

Panama Report by Carlos Wesley

U.S. proconsul warns Endara

The U.S.-pet narco-government is shaken as more drug ties are revealed, proving EIR's charges.

The American proconsul in Panama has warned the U.S.-installed government that it will not survive if it doesn't put a lid on the drug and corruption scandals that are daily coming out about virtually every high official of the regime of drug bankers headed by Guillermo Endara. The warning, delivered by outgoing U.S. Ambassador Deane Hinton in a speech before the American Chamber of Commerce in Panama on Dec. 15—just five days before the third anniversary of the bloody invasion that was ordered by George Bush to remove the supposedly “drug-trafficking dictator” Gen. Manuel Noriega from power—is all the more significant as Endara's only hold on power are the soldiers of the U.S. occupation forces.

“The constitutional government might well not survive if widespread corruption, or even uncertainty about the extent of the corruption, slowly undermine public confidence in democracy,” said Hinton, according to an unofficial Spanish-language translation of his speech published on Dec. 22 by Panama's *La Estrella*. The American proconsul said that Panama's offshore banking center, its financial system, and the Colón Free Zone were particularly vulnerable to “drug trafficking and money laundering.” Local authorities say that in 1992 alone, 6.2 tons of cocaine were confiscated in the Free Zone, and that's believed to be merely a fraction of the drugs that pass through there.

On Dec. 18 and 19, *La Estrella* published the transcript of an interrogation of convicted Medellín Cartel former chief money-lauderer Ramón

Millán Rodríguez, conducted by the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA). According to the DEA report (which some believe was leaked by Panama's Attorney General Rogelio Cruz), Millán said that he laundered millions through Dadeland Bank of Florida, which was owned by Panama's *La Prensa* publisher Roberto “Bobby” Eisenmann, Carlos Rodríguez, and current Vice President Guillermo “Billy” Ford; that Ford and his brothers, Henry and Jaime, now ambassador to the United States, and his nephew, Jaime Ford, Jr., currently head of the Colón Free Zone, helped him launder money in Panama. Millán also said that Henry Ford had replaced him as treasurer of the Medellín Cartel.

Since last October, *La Estrella* has been publishing articles on Ford and Dadeland Bank based on *EIR*'s 1987 “White Paper on the Panama Crisis.” The exposé documented the Stephen Samos drug money-laundering case in Miami, involving Dadeland's owners and in which Panamanian lawyers Alvin Weeden and Iván and Winston Robles figured as unindicted co-conspirators.

ABC News correspondent in Panama Tomás Cabal rushed to the defense of the Dadeland gang. Weeden and the Robles brothers were merely naive “young lawyers who got sucked into” money-laundering because they had been exiled by Panama's military government to Miami “where they found themselves in dire economic circumstance,” wrote Cabal in the Jan. 4 *Panamá-América*. This is the same Cabal that ABC beamed into your living room every evening to

brainwash you into supporting Bush's campaign against Noriega.

Ford's faction retaliated by forcing the Christmas Eve ouster and arrest of Attorney General Cruz, on charges of releasing nearly \$40 million in frozen bank accounts belonging to suspected Colombian drug kingpins. After he threatened to reveal all he knew about corrupt actions by high government officials, Cruz was released from house arrest by Panama's Supreme Court on Dec. 29, but he still faces legal charges.

In interviews, Cruz said that he had dirt on Chief Justice Carlos Lucas López, his former partner at First Interamericas, a cartel-owned bank that was shut down by Noriega. Cruz also accused Solicitor General Donatilo Ballesteros, responsible for his ouster and arrest, of working to unfreeze suspect bank accounts.

Two days before his fall, Cruz had ordered the arrest of Customs chief Rodrigo Arosemena. Officials of Customs are involved in drug trafficking and drug money-laundering, said Cruz. As it turned out, Arosemena was released and given back his job, while Cruz got the axe, ironically based on a complaint signed by drug syndicate dirty-tricks man Alvin Weeden.

Weeden's law firm, Robles and Robles, was among several law firms that got Cruz to release the confiscated bank accounts of suspected drug traffickers, collecting 10-20% of the money on deposit, and then turned around and filed charges against Cruz for releasing the money. According to the Jan. 4 *Panamá-América*, other law firms that participated in the scam include that of President Endara, and Galindo, Arias and López of Chief Justice Lucas López and Treasury Minister Mario Galindo, another of Cruz's former partners at First Interamericas.