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High School & University Students Demonstrate In Panama City

by Deborah Tyroler

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For three consecutive days, from Aug. 20 through Aug. 22, high school and university students organized street demonstrations in Panama City to protest government policies, and a Supreme Court ruling upholding a decision by the National Institute to expel five students for "rowdy" behavior. The Institute, a secondary school, expelled the students for participating in a street demonstration two months ago which turned into a riot. The most violent incidents occurred Tuesday afternoon near the Universidad de Panama campus. Fifty young people were reportedly injured in clashes with anti-riot police who used tear gas and clubs to disperse the protesters. On Wednesday, traffic along major thoroughfares was tied up for hours. Demonstrators had set up roadblocks using stones, old tires, lumber, boxes, glass and other assorted trash. Students from the Institute, the Universidad, Panama City's major art school, and at least a dozen other high schools threw rocks at police attempting to redirect traffic until the riot squads appeared and dispersed the protesters. The students' chant, "It's the same, but worse" ("Es lo mismo, pero peor") was directed at the government of President Guillermo Endara, installed at the time of the US military invasion last December. Education Minister Ada Gordon announced that the Institute would be closed "until security conditions are restored." Classes at the Universidad de Panama and other high schools were temporarily suspended. (Basic data from Notimex, AP, 08/22/90)

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