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Sampling Of International Reactions To U.S. Intervention In Panama: A Summary

by Deborah Tyroler

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Dec. 22: A majority of member-nations of the Organization of American States called on the US to withdraw its troops from Panamanian territory and deplored the military intervention in Panama. A statement by Angola's ruling party, the People's Movement for the Liberation of Angola, condemned the US military aggression against Panama, and called on the US to pull its troops out of that country. The party said the intervention demonstrated the aggressive nature of US foreign policy. The Peruvian Congress approved President Alan Garcia's proposal to withdraw from the Inter-American Treaty of Reciprocal Assistance (ITRA), and denounced the accord for its "uselessness in avoiding invasions and aggressions such as the one in Panama." The ITRA was signed in 1947 and provides for the joint defense of the Western Hemisphere against outside attack or internal security threats. Dec. 23: The Roman Catholic Church called on Washington to end its military action promptly, saying the intervention had "trampled" on Panama's sovereignty and caused death, destruction and hunger. "Even though the action was aimed at bringing freedom to all Panamanians, we cannot help but lament the deep wound inflicted to our free and sovereign country and the enormous human and material damages it has caused, especially among the poor," said a communique from Panama's Roman Catholic bishops that was read by Archbishop Marcos McGrath. The US, Britain and France vetoed a proposed Security Council resolution to denounce the US invasion of Panama and demand the immediate withdrawal of US troops. Britain has expressed complete support in the 15-member council for the US invasion to oust Panamanian military leader Manuel Antonio Noriega. France has condemned both the invasion and Noriega's dictatorship. Canada, a non-permanent council member, also voted with the three permanent members. The two socialist bloc permanent members, the Soviet Union and China, voted in favor of the denunciation, along with Algeria, Brazil, Colombia, Ethiopia, Malaysia, Nepal, Senegal and Yugoslavia. Finland abstained on the issue. Virtually all other nations at the UN have rejected Washington's argument that it acted in self-defense to protect US citizens in Panama. The Security Council resolution, introduced by the Non-Aligned Movement, would have demanded "the immediate cessation of the intervention and withdrawal of the US armed forces from Panama." It would have strongly deplored "the intervention in Panama by the armed forces of the United States, which constitutes a flagrant violation of international law and of the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of states." In October 1983, the United States vetoed a virtually identical resolution denouncing its invasion of the island of Grenada. Peruvian Jurist Alberto Ruiz Eldrege called for the 21 signatories of the ITRA to "follow Peru's example and denounce the agreement because currently there is no nation which has confidence in the power of that document." He said the Peruvian government's action was logical because the treaty "had already been violated by the United States." Dec. 25: Peruvian President Garcia proposed an urgent meeting of Organization of American States foreign ministers to study the possibility of organizing an inter-American military force that would facilitate reconstruction in Panama, and replace US troops in that country. He said, "We are talking not only of helping the Panamanian people regain their sovereignty, but also of helping these intelligent occupiers to leave Panama, because they cannot leave on their own...If we

