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Panamanian Legislator Delivers Indictment Against U.S. Ambassador

by Deborah Tyroler
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During an address before the US Chamber of Commerce in Panama City the past weekend, Panamanian legislator Rigoberto Paredes accused US Ambassador Arthur Davis of flagrantly and directly interfering in Panama's domestic affairs. He said Davis has made little effort to even appear diplomatic in the language and style he has used in threatening economic sanctions if the Panamanian government refuses to accept Washington's policies. Paredes pertains to the ruling Democratic Revolutionary Party (PRD). He criticized the ambassador's crude tactics, adding that his government is not "on her knees begging alms," but rather will remain on "her feet with her head up," claiming what is rightfully hers as a sovereign nation. According to Paredes, Davis believes he has the right in the name of democracy to "invade and violate our sovereign territory and force us into a halter with a compass pointing to where our orders originate." Specifically, Davis was accused of seeking to "dictate guidelines and impose criteria" on Panama's armed forces. This proves, said Paredes, that the ambassador is ignorant of the role played by the military in Panama's new democracy. Next, the US ambassador's comments on the use of monies by the Panama Canal Commission were regarded as insulting. Paredes said Davis's reference to US Law 96-70 as harmless to Panamanian interests was obviously erroneous. He also stated that the ambassador continues insisting that the Canal Commission promotes the increasing participation of Panamanians in canal administration, while both the Panamanian Foreign Ministry and national congress have produced evidence to the contrary. Paredes closed his remarks by directing the following remark at Davis: "The Canal is ours...its transfer to our control in the year 2000 is not going to depend on the marks you give us, as if Panamanians were frightened school children, and you the teacher with a big stick to punish us." (Basic data from PRENSA LATINA, 10/28/86)

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