

Editorial

Manifesto in defense of Panama

We are pleased to print, and to endorse, a Manifesto in defense of Panama which has been signed by some 500 senators and congressmen from all over Ibero-America. The document could not be more timely, since no sooner did the attention on events in China die down, than the U.S. government officially renewed its lawless assault on Panama's sovereign institutions, flaunting schemes to murder Panama's first non-white top military commander, Gen. Manuel Noriega.

As of this writing, the manifesto has been signed by 300 members of Brazil's Federal Congress, including two-thirds of the Senate. Signatures were also gathered in Argentina, Bolivia, Colombia, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Peru, Uruguay, and Venezuela. In addition, the Congress of Ecuador has approved a resolution in support of Panama and condemning U.S. intervention, a copy of which was given to its delegation for transmittal to the government of Panama at the Conference of Latin American Parliamentarians in Panama on June 17 and 18. The manifesto text follows:

"The undersigned, legislators from the nations of Latin America and the Caribbean, hereby inform the governments of the member countries of the OAS of their apprehension about the unfolding Panamanian crisis, especially, given the repeated United States government statements mooting the possibility of military intervention in that Central American country. The recent sending of U.S. military reinforcements to Panama confirms our worries, revealing, at the same time, a tendency of the Bush administration to dictate a solution to the Panama crisis, which, as we see it, should be solved politically by the Panamanian government and people, in a sovereign way, without any kind of foreign meddling. Sending new military contingents to Panama at this moment is in itself foreign intervention.

"The United States has repeatedly made public its intentions to not comply with the terms of the Torrijos-Carter treaty, which call for handing over the adminis-

tration of the Panama Canal to the Panamanian government and for withdrawing U.S. military bases from that country. This is the real issue.

"The United States does not accept the terms of the 1977 Torrijos-Carter treaties because they go against its traditional policy of interventionism. In reality, that treaty is of historical importance to Latin America and the Caribbean because it is a tool and an example to all the peoples who fight against the dictates of those countries that oppose the development of the poorest and fight for a new, just, world economic order.

"A U.S. military intervention in Panama would be an unacceptable violation of the principles of self-determination, as set forth in the Charter of the United Nations, and it would constitute an aggression against all the nations of Latin America and the Caribbean.

"We declare our solidarity with the people of Panama and with their legitimate political organizations, so that, in the shortest period possible, political and economic normalcy may be reestablished that would make the holding of new elections possible.

"It is important to stress that the political and economic sanctions imposed by Washington only contribute to destabilizing democracy. *Therefore, it is an absolute prerequisite condition for there to be free and democratic elections without foreign interference, that the economic blockade against Panama cease.*

"The sovereign stance of our nations, which corresponds to the objective needs of all countries that struggle for their sovereignty and self-determination, is to oppose foreign intervention in Panama. In that context we also affirm the Malvinas are Argentine and that the Amazon belongs to the countries of the region.

"Therefore, we demand that from the member nations of the Organization of American States a clear and unequivocal stance in defense of Panama's sovereignty, against foreign military intervention and for the terms of the canal treaties to be respected."