

1-19-1990

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Recommended Citation

Tyroler, Deborah. "Panamanian Labor Confederation Condemns U.S. Invasion." (1990). <https://digitalrepository.unm.edu/noticen/3644>

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Panamanian Labor Confederation Condemns U.S. Invasion

by Deborah Tyroler

Category/Department: General

Published: Friday, January 19, 1990

On Jan. 12, the Organized Workers National Council (CONATO) condemned the US military invasion of Dec. 20, and requested the immediate withdrawal of the occupation troops. In a communique, CONATO coordinator Jose Simiti, said: "As Panamanians we condemn the North American invasion" because of its violation of sovereignty principles and "for its enormous human, social and economic cost." The communique said the government of Guillermo Endara must demand the withdrawal of the US troops and compensation for Panamanians whose family members were killed or injured during the invasion. Unofficial reports indicate that 1,000 Panamanians died in the invasion, and 15,000 were injured. The figures include civilians and military personnel. Among other things, the communique said CONATO demands that the government install a legislative assembly, and establish clear guidelines for jurisdiction in labor affairs to ensure that workers' rights are respected. In this regard, the Council stated its opposition against collective or individual dismissals of civil servants who worked under the ousted government, described as persecution. The Council insisted that Panama's foreign debt be forgiven "as a contribution to the country's reconstruction." The communique also called on the US and Panamanian governments to abide by the 1977 Canal treaties, and to immediately release detained labor union leaders. (Basic data from Notimex, 01/12/90)

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