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MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD:

SUBJECT:

Conversation with Henry Cabot Lodge.

2003

1. In view of the continuing adverse press,* and in view of the Security Council meeting scheduled for this afternoon, I discussed the question of the advisability of my calling Ambassador Lodge with Mr. Berry and with the other members of our PBSUCCESS staff, including Mr. Bissell. All agreed that I should call him prior to the meeting in order to make two or three points clear to him.

2. I reached Ambassador Lodge by telephone about 12:10 P. M. and made a statement of which the following is the gist: I said that we had, of course, been following with a magnifying glass the development of the situation in Guatemala and that we believed our intelligence coverage there was very good. I said that we had numerous observers strategically situated within the country who were reporting regularly to us and that on the basis of all of our reports I felt safe in stating to him that the claims and charges of the Guatemalan Government of heavy aerial bombardment were untruthful. I said that we had received absolutely no confirmation of any bombing and that I believed our own reports were substantially borne out by the reports of the Embassy. I said that, accordingly we concluded that the Guatemalan claims in this regard were propagandistic and I suggested that if appropriate occasion arose it might be well to expose them. I said that there were considerable evidences of the fact that the Guatemalan Government was deliberately concocting and fabricating evidence of bombing, and I gave him the details of the burning of the Mendoza house, which was reported by eye-witnesses, including neighbors, to have been done by the Guatemalan police.

3. Ambassador Lodge said that he had not heard this story and that it was most interesting. However, he said that he had seen one telegram from the Embassy, of today's or yesterday's date, speaking of a bomb having been dropped upon the military side of the Guatemala City airport. He said that if even one bomb had been dropped, it would probably be wiser for him not to make an issue of the bombing or lack of bombing; and he further stated that he would hope to be able to pursue the strategy of staying on the sidelines unless the Guatemalans make a direct accusation of United States governmental involvement.

* Saturday's press, as well as Sunday's, contains for the most part versions of the facts favorable to the position of the Guatemalan Government.

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4. I replied that I had no thought to suggest to him what his strategy or tactics should be, but only to provide him with information to the effect that up to now we had received no reports of any bombings, either in Guatemala City or, for that matter, elsewhere in Guatemala.

5. I next stated that my other point was to call to his attention the amount of emphasis being laid by the Guatemalan Government -- and by the entire International Communist propaganda network, upon the invasion aspects of the Guatemalan affair. I said that on the basis of our information this appeared to be at the very least a purposeful and propagandistic exaggeration, in view of the fact that there has been seething unrest within the country for many months and that this has been rapidly coming to a head during the past few weeks. Ambassador Lodge expressed interest in this and inquired when the tension had begun to rise to its present pitch, and I said that it had built up most rapidly during the past month and had reached a sort of climax when the Guatemalan Government had issued its decree -- approximately two weeks ago -- suspending constitutional guaranties, including freedom of the press and freedom of assembly.

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FRANK G. WISNER
Deputy Director (Plans)

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