

tionally, 890 troops were dispatched immediately from the 7th Light Infantry Division at Fort Ord, California, and arrived on May 12th while another group from the 5th Light Infantry Division from Fort Polk, Louisiana were sent. In total 1,700 soldiers and 165 marines of the 2nd Marine Expeditionary Force were dispatched.

US troops in Panama now just about equal the number of Panama's Defense Forces. Presently, American personnel are based at 10 military installations along the 50-mile long Panama Canal. These additional troops were sent under the pretext of protecting American lives, similar pretexts were given for the 1965 invasion of the Dominican Republic and the 1983 invasion of Granada to justify US intervention in an effort to protect US interests in the region.

OAS RESPONSE

On May 12, 31 representatives of the Organization of American States

(OAS) met to consider a request by Venezuela to discuss Panama in a special session to be held on May 17th. The US circulated a petition among the region's leaders prior to the May 17th meeting to condemn Noriega's annulment of the May 7th elections and call on him to relinquish power. The US also asked all Latin American countries to withdraw their ambassadors from Panama. Subsequently, Mexico recalled its ambassador, the first Latin American country to do so. One should take into account here the fact that the US funds two-thirds of the OAS budget, \$40 million yearly. The US has historically resorted to using its economic leverage whenever it sees fit.

On May 17th, the OAS met to discuss Panama's «serious crisis.» In this meeting they called for the «transference of power» in the quickest possible time. The OAS also condemned Noriega with the exception of Nicaragua.

A delegation of three foreign

ministers and the Secretary-General Joao Baera Soares arrived in Panama on May 23rd to try to induce Noriega to step aside. Noriega responded by saying that the attitude of the OAS toward Panama is the result of US pressure and sets a dangerous precedent.

The Panamanian cabinet condemned the OAS accusing it of reverting to their traditional role of supporting North America.

US intervention in the internal affairs of any country is a violation of the sovereignty of said nation and therefore should be condemned. The principles of non-intervention in the internal affairs of Panama should be respected as stated in the Panama Canal treaties and dictated by international law. This deliberate violation of the Panama's sovereignty is Bush's attempt to forestall the transferring of the Panama Canal to its rightful owners. ●

US soldiers from Fort Ord, California as they leave for Panama.

