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Deborah Tyroler

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Panama: Talks To Begin Among Government & Opposition Parties, & Armed Forces

by Deborah Tyroler
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On June 21, the Panamanian Foreign Ministry issued a statement saying Foreign Minister Jorge Ritter had sent a letter to Organization of American States (OAS) Secretary General Joao Baena Soares agreeing to an OAS proposal for "a dialogue among Panamanians to overcome the serious problems confronting Panama." Ritter said the talks would include representatives of the government, the Defense Forces and the opposition. Last week the OAS delegation urged Gen. Manuel Antonio Noriega to open a dialogue with the opposition Civic Democratic Opposition Alliance (ADOC) and the pro-government National Liberation Coalition (COLINA). A spokesperson for the ADOC said the opposition would agree to the talks only "if Noriega participates in the dialogue." The OAS mission currently in Panama comprised of Baena Soares, and the foreign ministers of Guatemala, Ecuador and Trinidad and Tobago has until July 19 before it must report back to OAS member nation ministers. [On June 21 in Caracas, Venezuelan President Carlos Andres Perez discussed the Panamanian situation with foreign ministers of OAS member nations. The officials were on hand to attend a special conference of the Group of 77. Colombian Foreign Minister Julio Londono told reporters the ministers agreed that the resignation of Gen. Manuel Antonio Noriega is not a "condition" for a solution to the Panamanian crisis. He said, "The solution will occur within the context of respect for the principle of self- determination and non-interference in the domestic affairs of other nations." To the present, the US government and statements by the ADOC have presented Noriega's resignation as commander-in- chief from the Panamanian Defense Forces as a principal condition for resolution of Panama's political crisis.] (Basic data from Xinhua, AFP, 06/21/89; Notimex, 06/22/89)

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