

## Panama Report By Carlos Wesley

### U.S. invasion was long planned

*A CIA-Mossad agent at the center of arms-for-drugs scam says the U.S. lied about why it invaded.*

**C**ol. Eduardo Herrera, chief of police for the U.S.-installed government of Panama, told a group of Panamanian legislators that the capture of Gen. Manuel Noriega was just an excuse used by the Bush administration to invade last Dec. 20 and kill thousands of Panamanians. According to *El Panamá América* July 29, he said, "They were interested in coming in here no matter what, and they did it."

Herrera reported that prior to the U.S. invasion he had worked out a plan to land in Panama with a force of "Panamanian, Israeli, and South American commandos and overthrow Noriega." But "when Washington found out the plan was likely to succeed, they almost threw me in jail."

He was told that for the U.S. there were "more important" strategic considerations than Noriega, he said. In fact, said Herrera, someone in the U.S. Senate Intelligence Committee warned him "that they would alert Noriega if there was any attempt to assassinate him."

Herrera is no Panamanian super-patriot. A longstanding collaborator of the Israeli foreign intelligence agency Mossad, Herrera is a confessed CIA agent who is privy to some of the damning details of the drugs-for-arms Iran-Contra operation run out of the Reagan-Bush White House.

So why would Herrera, who owes his current job to the U.S. government, be unmasking the Bush administration's lies?

For one thing, it is a warning to Washington that it had better protect him. Herrera was at the center of an operation, sanctioned by the U.S. gov-

ernment, in which a shipment of Israeli weapons made their way to a ranch owned by Colombian cocaine kingpin Gonzalo Rodríguez Gacha. This operation is becoming unraveled, with disclosures that have the potential to do great harm to the Bush-men.

In 1988, Herrera, then Panama's ambassador to Israel, was recruited by then-Assistant Secretary of State Elliott Abrams to organize a force modeled on Oliver North's Nicaraguan Contra operation to topple Noriega. For the project Abrams allocated at least \$1 million in Panamanian government funds seized by the U.S. Herrera traveled to Washington, and met with officials at the White House, the CIA, and the State Department. He was put on the payroll to the tune of \$4,500 per month.

Israeli reserve Col. Yair Klein was hired to help Herrera organize this Panamanian "Contra" operation. Klein was the source of the "Israeli commandos" Herrera says were part of his planned anti-Noriega operation.

Klein was also the source of the "South American commandos" Herrera refers to, since at that time Klein was in Colombia training hired assassins for the cocaine cartels, according to Colombian authorities. Since things were getting hot in Colombia, early in 1989 Klein approached the Caribbean government of Antigua with a proposal to establish what he said would be a school to train "VIP security guards." In reality, it would train Herrera's "Contras" and other hit-men.

He also sought permission to import weapons for the training. Anti-

gua's defense chief Clyde Walker said in a sworn affidavit that he consulted with local CIA agent Robert Hogan, and with the CIA station chief for the eastern Caribbean, Robert Kenning. The CIA vouched for Klein, said Walker. Nonetheless, Antigua said "no" to both of Klein's requests.

"When I was informed that the training school was not approved, I was most disappointed and shocked and had no other alternative but to divert the equipment to the Panamanian entity who paid for it," said Klein, in an affidavit first published in the U.S. in *EIR* on June 1. The "equipment" he refers to, are the Uzi machine guns and the Galil rifles found at the ranch of Colombia cocaine cartel chief Rodríguez Gacha.

According to Klein, "the understanding between myself and the Panamanians was that absolutely nobody should be aware of the information except the CIA who I was told gave its blessing and approval."

To cover up the trail, a number of misleading reports—known in the "spook" business as "confetti"—have been leaked through the media. One of these is a purported secret Colombian intelligence report published by *El Tiempo* on July 16, which claims that Klein's proposed training school in Antigua was solely a project of the Medellín Cartel, to train both their hit squads and Tamil guerrillas from Sri Lanka.

The story, reprinted by the press worldwide, omitted any mention of the involvement of the CIA and Herrera's "Contras." But it did blame Libya's Qaddafi, always a safe bet as a bogeyman.

Worse still is an article published by Colombia's *El Espectador* on July 19, which lies outright that Antigua's defense chief Walker "refused" to provide official investigators with the names of the CIA agents he dealt with.