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GENERAL ASSEMBLY  
Forty-third session  
Items 12, 72, 79, 82, 83  
and 96 of the preliminary list\*  
REPORT OF THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL  
COUNCIL  
REVIEW OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE  
DECLARATION ON THE STRENGTHENING  
OF INTERNATIONAL SECURITY  
QUESTIONS RELATING TO INFORMATION  
DEVELOPMENT AND INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC  
CO-OPERATION  
EXTERNAL DEBT CRISIS AND DEVELOPMENT  
IMPORTANCE OF THE UNIVERSAL REALIZATION OF  
THE RIGHT OF PEOPLES TO SELF-DETERMINATION  
AND OF THE SPEEDY GRANTING OF INDEPENDENCE  
TO COLONIAL COUNTRIES AND PEOPLES FOR THE  
EFFECTIVE GUARANTEE AND OBSERVANCE OF  
HUMAN RIGHTS

SECURITY COUNCIL  
Forty-third year

Letter dated 22 March 1988 from the Permanent Representative  
of Panama to the United Nations addressed to the  
Secretary-General

I have the honour to transmit to you herewith excerpts from the message to the nation issued by His Excellency Mr. Manuel Solís Palma, Minister in Charge of the Presidency of the Republic of Panama, on 21 March 1988 (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would have this letter and its annex distributed as a document of the General Assembly, under items 12, 72, 79, 82, 83 and 96 of the preliminary list, and of the Security Council.

(Signed) Jorge Eduardo RITTER  
Ambassador  
Permanent Representative

\* A/43/50.

ANNEX

Message to the nation issued by the Minister in Charge of the  
Presidency of the Republic of Panama on 21 March 1988

In my capacity as Head of State, I am addressing the country and the world with the authority and responsibility vested in me by the Constitution, the Supreme Court of Justice, the Legislative Assembly and the police, and by the people rallied for this decisive battle to defend the Panamanian nation.

I denounce to all the countries and peoples of the world the mockery which the Government of the United States of America is making of the most elementary principles and rules of international law by its aggression against the Republic of Panama, an aggression unparalleled in the history of mankind.

The Panamanian people and the peoples of Latin America and the world must realize the magnitude of the danger inherent in the strategy of domination which the United States Government is trying out against the people of a small country which has always offered it friendship, always contributed to the growth of its wealth and always helped augment its might.

Everybody must be told the truth.

No matter how great the control currently exerted by the United States Government over the media which generate and disseminate information in that country and in a large part of the world, no matter how great its capacity for manipulating world public opinion, at this terrible hour the Republic of Panama must rise up and tell the world that lies shall not prevail.

Panama's present situation is no sudden phenomenon, it did not happen overnight. It is not an action against one man, against a system, it is not a reaction against a change of leadership. It is the result of a carefully planned strategy of domination, calculated to be implemented systematically, gradually and unscrupulously over a long period of time, conducted with a merciless, vicious cruelty which will live on in the memory of many generations to come.

For years, they paved the way with slanders and lies for winning over peoples' minds by insinuation. For years, they steadily undermined the bastion of Panamanian nationalism by the most degrading sabotage of education and the shaping of awareness among young people. For years, they prepared the ground by obstructing the Panamanian Government's programmes for economic development and social progress, striking at the heart of the national economy, frightening away foreign capital and impeding the Government's efforts to comply with its international financial obligations.

Governments throughout the world know perfectly well how these things are done. Informed men and women everywhere know it too. Anyone who analyses and questions events, anyone who can distinguish between the reality he sees and the reality that is fabricated for him, anyone who questions and looks for the reasons, the purposes of the upheavals in history, knows it.

However, as Head of State and as the person who can speak with the greatest authority in the Republic of Panama, I must now tell our truth, which is the truth and nothing but the truth.

The United States Government wants to prolong its military presence in Panamanian territory beyond the year 2000, in violation of the commitment entered into by President Jimmy Carter and General Omar Torrijos Herrera.

They claim to want a country free of drug traffickers, but that is not what they want. What they want is a country which will let them maintain a strategic military vanguard in the heart of the American continent. They claim to want a country where there is no money laundering, but that is not what they want. What they want is an impoverished, debased and subjugated country which never objects to the presence of an unlimited number of United States troops on its soil. They claim to want a country with a democratic Government, but that is not what they want. What they want is a country with a docile, submissive Government which never objects if they want to use those United States military installations and troops in Panamanian territory against other peoples.

The democracy which we Panamanians are building is based on the principles of neutrality of the Panama Canal, friendly relations with all nations, genuine equality among all our citizens because, without equality, freedom and all freedoms remain a dead letter in the school books and, lastly, the institutions and life-style which the Panamanian people want and not those which another people or Government wants to impose on them.

It is this national will which has resulted in the present situation, and the Governments and peoples of the world must understand that Panama's loss will be everyone's loss. Not only the principle but also the future of the political independence of many other Latin American nations are at stake in the self-determination of the Panamanian people.

The drive for domination which we Panamanians are suffering today must be stopped short in Panama, because failure to act now will help to undermine respectful coexistence among nations and also peace, in this region and this continent at least.

If the United States Government thinks that it can bring us to our knees through its arrogant, arbitrary behaviour, let it now hear our firm and vigorous response. Ours is a people trained in nationalist struggle, accustomed to confrontations with the United States, and prepared to resist and defend the Panamanian nation, no matter what it costs nor how long it takes.

