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Retired Latin American Military Officers Organization Convenes In Panama

by Deborah Tyroler

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On the evening of Aug. 7, a five-day meeting of the executive council of the Military Organization for Democracy, Integration and Liberation of Latin America and Caribbean (OMIDELAC) commenced at the Continental Hotel in Panama City. In a speech opening the meeting, president of the organization, retired Gen. Richelieu Levoyer of Ecuador, said that OMIDELAC selected the Panamanian capital as the venue for its second congress "because we feel that a serious international situation is emerging" in Panama. Levoyer criticized recent US policy toward Panama. He said that by financing the Panamanian political opposition's campaign in the May elections, the US government had transformed the elections into a destabilization operation in order to "legitimize military intervention and install the candidate of its choice." Levoyer said, "All Latin America should denounce this flagrant interference by the United States in Panama's internal affairs." Next, the OMIDELAC president said a solution to the country's political crisis "must come from the Panamanians themselves." Levoyer expressed the organization's solidarity with the Panamanian people in their struggle against "unusual foreign intervention." He insisted that Washington exercise "respect for the self-determination of the [Panamanian] people and for the principle of non- intervention," as well as "unrestricted fulfillment of the Torrijos-Carter [Canal] treaties." Among the high-ranking retired officers attending the congress in Panama are division generals Edgardo Mercado Jarrin and Jorge Fernandez Maldonado of Peru, and general Victor Licandro of Uruguay. On Monday morning, OMIDELAC members visited the tomb of Gen. Omar Torrijos. According to Xinhua, prior to the conference's conclusion, the retired officers plan to meet with several Panamanian government officials, and commander-in-chief of the Panamanian Defense Forces, Manuel Antonio Noriega. (Basic data from Xinhua, 08/08/89)

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