

8-24-1990

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Panama: Foreign Minister On U.S. Coast Guard Patrol Of Panamanian Coastal Waters

by Deborah Tyroler

Category/Department: General

Published: Friday, August 24, 1990

In statements to reporters on Aug. 19, Foreign Minister Julio Linares said US and Panamanian officials were preparing the finishing touches on an agreement for joint US-Panamanian patrols of the nation's coastal waters. He asserted that the agreement will not infringe on Panamanian sovereignty. The agreement would reportedly permit the US Coast Guard to board any vessel in Panamanian territorial waters "suspected" of drug trafficking, after obtaining authorization from a Panamanian naval officer. President Guillermo Endara's administration has justified the "need" for support by the US Coast Guard based on Panama's inadequate surveillance equipment and weaponry to counter "piracy" and Colombian drug traffickers. (Basic data from Notimex, ACAN-EFE, 08/19/90)

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