

U.S. caught backing Mob 'democrats' in Panama

by Gretchen Small

Calling upon the name of the U.S. State Department's "Project Democracy," Reagan administration officials have put out the word that Gen. Manuel Antonio Noriega, commander of Panama's Defense Forces, is now considered a strategic obstacle to U.S. plans in Central America, who must be forced from power. "Panama is the asterisk in the whole democracy plan of the [Reagan] administration for Central America. We would like to say that all the countries in the Central American isthmus are democratic, except Nicaragua, and we can't say that now because of Noriega in Panama," an administration official told the *Miami Herald*, the paper reported June 14.

A June 12 article in the *New York Times*, penned by veteran intelligence hand Seymour Hersh, set the removal operation into motion. The *Times* piece charged that U.S. officials—none of them willing to be named—consider General Noriega to be involved in narcotics, money-laundering, arming Colombia's M-19 terrorists, and passing information to the Castro government in Cuba.

The National Broadcasting Corporation featured a similar slanderous story against Noriega. U.S. congressmen immediately called new hearings on the crisis in Panama. On June 13, Hersh indicated some in the United States have decided Noriega must go—by any means necessary. Hersh reported that the Nixon administration had considered ordering "the complete immobilization"—assassination—of Noriega, when he headed Panama's intelligence service.

No facts were given in the article to back up the charges. One U.S. intelligence official complained to Hersh that Noriega is "brilliant in masking much of his direct involvement" in the alleged illegal activities! The Panamanian government released a letter sent by U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration head John C. Lawn, to General Noriega on May 8, barely a month before, in which he praised Noriega for "the vigorous

anti-drug trafficking policy that you have adopted." (See *Documentation*).

A syndicated column by a regular intelligence conduit, Georgie Anne Geyer, appearing June 19 in the *Washington Times* points to the real issue underlying the "get Noriega" campaign. Entitled "Five Minutes to Midnight," Geyer's article demands that the U.S. Establishment act now to "stave off tragedy" in Panama, asserting that the stakes in the current Panama crisis "are even higher than they were in Cuba" in the 1950s. What Geyer targets as the looming tragedy, is the entry of U.S. presidential candidate Lyndon LaRouche into the battle over Caribbean policy—specifically, LaRouche's defense of Panama and General Noriega.

LaRouche has led a battle in the past two years for the nations of the Western Hemisphere to formally declare war on the narcotics empire, and prosecute that war with an alliance of the governments and militaries of the region modeled on the alliance that defeated fascism in World War II. Under the LaRouche doctrine, the institutions of the military on the continent must be strengthened, so as to defend national sovereignty.

The "danger" foreseen by Geyer, is the possibility of support for LaRouche's policies developing in Ibero-America. Geyer, a member of the Aspen Institute's Western Hemisphere Governance Project two years ago, serves as a mouthpiece for the Liberal Eastern Establishment. Today, the Establishment's stated policy is that Ibero-America's military institutions must be *weakened*, not strengthened. The policy was spelled out this spring as a priority for the Establishment by the Inter-American Dialogue, a group of Trilateral Commission members and bankers headed by Xerox founder Sol Linowitz.

Two interrelated, policies are contained in the Dialogue's 1986 Report: one, that the Dialogue group will establish a

special task force dedicated to the “problem” of the Ibero-American military as a threat to democracy, and two, a proposal that fighting a war on drugs be replaced, by the “selective legalization” of narcotics.

Democratic institutions throughout the hemisphere *are* under attack—by narco-terrorist armies deployed by the drug-mob. In some countries, the terrorist armies of the mob are larger, and better equipped, than the militaries upon whose shoulders rest the defense of national institutions. As we report elsewhere in this issue, Colombia’s M-19 has now threatened to kill every member of the Colombian cabinet, while Shining Path terrorists in Peru seized the country’s largest prisons, in a wave of terror which includes attacks on churches.

To disarm the continent now, in the name of “democracy,” is to hand the region to the drug mafia. Yet there is no question that that “disarmament” policy in the face of the narcotics mafia is the broader issue standing behind the attack on General Noriega. The policy was repeated again, by Assistant Secretary of State Elliot Abrams, most recently.

