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PRELIMINARY U.S. DELEGATION REPORT ON RESULTS OF AM BROADCASTING CONFERENCE IN RIO DE JANEIRO

The second session of the Regional Administrative Medium Frequency Broadcasting Conference, which was held in Rio de Janeiro from November 9 to December 19, 1981, produced an Agreement and Plan to govern AM broadcasting in the Western Hemisphere.

The results are embodied in a 140-page document entitled Final Acts and a 1,500-page Assignment Plan officially known as the Rio de Janeiro Plan.

The Rio conference was the first attempt of Western Hemisphere nations to develop such an Agreement and Plan involving all countries in the region. In their deliberations the delegates from the 26 participating countries had to consider approximately 15,000 operating and planned AM radio stations.

The Agreement contains procedures for coordinating AM broadcast assignments and includes a technical annex which prescribes criteria to be used in providing for mutual interference protection. The procedures and standards contained in the Agreement are substantially consistent with those embodied in the North American Regional Broadcasting Agreement (NARBA) and the Agreement between the United States and Mexico on AM broadcasting.

The Plan is made up of two lists: List A consists of all frequency assignments, both operating and planned, for which all affected signatories have indicated their acceptance of interference, both caused and received. List B consists of all remaining assignments for which post-conference coordination will be necessary to resolve unaccepted interference. Both lists are subject to post-conference verification. Although final figures will not be available until that verification has been completed, it is expected that at least 90 percent of U.S. stations will be in List A.

The Conference also developed several recommendations and resolutions concerning interregional interference, the AM band expansion conference scheduled for 1986, treatment of assignments of non-signatories and various procedures for the resolution of remaining interference problems.

The Agreement will come into force on July 1, 1983. Until that time the signatories have agreed to apply the procedures and technical standards of the Agreement to all ongoing allocation matters.

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Before and during the Conference, representatives of Cuba and the United States held consultations to identify approaches for resolving mutual interference problems. In view of the many broadcasting and nonbroadcasting issues that have arisen between Cuba and the United States during the last 20 years, both parties recognized that resolution of those interference problems would require additional consultations that would extend beyond the time afforded by the Conference.

Cuba withdrew from further participation before the last week of the Conference as a result of difficulties it encountered in advancing its interests. The final specific issue that prompted that action was refusal by the Conference to approve a proposal by Cuba for a block of 48 changes in its assignments. Such a shift, had it been accepted, would have resulted in significantly increased interference to the United States.

In its final statement to the Conference, Cuba criticized U.S. government broadcasting operations, such as the Voice of America and the proposed Radio Marti. That was the first time Cuba specifically mentioned those broadcast services. That issue did not prevent Cuba's participation in the Conference and did not interfere with efforts to develop the Plan.

Broadcast operations by both countries continue to create mutual problems. A number of those problems, particularly where government stations are involved, may not be resolvable solely within the bounds of AM broadcasting and must be examined in a broader context.

The Agreement and associated Plan provide for the protection of existing and future U.S. broadcast needs. However, although the Conference has officially ended, much work remains to be done to complete, implement and maintain the Plan for regional AM broadcasting coordination. Among the remaining tasks are bilateral discussions, thorough verification of the data base and development of domestic procedures to implement the Agreement.

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