JeSD to the NEWS
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PANAMA AND CARTER'S CREDIBILITY

The issues of credibility and foreign policy will be joined in the next few weeks when President Carter faces what to do about a new treaty with Panama over ownership of the U.S. Canal.

When campaigning for the Presidency, Jimmy Carter solemnly promised, "I would never give up complete control or practical control of the Panama Canal Zone."

Yet even before Mr. Carter moved into the White House, he named Gale W. McGee, former Senator from Wyoming, as Ambassador to the Organization of American States. Because of McGee's known views, this appointment was interpreted as a signal that Carter has decided to capitulate to Panamanian demands that we surrender ownership of our Canal.

Mr. Carte ? Bpointed Sol M. Linowitz as co-negotiator with Ambassador Ellsworth Bunker to speed completion of the giveaway treaty. The Linowitz appointment was a further sign that Carter is pressing hard to consummate the eight-point preliminary agreement signed by Henry Kissinger in 1974 under which we would turn over control and operation of the Canal Zone and the Canal to Panama.

Linowitz was chairman of the Commission on United States-Latin American Relations, a private group that issued a newsmaking report in December 1976 calling on the new Carter Administration to hurry up and sign a new treaty with Panama, and also abandon the Monroe Doctrine in favor of a "global" view of the world.

One of the arguments used by promoters of the Canal giveaway is that, if we don't cave in, the Panamanians will attempt to take the Canal by force and we would have to send 100,000 troops to defend it. Knowledgeable observers laugh at that kind of scare talk, saying that all the United States would have to do is to cut off replacement parts and ammunition to the Panamanian dictator, and he would be helpless.

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A survey of the historical record of Panama should be enough to discovrage us from giving its dictator any control over our Canal in which we have invested nearly $7 billion. In its 73-year history, Panama has had 59 chiefs of state.

The current dictator, General Omar Torrijos, was never elected. He seized power illegally from the duly elected president in 1968. He allows only one political party in Panama, the Communist Party. In 1976 Torrijos, with a retinue of 200 Panamanians, made a public showing of unity with Fidel Castro by a state visit to Havana.

One hidden joker in the Panama negotiations is the financial cost. As long as we have absolute ownership of the Canal, we can quickly move our naval ships between the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans as the need requires.

As aptly pointed out by Lt. Gen. V. H. Krulak, USMC (Ret.) in the scholarly journal Strategic Review, "Without absolute control of the Canal and the essential contiguous land, the United States could not accept the hazard of a one-ocean navy. It would be essential at once to initiate construction of fleets independently able to meet a crisis in either the Atlantic or Pacific -- a massive expenditure which we are now spared only because of our control of the Canal."

Last November William R. Drummond, a Canal Zone policeman, filed suit against President Ford, Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, and Ambassador Ellsworth Bunker to prevent the giveaway of our Canal Zone to Panama. Subsequently Drummond's automobile was bombed.

Now a group of U.S. Senators and Congressmen, led by Senator Jesse Helms, has filed a similar suit in Washington, D.C. This would indicate that retiring UN Ambassador William Scranton was on target when he said recently that opposition is growing in the United States to a new treaty on the Canal and it may be difficult to get it ratified by the Senate.

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