

EIR Investigation

Noriega's revelations put Bush on the hot seat

The following speech was prepared by Gen. Manuel Antonio Noriega of Panama in Spanish, for delivery at his sentencing hearing before Judge William Hoeveler in federal district court in Miami, Florida on July 10. It is a historic document, providing insights on an important period of U.S.-Panama relations. It has been completely blacked out of the U.S. media, which has given us added incentive to run it in full.

Over the coming weeks, EIR Panama reporter Carlos Wesley will be explicating the fuller story behind many of the points touched upon by Noriega, the importance of which is not always obvious to the general reader. Noriega raises many issues which are politically sticky for the Bush administration—which may explain why this speech has not appeared in English outside the pages of EIR. The speech was translated by EIR, and subheads have been added.

Thank you, Your Honor, for permitting my presentation, which is but a fraction of everything I have to explain.

Before beginning, I wish to praise the God of the universe who is the just judge, for permitting me to be here under these circumstances.

I wish to praise the God of the universe for the opportunity He gave to the prosecutors, to accuse me based upon a bill of indictment that they never believed in.

I wish to praise God in the name of Jesus for you, Your Honor, for this day and for these circumstances. May God bless you, may God bless the prosecutors, may God bless the members of the jury. May God bless your consciences and your souls!

I see this intervention today as a conversation between you and me. I will not be making a speech, nor an explanation, nor a defense; just a limited presentation of things and facts that give the sense, the smell of this case beyond a

reasonable doubt. Socrates once told his disciples in Athens: "Abstain before doubt." And the great legal philosopher Solon said, "It is preferable for a guilty man to go free than to condemn an innocent man."

And it says in one of the wisest Chinese books, the *Tao Te Ching* [*The Way of Life*] of Lao Tzu: To condemn an innocent man beyond a reasonable doubt, causes in the persons who provoked the act emotional damages that are called *karmas* in philosophy.

Greater crimes often done by decent men

It is easy to determine wrongdoing when it is perpetrated by criminals. We expect it from them and we anticipate their conduct. But when good men are used for evil purposes, no one is inclined to believe it. However, the greater crimes are often perpetrated by decent men acting with a noble purpose.

I need look no further for my proof, than your recent examination of the jury. There is no way to reconcile what the jurors told the press, and what they told this court. I have no doubt that the jurors really told the press that there was a prayer session at the Everglades Hotel; but in court, they denied that such a prayer session took place. Your Honor, I am sure that you don't believe that the press fabricated this incident. But you believed the jurors, because you are incapable of believing that the jury would lie to you. Nevertheless, you know that at least one member of the jury had previously lied to you. Similarly, you always believed their claims that they never heard the news, nor commented on the case, nor watched television. It is possible that the jury was forced to lie to you by the hidden arm, by the Chinese Wall that always presented itself at decisive moments.

My case was orchestrated by those who fear me. Men who sought to discredit me through the charges or to kill me

during the invasion, as they were unable to kill me before with the commando group led by the Israeli [Col. Yair Klein], which was trained in the Caribbean and which later sold their weapons to [Colombian drug lord Gonzalo Rodríguez] “the Mexican” Gacha, nor through two coup attempts, nor with the invasion, when 10,000 American soldiers were searching for me and \$1 million was offered for me, dead or alive. Since they could not kill me yesterday, they bring me here today so that you do them the favor of killing me in life, so that there may be a distant and just hand to squeeze the trigger. Blessed and praised be God!

It is said that those who don't learn the lessons of history are condemned to repeat them. The problem is that no one wants to learn the lessons of history, and I was one of those (*mea culpa*). For thousands of years, powerful nations have staged provocations to start wars or to persecute leaders who are obstacles to their plans. I forgot that and fell for the provocation of the United States' harassment on my own territory. And once one falls for the provocation, there comes the frenzy in the news media in the name of American justice.

That's how you Americans demanded justice after hearing the story of your warships coming under attack in the Gulf of Tonkin.

That's how you Americans demanded justice against Spain when your warship, the *Maine*, sank in Havana harbor.

And that's how, more recently, you Americans demanded justice after hearing the story that Iraqi soldiers were murdering babies in Kuwait. Only after all of these events, was it discovered that your leaders had manipulated the facts for political aims.

It was the same in Panama: Before the invasion, there was no danger to the canal or to American citizens.

Judge Hoeveler, Panama was not invaded because the canal was threatened. Panama was not invaded because the lives of American citizens were in danger. Panama was invaded because I was an *obstacle* who *undermined* the place in history of your President George Bush, who wanted me dead!

The real purpose of these proceedings is not to sentence me, but to legitimize the power of this administration to take any measure to achieve its political goals, even if it includes the death of innocent persons.

‘You have been used by your government’

Unfortunately, you have been used by the government. By refusing to allow any challenge to your government's policy actions, you have become an ally of these policies. You accepted your government's arguments, that its war in Panama was necessary to protect American lives. You accepted the argument, because you cannot conceive that your Army could have caused the deaths of innocent people merely to discredit me and for the political purposes of this administration.

