

Panama:

Two American mercenaries and five Panamanian nationals were arrested Oct. 15 for conspiring to overthrow the government of President Aristede Royo. Among those detained was a leader of the rightwing-Christian Democratic Panamenista Party led by former president Arnulfo Arias, who has lived in exile in Miami for years.

Grenada:

Prime Minister Maurice Bishop accused NATO and unnamed "American sources" of involvement in a plot to invade the tiny island nation and overthrow its pro-Cuban government. The plot, similar to the failed Bay of Pigs operation, was foiled and an estimated 100 persons arrested. (See LATIN Report)

Jamaica:

Prime Minister Michael Manley was targetted for overthrow in a top secret London conference on "Caribbean security" three weeks ago, because of his public support of Cuba

the Havana Nonaligned Conference. The U.S. anti-Cuba offensive has bolstered Manley's opposition, the Jamaican Labor Party, in its rabble-rousing attacks on Manley's ties to Cuba and his "failure" to solve a serious economic crisis. U.S. and Canadian banks have refused to refinance the nation's foreign debt, despite a "green light" from the IMF, and as the Washington Post said in an editorial attack on Manley Oct. 26,

"Jamaica does not appear to be among those tippy countries to which Carter promised extra aid." The intensified wave of terrorism, run through known JLP networks, raises the real threat of an assassination attempt against Manley.

Venezuela:

There are mounting rumors of serious discontent within the Venezuelan military and the possibility of a right-wing coup d'etat. President Herrera Campins was forced to publicly respond to these rumors, substantiating the estimation of one expert that the current coup talk is the most serious in five years. The "climate" for nurturing coup tendencies in the military is being created around the "watergating" of former President Carlos Andres Perez for alleged corruption during his term of office by a faction of his AD party and the ruling Christian Democrats. An attempt to erase his still strong influence, the corruption investigation is also aimed at discrediting the intensive industrialization program associated with the Perez presidency.

Ecuador:

The new civilian government of President Jaime Roldos is already in political crisis, paralyzed by the political faction fight between Roldos and his former mentor and uncle Assad Bucaram over who runs the ruling party and the government itself. There is no telling how long the military, however reluctant to assume the institutional risks of political power, will stand by without interfering.

U.S. presses for Latin American NATO

The heads of 16 Latin American Armed Forces are currently holding their annual policy-making summit in Bogotá, Colombia. As in previous sessions, the theme is "guaranteeing security on the continent, particularly in regard to communist subversion." Attending the summit are the armed forces commanders of Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Ecuador, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, the Dominican Republic, Surinam, Trinidad and Tobago, Uruguay, Venezuela and Colombia.

Cuba and Nicaragua were excluded from the summit and Mexico attended only with observer status, protesting that the meeting is solely for the United States "to issue directives on how to fight what they term subversion and communism." El Salvador and Bolivia cited "internal problems" as

their reasons for not attending, while both the United States and Canada sent delegations with observer status.

Colombia President Julio César Turbay Ayala set the tone for the meeting when he opened the sessions with the statement that "where ostensible political vacuums could necessarily lead to generalized anarchy, the armed forces are called upon to exercise power to reestablish the rule of authority." Colombian Army Commander Gen. José Gonzalo Forero Delgadillo nonetheless publicly asserted that the summit was only called to "exchange experiences" and would neither deal with the volatile Caribbean situation nor plan programs of joint military action for the continent.

Whether the United States or one of its allies will formally propose the creation of a Latin American standing army—an idea in which the U.S. has expressed special interest since the Nicaragua revolution—remains to be seen.