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Deborah Tyroler

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Panamanian Military Announces State Of Alert In Response To Alleged "plot" Between U.S. & Christian Democrats

by Deborah Tyroler

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On March 27, the Panamanian Defense Forces (PDF) announced a state of alert, result of "plotting" between the US and the Christian Democrats to dismantle the military. During the weekend, Ricardo Arias Calderon, president of the Christian Democrat party, announced planned changes in the military if the opposition wins the May 7 general elections. Arias, vice presidential candidate for the Democratic Alliance of the Civic Opposition (ADOC), said military chief Gen. Manuel Antonio Noriega would be dismissed. According to PDF spokesperson Lt. Arnulfo Castrejon, Arias' statements "coincide" with demonstrations outside the US Embassy which shows collusion between the Christian Democrats and the United States. The opposition coalition will face off with pro-government party forces, called the National Liberation Coalition (COLINA) in the May elections for president, two vice presidents, 67 legislators and 510 magistrates. On March 22, Christian Democrat party offices in Arraijan, 13 km. west of Panama City, were set on fire and ransacked. Party leaders blamed government supporters. (Basic data from AFP, 03/27/89; Xinhua, 03/28/89)

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