But, Your Honor, it is the same standard of conduct of



Gen. Manuel Antonio Noriega at a political rally of the Ibero-American labor movement in Panama City, Panama on April 28, 1988.

some administrations of your country when they wanted to keep some foreign territory that interested them. This was the same pattern of behavior followed in 1903 to hold on to Panama: First, they provoked a civil war between Liberals and Conservatives called the War of the 1,000 Days; secondly, they imposed a government subservient to their interests; thirdly, they shot the indigenous leader, Victoriano Lorenzo.

In 1989, the same thing happened. First, for 1,000 days (since 1986), they engaged in provocations, carrying out harassment on our national territory and culminating with an invasion; secondly, they imposed a government to serve their image and likeness and gave it the oath of office in the barracks of an American military; thirdly, they eliminated a leader and a cause.

Your Honor, for six months you have heard talk about Panama. You don't know Panama! But the way the prosecutors talked about it and its authorities, was with the same impositions and demands that one speaks about the duties of an American colony such as Guam or the Virgin Islands.

Your Honor, Panama existed as an indigenous settlement discovered by Rodrigo de Bastidas in 1513, and Columbus

reached its shores on his fourth voyage. Panama has its own history, its own military antecedents. Here, it was made to seem that I was the first to establish an army or to arm troops. But the Army of the Isthmus of Panama fought in the War of Independence from Spain on the side of Bolívar and Sucre in the battles of Junín and Ayacucho. That is to say, Panama is not a colony of the United States. It never was nor ever will be a star in the flag of the United States, and its officials cannot abide by the orders of their masters, the chiefs of a colony.

The importance of bringing up the foregoing, is for Your Honor to see the impression the jury took with it in believing that the violation of American laws and my supposed culpability was because American authority had not been complied with as they demanded.

The jury was never able to properly learn that Panama has its own laws, its own way of life, its own culture, its customs, its history, and its own political and economic interests.

Panama enters into the sphere of interests of the United

States because of its geographic location as the shortest route from the Atlantic to the Pacific and because of the building of the canal. The 1903 Treaty was imposed; it was not signed by a Panamanian but by a Frenchman who was bribed and imposed.

All this history culminated in the Torrijos-Carter Treaties, a process led by Gen. Omar Torrijos and assisted by many civilian and military advisers. It was not General Torrijos alone who achieved this advance.

To achieve this great objective, General Torrijos had first to overcome the threat of a drug indictment against him and his minister of foreign affairs. I went to the office of [Drug Enforcement Administration head Peter] Bensinger in Washington, to discuss the situation. In the end, Torrijos's brother was indicted by a grand jury in New York; years later, the charges were dismissed.

DEA officials lied shamelessly

However, Bensinger, the former DEA administrator, lied shamelessly to the jury and never mentioned those discus-

Who is Gen. Manuel Antonio Noriega?

Why the U.S. government threw its vast financial, political, and military resources into overthrowing the government of Panama, is best understood by taking a closer look at General Noriega, the man who was sold to the world as a corrupt dictator, a drug-trafficking "pineapple face" who had enslaved his people and defied the United States government.

Manuel Antonio Noriega moved up in the ranks of the Panamanian Defense Forces alongside Omar Torrijos, the military man who led Panama from October 1968 until his assassination in July 1981. Torrijos helped shape a generation of Panamanians—civilian and military—committed to ending the legacy of U.S. domination of Panama, as codified in the treaty governing the Panama Canal since 1903. The foreign policy adopted by Torrijos championed the integration of Ibero-America as a means of guaranteeing regional sovereignty and national self-defense.

It was that nationalist and Ibero-Americanist legacy that Noriega brought with him when he assumed command of the Panamanian Defense Forces in 1983. But it posed a threat to the international banking elites which dictate U.S. State Department policy and whose intention was—as Noriega himself explains in his sentencing

speech—to 1) abrogate the 1978 Torrijos-Carter Treaties giving control of the canal to Panama by the year 2000, and 2) convert Panama into a drug money-laundering center, as the opening shot of a "free trade" offensive against all of Ibero-America.

Panama under Noriega took a leading role in organizing the Contadora peace process for Central America, and was poised to give a *Torrijista* orientation to policies regionwide. The U.S. State Department countered by putting banker Nicolás Ardito Barletta into the Panamanian presidency in 1984, to sabotage that potential and to dismantle the key institution sustaining the *Torrijista* doctrine in Panama, the Panamanian Defense Forces. But Barletta's support for the International Monetary Fund's drug-pushing policies, and his hostility to Latin Americanism, stripped his presidency of all support. He was forced to resign in September of 1985.

While continuing to collaborate with the U.S. on intelligence and to take a leading role in fighting drugs, Noriega refused to play the lackey. He would not allow the U.S. to sabotage the canal treaties, nor would he allow Panama to be used as a launching pad for U.S. destabilization of Central America. Neither would he ignore the rampant drug trade which Barletta's banker buddies were financing. He scored major blows against both the drug cartels and their bankers, something for which he was never forgiven.

