:e t to the NEWS

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DEFENDING THE U.S. CANAL

When President Carter said he would defend the Panama Canal even if it takes 100,000 Ameri'can troops, he was indulging in an emotional argument designed to scare us into ratifying the Canal Treaties by conjurihg up the threat of rioting, sabotage, or military attack.

President Carter has the shoe on the wrong foot. The 100,000 troops are what might be required if we sign the Canal treaties -- not if we reject them. The terms of the treaties require us to give up the two great non-military assets that now peacefully protect the Canal against violence, and would leave us with only American troops to do the job.

On the other hand, if we reject the treaties, we can defend the Canal indefinitely with our existing level of troops there, just as we ha e done for more than 60 years.

One of our present non-military assets is the Canal Zone of five mil es on e.ach side of the Canal that has always enabled us to keep any troublemakers at a safe· distance. Under the treaties, we would surrender ·this Zone immediately to Panama.

The other non-military asset that keeps Panamanian rioters and troops from doing any damage is their knowledge that, if they get too rambunctious, **we** can simply cut off the flow of U.S. dollars by pulling out and building another canal in Nicaragua. Under the Canal Treaties, however, we promise not even to talk with any third nation about building another Canal.

Nicaragua is a much better place for a canal. The climate is better, it's closer, and it has a deep lake that would cut costs. The original Isthmian Canal Commission recommended that our Canal be built in Nicaragua.

The reason Panama won out over Nicaragua as the location of t e·great U.S!

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Canal was because the Panamanians were lucky enough to have as their agent a smart French promoter-diplomat named Bunau-Varilla. He knew that the sweetener that would tip the scales in favor of Panama was the offer to give the U.S. sovereignty "in perpetuity" over the Canal Zone.

Senator Harry Byrd estimates that the overall cost of the Canal Treaties would eventually reach $10 billion. That is the sum of our present capital investment in the Canal and Canal Zone, plus the more than $2 billion we are scheduled to pay Panama to take it.

This figure doesn't even take into account the economic costs from the increase in Canal tolls. Treaty negotiator Sol Linowitz admits that Panama will raise the tolls 25 to 30 percent.

More important is the cost to the good name of America in letting the world know that we are willing to surrender to any petty dictator who has a tantrum, makes threats, and hurls demands. Apparently, the Carter Administration isn't even very choosey about selecting a dictator to cowtow to.

According to Freedom House, Torrijos has the worst record on human rights in all of Latin America. Until the Canal Treaties began to run into opposition in the United States, Torrijos made a practice of throwing his enemies into prison for 15 years without a trial.

Torrijos' brother Moises is under a Federal indictment in connection with heroin-smuggling charges. That is why he couldn't accompany his brother to the White House for the gala treaty-signing staged in Washington, D.C., on September 7. The Federal marshal would have had to mar the media event by making an arrest.

The fatal fallacy in the arguments of those promoting ratification of the Panama Treaties is the very idea that we can give away the Canal and the Canal Zone and then, if necessary, use the Marines to enforce our "right\\of passage. Those who use that argument have learned nothing from history. If we ever did such a thing, the world would treat us exactly as it treated the British when they sent troops to protect their rights in the Suez Canal.

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