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Panama: Police Conduct Search Operations For Rebels

by Deborah Tyroler

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On Jan. 24, deputy attorney general Rogelio Arosemena told reporters that "Martirio" Herrera, a former officer in the defunct Panamanian Defense Forces, was detained for questioning in connection with recent violent incidents in the capital. On Jan. 25, government spokespersons told reporters that police had commenced a search operation aimed at identifying the whereabouts of rebel group M-20 members. M-20 is believed responsible for numerous acts of terrorism over the past two weeks. A total of 300 heavily armed police officers backed by helicopter units were "combing" the towns of Cerro Azul and Pacora, located 40 km. northeast of the capital, and checking identification papers of passengers on public buses. Next, 200 police officers were deployed to search buildings and terrain near the Pacora River. Area residents have reported the presence of presumed rebels. (Basic data from ACAN-EFE, 01/24/92; Agence France-Presse, 01/25/92)

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