Noriega has been overthrown and imprisoned by the U.S. regime, but he has not been broken, as is evident from his sentencing speech.

sions nor others related to the purpose of Washington's accusations.

Afterward, General Torrijos died in "mysterious" circumstances during a domestic flight in Panama. Torrijos's brother Moisés determined in an investigation that the Reagan-Bush administration, with a Southern Command task force, caused the explosion of his plane. This information was turned over to the intelligence agency of the United States [CIA].

After Torrijos's death, two commanders led the National Guard. I assumed command within the chain of command established by Panamanian regulations. The [Panama] Defense Forces were created on the basis of the requirements set forth in the Torrijos-Carter Treaties, to relieve the military forces in 1999.

The organization of the Defense Forces was presented to the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff in Washington and it received the corresponding approval, that it met the requirements of the new treaty.

Here, the Defense Forces were referred to as some strange thing. However, they were organized as a professional counterpart of the American military brigade in the Canal Zone.

Of course, the Defense Forces covered other internal needs of the Panamanian government, which was a sovereign right of that nation.

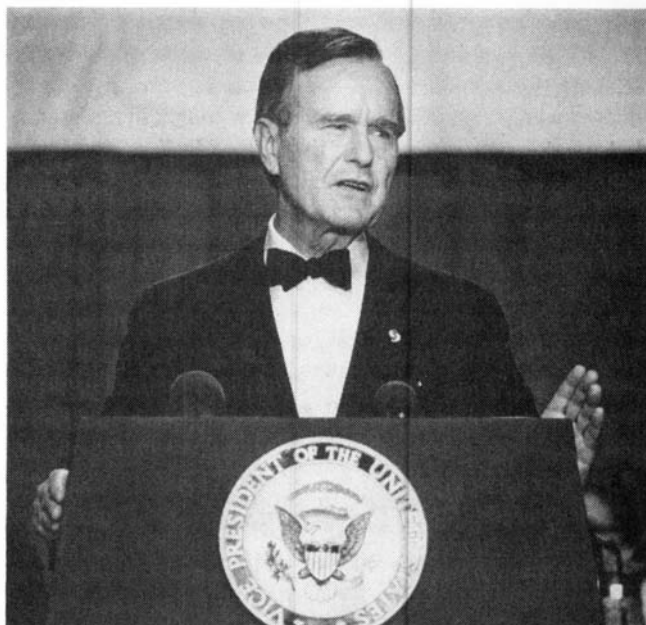
But when I assumed command, the Reagan-Bush administration confused my friendship and my professional coordination with submission, dependence, and servility. When they attempted to go against the interests of my fatherland, I didn't accept it. For example, they wanted to continue the School of the Americas at the military base of Fort Gulick, and I demanded they return it, in compliance with the Torrijos-Carter Treaties. This decision and others I took, made them see me as a threat to their plans and intentions.

And that's how the case against General Noriega came about.

A politically motivated case

Yes, Your Honor, the case against Gen. Manuel Antonio Noriega is completely and totally political, just as you described it the first time it came to your attention, when you said it was "fraught with political overtones." Yes, Your Honor, a strong political odor can be sensed in the unfolding of this case. The government's Chinese Wall, the CIPAs [Classified Information Procedures Act], the permanent conferences and consultations with Washington. Those are all "political overtones" before, during, and after, wouldn't you say, Your Honor?

The allegations of these two administrations were presented to a grand jury through [former Panamanian New York consul] José Blandón. You remember that name, and others, that culminated with the 1988 charges that caused all the infamous publicity and the honor of a satanic invasion, by



George Bush, accused of being the intellectual author and conspirator in the sabotage against American civilian installations in the Panama Canal Zone that began on Oct. 31, 1976.

means of which I find myself today in the belly of Leviathan?

Your Honor, how can the lies of the original charges and of the witnesses be justified, when there was no agreement, not even now, between the charges and the lies and contradictions of the witnesses? And you do know, Your Honor, within your reasonable doubt, that the theory of the indictment is contradictory within itself, in the acts that occurred and in the persons.

For example:

- 1) Where in the indictment does the name of the oft-mentioned [former PDF Col.] Julián Melo Borbua appear?
- 2) Where in the grand jury indictment are the famous Méndez brothers?
- 3) Why did the government, having Blandón and [DEA informant Boris] Olarte in its custody, never call them to testify?

The answer, Your Honor, is obvious. There are two totally opposed theories. For this reason, I, believing that the jury was going to study the documents, as my attorneys assured me, asked that the original indictment remain unaltered so that the members of the jury might draw their conclusions from these contradictions. Do you not think, sir, that this is indeed a reasonable doubt?

Why did the government threaten Blandón so that he would not testify in this case, after he was the prosecution's star witness before the grand jury, Congress, and the television networks? Why did they force him to plead the Fifth Amendment of this Constitution? Do you not think that in this instance, too, there are "political overtones"?