Speaking to a graduating class of officers at the Inter-American Defense College on June 13, Abrams called the region’s military institutions a threat to democracy. “Democracy is on the rise in our hemisphere. . . . Gone are the days,” Abrams said, when military leaders can “arrogate to themselves the right to decide for their nations,” and he warned that “enlargement of military forces to protect democratic institutions can threaten those very institutions, when the military dwarfs civilian institutions and assumes some of their functions.” Abrams then lectured the Ibero-American military men on how narcotics was “your” problem and a threat to “your” institutions!

Destabilizing Panama

In Panama, there was no doubt the *Times* article forms part of a broader attack on the institutions of the region. The charges were meant to weaken the government of Panama, Panama’s President Eric Delvalle charged. Panama’s ambassador to the Organization of American States, Roberto Leyton, called the accusations part of a “conspiracy” against the Contadora nations: “It is significant that the attacks on Noriega follow the criticisms against Mexico,” he stated on June 12.

“I personally think that they, the *New York Times*, have lied,” President Eric Delvalle stated. “What’s the importance of a publication in the *New York Times*—however big the name of the *New York Times* might be—if they don’t dare to say who said it?” On June 12, Delvalle held a four-hour meeting with his cabinet, the leadership of the Defense Forces, legislators and leaders of the parties backing the government. “We will never permit nor tolerate, that the name of General Noriega, or that of the Armed Forces, of Panama, or of this government, be sullied,” the President said afterwards.

The government will demand a “clarification” from the U.S. government, Delvalle said, because Panama, its De-

fense Forces, and General Noriega are being “denigrated” in the United States by a campaign whose “basic purpose” is to “discredit and divide the Armed Forces.”

Foreign Minister José Abadía summoned in U.S. Ambassador Arthur Davis. “Once and for all,” Abadía said, “the U.S. should make known its official position with respect to these declarations,” which he called “unjust, unfounded, and totally alien to the reality of our country.”

Noriega identified civic-military cooperation in Panama as the target. “The action isn’t against me, it’s against Panama,” Noriega stated. “We have a great alliance between men in uniform and civilian power, which we are going to maintain. They want to see President Delvalle weakened, left without force, but he has the power of the Defense Forces behind him, and this burns them.” He added, that he thought some people in the United States did not plan to return control of the Panama Canal to Panama, as agreed in the treaties.

Panama’s leading political party, the Revolutionary Democratic Party, placed a resolution before the Legislative Assembly which warned that “the campaign against Gen. Manuel Antonio Noriega is highly pernicious and dangerous for the good relations that should prevail between the United States and Panama.” The PRD called the accusations “false, and slanderous.”

Opponents of the regime who place patriotism over politicking, also protested. Dulcido González, president of the National Private Business Council, is known as an “acerbic critic” of the government, UPI, reported, but he, too, fired off a letter of complaint to the executive director of the *New York Times*, saying that the paper made charges “without presenting the relevant proofs which confirm the supposed facts. . . . As businessmen and Panamanian citizens,” González wrote, “we feel we have the right to request, from you, that you impose truth in your news stories, since the absence of this is destabilizing our nation.”

Who’s supporting narco-terrorism?

To portray the ouster—or assassination—of General Noriega as the key to ending the “Panamanian connection” to international crime, as one unnamed White House official asserted to the *New York Times*, goes beyond cynicism—and into treason. Perhaps no single other action can more quickly secure Central America for the narcotics mafia, or aid Soviet plans to pin the United States down in Central American carnage. Noriega has become an activist in three areas critical to securing the Caribbean:

- Rebuilding cooperation between the Colombian and Panamanian military in the war on narco-terrorism. Relations between the two militaries had been damaged by the activities of Noriega’s predecessor as head of the Defense Forces, Gen. Rubén Darío Paredes. Paredes, whose career was promoted by Henry Kissinger, was recently revealed to be linked with the Ochoa drug family in Colombia, and reportedly protected operations of Colombia’s narco-terrorist M-19 in Panama.

- Central American stabilization. Noriega has been a

leading strategist of the doctrine that national security depends on economic development, and that therefore the economy is of military concern. Noriega built a network within Central America's military around that conception, and recently began organizing to establish a military support group for Contadora's peace efforts.

