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Sampling Of Reactions To U.S. Military Action In Panama

by Deborah Tyroler

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Early Wednesday, the Soviet Foreign Ministry issued a communique saying that the dispatch of US troops to Panama "no matter what reasons are cited, has provoked a feeling of serious concern in the Soviet Union...These actions, a violation of the United Nations charter and generally recognized rules of state relations, should be condemned by the international community. The United States must immediately stop its armed intervention in Panama." British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher pledged full support of the US action, saying she believed all those who had criticized Gen. Noriega "must clearly support the Americans in their action." The Foreign Office said it was not in a position to comment. In Nicaragua, Foreign Minister Miguel d'Escoto read a statement signed by President Daniel Ortega over state-run radio saying Nicaragua had called for an emergency session of the UN Security Council "to strongly condemn the US invasion in Panama and demand the immediate withdrawal of its troops...For Nicaragua the military intervention represents a real threat for Latin and Central America and particularly for Nicaragua." Spanish Foreign Minister Francisco Fernandez Ordonez said his government "deeply regretted" the events in Panama. The Spanish government had always opposed foreign military intervention, and Ordonez said he hoped the Panamanian people would be allowed to decide their future freely. The Japanese Foreign Ministry said it had set up a special headquarters headed by Vice Foreign Minister Takakazu Kuriyama to collect information on the Panamanian situation and protect Japanese nationals in Panama, estimated at 700. A senior foreign ministry official said the Japanese government hoped the situation would be stabilized in Panama and that "democratization will prevail." According to a communique issued by government spokesperson Hans Klein, the West German government expressed "its understanding" for the US military invasion in view of "events that happened these last few days in Panama," and given "the threat weighing on US nationals" there. Costa Rican Foreign Minister Rodrigo Madrigal Nieto told reporters that the US occupation of Panama was lamentable. He said that it was a consequence of the inefficacy of the OAS. According to a communique by the Colombian Foreign Ministry, foreign ministers of Argentina, Brazil, Mexico, Uruguay, Peru, Venezuela and Colombia plan to meet in Bogota Wednesday night. The Rio Group has condemned Noriega's regime, but it has also consistently rejected any direct US intervention in Panama. In Buenos Aires, Argentine Foreign Minister Domingo Cavallo expressed concern, and said the Rio Group will seek a way of "acting together" to end the conflict. Cavallo told reporters that Latin America "is going to have to play a fundamental role to prevent a deepening of the crisis and a greater spilling of blood." In a communique issued in Caracas, the Venezuelan government said the US intervention was the result of a "lack of an effective and firm response by our countries to the violation of human rights and constitutional norms on the part of the de facto government of Panama." President Carlos Andres Perez called for US troops to retire before Caracas recognizes the new government of Guillermo Endara. Venezuela called for the immediate meeting of an OAS consulting committee to "analyze and take decisions that will contribute to the re-establishment of Panamanian sovereignty." In Washington, the Permanent Council of the Organization of American States met in special session to discuss the US attack. The Council recognized Jose Maria Cabrera, representative of the ousted Panamanian regime, as that country's legitimate delegate. Immediately after the decision was announced, Cabrera condemned the US military invasion. An unidentified

OAS source cited by AFP said that the Council had no other option but to recognize Cabrera, who was expected to formally denounce the invasion before the council later Wednesday. In New York, the UN Security Council met in emergency session Wednesday morning to debate the US military attack. Nicaragua requested the emergency meeting. Democrat congressional leaders, including George Mitchell and Christopher Dodd expressed support for President Bush's order to attack. (Basic data from several reports by AP, Notimex, DPA, AFP, Xinhua)

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