

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

November 29, 1975

Office of the White House Press Secretary

THE WHITE HOUSE

TO THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES:

I am transmitting for the Senate's advice and consent to ratification the Protocol of Amendment to the Inter-American Treaty of Reciprocal Assistance (Rio Treaty) signed at San Jose July 26, 1975. I also am transmitting, for the information of the Senate, the report of the Department of State with respect to the Protocol.

The signing of the Protocol of San Jose was a major development for the Inter-American System and a reaffirmation of the importance of our own relationship with the countries of Latin America. The Amendments, taken as a whole, do not alter the Rio Treaty's fundamental thrust; rather, they are for the most part constructive changes which will make the Treaty more flexible and politically viable in the years ahead.

The San Jose Conference of Plenipotentiaries for the amendment of the Rio Treaty constituted the final step in a process which began in April 1973 when the General Assembly of the Organization of American States, with the support of the United States, began an effort aimed at modernizing the instruments of the Inter-American System so as to make them more responsive to today's needs. The Protocol thus represents the end product of a conceptual and drafting process which began more than two years ago.

The most significant changes embodied in the Protocol in the Rio Treaty are (1) a provision for lifting sanctions by majority vote rather than the two-thirds vote required for all other decisions under the Treaty; (2) specific provision for non-binding recommendations and for conciliatory and peace-making steps as well as for binding measures; (3) a narrowing of the geographic area in which the "attack against one, attack against all" applies, eliminating Greenland and some high seas areas, and limiting its applicability to attacks against other states parties (instead of all "American states"); (4) the incorporation of a more complete definition of aggression than appeared in the original treaty, following the lines of the definition approved in 1974 by the General Assembly of the United Nations; and (5) the addition of an article providing that "collective economic security" shall be guaranteed by a special treaty (a provision to which the United States submitted a reservation at the time of signature). While the inclusion of an article on collective economic security represents an unfortunate detraction from the Protocol's balance and good sense, on the whole, the amendments improve this basic instrument of inter-American security and peacekeeping.

It is significant from the point of view of the United States that many other proposed changes were not embodied in the Protocol. For example, a proposal supported by some that would have limited the "attack against one, attack against all" concept to attacks coming from within the

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hemisphere was soundly defeated. Similarly, efforts to limit the authority of the Organ of Consultation to deal with a broad range of acts which could endanger the peace of America were unsuccessful. The result, in our view, was a reaffirmation of the basic principles of the Rio Treaty rather than a weakening of them. Nevertheless, I believe the protection of interests of the United States with respect to its position on the concept of collective economic security requires a formal reservation to that Article when the United States deposits its instrument of ratification, along the lines of the reservation made at the time of signing.

The various amendments to the Treaty are dealt with in detail in the enclosed report by the Department of State and the summary of amendments.

I strongly believe that it is in the national interest of the United States to ratify the proposed amendments. I therefore urge that the Senate give its advice and consent to ratification by the United States of the Amendment to the Rio Treaty contained in this Protocol, and that it do so as promptly as possible consistent with its constitutional responsibilities.

GERALD R. FORD

THE WHITE HOUSE,

November 29, 1975.

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