

## Panama Report by Carlos Wesley

### U.S. seeks to outlaw security forces

*Media attacks on the narco-government have only one purpose: elimination of any independent military force.*

Syndicated columnist Jack Anderson denounced the U.S.-installed government of Panama in an article on June 25. "Since Panama was 'liberated' by the United States from the clutches of Manuel Antonio Noriega, Panamanians are finding out that freedom isn't what it was cracked up to be," wrote Anderson. "The new administration of Guillermo Endara has show little patience for its critics in the press or inside the government."

After such an introduction, the reader perhaps expected Anderson to chastise Endara for trampling on the rights of, say, publisher Escolástico Calvo, who has been jailed on trumped-up charges since the U.S. invasion. Instead, Anderson took up the cudgels for *La Prensa's* Roberto Eisenmann, who "has been at the forefront of a crusade" to purge Panama's new constabulary of "corrupt former members of Noriega's Panama Defense Forces."

Eisenmann is facing opposition from Attorney General Rogelio Cruz, whose own résumé—says Anderson—"includes a stint as director of Panama's now defunct First Inter-Americas Bank, which was controlled by the Cali drug cartel of Colombia." But Anderson fails to mention that Eisenmann is tied to the rival Medellín cartel, through his co-ownership of Dadeland National Bank of Florida, a key financial institution for one of Medellín's money launderers.

Vice President Ricardo Arias Calderón, whose family links are also with the Cali cartel, is Eisenmann's main opponent. Arias is "none too

pleased with Eisenmann's criticism of those troops," Anderson reports, and at one point "tried to gain control of the 700 *La Prensa* shareholders and have Eisenmann fired." He didn't succeed, but his critics insist that Arias is covering up for "corrupt members of the Panamanian police."

Neither Anderson's column nor an almost identical attack appearing the same day in the *Los Angeles Times* made any reference to the most serious case of corruption of all: that of Col. Eduardo Herrera. Appointed at the insistence of the U.S. to head the Public Force, the constabulary that replaced Panama's Defense Forces (PDF), Herrera is at the center of the scandal involving the transfer of weapons obtained by Israeli reserve Col. Yair Klein to Medellín cartel kingpin Gonzalo Rodríguez Gacha.

According to the *Times*, Arias Calderón, who is also the interior and justice minister, "is moving to impose his policies in areas under the jurisdiction of President Guillermo Endara, and the second vice president, Guillermo (Billy) Ford." Ford, a former co-owner of Eisenmann's Dadeland Bank of Miami, is, to quote the *Times*, "an advocate of strict free-market policies, an approach scorned by" Arias's Christian Democrats.

They also differ in their approach to Public Force. Arias favored using former members of the PDF as the core of the new constabulary. "We wanted them to know that there is a place for them," Arias's aide Roberto Azbat told the *Times*. "We didn't want to see them become guerrillas." Az-

bat, according to sources in Panama, will soon be appointed the first civilian chief of the new constabulary. He said the use of the PDF "is only a transitory stage."

But Eisenmann and his allies are demanding that Panama abolish outright any security forces. This is not a new position for these agents of Project Democracy, the U.S. not-so-secret parallel government. Eisenmann, a contributor to the magazine put out by Project Democracy's public arm, the National Endowment for Democracy (NED), had *La Prensa* proclaim back in July 19, 1987: "Panama does not need an army." *La Prensa* also called for dismantling the Civil Police, the Coast Guard, and the Border Police in order to "have democracy." Ruben Carles, Panama's Comptroller General and an ally of Vice President Ford, told the *Times*, "Now is the time to build a completely new Public Force, while the Americans are still here."

As we noted in *EIR* on June 15, "It is not a case of beating swords into plowshares. While Panama will be denied its own army, there will be armed forces in Panama—U.S. forces." Those troops will enforce the new imperial agreements between the U.S. and the U.S.S.R.

U.S. Secretary of State James Baker told a meeting of Central American Presidents in Guatemala on June 18, that they should "take the historic opportunity" to cut their militaries.

According to the June 25 issue of *Newsweek* magazine, "Panama is the test case" for a "new era in U.S.-Latin American relations." U.S. Ambassador Dean Hinton, "America's closest approximation to the Roman Empire's troubleshooting proconsuls," is overseeing the demilitarization of Panama. "The heart of the program is the conversion of the Panama Defense Forces into a police force armed only with pistols and shotguns."