



# News Release

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## CARTER TO MEET WITH PANAMANIAN LEADERS ON TENTH ANNIVERSARY OF CANAL TREATY

WASHINGTON, DC, FEBRUARY 9, 1988 -- National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (NDI) Chairman Walter F. Mondale today announced that NDI and the Carter Center at Emory University will sponsor a major international conference on Panama March 18-21 with the participation of former President Jimmy Carter and a full spectrum of Panamanian and international leaders.

The NDI conference, entitled "Ten Years After the Panama Canal Treaties: Panama's Transition," will be held on St. Simon's Island, Georgia, with the support of the ARCA Foundation.

Mondale, who today extended invitations to 25 government and opposition leaders of Panama, said "NDI is looking to contribute to a peaceful solution to the current political crisis in Panama."

Noting the tenth anniversary of the Canal treaties, Mondale said he was "delighted that President Carter, the man who led our nation to the eminently sensible act of ratifying these

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treaties, would lead the U.S. delegation in a vital discussion about the transition in Panama."

NDI Executive Vice President Ken Wollack will coordinate the conference with Martin Edwin Andersen, director for Latin American Programs at NDI. The three-day session will focus on the scheduled 1989 presidential elections with emphasis on gaining consensus on the mechanisms needed to ensure a free and fair vote. "We will stress the importance of strong political parties in the electoral process," Wollack said, "and the need to achieve the proper relationship between civilian and military authority in a democratic environment."

In addition to these transition issues, the participants will also discuss implementation of the Panama Canal Treaties and those provisions that guarantee the smooth transfer of the Canal to Panamanian authorities while assuring continued U.S. access to the geo-strategically important waterway. Procedures for U.S.-Panamanian cooperation to operate and defend the Canal have been working successfully despite internal political problems in Panama.

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"We have been told by Panamanians from the Ambassador to Washington to government party officials to opposition party leaders to activists in the Civic Crusade that this meeting can help prevent further political violence," Mondale said. "We will focus our attention on the future and a peaceful and democratic transition," added the NDI Chairman who was Vice President of the United States when the Canal treaties were negotiated and signed.

Following the formal conference sessions, a press conference will be held at the Carter Center on Monday, March 21 at 10 a.m.

The National Democratic Institute, affiliated with the Democratic Party, conducts nonpartisan political development programs overseas. Working with political parties and other institutions, NDI seeks to promote, maintain and strengthen democratic institutions and pluralistic values in new and emerging democracies.

NDI has conducted democratic development programs in nearly 30 countries, including Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Haiti, Nicaragua, Northern Ireland, Senegal, South Korea, Taiwan, Uruguay and the Philippines.

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