

## Panama Report by Carlos Wesley

### Fallout from invasion increasing

*Almost seven months after the Panama invasion, anti-Bush resentment is increasing—even among Bush supporters.*

**R**ight after the invasion of Panama last Dec. 20, George Bush's popularity shot up to all-time highs. At least, so claimed the opinion polls.

Bucking conventional wisdom, *EIR* Founding Editor Lyndon LaRouche then said the invasion could prove to be the beginning of the end of Bush's presidency. "What I suspect we will be seeing is a President being put to the test. If he does not change—and I speak of, typically, the liberal Establishment, which will give him a little time and a chance to learn his lesson after he has been slapped in the press and elsewhere—then they will crush him," said LaRouche in a Jan. 5 statement.

One might have expected the issue to have faded away by now. Instead, Bush is facing growing resentment for his Panama caper.

On July 5, West Germany's main television network, ARD, gave extensive coverage to July 4 protest demonstrations in Panama City against the invasion and against the continuing U.S. military occupation of Panama. The "Issues of the Day" program noted that the true number of people killed during the invasion was 4-5,000, not the 520 admitted by the Bush administration. "Bush is a killer," an enraged Panamanian woman declared on the show.

The television report showed corpses being exhumed from mass graves and reported that some bodies were bound hand and foot, indicating that they had been executed. Viewers told *EIR* that the German TV report left a clear impression that the U.S.

violated the human rights of the Panamanians. "You have to remember that because of what was done by the Nazis, here in Germany, there is a lot of sensitivity to human rights violations. The television report brought to mind the parallel with what was done by the Nazis," one viewer said.

Even more surprising is the grassroots organizing against Bush by his former conservative supporters. In a newsletter called *Criminal Politics*, Lawrence Peterson charged that the 26 Americans "who died in battle and the 324 men who were wounded in capturing Noriega for George Bush, were sent there on a personal mission to eliminate a potential threat to his presidency and to protect the Bush family investments—not to control the flow of drugs into the U.S." He stated that the Bush family has \$350 million in investments in tourism in Panama.

The charge originally surfaced in an article in the *Los Angeles Times* last Dec. 30 entitled "Bush's brother linked to firm in Panama deal," reporting that Prescott Bush, the President's brother, is a business partner of the Japanese-owned Aoki Corp. Prescott Bush and Aoki are joint investors in a multimillion-dollar tourist resort in Red China. Aoki also has considerable holdings in Panama, although the *Times* noted that there was no indication that Prescott Bush is also an investor in those.

Kenneth White, president of the Virginia Taxpayers' Association, said July 2 on a radio program in Roanoke, Va., that the Bush family business ties

to Aoki "raises serious questions of conflict of interest" for the President, and he called for an investigation.

Bush is also faced with reports that more Americans died during the invasion than the 23 military and 3 civilians officially admitted. An American journalist who covered the invasion said on the nationwide Larry King radio show July 6 that he had obtained information that body bags with dead U.S. soldiers had been transferred from Panama to Honduras.

A similar charge was raised earlier in Panama by opposition legislator Mario Rognoni. This evoked a heated denial from Gen. Marc Cisneros, the departing head of U.S. Army South in Panama. Rognoni is "a pig," sputtered Cisneros July 3. "I don't know why he is not in jail."

Experts consulted by *EIR* say that during the war in Indochina, American casualties in illegal incursions into Laos and Cambodia were covered up. "It is not out of the question that people who got killed in Panama, got reported instead as, say, dying in a helicopter accident in Honduras," said one.

Rogelio Cruz, partner in the Cali cocaine cartel who is now attorney general of the U.S.-installed government of Panama, asked for Rognoni and other opposition legislators to be stripped of their congressional immunity. The request was not granted; but immunity is only in effect while Congress is in session. As soon as a recess was declared at the end of June, the opposition bench fled abroad to avoid arrest.

In a TV interview on July 6, Attorney General Cruz moaned that the U.S. "evidence" of Gen. Manuel Noriega's alleged drug trafficking "is scanty and vague." Cruz called on Cuba's Fidel Castro to help the U.S. Justice Department prosecute Noriega as a "gesture of Latin American solidarity with the truth."