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THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

DECLASSIFIED
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7/31/2018 KBH

MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

SUBJECT: President Hugo Banzer of Bolivia (U)

PARTICIPANTS: The President
Madeleine K. Albright, Secretary of
State
Samuel R. Berger, Assistant to the President
for National Security Affairs
Theodore J. Piccone, National Security
Council (Notetaker)
Patricia Arizu, Interpreter

Hugo Banzer, President of Bolivia
Javier Murillo, Minister of Foreign Affairs
Marlene Fernandez, Ambassador to the
Organization of American States

DATE, TIME April 19, 1998, 10:55 - 11:05 a.m.
AND PLACE: Sheraton Hotel, Santiago, Chile

President Banzer said his English was that of a captain, not a general, so he will speak in his native Spanish. Democracy in Bolivia has been strengthened considerably. We have gone from a one party system to alliance governments. In my coalition, we have nine partners, which is very difficult but it helps us to convince others of democracy's benefits. My government has set challenging counternarcotics objectives, but we have every will to achieve them. They are directly related to the counternarcotics policy of the United States. We are committed to eradication, but we are encountering very strong resistance. Just hours before coming to Santiago, there was a serious clash between our forces and the cocaleros, including at least one dead. This is a war, but we have the will to win. (X)

President Banzer continued that when U.S. assistance was decreased, he asked Vice President Quiroga to travel to Washington to explain our policies. It is my privilege to be the first president of Bolivia to pass a law controlling dangerous drugs and to create an organization to fight them. We have made a national decision with the support of the armed

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forces, the church, and the private sector, to declare war on drugs. We know there will be more deaths and injuries, but we have the will to win and can win if we have the support and cooperation of the United States. (Ø)

The President said he was very impressed with President Banzer's commitment. We will work with you to achieve your counternarcotics objectives. "I have had a long-time relationship with Bolivia, going back to my days in Arkansas. We want to support you." If you succeed in Bolivia, it will give great hope to Colombia, where the situation is worse and getting worse. It would send a signal throughout Latin America, to Asia and throughout the world that this fight can be pulled off. There are many doubters and the narcotraffickers have managed to pay people off in exchange for not killing them. We will continue to work with Bolivia in this fight. (Ø)

-- End of Conversation --