5-24-1989

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Organization Of American States Delegation Arrives In Panama

by Deborah Tyroler
Published: Wednesday, May 24, 1989

On May 23, Organization of American States (OAS) Secretary General Joao Baena Soares arrived in Panama City to lead a mission charged with elaborating suggestions to resolve Panama's political crisis. Trinidad and Tobago Foreign Minister Sahadeo Basdeo arrived May 22. Two other members of the OAS mission, Ecuadoran Foreign Minister Diego Cordovez and Guatemalan Foreign Minister Mario Palencia arrived late Tuesday. The delegation was created as part of an OAS resolution on May 17 that criticized Panamanian Gen. Manuel Antonio Noriega for "abuses," and called for a "transfer of power in the shortest possible time." The OAS delegation is expected to remain in Panama throughout the week. The May 17 resolution said the mission is to report back by June 6. Minister Basdeo told reporters Monday that the delegation members would be meeting with representatives of the government, political parties, the Roman Catholic Church and businesspersons during their visit. Ecuadoran Minister Cordovez said the mission would "tell all Panamanian sectors that there is concern in Latin America about Panama's crisis." According to AFP, prior to the delegation's arrival, unidentified government sources had leaked details of a proposal under which Guillermo Endara, opposition presidential candidate in the May 7 election, would be named to head a three member civilian-military junta. The proposal also provided for the retirement within two years of Gen. Noriega, the sources said. The government also issued a communique asserting that the OAS had no mandate to act as a "court" or "international electoral tribunal." Later, Panamanian Foreign Minister Jorge Ritter said the OAS mission was to promote an agreement among Panamanians. Opposition leaders have asserted that they will accept no solution to the crisis that does not recognize their victory at the polls. (Basic data from AFP, AP, 05/23/89; New York Times, 05/24/89)

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