

## Panama Report by Carlos Wesley

### CIA chief proposes 'Murder, Inc.'

*The target of a U.S. assassination bureau would be Panamanian Defense Forces commander Gen. Manuel Noriega.*

The head of the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency, William Webster, is proposing that the CIA be given the authority to assassinate foreign leaders such as Gen. Manuel Noriega, commander of Panama's Defense Forces (PDF). In an interview published by the *New York Times* Oct. 17, Webster called for modifying an Executive Order that "no person employed by or acting on behalf of the United States government shall engage or conspire to engage in assassination."

Webster argued that the order has been interpreted incorrectly to bar any U.S. involvement in a coup that might potentially lead to a political assassination, such as the failed attempt against General Noriega on Oct. 3, which was sponsored by the U.S. "Now the next thing is, hire a guy to kill Noriega or fund a group who wants to kill Noriega," said Webster. "Our Executive Order would have in the past been construed at least that we could not do that, because we would just be using someone else to do what we couldn't do ourselves," he said.

This call for Noriega's murder implements the policy recently announced by Webster that the CIA will now be deployed against what he avers is the economic threat to the U.S. posed by its allies, specifically Western Europe and Japan, since the Soviet Union no longer poses a major military threat. Webster's CIA is joining forces with the Soviet KGB, supposedly to combat international terrorism and drug trafficking!

The Bush administration has been moving toward openly adopting state terrorism as an instrument of foreign policy since its Oct. 3 fiasco against

Noriega. "I would say that we certainly are in agreement with everything Judge Webster said," White House spokesman Marlin Fitzwater told reporters Oct. 17.

A few days earlier, it was revealed that the administration has authorized the FBI to get into the kidnaping business. On Oct. 13 Secretary of State James Baker III confirmed a leak to the *Los Angeles Times* that a new directive has been drafted: "Authority to the FBI to Override Customary or Other International Law in the Course of Extraterritorial Law Enforcement Activities." California Rep. Don Edwards condemned the move, saying "If we do it, that means Moscow could authorize the KGB to arrest somebody in our country." Mexico's Foreign Minister Fernando Solana was blunter: "Mexico will not accept that no matter what."

The administration has made clear that the "snatch authority" is aimed at General Noriega. The Panamanian leader was indicted on concocted charges of drug trafficking, because he stood in the way of the U.S.-Soviet power-sharing arrangements in Central America.

In a speech on Oct. 16 to the Foreign Policy Association in New York, Secretary of State Baker confirmed the deal on Central America by the two superpowers which was first revealed by Soviet Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze in a speech to the same body on Oct. 3. As explained by Shevardnadze, under the accords "the two superpowers could act as guarantors" of a balance of forces in Central America.

Meanwhile, the commander of the U.S. Southern Command in Panama, Gen. Maxwell Thurman, is requesting the evacuation of all American civilian dependents, claiming that "the U.S. is at war in Panama," reported the *Washington Times* on Oct. 19.

Arguing from a relatively level-headed military standpoint, the former chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Adm. William Crowe, implicitly challenged the madness that has seized the administration. Crowe's wrote a letter that was published on Oct. 16 in the *New York Times*, in which he replied to an article, "Noriega Respects Power; Use it," penned by Elliott Abrams, the former Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs, and one of the architects of the failed U.S. policy against Panama.

Crowe says: "Mr. Abrams's proposals during the various mini-crises involving Panama were both reckless in their formulation and reckless in their casual commitment of our military men and women. This latter phenomenon is not unknown among young political appointees who have never served in uniform." Crowe said that "it was Mr. Abrams who assured us that the mere 'threat' of sanctions would quickly bring Panamanians into the streets demanding General Noriega's overthrow. We tried that, and it didn't work. He then argued with great confidence that actually imposing sanctions would bring the general to his knees in two weeks. We tried that, and it didn't work either."

Crowe concluded that U.S. policy toward Panama should be guided by three criteria: that it be effective, that American lives not be risked unnecessarily, and that it not damage U.S. relations with other Ibero-American countries. "Unfortunately, the proposals of Mr. Abrams met none of those tests," wrote Crowe.