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Panama: Recent Poll On Perceived Economic Conditions

by Deborah Tyroler

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On Aug. 29, in a speech before the Legislative Assembly, Vice President and Justice Minister Ricardo Arias Calderon summarized results of a survey conducted in June by the Venezuela-based Central American Public Opinion Institute (DOXA). Twenty-seven percent of 1,200 interviewees were unemployed, and 43% of respondents said unemployment ranked as the nation's number one problem. Seventy percent of respondents said they believe that current US aid is adequate for overcoming the current economic crisis. Next, 38% of respondents said they distrusted the police force, comprised mainly of former members of the Panamanian Defense Force. Twenty-two percent indicated they believed the economic situation is improving. A mere one percent described the US military occupation as "a problem." Forty-one percent said they believe conditions in general "are improving," while 30% believe the opposite. President Guillermo Endara received an 8% approval rating. Twenty percent of respondents said they were not satisfied with the president's performance, and 6% indicated they were "very unhappy." Arias Calderon also referred to another poll published in the local media two weeks ago. Results of the earlier survey indicated that most Panamanians do not support the Democratic Civic Opposition Alliance (ADOC); declining support for President Endara; and, a high level of discontent regarding the police force. Calderon warned that the "Fujimori phenomenon" is possible in Panama, in reference to adequate support to elect recently installed Peruvian President Alberto Fujimori, followed by widespread opposition to his policies. According to Calderon, the "possibility always exists" for a third political force unsatisfied with the government. (Basic data from Notimex, 08/29/90)

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