Adm. John Poindexter, former national security adviser, wanted Noriega to deploy Panamanian troops against Nicaragua as the spearhead for U.S. military intervention. Shown here after his arraignment on charges stemming from the Iran-Contra affair in Washington, D.C. on March 24, 1988.

I ask, what justification can be given to the citizens of this country about the tape recordings of my private conversations and those between attorney and client? They were made public on the basis that they were seeking evidence. . . . Ah! That is to say, they had no evidence!

What is the justification?

1) How can this country justify causing the death of over 3,000 persons with the aim of capturing just one man?

2) When before in the history of the civilized nations of the Americas has a country been invaded, causing destruction and death, to overthrow and arrest a foreign leader fulfilling his mandate?

3) What can this administration say to its people to justify an armed invasion in 1989 to sanction supposed illegal acts committed in 1984 against this country?

4) What explanation is there for not applying the law during this five-year period (1984-89), while at the same time maintaining a close, direct, and documented relationship with the alleged author of the crimes of 1984?

5) What justification can this administration give to its citizens for an expenditure of more than \$250 million to carry out one arrest?

6) How can this administration explain to its people the response of the Panamanian people to the visit of its leader and President, George Bush, after he liberated them from a "monstrous dictator" in a demagogic "Just Cause"?

7) What justification can the current administration give to conscientious citizens? Allow me to bring up the case of an intelligent and open-minded girl named Sarah York, from a town in the hinterlands, who decided to go beyond what she heard and did not understand. She decided to write to me and listen to me. She traveled to Panama to personally experience what was felt in my country. When she returned, she wrote to her President: "I went to Panama persuaded by the impression of a monstrous propaganda and I realized that he was not the monster that we were led to believe." She never got a reply from the White House.

8) Your Honor, how can this administration justify to the generation of the year 2000, to Sarah York, the immoral payments of money, promises of reduced sentences, and other privileges given to notorious criminals who were brought out of jail in this country, and to others, to testify against me?

9) How can it be explained that of the 250,000 photos seized in the invasion, there is not one showing me with the heads of the [drug] cartel in the supposed meetings so talked about in this court? However, there are photos of me with the President of the United States. Why didn't the jury see these? Why was their content and purpose not explained?

10) What name can you give to the action of demanding and clamoring for the rights granted by the Geneva Convention to prisoners of war for [U.S.] soldiers in Vietnam and the Persian Gulf, but denying others, such as myself, those same privileges and rights?

These acts, Your Honor, establish precedents, so that countries with views different than the United States, such as Cuba, Iraq, Libya, South Africa, Israel, and others, will draw contrary legal conclusions, with their own justifications.

The multimillion-dollar propaganda machine employed against me by the Reagan-Bush administration for nearly four years, did not allow any of the citizens of this country to escape its claws. Thus, there could be no impartial jury that did not have preconceived images about this trial. And the proof of this was expressed by one of the jurors, when this trial was headed for a "mistrial" because of a "deadlock" among the jurors on April 8, 1992, the day before the verdict in this political trial. [The juror] said that "George Bush is awaiting this verdict." In the end, George Bush, the President of this country, congratulated them with imperial civility.

But I am going to offer more reasons for my political persecution:

'I was the obstacle'

I say to you and to the world that *I was the obstacle* to obtaining military bases in the canal in perpetuity. *I was the obstacle* to not complying with and undermining the 1977 treaties. At every point, I was zealous in complying with the clauses to the letter, much as one who prays from the Bible, because the treaty of 1977 was for Panama *a religion* [empha-

sis in original]!

Your Honor, permit me to go more deeply into this concept, for it is necessary that you know that the Torrijos-Carter Treaty is for Panama a birth certificate for a nation that was brought into being by a caesarean section in 1903. The Carter administration, acting with vision, succeeded in bringing about the canal treaty with a just philosophical concept that may be summarized thusly in the words of President Jimmy Carter: "But the treaties do more than just this . . . they represent the United States' commitment to the belief that *justice and not force should be the basis for our dealings with all the nations of the world.*" That's why, when Carter visited Panama, he was received with affection, not with tear gas canisters and protests; he traveled 10 kilometers in his open car, shaking the hands of the Panamanian people, and he spoke before 300,000 people in Panama City's biggest plaza. These are the affectionate reactions of people toward leaders of stature like Jimmy Carter. But a month ago, the present leader, George Bush, with an ostentatiously armed military occupation in a plaza with a small capacity for 5,000 persons, was treated as a genocidalist by the relatives of those killed during the invasion of Panama he directed, and he could not deliver his address to the public and had to be evacuated under armed guard.

