

# Dope, Inc. is back in the saddle in Panama

by Carlos Wesley

Alvin Weeden, whose activities as a drug money-launderer have long been known to U.S. authorities, was confirmed as Panama's Comptroller General, by a two-vote margin by Panama's Legislative Assembly on Sept. 28.

Weeden's appointment could not have taken place without at least the tacit acquiescence of Madeleine Albright's State Department. The post makes Weeden the chief financial officer for the new administration of Panamanian President Mirya Moscoso—at whose Sept. 1 inauguration Attorney General Janet Reno, ironically, was the United States official representative—and gives him virtually total control of the entire payroll and of nearly every single penny spent by the government.

U.S. Ambassador to Panama Simón Ferro kept silent, even though sources say that a well-placed word by him might well have caused Moscoso to rethink Weeden's appointment. When asked by *EIR* what was the U.S. stance on the appointment, a State Department spokesman demurred that the drug charges against Weeden might be “unproven allegations.” When that didn't wash, he said that there would be no comment while Weeden's confirmation process was ongoing. When it was pointed out that Weeden had already been confirmed—24 hours earlier!—another spokesman said: “In that case, we would still have no comment.”

Other Clinton administration officials were not as sanguine. “Around here we are not pleased with Weeden's appointment,” said an official involved in anti-drug activities. The source complained that Ambassador Ferro had not even bothered to file a report on Weeden's nomination, forcing officials to rely on press reports.

The case against Weeden in Panama was presented by Congresswoman Teresita de Arias, who broke ranks with Moscoso's ruling coalition, noting that Weeden had been named by Steve Samos during the 1985 criminal trial against Sunshine Bank of Miami in the U.S. Federal Court for the Southern District in Miami, as among those who helped him launder money for admitted drug-trafficker José Antonio Fernández. A financial wheeler-dealer who was also involved in the drugs-for-arms Iran-Contra operations, Samos turned state's evidence in exchange for immunity for himself; his former wife, Alma Robles; and his former brothers in law, Winston and Ivan Robles, who were Weeden's law partners. Arias said she was willing to surrender her parliamentary immunity if Weeden wanted to sue her for slander, reported *El Panamá América*.

## The return of the Dadeland Gang

While lying that there had never been such a criminal trial in the United States, Weeden, nonetheless, did not take up the legislator's challenge to bring suit against her. As *EIR* reported when the Sunshine case first broke, Weeden *personally* transported at least half a million dollars in drug money for Fernández. It didn't end there. In 1993, Weeden and his then-boss, Customs chief Rodrigo Arosemena, were named by former Panamanian Attorney General Rogelio Cruz, himself tied to drug cartels, as suspects in the disappearance of several containers of ethyl ether belonging to the Panama Canal Commission, which ended up in the hands of the Colombian cartels. Ether is used to extract cocaine from coca leaves.

Weeden is not the only figure with shady ties in Moscoso's government. Carlos Rodríguez and publisher Roberto “Bobby” Eisenmann, who were co-owners of Dadeland Bank of Florida at the time it was laundering the drug money for Fernández (who was actually a shareholder in Dadeland), are both advisers to the President. Eisenmann is the head of Transparency International in Panama, an NGO that “fights corruption” by destabilizing governments it dislikes. They appear to apply the principle that “it takes one to know one.” Transparency's chief expert on government corruption, for example, is Elliott Abrams, George Bush's former Assistant Secretary of State and the only figure in the Iran-Contra scandal who actually pleaded guilty.

It was under Iran-Contra that the crack-cocaine epidemic was unleashed on the United States, and Abrams, *personally*, according to a July 26, 1989 report from the General Accounting Office (GAO), authorized the illegal disbursement of \$1 million in funds belonging to the Panamanian government that had been seized by the United States, which went to purchase weapons that ended up in the hands of Colombian drug lord Rodríguez Gacha. One of those weapons was used to assassinate Colombian Presidential candidate Luis Carlos Galán, paving the way for the current takeover of Colombia by the drug mafias.

Guillermo Ford, another of Dadeland Bank's former partners, with reported ties to convicted Medellín Cartel chief money-launderer Ramón Millán Rodríguez, is being mooted as Panama's next Ambassador to the United States, or to Great Britain.

The appointment of Weeden and the others has raised eyebrows, since it came a scant three months before the United States is scheduled to hand over full control of the Panama Canal and withdraw the last remaining American soldier from Panamanian territory. Earlier this year, Panamanian Congressman Miguel Bush Riós twice travelled to Washington to warn that Colombia's narco-terrorist FARC has set up camp in Panama's Darién jungle. Bush also noted that drug trafficking and drug-money laundering in Panama have increased five-fold since the 1989 invasion ordered by George Bush, ostensibly against drugs—a fact confirmed by U.S. law enforcement officials.