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Panama: Comptroller Francisco Rodriguez Appointed Interim President

by Deborah Tyroler
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On Aug. 31, Panama's Council of State appointed Comptroller Francisco Rodriguez Poveda as interim president and Carlos Osores Typaldos vice president to take over Sept. 1. Foreign Minister Jorge Ritter, who resigned on the evening of Aug. 30, told reporters of the appointments after the closed session. The Council is comprised of about 40 persons, including cabinet ministers, heads of government and military leaders. The president is formal head of the Council. Both Rodriguez and Osores are members of the Democratic Revolutionary Party (PRD). According to an official announcement, and statements by Rodriguez, new elections have been tentatively scheduled to be held in six months if the US "ceases its aggression and releases Panamanian funds it arbitrarily holds." The interim government also plans to reform Panama's current electoral legislation. Osores, currently a member of the Panama Canal Commission, is a former vice president, foreign minister and UN ambassador. Rodriguez, 50, directed the government's General Accounting Office since 1982. His career in government began in 1965 at the General Planning and Administration Office of the Presidency, and rose to General Budget Director at the Ministry for Economic Policy and Planning. From 1975 to 1978, Rodriguez was Deputy Minister of Agriculture, and later served as minister. He was also managing director of the Multinational Banana Brokerage (COMUNBANA) and represented Panama at the International Monetary Fund and World Bank, as well as at the negotiations leading to the 1977 Canal accords. The new president was born in Herrera, central Panama, and obtained degrees in engineering at University of Panama (1962), agronomy at Lima's La Molina University (1963), and project planning and evaluation at Guatemala's San Carlos University (1964). He also studied at Chile's Latin American Institute for Economic Planning and at the Interamerican Development Bank in Washington. Vice President Osores, 49, began his political career at the Foreign Ministry in 1969. Later, he served as Minister of Justice, and occupied the vice presidency in 1982. Osores studied English at St. Louis University in the US, and obtained a degree in jurisprudence at Italy's Padua University in 1967. He was managing editor of Estrella, the oldest Panamanian daily, and is currently a member of its editorial board. [On Aug. 31, Juan Sosa, Panama's ambassador in Washington under ousted President Eric Arturo Delvalle, closed down the Panamanian embassy in Washington. Delvalle recognized Sept. 1 as the end of his term. Sosa said he planned to request political asylum in the US, and that he would hand over the keys of the embassy to the US State Department's Office of Foreign Missions.] (Basic data from several reports by AFP, AP, Notimex, DPA, Xinhua, 08/31/89)

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