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Panama: Ousted President Lives In Miami, To Assume Life As Businessperson After Election

by Deborah Tyroler

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On March 22, US Secretary of State James Baker told Panamanian President-in-exile Eric Delvalle that relations with Panama will not be normalized until Gen. Manuel Antonio Noriega is removed from power. State Department spokesperson Charles Redman said that fair elections on May 7 would offer an opportunity to push Noriega out, and thus end Panama's current economic crisis. "There'll be no accommodation with a Noriega-dominated regime," Redman said. He added, "The US government is firmly and unequivocally committed to the spirit and the letter of the Panama Canal treaties." For the last two months, Delvalle and his family have been living in a house he bought in Miami. He told reporters after speaking with Baker that although he now resides in the US, he travels "constantly to Panama." Miami, said Delvalle, will be his base. "I will continue doing politics full time until my term expires in August, and then I'll dedicate myself to doing business." Delvalle is recognized as Panama's president only by the US. Delvalle was ousted in February 1988 when he unsuccessfully tried to fire Gen. Noriega who had been indicted in Florida on drug trafficking conspiracy charges. Delvalle was replaced by Manuel Solis Palma. Delvalle said he expected Noriega to fix the elections to ensure that pro-Noriega candidate Carlos Duque defeats opposition candidate Guillermo Endara. In a taped speech for a clandestine station supporting Endara, Delvalle said, "The opposition has to go to the polls because it has no other alternative. But it will all be useless." (Basic data from DPA, AFP, 03/22/89)

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