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Panama: Foreign Minister Reports On U.S. Aid

by Deborah Tyroler

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According to an Aug. 8 broadcast by Prensa Latina, the Cuban government's international news service, a recent report to the budget committee of Panama's Legislative Assembly by Foreign Minister Julio Linares indicated that under an agreement with Washington signed July 3, Panama City will receive some \$246 million in US aid. Legislators responded by pointing out that Article 153 of the nation's constitution requires that formal agreements involving the executive branch require prior approval by the legislature. The agreement specifies privatization of state-run companies, and a variety of reforms in public administration, labor union organization, and foreign trade regulations. According to Linares, a mutual assistance agreement, or information exchange on crime, is a prerequisite applied by Washington to disbursement of a portion of the aid. Opposition congressperson Gerardo Gonzalez commented that the US aid is delivered under more stringent conditions than ever before because of the country's current crisis. Linares also noted that US economic aid is determined by Washington's interests, rather than humanitarianism. (Basic data from Prensa Latina, 08/08/90)

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