- Defense of the Panama Canal. Noriega heads military preparations to take over defense of the Panama Canal in 14 years, when, on Dec. 31, 1999, sovereignty over the Canal Zone reverts to Panama.

Mob democracy

The narcotics mafia immediately jumped to take advantage of the U.S. greenlight for attacks on the military. On June 14, Panama's Christian Democratic party issued a call for a military uprising. It is "urgent that responsible officers and troops recognize as soon as possible the need for a new military command," read the statement by party Secretary General Ricardo Arias Calderón. "It is urgent that responsible political, labor, and civic forces find the way, as soon as possible, to establish a new civilian government, with legitimate authority and the popular support of the majority." Arias Calderón told the *New York Times* that "remilitarization" is the major threat facing Panama.

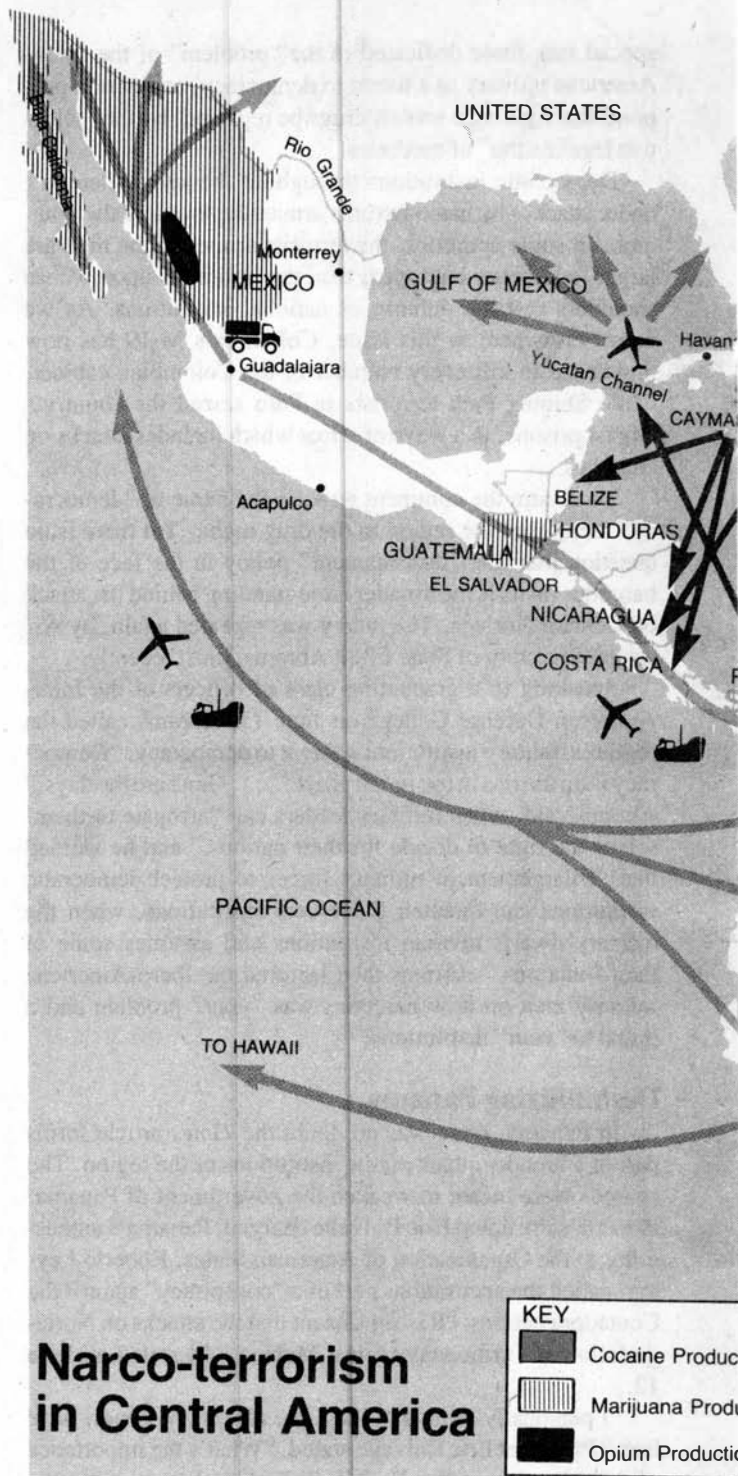
On June 15, Arnulfo Arias, head of the Democratic Opposition Alliance, issued his statement, asserting that Panamanians have the "duty to rid themselves of the military leadership which is the source of corruption and decadence in the country."