The peoples of the world condemn the coercive, illegal and immoral measures which the United States Government has arbitrarily imposed on our small country. So that the annals of the history of America might record this wanton violation of the principles and rules of international law, this use of embargo and economic blockade and the threat of military force against Panama as means of pressure and oppression, let me list such measures here:

1. Obstruction of negotiations on the external debt service;
2. Blatant violation of the 1977 Panama Canal Treaty, which establishes that payments must be made to the Republic of Panama and not according to the whims of spurious presidents or ambassadors. The United States has withheld the periodic payments due to us for use of the Canal, thereby increasing our budget deficit by an amount approaching 100 million Balboas this year. They have even boasted about doing so, as if violating treaties in order to overthrow Governments was a new rule of international coexistence which other nations would gracefully accept;
3. The United States Government has reduced its quotas for Panamanian exports;
4. The United States Government has excluded Panama from its generalized system of tariff preferences and from the aid and co-operation mechanism of the Caribbean Basin Initiative;
5. Basing itself on recognition of a non-existent Government, the United States Government has ordered the withholding of funds deposited in that country by the National Bank of Panama, as well as the funds of all Panamanian consulates deposited in United States bank accounts. In so doing, it has triggered a serious currency crisis of a magnitude never before seen in our country, thereby obstructing production, currency movements and the normal transactions of the national economy;

The arbitrary court orders freezing the funds of the Republic of Panama tarnish the independence of the United States judicial system, which is bowing to the dictates of the State Department and violating the international treaties and agreements in force which that country signed with the Republic of Panama and which its Congress ratified, thereby making them United States law;

6. It has also threatened to suspend or restrict oil shipments through the Petroterminales de Panama pipeline, in order to further aggravate Panama's fiscal situation by eliminating the revenues from taxes and dividends due to the Panamanian State as a shareholder in that corporation;
7. The United States Government has imposed direct bans on exports from its country to Panama and has called on other countries to also restrict their exports to Panama in order to create a serious shortage of strategic goods;
8. Also by means of court orders, it has barred Air Panama flights and prohibited vessels flying the Panamanian flag from docking in United States ports. It has even seized an aeroplane of the Panamanian national airline along with all its other assets in the United States;
9. In addition to such direct aggression, it has tried to augment the adverse effects on other important sectors of our economy, such as the international financial services and maritime shipping services which Panama provides to other countries of the world. To this must be added innumerable cases of harassment and humiliation of foreign service officials of the legitimately constituted Government of the Republic of Panama, and countless assaults on our national dignity.

All these actions are clear and obvious manifestations of an undeclared war against the Republic of Panama, against the Panamanian people's desire for peace and the national will to defend the neutrality of the Panama Canal. The colossus is not moving against a man, or a Government, or an ideology. The prey it is pursuing is a national will which no longer coincides with its will, which does not agree with its current interpretation of security interests and political and economic domination. What the United States Government is trying to do is to bend the will of the Panamanian people - the will to defend the legacy of General Omar Torrijos Herrera and enter the twenty-first century as a nation which has finally achieved genuine sovereignty, independence and freedom and no longer has any foreign troops on its soil.

Nowhere does the 1977 Panama Canal Treaty authorize the United States of America to decide unilaterally to conduct military exercises outside the defence sites clearly established and precisely demarcated on the agreed maps. On the contrary, the Treaty establishes a bi-national body which must co-ordinate and plan such exercises once formal authorization has been given, at the highest level of the executive branch, by the Republic of Panama.

The 1977 Panama Canal Treaty, including all the annexes and maps, documents, exchanges of notes and amendments, understandings and reservations in the instruments of ratification, authorizes a United States military presence and military activities only for the specific purposes of protecting and defending the Canal, and such purposes can never include, in anyone's eyes, manoeuvres to intimidate the Panamanian Defence Forces or preparations for an invasion or occupation.

The Governments of countries with large armies and long military traditions will have no difficulty in grasping the significance of these exercises with lethal ammunition and destructive capacity, which are being held only kilometres from installations of the Panamanian Defence Forces and alongside villages where the cracked walls and broken windows of schools and churches bear witness to the aggressive extent of the operation.

The closing of banks and the paralysing of the financial centre, both provoked by the economic aggression of a foreign Government which is thus making a mockery of the confidence placed in it by Panamanians for 85 years, show us and the world just how vulnerable our monetary system and thus the national economy really are.

These bank closures, which are the result of the arbitrary, illegal seizure of dollars belonging not only to the national treasury but also to private depositors of different nationalities, have suddenly restricted the currency available in the country, with devastating effects for the economy of the Panamanian people who have thus been deprived of the means of exchange which enabled them to meet their essential everyday needs. This unheard of action which, to the shame of the civilized world, marks the first use of the weapon of financial piracy in relations among nations, makes it clear that the workability of our monetary system must be studied carefully and responsibly in the context of the concepts of economic reality and national sovereignty. I believe firmly that this is so because the national Government has a duty to take the necessary steps to defend the country's

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free enterprise economic system and the institutions on which it is based, as well as the banking centre which is now temporarily in disarray because of foreign pressures and covert or overt political intrigues.

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