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## Panama

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# Narco-terrorists' target: the Canal

by Gretchen Small

In February, the annual maneuvers of U.S. and Panamanian military forces, named "Operation Liberty Torch 87," were conducted on the tactical assumption that the primary threat to the Panama Canal arose from a narco-terrorist uprising, covering an attempt to occupy the Panama Canal. The scenario of armed rebels backed by the drug-traffickers was chosen because, "It is our view that all guerrilla groups have partial or total financing from the drug-traffic," Panamanian army spokesman Maj. Edgardo López explained.

Yet, in June 1987, the U.S. State Department threw its support behind an attempted uprising in Panama, led by a group of Soviet-linked narco-terrorists! Although the June uprising failed, State Department officials now insist that Panama's government negotiate a "peaceful transfer of power" to the narco-terrorist-led opposition.

Thus, U.S. support for a Soviet-triggered crisis in Panama has created the worst threat to the Panama Canal since Nazi activist Arnulfo Arias became President in 1940, and attempted to aid Axis sabotage of the Canal.

The Soviet Union has already gained a foothold in the South Atlantic, through concessions granted by the Alfonsín government in Argentina, from where they can strike at the Straits of Magellan—the only route around the hemisphere should anything happen to the Canal.

Accidental? "You must also remember that the precision of current weapons allows a single missile to destroy the Panama Canal," Victor Volski, director of the Soviets' Latin American Institute, told the Argentine newspaper *La Razón* on Nov. 21, 1986.

The timing of the June uprising itself reveals the narcotics mob's hands behind the insurgency.

On May 6, 1987, U.S. officials announced the conclusion of "Operation Pisces," which they called "the largest and most successful undercover investigation in federal drug law-enforcement history": 118 top narcotics runners were arrested, while simultaneously, the Panamanian government froze 54 accounts in 18 banks of the offshore center in Panama. The accounts were then opened for examination by U.S. drug

agents, in the first implementation of Panama's new banking Law 23.

Representatives of the National Association of Banks in Panama cried: "This will end the Panamanian banking system, because people will no longer believe in banking secrecy." Panama's authorities replied, "Anyone who has nothing to do with drug-trafficking has nothing to fear."

The opposition press attacked "Operation Pisces," as a move that "will devastate the Panamanian banking center." *Extra* railed, "The U.S. Attorney has more power to investigate bank accounts in Panama than he has to investigate bank accounts in his own country." Its sister paper, *La Prensa*, accused the Panamanian Defense Forces (PDF) and government of "serving U.S. interests" by cooperating in anti-narcotics operations.

On June 8, those same forces led the uprising against the Defense Forces and government. Until ordered to open by the government, the banks joined the general strike, and shut their doors. The case is airtight: The leaders of the opposition movement in Panama are drug-traffickers, drug money-launderers, or advocates of narcotics legalization.

- The riots were called to support allegations by retired **Col. Roberto Díaz Herrera** against PDF Commander, Gen. Manuel Noriega. Díaz Herrera has long been identified as a Cuban agent and a drug-runner. He ran the "Panama connection" for the Reynaldo Rodríguez López gang in Peru, one of the largest cocaine pipelines in South America. In the same interviews where he accused Noriega, Díaz Herrera hailed Fidel Castro as "an extraordinary friend of mine," and said he was acting on instructions of his guru, Satry Shri Sai Baba.

- Díaz Herrera hoped to be the "Juan Ponce Enrile," for an opposition regime—the new defense minister in a government headed by Panama's would-be Aquino, **Arnulfo Arias**. "What I am saying is that Arnulfo Arias is the President of Panama," Díaz Herrera stated. On July 4, Arias announced that the opposition still aims for power. "We don't want to shed blood, but if the military clique insists we will defend ourselves. . . . Anything is allowed to topple this regime."

Anything? Arias was first overthrown as President in 1941 with U.S. help, as an Axis agent who threatened hemispheric safety. U.S. intelligence reports on Arias's ties to narcotics trafficking and gambling rackets in Panama are still available at the U.S. National Archives.

- **Cesar Tribaldos** was the spokesman during the strike for the Chambers of Commerce, which played the inside role in creating the "Movement for Democratic and Free Elections" in collaboration with the U.S. embassy's number-two man, **John Maistos**. "Civil resistance means not to obey, not to work, not to go to school, not to pay taxes," Tribaldos urged. Newspapers identified Tribaldos as the ex-president of the Chambers of Commerce, but couriers for the Colombian dope mob knew him in a different capacity. When Panama's government shut down **First Interamericas Bank** in 1985, because it was owned by Colombian cocaine king

Gilberto Rodríguez Orejuela, Orejuela's people identified Tribaldos as the man who laundered \$40 million through the **Banco Continental del Panama** for them.

