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Deborah Tyroler

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Panama: Lawyers Say Government Violated Constitution Upon Seeking U.S. Military Intervention During Police Uprising

by Deborah Tyroler

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On Dec. 11, a group of attorneys filed charges against President Guillermo Endara and Vice Presidents Ricardo Arias and Guillermo Ford stating that the "request" for US military intervention to crush the police uprising last week was unconstitutional. The attorneys said no international treaty, nor article of the Panamanian constitution permits such action. (See CAU 12/07/90 on police uprising.) The government has justified the action as the "lesser of two evils" in the face of an attempt to overthrow the government. On Dec. 12, Alma de Vallarino, attorney for Eduardo Herrera, former police chief and leader of last week's police uprising, said he would not give a deposition until US troops withdraw from the prison where he is being detained. Herrera was moved from the El Renacer prison to the penitentiary on Naos island Dec. 10. About 100 US troops were on hand to stand guard surrounding the Naos prison. (Basic data from ACAN-EFE, 12/11/90; AFP, 12/12/90)

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