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Panama Redefines Non-intervention Principle At O.a.s. General Assembly

by Deborah Tyroler

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On June 6 in Asuncion (Paraguay), during the Organization of American States' (OAS) 20th General Assembly, Panamanian Foreign Minister Julio Linares accused Latin American nations of violating the principle of self-determination, result of a particular interpretation of non-interventionism. He asserted that if "regimes based on the sword and the rifle" are permitted to exist, "the right of self-determination" is effectively annulled. Linares said evidence of Latin American nations' defective interpretation is found in the fact that the Group of 8 excludes President Guillermo Endara's government from membership, but permitted participation by Panama under the rule of deposed Gen. Manuel Noriega. Next, the minister said, "Latin America does not understand that sovereignty is not only vulnerable" to depredations by foreign states, but also to "nationals, when they are dictatorships who ignore self-determination and violate human rights." Linares asserted that in the past 65 years, home-grown dictators have caused more damage to Latin America than foreign invasions. He added that for 21 years "the international community was not scandalized with the [Panamanian] regime, and maintained relations with it." Endara, said Linares, was not "imposed" by the US on the Panamanian people. He then denounced the harsh experience suffered by Panama result of the lack of understanding by other Latin American nations. (Basic data from AFP, 06/06/90)

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