Prospects For Reaching Solution To Panamanian Crisis

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Prospects For Reaching Solution To Panamanian Crisis

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In an interview with the New York Times on June 8, Secretary General of the Organization of American States, Joao Clemente Baena Soares, indicated optimism regarding prospects for success in reaching a solution to Panama's political crisis. He said, "I am fairly optimistic, because of all the conversations we had in our previous visit to Panama last month. There is a general expectation of arriving at a solution." On May 17, the OAS denounced electoral abuses by Gen. Manuel Antonio Noriega and created a four-member mission to assist in talks aimed at achieving "a national accord that can bring about, through democratic mechanisms, a transfer of power" in Panama "in the shortest possible time." The team is comprised of Baena Soares and the foreign ministers of Ecuador, Guatemala and Trinidad and Tobago. On June 6, the OAS gave the team a six-week extension to July 19. Baena Soares is scheduled to arrive in Panama June 11. According to the Times, OAS officials who visited Gen. Noriega in May had the impression he might be willing to resign if he could so in a "dignified manner." This would mean avoiding the label of criminal or being forced to leave. In an interview in Washington with the Times, Ricardo Arias Calderon, a vice presidential candidate on the opposition ticket May 7, said the OAS mission had spent most of its time unsuccessfully attempting to arrange direct talks between the Noriega regime and the opposition. The six-week extension, he said, "imposes an intolerable delay on the Panamanian people." (Basic data from New York Times, 06/09/89)

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