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Panama: Commission Demands End To U.S. Military Occupation, U.S. Compensation For Damages Caused By Invasion & Sanctions

by Deborah Tyroler

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In a report addressed to President Guillermo Endara and released to the press on Aug. 20, the National Reconciliation Commission called for the end of US military occupation of Panamanian territory. The 13-member Commission was appointed by the government, and is headed by Archbishop Marcos McGrath. Members include Bishop Jorge Altafulla, Catholic priests Pablo Varela and Nestor Jaen, Lutheran minister Ernesto Weigandt and four representatives each of pro-government and opposition political parties. The commission also requested an investigation of the "real numbers" of Panamanians killed during the US invasion in December, and asserted that the US government must provide economic compensation for damages caused by the invasion and economic sanctions imposed against the regime of Gen. Manuel Antonio Noriega. The report also called on the Endara government to "depoliticize political appointments and avoid the policy of unjustified dismissals." A committee must be created, said the report, to prevent such dismissals and to eliminate "favoritism, privilege, nepotism, and influence trafficking" practiced by members of the Endara administration. Since the US invasion, about 18,000 public employees have been fired, accused of supporting the deposed general. The report recommended amnesty for persons accused of political crimes, and that justice be applied "with rigorous efficiency" against civilian and military supporters of Noriega accused of corruption, assassination and torture. An estimated 200 Noriega supporters are currently incarcerated. The Commission also insisted on "rescuing" Panamanian sovereignty, and called on the government to initiate legislation focused on ensuring "adequate administration of national territory to be turned over to Panamanian control, and of the Panama Canal" in the year 2000. The Commission's report contained over 50 recommendations on nationalism and sovereignty issues, political reconciliation, and socio-economic restructuring. (Basic data from AFP, 08/13/90)

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