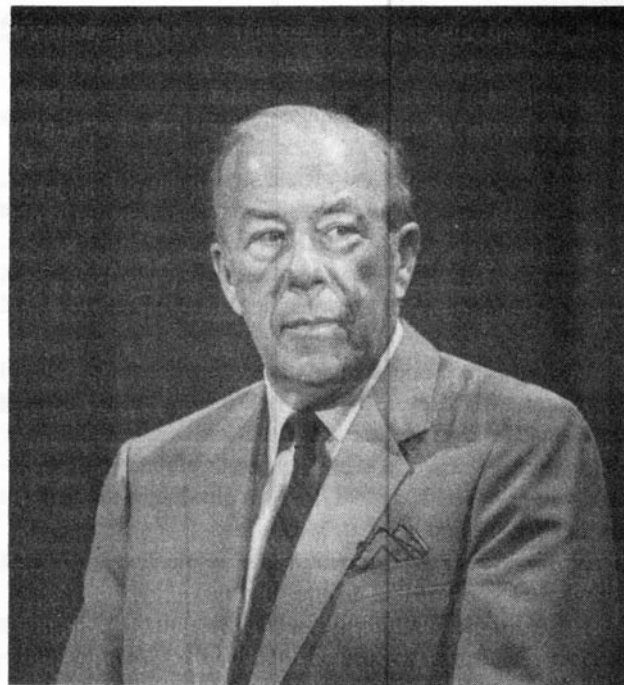
That's because the Panamanian people view the last two "Reagan-Bush" administrations as the signers of the death certificate of a free and sovereign nation, as Panama ought to be. And that is why Gen. Manuel Antonio Noriega was an obstacle to their disproportionate aims of keeping the canal and its territory, and perpetuating their military bases with the duties of an American colony.

But the haughtiness and arrogance didn't stop there, Your Honor; they didn't just want to dismantle the clauses of the treaty and force me to submit to their orders, but they also wanted to impose their influence and power on other independent nations in the area like Nicaragua, Honduras, Argentina, Chile, Peru, Colombia, and Cuba.

In the specific case of Nicaragua, the insulting demand of Admiral [John] Poindexter—indicted as a liar in the Iran-Contra case, which is now reaching up to the levels of true responsibility—was that of establishing a spearhead, using Panamanian troops inside Nicaraguan territory to justify the armed intervention of the United States.

When I learned from him and other high-level envoys of this administration the true reason for its image as a protector, at that moment, I told them no! No! To permit harm to my troops and my neighbors, I said no! To hurt the Nicaraguan people, I said no! To intervene against a people in the midst of their most intimate struggles and decisions, I said firmly, no and no.

And that "no" is one of the reasons I find myself before you, for not permitting them to obtain their political goal. On Dec. 12, 1986, I heard from their lips the threat that I never could imagine would be carried out in civilized coun-



George Shultz, then secretary of state, was negotiating to drop all charges if Noriega would leave the country and give the U.S. a free hand in Panama.

tries. Now I suffer the consequences. At that time there was no indictment. At that time I was their ally.

U.S. has a lot to explain

Yes, Your Honor, these are "political overtones," as you noted in 1987 and which you never allowed to come out as part of my defense against these false charges brought against me following Poindexter's threats. Your Honor, the defense was not allowed to present among its evidence here, documents that exist in the classified archives of the United States, such as:

- A. Information about anti-drug operations since 1974.
- B. Requests for Panamanian documents about undercover operations.
- C. Everything relating to the Shah of Iran, U. S. interests, and the Iran hostages. The accounts at BCCI [Bank of Credit and Commerce International] were opened since the time of the Shah.
- D. When the United States attempted to eliminate the Shah of Iran in Panama, using Panamanian medical doctors, to obtain the release of the American hostages, all of this was planned on orders of the silent power.
- E. The famous and oft-mentioned [drug pilot] César Rodríguez, who was recruited by the Americans and since 1980 was working with the intelligence agencies in arms transfers to Central America.
- F. [Drug pilot] Floyd Carlton worked as a paid informant

with DEA agent Sedillo since 1979 and later took weapons to the Contras for drugs.

G. All the pilots recruited by César Rodríguez were working for U.S. law enforcement agencies. The government knew it and covered it up.

H. Weapons from Costa Rica, first for the Sandinistas, then for the Contras. And with the Contras, those pilots were allowed to bring drugs from Costa Rica to the United States. In Costa Rica, their base of operation was run by [American citizen] John Hull, [CIA station chief Joseph] Fernández and others.

I. The death of Panamanian former Sandinista Dr. [Hugo] Spadafora, after visiting the CIA in Washington and meeting with John Hull on his farm in Costa Rica.

J. The agreements and conversations of the trip to Washington in May and June 1983, which eliminates the dates of the much-mentioned visit to Medellín.

K. The videocassette on mercenaries and drug trafficking turned over in June 1983 in Washington.

L. The trip to Washington in 1984, where the U.S. chose and gave its backing to [Nicolás Ardito] Barletta as the presidential candidate against Arnulfo Arias.

M. Access and control of the Omar Torrijos Airport by the American authorities.

N. Reports from intelligence agencies that state explicitly that they have no proof of drug trafficking against General Noriega.

O. No mention of the teltap [telephone tap] and its source of information, a basic point for our defense, and which tapes, tape recordings, and transcriptions were collected and seized by the 400th military intelligence group of the Southern Command.

