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Deborah Tyroler

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## **Panama: Catholic Church Forms Human Rights Investigatory Commission**

*by Deborah Tyroler*

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In a June 26 press conference, rector of the Santa Maria la Antigua University (USMA) Stanley Muschett told reporters that a new Truth, Justice and Reconciliation Commission had been formed in order to investigate human rights violations which occurred under the Noriega regime as well as deaths and disappearances during the December 1989 US invasion. Muschett said that he will serve as president of the commission, which will operate under the auspices of the Catholic church. Muschett said that there "is a great need to make moral amends to those who suffered the loss of loved ones." He said, "If we are to achieve reconciliation, we must sit down together and talk about our grief. The suffering caused by the US invasion has been disregarded for far too long." Human rights advocates insist that during the 21 years of military rule, dozens of Panamanians were tortured and/or disappeared. In addition, they reject official figures asserting that only 524 civilians and soldiers died during the US invasion. They maintain that the real number exceeds 4,000. (Basic data from Inter Press Service, Agencia Centroamericana de Noticias-Spanish news service EFE, 06/26/92)

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