Panama: Update On Oas Mission, Related Developments

Deborah Tyroler

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalrepository.unm.edu/noticen

Recommended Citation

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Latin America Digital Beat (LADB) at UNM Digital Repository. It has been accepted for inclusion in NotiCen by an authorized administrator of UNM Digital Repository. For more information, please contact amywinter@unm.edu.
Panama: Update On Oas Mission, Related Developments

by Deborah Tyroler

Category/Department: General

Published: Friday, May 26, 1989

March 24: Accompanied by a crowd of about 350 chanting supporters, opposition leaders Guillermo Endara, Guillermo Ford and Ricardo Arias Calderon marched from a Panama City church to a hotel where they met with members of an Organization of American States (OAS) delegation. The opposition reportedly told the OAS mission they wanted their election victory recognized and Noriega retired. The delegation also met with leaders of the Roman Catholic Church. The delegation was created under an OAS resolution after elections May 7 were annulled amid allegations of vote fraud by Gen. Manuel Antonio Noriega. The mission, led by OAS Secretary General Joao Baena Soares, included foreign ministers Diego Cordovez of Ecuador, Mario Palencia of Guatemala and Sahadeo Basdeo of Trinidad and Tobago. At a news conference following a nearly three-hour meeting with the OAS mission, Gen. Noriega said the meeting had been "positive" and gave the Defense Forces "an opportunity to express their idea about the economic aggression...and the foreign intervention that caused the deterioration" in Panama. Noriega said, "Each officer spoke of his concept of this reality. We talked about the intimidation, of outrages, of excessive foreign presence and intimidation by air, sea, land, submarine...even the ozone layer has suffered intervention." An aide said Noriega told the delegation his resignation is an issue that would be decided by the Defense Forces, not by an OAS request. President Manuel Solis Palma told a meeting of bureaucrats that no new elections were possible before Sept. 1, when his term as "minister in charge of the presidency" is supposed to end. He said another vote could be held because of the expense and "because of the psychological condition of the Panamanian people after the trauma of the elections." Solis Palma suggested that legal procedures would permit him to continue in office. He cited an administrative code that says a person must serve until he is replaced. Another alternative, said the president, is his replacement, which does not necessarily mean the opposition. Regarding the opposition's demands, the president said, "Those who think that the OAS delegation has come to hand them power on a platter will continue to wait..." Former presidential candidate of the pro-government National Liberation Coalition (COLINA), Carlos Duque, and vice presidential candidate Ramon Sieiro, said they would be willing to negotiate with opposition if requested to do so by the OAS delegation. May 25: The Panamanian government announced that Gen. Noriega had requested Japan's "good offices" to seek a solution to foreign pressure against Panama. Military sources said Noriega had spoken with Japanese media representatives in making the request. Noriega accused the US of having initiated a "psychological offensive" destined at obligating Panamanian authorities to negotiate a permanent military and colonial presence in the country. Noriega reportedly said, "The US has already militarily interfered..., and we now face the danger of aggression." According to an unidentified military officer quoted by Notimex, Japan could play a very important role in mediating the termination of military and economic pressure against Panama. Japanese investors have expressed interest in plans for modernizing the Panama Canal facilities, and constructing an alternative canal in Nicaragua. Military sources told Notimex that on countless occasions Panama has appealed to Japanese economic and technological strengths as an alternative to Washington's "dominion" since the early 20th century. (Basic data from AP, Notimex, Reuters, 05/24/89; Notimex, 05/25/89)