

Panama Report by Carlos Wesley

Delvalle's arrest ordered

The Bush administration still says he's President of Panama. Will the U.S. now proclaim Miami Panama's new capital?

The man the United States government insists is "the legitimate President of Panama," Eric Delvalle, is currently living in exile in Miami, Florida. Delvalle said in an interview with Knight-Ridder News Service that he and his family had moved to Miami two months ago and are living in a condo in the exclusive Grove Isle. "Miami will be my base," he said.

While Delvalle was meeting in Washington, D.C. with Secretary of State James Baker on March 22, State Department spokesman Charles Redman said that the United States still recognized Delvalle as President of Panama. He did not say whether the United States has now proclaimed Miami Panama's new capital.

Until now, the U.S. recognition of Delvalle's fictitious presidency was the sole justification for its economic sanctions against Panama. The open acknowledgement that he is not even living on Panamanian soil undermines the dubious legal foundations for the sanctions adopted by the Reagan administration on the recommendation of William D. Rogers. Rogers is Henry Kissinger's personal lawyer, and also legal counsel for Kissinger Associates and its former employee, Deputy Secretary of State Lawrence Eagleburger.

Millions of dollars have been stolen from Panama under the economic war strategy designed by Rogers. And now, the government of Panama has launched a campaign to get the money back.

Panama's Attorney General Carlos Villalaz announced on March 16 that a warrant had been issued for Delvalle's arrest and that of several of his

collaborators, owing to the disappearance of more than \$65 million belonging to the Panamanian government, which were frozen in a New York bank account by the Reagan administration.

Villalaz said that the international police agency Interpol has been asked to help in the arrest of Delvalle and in recovering the stolen Panamanian funds that are missing from the escrow account opened by the Reagan government.

Panamanian employees of the Panama Canal Company and of the U.S. military's Southern Command are protesting the damaging effects of the economic sanctions. While the U.S. government has been withholding income taxes from their pay checks, the taxes have not been turned over to the Panamanian Treasury, because of the Rogers sanctions. As a result, the employees have not been able to obtain certificates of tax payment, which are necessary to travel abroad and to renew their automobile license plates, which expired on March 1, 1989.

But the U.S. military in Panama has winked at the sanctions in at least one instance, the "war of the license plates." As we reported last week, children of American servicemen and civilian employees in Panama were being subjected to hardships because the American-owned bus company contracted to take them to school was unable to pay its taxes to renew its license plates.

After several meetings between representatives of the Panama Defense Forces (PDF) and the U.S. military, the go-ahead was quietly given

for the company, Contract Services, to pay its taxes and get the buses rolling again.

This brought howls of protest from the likes of former U.S. Assistant Secretary of State Elliott Abrams and syndicated columnist Georgie Anne Geyer, who claimed that U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff chairman Adm. William Crowe was burying incidents of harassment by the PDF against Americans in Panama, "to achieve a business-as-usual relationship" with PDF Commander Gen. Manuel Noriega.

Geyer, who is known to be close to Central Intelligence Agency "socialist" types like Cord Meyer, wrote an article March 20 in the *Washington Times*, titled "Hidden Torment in Panama?" She charged that "events so unspeakable are taking place in Panama that American powers from the White House to the Pentagon are afraid to deal with them."

In prose even more lurid than she used in her "Five Minutes to Midnight" column of June 19, 1986—when she wrote that the policies of the "LaRouche group" in support of Noriega "threaten decades of American foreign policy and power" in the Caribbean—Geyer's March 20 article says: "You haven't heard about attempted 'sexual abuse,' such a nice phrase for what General Noriega and his Panamanian 'soldiers' do when they get aroused, against Americans?"

With Panama's upcoming presidential elections on May 7, even the Bush administration will have to abandon any pretense that Delvalle is President of Panama, and return the money illegally seized from Panama. To avoid that, Geyer argues that the United States should use force against Panama. "It isn't going to get better; it's going to get worse. Military action will eventually become inevitable there," she writes.