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Panama: Anti-u.s. Demonstration On Day Of Martyrs

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On Jan. 9 in the El Dorado suburb of the capital, 8,000 Panamanians celebrated the ouster of Gen. Manuel Antonio Noriega at an outdoor memorial Mass attended by President Guillermo Endara and first and second vice presidents, Ricardo Arias Calderon and Guillermo Ford. Meanwhile, others marched in an anti-US demonstration. According to AP, about 150 participated in the demonstration. Notimex reported 300. The marchers gathered at Santa Teresa church in Maranon, a low-income neighborhood, for a Mass celebrated by six priests, including three US citizens. Both events commemorated the Day of the Martyrs, a national holiday in memory of 23 Panamanians who died in anti-US riots in 1964. A pamphlet distributed in Maranon by the small Socialist Workers Party read: "Endara, Arias Calderon and Ford will be remembered by future Panamanian generations as oligarchs in the service of a foreign power." The party opposed Noriega throughout the six years he was in power. The marchers included university and high school students and leaders of 32 labor union, indigenous and human rights organizations, who said they opposed Noriega, but condemned "the savage Yankee invasion that cut an open wound in our national sovereignty." Students of the National Institute of Panama (Instituto Nacional de Panama) carried a large poster which read: "La Patria Esta de Luto." Twenty-six years ago hundreds of students at the Institute and workers attempted to raise the Panamanian flag at schools in areas controlled by the US military. These incidents resulted in a confrontation during which US soldiers killed 23 Panamanians and wounded more than 500 others. (Basic data from AP, Notimex, 01/09/90)

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