P. Why was [the defense] not permitted to elaborate about Grenada?

Q. Why was [the defense] not permitted to speak about the meetings with former CIA director [William] Casey in my home in Altos del Golf, and in Washington and in Fort Amador and in other clandestine sites?

R. Why, if Manuel Antonio Noriega is a criminal, were there letters signed on official letterhead of the United States, by DEA administrators or diplomats in Panama, from 1977 continuing until 1988—eleven years of letters, and documents before, during, and after the charges? Your Honor, you saw here with what effrontery men with respectable positions like [former DEA administrator John] Lawn, Bensing, and others lied, saying that they were signing letters for diplomatic reasons. This attitude is an insult to the governments of Latin America and a warning that documents signed by U.S. officials cannot be trusted. I know that, as an American, Your Honor was annoyed by the repeated expression, "Well, I signed this letter wearing a diplomatic hat."

S. Of the mysterious trip to Cuba [the defense] was not allowed to say that it included a request for a visit by a high-level official from the Reagan-Bush administration, who,

following my visit, went to Cuba to open a channel for talks. But it is not convenient for the administration that this be known, because it would be criticized by the Cuban exiles. And mention of the name of this high-ranking official of the Reagan-Bush administration who was sent by Reagan-Bush and received by Castro, after my intervention, was similarly not permitted.

T. Here, the prosecutors insulted the prestige of a Colombian leader, [former Colombian President] Dr. López Michelsen; they presented him as a drug trafficker, but when he came to Miami to testify, they disregarded the summons that they had issued. Why?

U. Similarly, concerning the lie of the visit to Medellín, had it taken place, the Colombian intelligence services would have had details or proof of such a visit.

V. Blandón himself told the government why the visit to Medellín could not have occurred.

W. The prosecutors had Melo three times at the Embassy Suites in Miami. Why was he not called to testify? Because Melo's version would have exonerated me. Melo was never mentioned in the famous 1988 indictment, but he was the star of this trial.

U.S. offered to drop the charges

And speaking of the indictment, Your Honor, I clarify for you certain inconsistencies that can serve as proof of the "political overtone" converted into a political persecution. That is, this indictment served these two administrations as a weapon for using the U.S. courts to thereby attain their political goals in the international arena, as even their own representatives in the U.S. House of Representatives stated.

Did you know, Your Honor, that from the beginning of May 1988 to October 1989, these two administrations were willing to agree to drop or quash all criminal charges against me, in exchange for my handing the country over to them, for them to impose their own government, their own courts of justice, and their own Panama Canal administrator?

The question is, why were not the real drug traffickers offered this? The answer is very simple: Besides being criminals, they were not Panamanians and could not offer any of their interests in exchange; they could not offer territory for military bases, nor a canal beyond the year 2000. Beneath this logic, and beyond the famous reasonable doubt, it means that any leader or head of state who does not obey the whims of the Establishment may find himself converted into a criminal if he acts against the established interests. He may find himself blackmailed with defamation, jail, deprivation, and even beyond that, he could be deprived of even the right to exist.

And that's the reason they wanted me dead. That's why in the midst of the 20th century, on the eve of the third millennium, the President of the most powerful nation on Earth puffed out his chest when he put a price on my head. He offered \$1 million for my capture.

Where are the rights of man?

The agreements to drop the charges, which President Reagan delayed his trip to Russia for me to sign, are the clearest explanation of the “political overtone.”

I read from the text of the document containing the basic agreement rejected by General Noriega on May 25, 1988:

Mr. Charles Redman: “Undersecretary [of State for Public Affairs Michael] Armacost will continue to testify publicly, and Assistant Secretary of State [for Inter-American Affairs Elliott] Abrams is also here, so that they can answer additional questions.”

Undersecretary Armacost: “I believe that the secretary has made a plan of the objectives and their status. I believe that you would be interested to know a bit more of the details that have transcended.

“First, together with Mike Kozak, Col. Gerry Clark has participated as our representative in everything. On the Panamanian side, the principal interlocutors were Rómulo Escobar, main leader of the PRD party, [and] Colonel [Marcos] Justines, chief of staff of the Panamanian Defense Forces.

“The agreements that were dealt with in very detailed form involved the development of events. And with an element of these—the suspension of IEEPA [International Emergency Export Act] sanctions on our part—it was anticipated that General Noriega would give a speech in which he would make a series of statements, among them the announcement of his intention to resign as commander of the Panama Defense Forces on Aug. 12, and a call for the legislative assembly to immediately approve a law which would limit the term of any commander of the Defense Forces to five years, retroactive to Aug. 12, 1983. In short, his term would end Aug. 12 as the result of a change in the law.

“It was intended that—in response to a motion presented by Noriega’s attorneys to drop the charges against him—we would accede to a motion to continue it until Aug. 12, and then to *accede to dropping the charges* . . . in such case that he finally carries out his obligations to abandon the Panama Defense Forces on Aug. 12.”

Question: “What was there regarding his return? You did not mention anything about how much time he had to remain outside of Panama.”

