8-25-1989

Organization Of American States Special Session: Mandate Of Mediation Team Not Extended

Deborah Tyrolier

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.
Organization Of American States Special Session: Mandate Of Mediation Team Not Extended

by Deborah Tyroler

Category/Department: General
Published: Friday, August 25, 1989

Foreign ministers of Organization of American States member-nations met on the evening of Aug. 23 in Washington for a special session to discuss the situation in Panama, and to hear a report by members of its mission to that country. Since its creation in May, the OAS mission has made five visits to Panama. The mission was comprised of Secretary General Joao Baena Soares, and the foreign ministers of Ecuador, Guatemala and Trinidad & Tobago. Team members said that they had failed to achieve the goal of an agreement on a transfer of power on Sept. 1 leading to eventual elections, but that further talks between the Panamanian government and opposition parties might be useful. Mission chief, Ecuadoran Minister Diego Cordovez, presented the report. As part of US pressure tactics to dislodge Gen. Manuel Antonio Noriega, the US Southern Command has held a series of increasingly conspicuous military exercises in Panama. US officials said the purpose of the exercises was to reassert US rights under the 1977 Canal treaties, and to discourage harassment of US military personnel. "Without making a pronouncement on the legality or illegality" of the military operations, the team said they were "inopportun," and suggested that the exercises were partly responsible for their failure to mediate an agreement. The report said, "It is essential to avoid the possibility of an incident that, in the present circumstances in Panama, might thwart all efforts to achieve a peaceful solution. The mission is of the opinion that at this time it is essential to avoid actions that could exacerbate the situation." The OAS mission also expressed concern about recent "violations of human and civil and political rights" alleged by opposition leaders to have been perpetrated by the Panamanian government. Next, the team called on the US and Panama to "normalize their bilateral relations," saying such a move "would give impetus to the search for a negotiated solution" in Panama. After more than seven hours of debate behind closed doors, the foreign ministers approved a resolution calling on the Panamanian parties in conflict to reach an agreement permitting a transfer of power to take place Sept. 1. Meeting chairperson, Colombian Minister Julio Londono, presented the resolution early Thursday morning. The resolution said that upon request by all parties to the national dialogue government, military and opposition parties, the OAS mission would return to Panama to help mediate an agreement. Next, the OAS ministers called on the Inter-American Human Rights Commission to attempt a visit to Panama as soon as possible with the objective of completing an updated investigation of the human rights situation.

At a press conference on Wednesday in Washington, Panamanian opposition leader Ricardo Arias Calderon said that "despite the great efforts of the OAS mission, the negotiation was not successful because of Noriega's unwillingness to step down." Earlier this week, Noriega said the opposition negotiators had made a "historic error" by turning down the government's offer for power sharing in the provisional government to be set up Sept. 1. Opposition leaders say there is no need for power-sharing arrangements or new elections because they won the elections on May 7. (Basic data from Notimex, 08/23/89; New York Times, Prensa Latina, 08/24/89)
-- End --