
Ibero-America

Panama 'deal': a hoax and plot to assassinate Noriega

by Robyn Quijano

A much-hyped deal between the Reagan administration and Panamanian Gen. Manuel Antonio Noriega to be fixed before President Reagan left for Moscow, fell through on May 26. This was no surprise for readers of *EIR*, but the ordinary public had been treated to such a build-up, that when "the tyrannical dictator thumbed his nose at us again," the Americans were programmed to become enraged.

Secretary of State George Shultz announced that the U.S. "offer" had been taken off the table. Military action is no longer being ruled out, the media reports. On May 17, Stanley Morris, director of the U.S. Marshals Service, the entity which would lead a proposed "multinational force" to kidnap alleged drug runners around the globe, announced that U.S. Marshals would try to apprehend Noriega to face criminal charges in the U.S. if negotiations in Panama collapsed. And then, Sen. Alfonse D'Amato, called for the forcible "extradition" of Noriega, and announced his probable assassination in the firefight.

How General Noriega, the Commander of the Defense Forces of an allied nation, who has such popular support that even hostile U.S. media had to admit that he could win a presidential election, has become U.S. public enemy number one, is an important strategic question.

Why must Noriega, once a close ally of the Pentagon and U.S. intelligence, praised by Interpol and the DEA for his anti-drug efforts, now be gotten rid of? The *Christian Science Monitor* explained in April that since Noriega was not controlled by either of the superpowers, he presented a danger to the regional pacts agreed to by Reagan and Gorbachov. This thesis was proven again on May 26, when the newest agreement in the "New Yalta" pact was announced—a joint war on drugs by the United States and the Soviet Union. The DEA will share intelligence on the war on drugs with the Russian empire, which controls international narco-terrorism as a form of irregular warfare against the West!

And so, the Eastern Establishment's media has changed the face of the enemy. The Soviets are now great peace-loving allies and friends. And any Ibero-American nationalist, who dares to fight for his nation's sovereignty, can be charged with being a drug runner, assassinated by U.S. hit squads, to the joy of the heavily manipulated U.S. population. New York Mayor Ed Koch, among other prominent

politicos, has called for an invasion of any drug-producing nation. Taking the hideous problem of drugs, and turning the U.S. population's frustration against our Ibero-American neighbors, has been very easy.

The Reagan administration has admitted that the indictment of Noriega was conceived in a unique way as a tool of foreign policy. George Bush, on May 17, inadvertently stated that the indictment against Noriega is a fraud. "José Blandón is nothing more than a degenerate and a liar. This Blandón resembles those criminals who are in jail, and believe that their sentences will be reduced or they will be freed if they make all kinds of accusations against someone." This George said because Blandón, an ex-Communist Party member and suspected Cuban agent, had some unfavorable things to say about him. But the entire hoked-up indictment against Noriega is based on the testimony of José Blandón, and two convicted drug runners, handed over to the DEA directly by Noriega. They testified against him to lower their sentences. Both got their sentences reduced, and one admitted in congressional hearings that he was testifying in revenge.

Perhaps that is why D'Amato hopes Noriega will never get to trial. On May 20, Senator D'Amato had the following exchange with John McLaughlin, on the "One on One" television broadcast: D'Amato: "I tell you what we'd do—we ask for his extradition. President Delvalle would grant that, under an old treaty that we have with them. And then we serve notice to let him know we're going to take him out, one way or the other." McLaughlin: "Would you executive [sic] him if he were found guilty in the U.S.?" D'Amato: "... I doubt if we'd get him out alive. There probably would be a firefight, and—" McLaughlin: "Suppose we got him out alive. . . ." D'Amato: "We'd try him." McLaughlin: "Would you favor the death penalty for him?" D'Amato: ". . . "We don't have that kind of charges laid against him. . . ." McLaughlin: "But you would not favor an assassination team to take him out, as the Israelis did Khalid Walid." D'Amato: "I would favor us using whatever force necessary to bring about his removal. . . . And if it took a firefight to bring him out, then so be it. And if something happened in that which brought about his demise, why, that's one of the risks."

"No commander abandons ship in stormy times," General Noriega told Panama's Legislative Assembly on the eve-

ning of May 26, when asked if he planned to retire. Panama's Defense Force commander, was received with a standing ovation by the Assembly, and the hundreds of visitors which packed the hall to hear his report on the details of the talks with the United States. After a brief opening statement, Noriega answered questions for hours.