Undersecretary Armacost: “It was thought that he would be traveling. It was hoped that he would liquidate a small personal business during the period immediately after his retirement, but that in September he would travel outside the country, until the May 1989 election period, except for a small visit to his family at Christmastime.”

I also read from the statements of U.S. Secretary of State George Shultz, upon the breakdown of the negotiations with Panamanian leader Manuel Antonio Noriega, May 25, 1988:

“We have recalled the United States negotiator Michael Kozak. At the final moment in the negotiations, Noriega did not agree to continue with the arrangement that his representatives had negotiated. Future negotiations are not con-

templated. All the proposals considered during these negotiations have been withdrawn. There is no offer on the negotiating table.”

Question: “Do internal political pressures here have anything to do with your decision to withdraw the proposal?”

Shultz: “No, that has nothing to do with it. We have an extremely solid proposal, in spite of how much it has been criticized. I have realized this to the extent people learned to support it and understand it a bit more. The support has

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increased considerably as something very important. It is extremely clear that Noriega and his people among the military close to him clearly see what our proposal seeks: that he leave Panama and leave power. That is the objective, and of course, to create a political opening so that the forces of democracy and liberty may enter in that opening and take charge of it, and we will continue fighting to attain it and we will work together with the Panamanian people with that proposal.”

‘I didn’t sell out my country’

If this nation had known of such a proposal! If the world had read this document! They would feel the disgust that I felt at that moment. And I do not regret having rejected that human wretchedness, nor that I am suffering the consequences myself, because I don’t carry on my conscience the weight of having sold out my country, *Panama*, for materialist proposals.

If that is the price that I am paying in exchange for my freedom, my dignity, and my loyalty to the nation that bore me, then it is a small price indeed!

These two administrations have directed their policies with the sword, and not with the pen, as the President himself has demonstrated with his imperial disdain for international laws, with the disproportionate and uncontrolled use of his powerful force, as if President George Herbert Walker Bush were the “master of eternity.” And so, with his reactionary philosophy, he ignores the international statutes of the United



Guillermo Endara, shown here in May 1990, was imposed on Panama as President, by the United States.

Nations, of the Organization of American States, of Geneva, and of the World Court at The Hague.

And I say today, here and now, that being the world's policeman is a very costly profession, not only in terms of prestige but also economically. For example, for those \$200-300 million that the invasion of Panama cost, how many of this country's domestic problems—how many homeless, how many unemployed, families without homes in Los Angeles, New York, and Miami—could have been solved? As the speaker at the graduation at Wellesley College said recently:

“We have no need to be told about an idealized world that never was as virtuous and free from care as some would believe. We need understanding and a hand to help us in solving problems. The threat of our Cold War enemies has been replaced by our own empire: indifferent, national, that tolerates separated families, homeless children, schools with problems, growing poverty, racism, and violence. This government has politicized local problems and has not previously paid attention to them.”

Surpassing Goebbels

Yes, Your Honor, this administration has not paid attention because it was doing sentry duty, inspecting the “open veins of Latin America,” directing the internal affairs of Nicaragua, Honduras, Panama, Peru, Brazil, Cuba, Mexico, Argentina; and it was indifferent and insensitive to crime, corruption, and violence in its own streets, with the sequel of social illnesses like AIDS. But I assure you that these two administrations justified their actions with the expert and refined use of propaganda, surpassing in their official propa-

ganda or psychological warfare that of Goebbels in the time of Hitler's Nazi Germany. With that same use, abuse, and power utilized by Chapter 5 of the Military Manual on gray propaganda, of first creating a demon and then burning him at the stake.

And so they distorted the image of the Republic of Panama and with it, its civilian and military leaders. The headlines demonizing General Noriega were designed to psychologically prepare the population for the necessity of sending U.S. soldiers, to kill and be killed. But cautious observers of U.S. foreign policy know that the support for dictatorial and corrupt governments in other countries in Central America indicates that there must be other motives to explain the decision by the Bush administration to begin the war.

Panama Canal treaty the target

Ample evidence reveals that the U.S. government and the Pentagon planned to pull down the Panamanian government and to replace it with a servile regime that would renegotiate the key provisions of the 1977 Panama Canal treaty, especially the Galeta Island military bases. While they created social discontent by means of economic strangulation, the Pentagon raised the psychological pressure by increasing military provocations. This included U.S. troops closing roads, searching Panamanian citizens, confronting members of the Panama Defense Forces, occupying small towns in the interior for numerous hours, flying over Panamanian territory with war equipment without permission, and surrounding public buildings with troops.

On Oct. 3, 1989, a coup d'état with the full support of this administration represented by the Southern Command failed in its intent to assassinate me. What would be the reaction of the American people if a leader of an ill-advised foreign country were to have attempted a similar act against the U.S. President!

Moreover, during the Panamanian presidential elections, the U.S. State Department spent \$10 million of its own people's money to finance the opposition candidates. This is equivalent to this government spending \$1 billion on its own elections. To compare this figure, it would be equivalent to five times the amounts spent by Michael Dukakis and George Bush combined in the last election. What reaction would the American people have if a leader—Qaddafi or [Saddam] Hussein, for example—were to plan a similar act in the United States?