do not assist in the reconstruction effort, and the US troops are still there by Jan. 1 and they have decided to stay, they will remain for the entire year." At a breakfast meeting with foreign journalists, Garcia reaffirmed his government's demand that the US withdraw its troops immediately from Panama. He reiterated that the case of Gen. Manuel Noriega was secondary compared to the fact of US armed intervention. Garcia said Latin Americans were concerned about the "exaggerated, brutal and arrogant" invasion since it demonstrates that the US government will use force against any Latin American country. The Peruvian leader pointed out that Guillermo Endara, installed as president by the invading army, had not been recognized by the OAS. Democracy in Panama, he said, will not be reestablished by US military force, but rather by the Panamanian electorate. Garcia said Peru has maintained relations with Panama, but at a low level, i.e., trade attache. President Garcia pointed out that he and many other Latin American leaders had been naive, believing that the Bush administration was in fact promoting a new era of dialogue with Latin America. Garcia reiterated that he would not meet with President Bush at the February summit in Cartagena, Colombia, since he "is an invader. I must not, I cannot, and I do not desire, as a Latin American, to meet with President Bush while there is an invading army in Panama." Next, Garcia said his position on the summit does not mean that Peru is declaring war of any kind with the US, nor that Lima is opposed to implementing the anti-drug plan. Dec. 26: According to official news agency, IRNA, tens of thousands of Iranians participated in a rally in Teheran to protest the US intervention in Panama. In what was described as one of the biggest anti-US rallies in years, protesters gathered in front of the Majlis or parliament and set fire to a US flag. Inside, Majlis deputies called for immediate withdrawal of US forces from Panama. A British flag was set on fire by a group of people IRNA identified as mainly Teheran University students in protest against British support of the US intervention. The flag-burning incident occurred outside the British interest section at the Swedish Embassy. Those protesters marched to the Majlis to join the demonstration there, where a US flag and an effigy of Uncle Sam were set afire. In a speech, Majlis Speaker Hojatoleslam Mahdi Karrubi, said the US invasion to oust Panamanian Gen. Manuel Antonio Noriega was reminiscent of the bombing of Ld Pa in 1986 and "attacks on the innocent people of Lebanon and Palestine." Jeff Hackett, editor-in-chief of St. Vincent's independent weekly newspaper, said the US invasion was an "unnecessary act of aggression against a mini-state." Noriega, he said, definitely required removal from office, but such task was a job for the people of Panama, "not the United States or any other foreign country." Hackett said that the US knew it had violated international law by its flagrant and wanton display of force, and was really nothing more than a common bully. "It is disappointing that the United States, which has an appalling record of intervention in Latin America and other parts of the world has not offered us a higher philosophy, a greater morality than the message that might is right." By unanimous vote, the Cuban parliament approved a statement which strongly condemned the US invasion of Panama, and demanded the withdrawal of US troops. Colombian Foreign Minister Julio Londono said his government was observing "with interest" the decision by the Peruvian Congress to withdraw from the inter-American accord. Londono rejected comments by daily newspaper El Tiempo blaming the OAS for the US invasion against Panama. The newspaper stated that the causes of the invasion were "Noriega's attitudes, the North American double game, and the vacillating attitude of the OAS." The OAS was described by El Tiempo as the other "casualty" of the invasion. In statements to Notimex in New York, Panamanian composer and musician Ruben Blades, said the regime of Gen. Noriega and the US military intervention constitute a "terrible tragedy" for Panama. He added that any military intervention to resolve conflicts among countries is condemnable, and requested that the self-appointed president Guillermo Endara call elections "as soon as possible." According to Blades, Endara committed political suicide by taking

office as president of Panama on a US military base. He emphasized that the majority of Latin American countries have been "very slow to recognize Senor Endara." Next, Blades pointed out that the US used military force to oust from power someone Washington itself created. The well-known "salsero" said there was no question that a majority of Panamanians are "truly happy" with the end of the Noriega's dictatorship. However, he added, massive approval of the US intervention is another matter. Peru's ambassador to Panama, Mario Castro Arenas, resigned as a result of disagreement with the Garcia administration on the US invasion of Panama. Among other things, in public statements Castro Arenas criticized Peruvian foreign policy, and complained that he was not consulted by the government in Lima on decisions relating to Panama. Peruvian Foreign Minister Guillermo Larco Cox publicly requested the ambassador's resignation after Castro Arenas announced that he supported recognition of Endara as president. At the time of his statement, the Peruvian government had described Endara's presidency as illegitimate under conditions of foreign invasion and installation at a foreign military base.

