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REMARKS BY PRESIDENT BUSH
AND PRESIDENT SANCHEZ OF COSTA RICA
IN PHOTO OPPORTUNITY

Oval Office

12:41 P.M. EST

PRESIDENT BUSH: Mr. President, welcome. I'm glad to welcome you back to the White House. I appreciate the very important discussions we had. Our discussions started with the bilateral relationship between the United States and Costa Rica. It is an important relationship. It's an important relationship when it comes to trade, it's an important relationship when it comes to interchanges between our governments and our peoples.

Mr. President, you spent a lot of time talking about the importance of education, and I respect you for that, and I appreciate your emphasis on education. And we will investigate ways to determine whether or not the United States can help, if you so desire, on matters of education. And I congratulate you on being very successful in educating the younger children of your country. And I, again, admire your focus on extending the education through all grades in Costa Rica.

Secondly, we spent time on CAFTA. It's an important initiative for this administration. I appreciate your dedication to the issue of trade. The President understands full well that trade is the best way to help reduce poverty around the world, and so he made it clear to me his deep desire for the United States to take the lead on the Doha round of the trade discussions, which I assured him we would.

I appreciated very much your advice, Mr. President, on the neighborhood in which you live. I thank you for your clear vision when it comes to forms of government. And I appreciate you sharing with me your insights as to the different countries and different leaders and how best that we can work together to achieve peace and stability.

It's an honor to have you here, Sir. You represent a fine country that a lot of Americans have had first-hand knowledge with. And I'm proud to welcome you.

PRESIDENT SANCHEZ: Well, thank you, Mr. President, for your time. This room is familiar to me. I visited the Oval Office in the past, during the Reagan years and when President Bush was President. I was telling President Bush that in the past, every time I came to the White House it was not to talk about Costa Rica, but about Nicaragua, and I'm very happy that we had a chance to talk about Costa Rica this time.

As he just mentioned, my country is a small country -- we produce what we do not consume, and we consume what we do not produce. This is why trade is so important to us. Costa Rica is a very open economy, is the second-largest open economy in this hemisphere, after Chile. And this is why CAFTA is important to us and this is why we're so determined to approve CAFTA, ratify CAFTA in our congress as soon as possible. And we are in the process of initiating negotiations with the European Union about free trade agreement with the whole of Europe, the European Union.

Concerning education, this is my priority. Peace was my priority 20 years ago, now it's education. I was asking President Bush that his program, No Child Left Behind, could be applied in many Latin American countries. You are all aware that what explains our failures among other things is the fact that average schooling in Latin American countries is only six-and-a-half years and that explains the social inequality and the poverty of our people.

So at the beginning of the 21st century, we're going to spend more on education, which is my dream and my determination to spend as much as 8 percent of GDP on education. We are simply condemning our children to remain poor as their grandfathers -- and this is something that certainly the people of Latin America don't deserve.

PRESIDENT BUSH: Thank you, sir.

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12:45

P.M. EST