

June 1985, the Costa Rican anti-narcotics police arrested another Mexican drug chieftain, Rafael Caro Quintero, considered the material assassin of Camarena, with numerous associates. All bore credentials identifying them as DFS agents.

The credentials confirmed rumors that had been circulating since October 1984, when the Mexican Army raided vast marijuana fields in El Búfalo and arrested several active agents of the DFS, that there was collaboration between elements of the DFS and the country's drug traffickers. Further, they provided unmistakable evidence that there were DFS links to the traffickers who had participated in the Camarena assassination. DFS director at the time was Antonio Zorrilla Pérez.

### The DEA vs. the CIA

Despite the long-standing evidence of corruption, the CIA station at the U.S. embassy in Mexico maintained close ties with Zorrilla Pérez. This friendship, in fact, triggered a brawl between the DEA and CIA offices in Mexico. In her book, Shannon writes that DEA sources had revealed to her that "the CIA agents in Mexico 'had had a falling out with the DEA agents in Mexico, concerning relations between the CIA and DFS' " (pp. 259-61).

The scandal did not stop there. Days after it was learned that Camarena had been kidnaped, the DEA officially requested the collaboration of all U.S. intelligence services, to locate their agent and rescue him alive. Still more shocking, the CIA delayed for two long and precious months in releasing its first intelligence leads gathered on Camarena's kidnaping. Camarena was kidnaped on Feb. 7, and, according to Shannon's book, the CIA released its first information on April 17, 1985, long after Camarena's death (pp. 259-61).

What could be the explanation for such a serious intelligence failure on the CIA's part? Perhaps it can be found in existing evidence that the CIA was protecting important drug traffickers like Zorrilla because they were serving as CIA informants or agents.

On Nov. 21, 1986, the *Washington Times* revealed that the CIA retained information on drug traffickers who might have been involved in the Camarena assassination, because "they were concerned that the Justice Department's accusations would expose CIA agents and informants in Mexico."

On Dec. 19 of the same year, the *Chicago Tribune* reported that at a Justice Department meeting held the previous month on the Camarena case, "the CIA argued . . . in favor of keeping the information secret, on the premise that to release it would compromise the agency's 'sources and methods,' and its ability to operate inside Mexico."

In Mexico, there are many who believe that Zorrilla worked with the CIA in illegal clandestine operations of financing and support for the Nicaraguan Contras, among other things.

On May 13, 1989, the Salinas government surprised

many by arresting Zorrilla—who by then was ex-director of the DFS—as the alleged intellectual author of the Mexico City assassination of renowned journalist Manuel Buendía. During the following days, Zorrilla was accused of association with traffickers Caro Quintero, Fonseca Carrillo, and Miguel Félix Gallardo, the chief honchos of the Mexican drug trade. All three are currently prisoners, along with a group of former policemen linked to Zorrilla.

## U.S. starts 'Noriega treatment' on Mexico

by Carlos Valdez

The NBC broadcast of the Jan. 7-9 series "Drug Wars, the Camarena Story" marked the beginning of the Bush administration's "Noriega treatment" of Mexico. The intention of the propaganda war is to eliminate, through a supposed war against drugs, any remaining pockets of resistance to the genocidal policies dictated through the International Monetary Fund and World Bank.

The program's message was direct enough. In the words of NBC anchor Tom Brokaw, "Camarena was assassinated because he was investigating not only drug trafficking, but also the corruption of the drug trade and how high it reached in the Mexican police, Army, and government. U.S. officials assert that, *as in Panama*, matters of drugs and corruption in Mexico continue to be deep-rooted. *And in nearly every area of that country, there is a local Noriega, a comandante, a governor enriching himself through deals with the Colombian cartel chiefs to bring cocaine, through Mexico, into the United States*" (emphasis added).

Even Mexican President Carlos Salinas de Gortari was called on the carpet. Brokaw reminded the audience that Salinas "promised to attack official corruption linked to the drug trade" and that although "the Mexican police have seized record amounts of cocaine during this period . . . U.S. police authorities say that despite all the government's promises, Mexico has still not permitted the United States to pursue traffickers' planes into Mexican territory. *Without a doubt, the trafficking routes that agent Camarena was trying to shut down continue in full operation, even protected by the same corrupt officials that Camarena wanted to entrap*" (emphasis added).

### Bush administration's blessing

The NBC series had the implicit blessing of the U.S. government. Not only has Washington not issued a single comment on the series, but during the three days it was

broadcast in both the United States and Mexico, U.S. officials appeared on the show to lend credibility to NBC's scenario. Tom Brokaw, for example, queried George Bush's drug policy director William Bennett; "In the Camarena case, if George Bush had been President, do you believe that we would have sent troops to that country?" Similarly, Brokaw asked Rep. Charles Rangel (D-N. Y.), "Do you think that the United States should have launched a military operation of some sort at that time?"