Dec. 27: In an article published in the daily newspaper *El Nacional* (Mexico City), Deputy Foreign Minister Sergio Gonzalez Galvez said that Mexico "does not intend to act as a leader or spokesperson" for Latin America, although the aggression against one country of the continent constitutes aggression against the rest. On the other hand, the diplomat said the US intervention in Panama cannot be discussed or criticized in the context of bilateral Mexico-US relations. The deputy minister came under attack by parties and organizations described as leftist or nationalist or both. These and other groups lambasted the government's failure to withdraw its ambassador from Panama and the US, as well as its alleged failure to categorically and systemically condemn the US invasion. Costa Rican Foreign Minister Rodrigo Madrigal told reporters that Latin American diplomats were evaluating several alternatives to see the US troops withdrawn from Panama and to resolve that country's domestic crisis. He said the alternatives ranged from designating a commission of former Latin American presidents to seek a negotiated solution to the conflict provoked by the US invasion, to the creation of an inter-American force in Panama. Venezuelan President Carlos Andres Perez suggested the commission, while Peruvian President Garcia has proposed the inter-American force that would be responsible for public order. According to unidentified ministry sources cited by Notimex, many Latin American governments do not see the logic in Latin American troops supervising a new order established by an invasion by US troops that has been consummated. The Colombian government has proposed that Endara designate himself as provisional president, call new elections as soon as possible, and make a pledge to transfer power to the elected president. The Colombian proposal was described as impractical by several regional governments who argue that it was extremely unlikely that Endara would accept an effective resignation and new elections when he has the support of 25,000 US soldiers and President Bush. Another proposal being discussed by Latin American diplomats is a recount of the ballots from the May 7 elections. Since the annulment of the election, copies of the *actas de votacion* were kept by the Catholic Church in Panama. An independent electoral tribunal would be appointed and a recount performed under supervision by international observers. If Endara's victory is ratified in this procedure, the international community would have to accept his legitimacy, despite the circumstances in which he came to power. Foreign Minister Rodrigo Madrigal said San Jose's designated ambassador to Panama, Jorge Emilio Regidor, will soon arrive in Panama City. Costa Rica's ambassador was withdrawn in May to protest the annulment of the presidential elections.

Dec. 28: The UN General Assembly resumed debate on a resolution proposed by Cuba and Nicaragua criticizing the US invasion of Panama. There is no right of veto in the General Assembly. The resolution "strongly deplores the intervention in Panama by the armed forces of the United States of America, which constitutes a flagrant violation of international law and

of the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of states." The draft also "demands the immediate cessation of the intervention and the withdrawal of the United States' armed invasion forces from Panama." The Mexican Chamber of Deputies approved a resolution calling for the immediate withdrawal of US troops from Panama, termination of persecution against Panamanian political leaders and military officers and respect for their life and liberty, and the immediate restoration of a state of law in Panama. Next, the resolution asserted that the invasion had provoked "serious tensions" in Central America. Dec. 29: The UN General Assembly approved the resolution introduced by Nicaragua and Cuba by a vote of 75 to 20, with 40 abstentions. Most Latin American countries voted in favor of the resolution, as did the Soviet Union and China. Portugal voted no and Spain voted yes. Votes against the resolution included, besides the US, Australia, Belgium, Britain, Canada, Denmark, France, Italy, Japan, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Turkey. In Tokyo, at a special cabinet meeting Japanese Foreign Minister Taro Nakayama said Japan would put off recognition of the newly installed government in Panama. Although ready for recognition, said Nakayama, Japan would continue to watch developments in Panama and the new government of President Guillermo Endara. Before the UN General Assembly, Mexico's ambassador, Jorge Montano, requested that the US withdraw its troops used to invade Panama. He said that US justifications of self-defense for the intervention constituted a "distortion of the letter and spirit" of Article 2 of the UN Charter. Jan. 2: Notimex reported that US-Spanish relations have deteriorated since the invasion of Panama, particularly after US Marines shot to death Spanish photographer Juan Antonio Rodriguez. According to accounts appearing in the Spanish media, said Notimex, President Felipe Gonzalez had requested on Dec. 20 that the Bush administration refrain from direct intervention in Panama, opting instead for a "Panamanian solution" to the crisis in that country. Jan. 3: White House spokesperson Marlin Fitzwater told reporters that Peruvian officials had announced they would send a ministerial delegation to the Feb. 15 summit to discuss cooperation in anti-drug efforts. President Garcia's suspension of his government's cooperation in US Drug Enforcement Administration operations in Peru has been lifted. Jan. 4: Costa Rican President Oscar Arias affirmed that Gen. Noriega's voluntary surrender to the US late Wednesday is the beginning of a consolidation process for lasting democracy in Panama. He said the nations of the hemisphere could "have avoided the arrival of US troops in Panama and the death of hundreds of Panamanians...by effective diplomacy within the Organization of American States. Arias said the US intervention has left wounds that will be very long in healing. He added that it will be very difficult for Panama to obtain the \$1.5 billion needed for economic reconstruction since foreign aid has already been channeled to other regions of the world, principally Eastern Europe. Arias' comments were delivered at the inauguration of a seminar focused on development prospects for the 1990s titled "Economy and Peace." According to Notimex, support by Democrats and Republicans in the US Congress for the capture of Noriega and his subsequent removal from Panama to the US was in direct contrast with the silence of Latin American governments, and strong condemnation by the Soviet Union. In statements to US reporters, Soviet spokesperson Guenadi Guerasimov said that Noriega, "a former CIA agent" who escaped his controllers is of little importance to the Soviet Union. Instead, he said, Moscow is concerned with US violation of international norms. Latin American diplomats were "concerned" over the Vatican's abandonment of its tradition of asylum, refuge and sanctuary. The Vatican was perceived to have succumbed to pressure by Panamanian bishops who wanted Noriega to surrender to the United States. The Ecuadoran National Human Rights Commission condemned the US invasion of Panama, calling it a flagrant violation of human rights. Commission president, former foreign minister Prado Vallejo, said that US occupation troops raided Panamanian homes and detained thousands of Panamanian citizens on US military bases.