George Bush's electoral games are responsible for the collapse of the talks, Noriega charged. The world must know that the talks with Reagan's envoy failed, when the envoy delivered an ultimatum, and demanded that Panama accept his last offer, Noriega stated. "On several occasions, Panama accepted changes proposed by aides of the Vice President, in order to protect his presidential campaign. However, even that was not enough. The U.S. wanted immediate acceptance of his ultimatum, so that they could bury what they had agreed to in the news coming out of Moscow." They hoped that what they had agreed to with Panama, would that way soon be forgotten in the U.S.

"We participated in talks, with the hope of protecting the well-being of Panamanians," Noriega noted. The United States was always looking at the talks from the standpoint of the election campaign. "Is that what is sought in a U.S.-style democracy: personal gains for a presidential campaign, which are put above the national interests of their country?" The American people should be reminded of Thomas Jefferson's saying, that a politician only thinks of the next election—a statesman of the next generation.

Noriega also discussed the drug charges, and pointed out Panama's real role in organizing coordinated regional and worldwide anti-drug operations which had been recognized not only in the United States, but by Interpol, whose secretary general just a year and a half ago decorated Noriega with a medal, and recognized Panama's leading role in fighting drugs in Ibero-America.

He denounced the fact that the U.S. government has made a joke of the Torrijos-Carter Treaties from the moment they were signed, subjecting Panama to pressures and aggressions which the American people have never even heard about. This has been the policy of the State Department—no matter who has been in charge, the same policy which the lying Elliott Abrams carries out today.

The previous day, Panama's National Information Service (SNI) had charged the United States with lying about the talks, in order to "psychologically prejudice the Panamanian cause." The SNI release states, "The conversations between Reagan's envoys and Noriega representatives have concluded, without reaching results. The U.S. side, after failing in its effort to impose its demands, obstinately began giving out a false version of the facts. U.S. spokesmen pretended that the contacts dealt with the cancelation of the political farce mounted in courts in Florida, in exchange for which Noriega will leave his post. . . . Panama never agreed to discuss the subject of the false accusations cooked up against General Noriega in the U.S. courts. Because those accusations lacked

all juridical substantiation, because they are only instruments of political pressure, because those courts have no jurisdiction in Panama, nor will they, and above all, because the Panamanian cause is not the case of one man, but of the dignity and sovereignty of a people and the strict respect and fulfillment of the Panama Canal Treaties and of international law."

"The U.S. government is obstinately tricking U.S. and world public opinion, announcing after sundown on May 24, that, supposedly, an agreement had been achieved with Panama, and announcing pretended steps that would take place. There never was any such arrangement; never was the basis of pressure and blackmail wielded by the U.S. side accepted by the Panamanians. . . . The farce of the false accusations has been utilized but the patriotic fortitude and morale of the Panamanian people has never bent. This cause is equally the cause of all Latin Americans and we will be invariably loyal to it."

Fight for economic sovereignty

During the previous week, Panama was in mobilization to define a new sovereign economic policy, including the creation of a Panamanian currency. Panama was exceptionally vulnerable to economic warfare because, by treaty arrangement with the U.S., Panama was forced to use the U.S. dollar as its currency.

Thus Panama seemed the nation of Ibero-America most unlikely to rebel against International Monetary Fund conditionalities, and the kind of austerity policies being imposed upon the entire continent. Panamanian President Manuel Solís Palma blasted the IMF policy followed by Panama since 1984, accused the U.S. of controlling the country's economic policy, and vowed a return to the nationalist policy begun under Omar Torrijos, in a speech delivered in Veraguas May 18. "In the desire to please the U.S., the government yielded to exaggerated payment demands, to the prejudice of the national and popular economy. This corresponded to the process of 'de-Torrijos-ization' and so-called 'structural adjustments' begun by Nicky Ardito Barletta and followed by Eric Delvalle, which brought their respective governments to confrontation with the popular sectors, and to renouncing national sovereignty in decisions on Panama's economic policy."

On May 26, Solís Palma reported that the negotiations with the United States fell apart because the Reagan administration refused to give "guarantees to indemnify the economic damage" done to Panama, estimated at \$1.5 billion. He called the drug-trafficking charges against Noriega "political and faked." In return for lifting them, the United States demanded a national unity cabinet be formed, and a new President chosen. "General Noriega told them no, because he was not seeking to eliminate the accusations, but to redress the [damage] to the Panamanian economy," President Solís said.