In response, Bennett said that the Mexican government "had a long way still to go," and that while "our critics" say "that we are too active, that we use our military, our force too much, I believe that we should use that force to put an end to this nuisance." DEA administrator John Lawn also appeared, to make the point that "the cartels are using the continent as a whole, and Mexico in particular." He added that the percentage of drugs that enters the U.S. from Mexico is, "I would say, between 35 and 40%."

It was one week later, on Jan. 13, that President Salinas finally issued the first substantial official statement against this new destabilizing offensive. The Mexican head of state declared, "We do not accept defamations," and emphasized that "Mexico assumes and maintains its commitment to a decided fight against the drug trade in the international context, but in no way accepts interference in its internal affairs, under the pretext of a war against that plague. We don't agree to the defamations, because they are absurd, incorrect, and facile." When asked by reporters about the NBC program, Salinas responded, "I am very annoyed."

Up until then, the official reaction of the Mexican government had been lukewarm. The presidential annoyance expressed by Salinas had only appeared unofficially in the leading Mexican dailies, particularly the government-linked *El Nacional*, in the form of commentaries and editorials. Thus, on Jan. 10, Mexican Ambassador to the United States Gustavo Petriccioli called a press conference to criticize merely "the final part" of the program, namely Brokaw's accusations that "in nearly every part of the country there is a local Noriega." The Mexican ambassador barely managed to stutter that such charges smack, "possibly, of bad faith."

That same evening, the Mexican Foreign Ministry broadened the government's "vigorous protest," although without abandoning its defensive tone. The Foreign Ministry said, "We wish to emphasize that the economic power that sustains the drug trade generates corruption in every part of the world. The concrete cases that have occurred in Mexico, once uncovered, have been pursued and opportunely dealt with." The ministry also stated, "We have returned to the era of putting the blame elsewhere, and of reciprocal recriminations among producer, transshipment, and consumer nations, which instead of taking on the common enemy, results in a dispersion of time and effort. . . . The Mexican government has reiterated its conviction that drug trafficking is an international crime

which should be fought in the multilateral arena by affected countries, within the framework of the United Nations, and with full respect for sovereignty, the principle of non-intervention, and for the internal law of each state."

The Permanent Commission of the Mexican Congress also denounced the NBC program in its Jan. 10 meeting and, alluding to the U.S. invasion of Panama, condemned any invasion by foreign forces under the pretext of fighting drugs. The commission said it would stay on alert to "prevent" any new unilateral actions by U.S. troops against any Ibero-American country, since it considered such an action a violation of the self-determination of peoples. The commission's statement was backed by every parliamentary faction represented on that body. Sen. Porfirio Muñoz Ledo warned that "the Mexican government should vigorously respond to the aggression to which it has been subjected" by NBC, since "if we do not react in time, we are going to regret it forever."

### A U.S. 'mini-invasion'

On Jan. 11, the semi-official daily *El Nacional* charged that the NBC program "probably represents the most scandalous and insidious anti-Mexican campaign generated" from the United States, and warned that "the foolish insistence of anchorman Brokaw that 'Mexico is like Panama' . . . leads us to think that the intention of such a statement is to create an environment favoring an eventual and sinister prerogative: that the United States may not only issue certificates of approval or disapproval on matters such as democracy, corruption, or the battle against drugs, but may intervene each time it chooses to do so." The editorial is accompanied by a cartoon characterizing the situation created by NBC as a "mini-invasion."

The next day, *El Nacional* carried a review of the NBC program by Raúl Trejo Delarbre, who notes Brokaw's "repeated insinuations": "Charges are now videotaped. A new campaign is being propagated by antenna and satellite which, going beyond exaggeration, responds to sentiments deeply rooted in the U.S. television audience. *Brokaw is not an amateur nor an improviser. He has advisers capable of evaluating the consequences of every insinuation, of every slip. The interventionist hints remained, to the astonishment of some and the complaints of others*" (emphasis added).

Mr. Trejo said that the very composition of the NBC series was designed to create a false picture of universal corruption in Mexico. 'Drug Wars' uses an intense and fast-paced tone, like any other police series . . . but at times, it uses real fragments of NBC newsreels when, in 1985 and 1986, the inquiries into the Camarena assassination were announced. The series thus acquires . . . credibility. We see a program with the resources of fiction, but with pieces of the real world . . . at least as represented and retrieved by television. On occasion, segments of the series are shown with the format of a television news broadcast (with hand-

held camera and videotape quality), to accentuate the impression that we are seeing real events, although in these cases they are simulated. . . . The names of Mexican officials linked to the prosecution of drug trafficking are real at times, and at others not. U.S. officials appear successful in the end, while Mexican figures are shown as weak. . . . Thus, from metaphor to reality, the U.S. public does not necessarily differentiate between exaggerations and truths. . . . After three days, the conclusion of the U.S. viewer is more than predictable.”