Vallejo stated that Ecuador does not recognize the government of Guillermo Endara. He added that Quito will not make decisions on diplomatic relations with Panama until after the departure of US troops. The Mexican government announced it would continue relations with Panama but said it would not send back its ambassador, Carlos Planck, to Panama City. The conservative National Action Party (PAN) called the US invasion a "transgression of the most elemental principles of international law by a country who says it is respectful of juridical norms." Mexican newspaper *El Universal*, referring to the US invasion, said "the end does not justify the means." As reported by AP, in Chile, the newspaper *Ultimas Noticias* said: "We don't like General Noriega, nor the way he ruled his country. Nevertheless, neither his bragging, nor his links to corruption, nor his lack of respect for the verdicts of the polls, justify that the United States, which always likes to pontificate about juridical principles, tramples these in order to get its way." Brazilian daily newspaper *Jornal do Brasil* called Noriega's surrender "a Pyrrhic victory" for the United States and praised the Vatican for "maintaining an impeccable line of conduct the same cannot be said for US intervention." Daily newspaper *Folha de Sao Paulo* said: "US policy in Central America will not advance positively so long as there is a predisposition in undertaking adventures of this type, to the detriment of coherent strategies for economic and social development." Jan. 8: The Bolivian Congress approved a resolution recommending that the government follow the example of Peru and withdraw from the Inter-American Treaty of Reciprocal Assistance, and reported US plans to interdict drug shipments off Colombia's coast. Next, the resolution also proposed forming a new Latin American organization "without the pernicious involvement of an aggressive power which does not respect the basic principles of peaceful coexistence." Chairperson of the Chamber of Deputies' international relations commission, Jorge Escobari, said: "The naval blockade off Colombia is another outrageous aggression and it makes one think that US foreign policy is very clumsy." The resolution also called on the government not to recognize the Panamanian government of Guillermo Endara, "installed by invading forces," and demanded that the US comply with the Panama Canal Treaties. (Basic data from Notimex, 12/22/89, 12/25-29/89, 01/02-04/90; Xinhua, 12/24-26/89, 12/29/89, 01/05/90; AFP, 12/23/89, 12/24/89, 12/28/89, 12/29/89, 01/03/90, 01/09/90; AP, 12/23/89, 01/03/90, 01/04/90; DPA, 12/26/89, 12/28/89)

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