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Panamanian President Threatens Attack Against "traitors" In Event Of U.S. Invasion

by Deborah Tyroler

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On Aug. 20, Panamanian President Manuel Solis Palma threatened to attack all "traitors" if the US invades the country. "Houses and businesses are the same to cannons and everybody will be under fire," Solis Palma said in a prepared statement. In reference to the opposition, he said, "There will be no spectators left here because if they (United States) attack us, we will take it upon ourselves to attack the traitors." Panama's Foreign Ministry has called on all Latin American diplomats in the country to denounce stepped up US military maneuvers in Panama. In a statement issued Aug. 20, the Foreign Ministry said an "institutional defense committee" had been established to safeguard the "institution, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Panama." The committee was formed, said the statement, because all Panamanians have a duty to take up arms to defend national independence in the face of the "threat of military aggression by the United States." At a press conference in Washington on Aug. 21, Panamanian Senators Francisco Artola and Milton Henriquez, and journalist Guillermo Quijano said that they had informed US officials that the government under Gen. Manuel Noriega will launch a campaign of "brutal repression" within the next few days. Representing the Civic Democratic Opposition Alliance (ADOC), the three men requested that the Organization of American States (OAS) send a human rights committee to Panama immediately to ensure that "the world will know how many deaths will take place." The ADOC spokespersons said they were convinced the regime would subject opposition supporters to terrible repression between Aug. 23 and Sept. 1. They said the US is a "victim of the pressures always used by the Latin American left to disqualify any of its actions on the continent...Because of this situation, accusations against Gen. Noriega for drug trafficking, assassinations and illicit enrichment have not gone forward." (Basic data from Notimex, AFP, Xinhua, 08/21/89)

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