

DEPARTMENT OF STATE
BRIEFING PAPER

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RESTRAINT IN CONVENTIONAL ARMS TRANSFERS (CAT)

Essential Factors:

During President Carter's visit to Venezuela in May 1978, he urged President Perez to take the lead in reviving the Declaration of Ayacucho, and promised him U.S. backing should he do so. The Declaration, signed by Perez and representatives of seven other South American countries in Ayacucho, Peru, in December 1974, pledged "an effective limitation on weapons, to put an end to their purchase with warlike or aggressive intentions, and so dedicate all possible resources to the socio-economic development of the Latin American countries."

Perez agreed to see what he could do, and in June 1978, at Venezuela's instance, the eight countries reaffirmed the arms restraint portion of the Declaration, inviting other Latin American countries to associate themselves with it. Mexico responded by inviting all nations of the region, including Cuba, to a meeting in Mexico City in August to discuss practical means of bringing about regionwide arms restraint. All the significant Latin countries except Brazil attended. A second meeting is planned for April 1979 in Ecuador, which Mexico hopes will agree to establish a permanent secretariat and consultative mechanism.

Venezuela supports the Mexican initiative, but is not optimistic about its chances of success because of Brazil's continued refusal to participate. In fact, Brazil actively lobbied against the idea in other Latin capitals. Brazilian Foreign Minister Silveira called in the US Ambassador to inform him of Brazil's opposition and its "grave concern" over the decision to hold one of the US-Soviet CAT meetings in Mexico. Brazil and Albania were the only two countries to vote against regional arms restraint at the UN Special Session on Disarmament.

U.S. Objectives:

In Venezuela, to encourage the new government to continue Venezuela's leadership role on this subject;

In Brazil, to allay suspicions that the US is seeking (through a Mexican surrogate) to disarm Brazil and prevent its achieving major power status.

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Brazilian and Venezuelan Objectives:

To avoid making any commitment in this area until the new governments have had a chance to consider the issue.

Points to be Made:

In Venezuela:

-- The US strongly supports Latin American efforts to negotiate CAT restraint.

-- We hope the Herrera administration will continue Venezuela's leadership role.

-- We agree that Brazilian participation is important, and we hope that Venezuela will ask the new Brazilian government to take a fresh look at the advantages of taking part in the negotiations.

In Brazil:

-- We want the Latin Americans to work out among themselves their own approach to the problem of arms races and arms-induced tensions.

-- Obviously such an approach would be more effective if it included the area's largest and most important country. But we understand that Brazil must make its own decision.

-- We agree that Brazil requires a level of armament appropriate to its size and leadership role, and the US does not oppose that.

-- We believe, however, an understanding on arms transfers would free funds for economic development and reduce international tensions.

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