Finally, the hypocrisy reached its highest level when the Bush administration initially justified the invasion, saying that I would have declared war against the United States. Praised be God! No one, not the Panamanian National Assembly, nor I, declared war against the United States. This is no surprise to anyone who can imagine that a country like Panama, which has 6,000 men in two combat battalions, might confront the most powerful country in the world with 16,000 combat troops encamped on its own territory. What

the Panamanian National Assembly did on Dec. 15, 1989 was to pass a resolution, based on the failed attempt of Oct. 3, 1989 which was supported by the United States, saying that there existed a condition similar to a state of war.

Persecution of family members

And Your Honor, as a result of everything that I have just presented, there has been a vile and unjust persecution of my family, such as the de facto and unlawful actions that have been taken against our property obtained before and outside the charges of this proceeding, and my properties inherited from my dead brother and other bank accounts, and the United States ordered Panamanian officials to seize all my goods, an assault against four defenseless women. . . . Never in the history of Panama have families been persecuted because of the political position of the head of the family. This is a bad precedent for all, especially for those who began it.

Why, if Panama is a democracy imposed by the invasion by the United States, are the women of my family not permitted to return to their homeland? Why does this administration order the government installed by the invasion of Panama to persecute my family in exile, and my relatives and friends who are not criminals in Panama?

The answer, Your Honor, is because this administration not only lies to its people, but betrays them.

Bush is guilty

For my part, I accuse George Herbert Walker Bush of:

- 1) Using his power and authority to influence and subvert the American judicial system to convict me;
- 2) Of genocide, for having given the order to massively bombard Panama's civilian population, causing the deaths of more than 5,000 inhabitants;
- 3) Of experimenting on civilian populations with the war technology of its invading army, such as the "Stealth fighter bomber," "cluster" bombs with "flechettes," and special flamethrowers to dispose of cadavers;
- 4) I accuse him of destroying the homes of 10,000 families in El Chorrillo and of not fulfilling promises of indemnification;
- 5) Of impoverishing the people of Panama with lies of economic aid that he knows will not be fulfilled;
- 6) Of not paying for the war damages caused by his troops to places of business in Panama City;
- 7) I accuse him of planning the destruction of Panama's sovereignty, and of Panama's Defense Forces, so as to retain the military bases beyond the year 2000 and not return the Panama Canal [as well as] Galeta Island to its rightful owners;
- 8) Of creating crises for those governments of Latin America that are not aligned with his demagogic "new world order" policy;
- 9) Of sabotaging the tripartite accord with Japan for the construction of a new canal through Panama;

10) Of being responsible for the covert military and economic support given to the Nicaraguan Contras;

11) Of being the intellectual author and conspirator in the sabotage against American civilian installations in the Panama Canal Zone that began on Oct. 31, 1976.

Of all this and more, he is guilty. And today, here, I denounce him before the American people and the world.

I am in good health. If anything happens to me, a strange disease or an accident while I am on American territory, I hold Mr. George Herbert Walker Bush responsible and I call as my witnesses the American people and the world.

To the Panamanians, remember:

There will be no Panamanian Canal in the year 2000. There will be no Army nor patriotic and nationalist Armed Forces. But there will be an ostentatious and insulting foreign presence, with troops and war bases of the United States.

However, remember: There is no armed invasion that can kill an idea. There is no sentence that can silence the Panamanian cry of liberation, for a single territory, for a single flag, and without foreign troops.

However, Panamanians, empires like that of Babylon and Rome fall like the Berlin Wall. Only God is the master of eternity.

I thank the prosecutors for their request of a sentence of dozens of years, for life imprisonment, for the death sentence. Nevertheless, the Lord is my shepherd, and with Him I do not fear.

I invoke, Your Honor, the new alliance of Jeremiah: "There will come days in which I contract a new alliance with the people of Israel. I will place my law inside them, I will write it in their hearts, I will be their God and they will be my people. You will judge your people, but I will judge you."

Your Honor, Judge Hoeveler, I have told my summarized truth, based on deeds and not on sophisms, under the Christian knowledge that God is He who knows the hearts of men and Himself, and that one cannot lie to Him. Your Honor, I have given myself to Christ, who dwells in the conscience of man; knowing that God writes straight upon twisted paths, I invoke for you the inspiration of the spirit of wisdom and of divine justice in your human decision.

Nonetheless, I thank God for having chosen me among so many Panamanians, to find myself here in this difficult test, fulfilling the mission that He has imposed upon me.

Nonetheless, I praise God for your having been the judge in this case. I praise God for the insults of these prosecutors. I praise God for this circumstance, knowing that He alone is in charge of circumstances. I praise God for having preserved my life during the war of invasion of Panama. I praise God because He protects my family as they wander the Earth in exile, because He is my shepherd.

I am at peace with myself. With time, history will show the lies that were said about me in this court, and history will also record that on this day I spoke the truth!