Who are these "democrats" picking up the State Department flag? *EIR* has just released a 96-page *Special Report* documenting how the opposition leaders are terrorists, drug-runners, and anti-Americans. Arias, now in his 80s, is a self-avowed gnostic cultist, whose background as an agent for the Third Reich during World War II fills cabinets still today at the U.S. National Archives. In 1941, the U.S. supported the overthrow of Arias as president of Panama, as a threat to freedom in the Americas and to the security of the Panama Canal.




The Christian Democrats have been partners with Arnulfo Arias in his efforts to overthrow the government for more than a year. In May, one leader of the Christian Democrats told the *Washington Times* that his party is actively "preparing the soil" to turn Panama into an "El Salvador or Nicaragua. People . . . are going into the mountains soon," raved Guillermo Cóchez, a former secretary general of the Christian Democrats, who now represents the party in Panama's Legislative Assembly.

The Christian Democrats now find themselves enmired in scandal over their financial angels in the drug mob.

The Christian Democratic connection first surfaced in March 1985, when the First Interamericas Bank scandal broke. The story came out that First Interamericas was owned by Colombian cocaine traffickers, Jorge Luis Ochoa and Rodríguez Orejuela. One of the messengers of the Orejuela mafia



Narco-terrorism in Central America

KEY	
	Cocaine Production
	Marijuana Production
	Opium Production

arrested by the Panamanian authorities, a Colombian named Jairo González Mendieta, reported that, in addition to using First Interamericas, he had helped arrange the laundering of some \$40 million through the Banco Continental de Panamá, Colón branch, via a member of the bank's board of directors, César Tribaldos.

The news was shocking: Banco Continental had been a conduit of funds for the Christian Democrats' campaign in

Documentation

U.S. media portrayed the April 21, 1986 testimony of Drug Enforcement Administration official Raymond J. McKinnon before the Senate Foreign Relations Subcommittee on Western Hemisphere Affairs, as an attack on Panama. Excerpts of that testimony and a letter sent by DEA head John C. Lawn, to General Noriega on May 8, 1986, tell a different story.

From John C. Lawn, May 8, 1986, to General Noriega:

. . . I would like to take this opportunity to reiterate my deep appreciation for the vigorous anti-drug-trafficking policy that you have adopted, which is reflected in the numerous expulsions from Panama of accused traffickers, the large seizures of cocaine and precursor chemicals that have occurred in Panama and the eradication of marijuana cultivations in Panamanian territory.

Regarding the question of attacking the profits accumulated by drug traffickers, I look forward to the day when all governments develop the means to systematically identify and seize those illegal profits. . .

From the testimony of Raymond J. McKinnon:

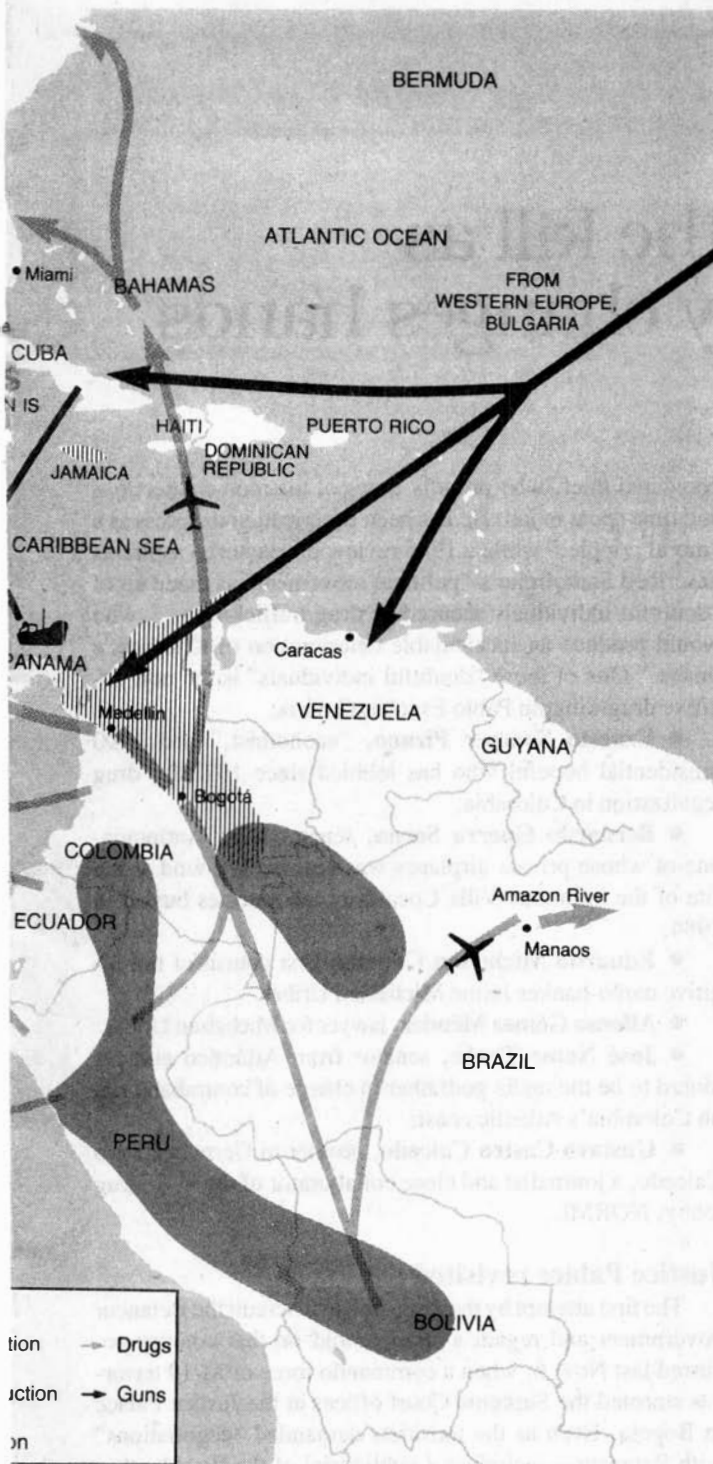
There has been progress made this year in several aspects of the drug situation in Panama. . .

One of Panama's chief industries is international banking. . . . In May 1985, U.S. and Panamanian negotiators met to discuss a possible Mutual Legal Assistance Treaty (MLAT) whereby the United States could obtain information on bank accounts belonging to drug traffickers. The last round of talks ended early last summer without any progress on the matter, and we have been unsuccessful in getting Panama to schedule new talks.

There is considerable resistance in Panama to any lifting of the bank secrecy laws, even to deal with the laundering of money from narcotics. It is likely that the Panamanians fear that removing any of the secrecy and security of bank accounts would cause a widespread withdrawal of money from the banks. Therefore, any further discussion of the MLAT needs the support of the private bankers who want the secrecy provisions of the law to continue. . . .

Panamanian authorities have seized and destroyed large shipments of precursor chemicals . . . attesting to Panama's commitment to interdict such material. . . .

With regard to DEA fugitives, Panamanian authorities have been very cooperative in expelling directly to the U.S. the fugitives caught in Panama, provided they are not Panamanian citizens. Since Panama is a crossroads country, a disproportionate number of our fugitives appear in Panama, thus, Panama's policy on this matter works to the benefit of the United States. . . .



the 1984 elections. Then, on June 15, the Panamanian daily *La República* published a photograph of a receipt made out to Christian Democrat C6chez, from Steven Samos—one of Panama's leading money-launderers for the drug mafia. Samos laundered millions for a marijuana syndicate associated with the Colombian drug family the Gavirias, until he turned state's evidence in 1984, to avoid prosecution in the United States.