On Jan. 12, columnist Francisco Cárdenas Cruz warned on page 1 of the daily *El Universal* that “the intention of pressuring our country once again seems clear”; that “the worst” of the NBC program is that its moderator dared to “say that Mexico is like Panama,” and suggests that “our country be invaded, like the [Panamanian] isthmus was last December in search of Panamanian Defense Forces chief Gen. Manuel Antonio Noriega.”

Cárdenas Cruz adds, “Today it’s the ‘war against drugs,’ tomorrow it may serve as a pretext for the United States, as Brokaw proposed to DEA administrator Jack Lawn and to Charles Rangel, chairman of the Anti-Drug Committee of the House of Representatives, to invade Mexico in search—according to the reason put forward in Panama and behind the decision of the naval blockade of Colombia—of people linked to the drug trade.” Cárdenas Cruz concludes with the warning that while “the invasion of Panama by the United States merits world condemnation, despite the insistent efforts of Bush and company to try to turn the unjustifiable into something justified, the White House cares little for public opinion; perhaps a cynical expression of ‘concern’ [by Bush] because what occurred could damage relations between his country and Latin America.”

On Jan. 10, *El Día* editorialized, “The televised campaign could be a means of pressure and retaliation by the Bush administration against the Mexican government, for the attitude Mexico has taken in international forums on the invasion of Panama.” *El Día* called on “democratic and progressive forces” in the country to reach “agreements” and to “make strategic provisions” for maintaining “a permanent defense of sovereignty.”

The daily of record, *Excelsior*, warned that “a new interventionist spirit is present in America, hidden behind a supposed crusade against drugs,” and notes that the “disinformation” of the program, by creating animosity between the two nations, is “in reality playing into the hands of the drug traffickers.”

On Jan. 5, Elaine Shannon, author of the book *Desperados* upon which the script for the NBC series was based, wrote in the *Los Angeles Times*: “I really believe that Bush is really ridiculous when he says that he is invading Panama to protect Americans. . . . If he went there for that reason, he should to go Mexico also. There is more drugs and more danger for Americans in Mexico than in Panama.”

## What price the invasion of Panama?

If one can believe public opinion polls, President Bush’s popularity stands at an all-time high largely because of the invasion of Panama. If so, it is because Americans have believed the lies fed to them by the administration and the media, and because they have not yet realized what the invasion has cost Panama and the United States.

Bush’s outlaw behavior is leaving the United States bereft of allies, at a time when the danger of a confrontation with the Soviet Union grows ever larger. The European Parliament condemned the invasion as a violation of international law.

But the administration insists that its decrees are “the law of the world.” Attorney General Richard Thornburgh said on Jan. 19 that the U.S. will “not tolerate wrongdoing that violates American criminal law anywhere in world.” What happens when, not a small country incapable of defending itself, such as Panama, but, say, the Soviet Union, or Red China, decides that the behavior of a Poland, a West Germany, or a Hong Kong “violates” their criminal law? On what grounds can the U.S. challenge their unilateral action?

The invasion was decided upon as early as last summer, and when the American commander, Gen. Fred Worner, balked, arguing that the crisis could be resolved without a U.S. military intervention, he was sacked. His replacement as head of the U.S. Southern Command, Gen. “Mad” Max Thurman, was sent in on Oct. 1, 1989 with explicit instructions: “Prepare to invade.”

Don’t expect the troops home anytime soon. The invasion has brought lawlessness to Panama. On Jan. 17, four gunmen, armed with grenades and AK-47 assault rifles, robbed a bank in the financial center of Panama City. The armed robbery took place virtually under the noses of the U.S. Army, the only functioning authority.

There is also guerrilla activity. On Jan. 19, U.S. military authorities deployed several hundred Green Berets to the provinces of Chiriqui and Bocas del Toro, and admitted that there are still pockets of armed resistance and that they fear a popular backlash. The Green Berets were told to expect to remain at least six months. Guerrilla activity is also reported in San Miguelito and Cerro Azul, leading into the Darien jungle.

Not only has Bush appointed partners of Colombia’s cocaine cartels as the government of Panama, but he has guaranteed that no Ibero-American government can collaborate with the United States. How can Peru, the world’s largest producer of coca leaves, join the United States against drugs or