

5 Message to the Senate Transmitting the United States-Colombian Treaty Concerning Quita Sueño, Roncador, and Serrana. *January 9, 1973*

*To the Senate of the United States:*

I am transmitting for the Senate's advice and consent to ratification the Treaty between the Government of the United States of America and the Government of the Republic of Colombia, concerning the Status of Quita Sueño, Roncador and Serrana, signed at Bogotá on September 8, 1972.

Under the Treaty the United States renounces all claims to sovereignty over three uninhabited outcroppings of coral reefs in the Caribbean—Quita Sueño, Roncador and Serrana.

The Treaty assures that the fishing rights of each Government's nationals and vessels in the waters adjacent to Quita Sueño will be free from interference by the other Government or by its nationals or vessels. Colombia also agrees to guarantee to United States nationals and vessels a continuation of fishing in the waters adjacent to Roncador and Serrana, subject to reasonable conservation measures applied on a nondiscriminatory basis.

The express purpose of the Treaty is to settle long-standing questions concerning the status of the three reefs, which are located between 380 and 460 miles from the Colombian mainland. In the late nineteenth century, the United States claimed them under the terms of the Guano Islands Act of 1856, following

their discovery by an American citizen in 1869. In 1890 Colombia protested the extraction by United States nationals of guano from these reefs, claiming that Colombia had inherited sovereign title to them from Spain. In 1928 the United States and Colombia recognized the existence of their dual claims and agreed to maintain a status quo situation which has existed to the present day.

Negotiation of the Treaty signed last September was a response to Colombia's desire to enhance its claim to sovereignty. The primary interest of the United States in the area is to protect the right of American nationals and vessels to continue fishing there. Another United States interest is the continued maintenance of navigational aids on the three reefs.

The Treaty meets the practical interests of both countries. It will satisfy the long-standing desire of the Colombian people that their claim to sovereignty not be encumbered by a conflicting claim by the United States. It will protect United States interests in maintaining fishing rights in the area and, through a related arrangement, will provide for maintenance by Colombia of the navigational aids there in accordance with international regulations. The enclosed report of the Department of State more fully describes the provisions of the Treaty and its

related arrangements.

This Treaty demonstrates once again the desire and willingness of the United States to settle, in a spirit of understanding and good will, differences which may exist in our relations with other countries particularly with our Latin American neighbors. I urge that the Senate act

favorably on the Treaty in the near future.

**RICHARD NIXON**

The White House,  
January 9, 1973.

NOTE: The text of the treaty and accompanying papers are printed in Senate Executive A (93d Cong., 1st sess.).