- **Banco Continental** is headed by **Roberto Motta**, one of nine conspirators accused of "promoting public disorders of grave consequence for the nation" by Panama's Legislative Assembly.

- Tribaldos was the alternate board member at Banco Continental for **Roberto Eisenmann**, the owner of the opposition newspaper, *La Prensa*, so opposed to Panama's cooperation against drugs. Eisenmann has been a contact man for pro-opposition activities funded by the U.S. **National Endowment for Democracy**. Eisenmann had also been a top contact in Panama of the **Fernández marijuana syndicate**, until the chiefs of that Colombian-connected gang were indicted in Florida in December 1984, in the "Sunshine State Bank case." The Fernández syndicate had bought shares in Eisenmann's Miami bank, **Dadeland Bank**, and used it for money-laundering. One of Dadeland's employees was Eisenmann's friend, **Iván Robles**. Iván was granted immunity from prosecution, in a deal arranged by the ring's money-manager, **Steven Samos** (later identified as also a money-launderer for the Nicaraguan Contras).

- *La Prensa* contributing editor **Winston Robles** has also been seen recently with John Maisto, the opposition's point-man at the U.S. embassy. Winston, too, was part of the Fernández ring. **Robles y Robles**, his law partnership with his brother Iván, was hired by money-manager Samos for "legal" work with the drug ring.

- Former President **Nicolás Ardito Barletta**, named by the Legislative Assembly as one of the nine top conspirators in the plot to overthrow the government, returned hurriedly to Panama to give his support to Díaz Herrera. A former economics student of George Shultz, Barletta was one of the bankers most angered by Panama's participation in "Operation Pisces." Barletta personally, back in the early 1970s, ensured that the offshore banking center was, in his words, "more secret than Switzerland." Barletta also supported the 1986 call by the Inter-American Dialogue, for the "selective legalization" of narcotics to be considered as an option, even if, as the Dialogue admits, this would likely lead to 60 million cocaine addicts in the United States.

- Fellow Inter-American Dialogue member, Panamanian Catholic **Archbishop Marcos McGrath**, also signed the call for the legalization option. McGrath has lent his support to cultist Díaz Herrera, and the opposition generally.

- Christian Democrat Secretary General **Guillermo Cochez**, is at the center of the opposition plot. Cochez, who also protested Panama's cooperation in "Operation Pisces," stated on May 22, 1986, "I tell you, we are preparing the soil here for the same problems they have in El Salvador and Nicaragua. People are losing their faith. What are they going to do? They are going into the mountains soon."

## Symbiosis of drugs and terror in Peru

by Sara Madueño

Peru is unfortunately one of the countries where Moscow's fairy-tale that there is no such thing as narco-terrorism has had the widest echo—so much so that the recent narco-terrorist atrocities in May and June in the jungle city of Uchiza and a dozen nearby villages in the Departments of Huánuco and San Martín, carried out by a combined force of Shining Path terrorists and bands of drug traffickers, have been labeled mere Shining Path "opportunism."

As shown in **Maps 1** and **2**, the strategy is nothing new. The recent years' growth of zones where drugs are cultivated and processed has proceeded in strict parallel, in time and space, with the burgeoning terrorism, deployed and expanded in lockstep with the great irregular army occupying the Andean region.

When Peru's President Alan García warned in Uruguay last May 15 that the terrorism typified by Shining Path is not unique to Peru, but "is essentially an Andean phenomenon which will stretch over the Andes toward Bolivia, Colombia, Venezuela, and Ecuador," he was not painting a futuristic picture. This transnational narco-terrorist army is already reality, and it deploys throughout the Andes without regard to borders.

For example, last March 16, the Peruvian weekly *Visión* reported that the number-two man of the Ecuadorian terrorist band "Alfaro Vive, Carajo," Edgard Antonio Frías, had been operating in Peru for two years. On May 6, the *Washington Times* revealed that terrorists of the Peruvian Shining Path and the Colombian M-19 are operating jointly and "are responsible for numerous blackouts in the last two years." The same day, the Caracas newspaper *El Nacional* reported on the arrest, in Caracas, of "foreign terrorists probably linked to the M-19 and Shining Path," and revealed that "Shining Path and M-19 operate jointly in Venezuela."

Shortly before, on Feb. 25, Bolivian Interior Minister Fernando Betherlemi reported on the arrest in Bolivia of five Peruvian subversives of the group "Red Fatherland," and a Uruguayan, connected to the Basque terrorist group ETA,