

Noriega Receives 40 Years

Panamanian Could Be Eligible for Parole on 10 Years

By William Booth
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MIAMI, July 10—Former Panamanian leader Manuel Antonio Noriega was sentenced today to 40 years in prison on drug and racketeering charges, but not before he accused President Bush of being a lying bully and a mass murderer.

U.S. District Judge William M. Hovelevler ordered Noriega, who addressed the court in Spanish for nearly three hours, to be held temporarily at the Metropolitan Correctional Center south of Miami. This will allow Noriega's defense attorneys time to argue that Noriega is a prisoner of war and thus should be sent not to a federal penitentiary, but to a military POW camp.

Because Noriega committed his crimes before 1987, he was sentenced under more lenient guidelines, which means he may be eligible for parole in 10 years. It is not yet known where Noriega will serve his time, although some sources associated with the case expected that Noriega will go a maximum-security prison, such as the one located in Marion, Ill.

Lead defense attorney Frank Rubino said he expected that Noriega, 58, would be in prison until he is 83—"if he lives that long."

Rubino said he had expected the lengthy sentence. Prosecutors had asked that Noriega be sentenced 120 years; Rubino had asked that Noriega be returned to Panama to stand trial there on murder and corruption charges.

Since Noriega has already served 2½ years in jail, he could appear before a parole board in January 2000, 10 years after 27,000 U.S. troops invaded Panama and captured the former general. There were 23 American soldiers and an estimated 500 Panamanians killed in the brief conflict.

During his seven-month trial,



Prosecutors Myles Malman, Herbert J. Lewis III and Michael Sullivan after trial. AGENCE FRANCE PRESSE

which ended in April with his conviction on eight counts of drug trafficking and racketeering, the former Panamanian dictator never took the witness stand. He sat impassive and stone-faced through the proceedings.

But today, Noriega stepped up to the lectern in his full dress Panama Defense Forces uniform, blew a kiss to his three daughters and launched into an animated but wandering three-hour speech, which was translated and included references to the Bible, Hillary Clinton and Socrates. Noriega also dipped

into a brief discourse on Panamanian history and attempted to explain why Panamanians like to party.

He accused the U.S. government of masterminding the assassination of his predecessor, Gen. Omar Torrijos, of plotting to kill the ailing shah of Iran while he was in Panama and of wanting Noriega himself hunted down and killed.

Much of the former general's speech focused on his anger at Bush, whom he repeatedly referred to as George Herbert Walker Bush, and

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Noriega Sentenced to 40 Years; Levels Charges at Bush

NORIEGA, From A1

Noriega's belief that he was indicted for crimes he did not commit because he refused to yield to Bush or former president Ronald Reagan.

"Panama was not invaded because of the canal or danger to the lives of Americans," Noriega said. "Panama was invaded because I was an obstacle to President Bush, who preferred me dead."

Noriega said that Bush had "lied" to the Panamanian people when he told them the United States would pay for damages from the invasion. And he labeled Bush a bully "whose chest swelled up when he said he was

putting a price on my head of \$1 million dollars." Finally, Noriega accused Bush of "genocide" of innocent Panamanians and compared the Bush administrator's alleged use of "propaganda" to that used by the Nazis.

Noriega said that in May 1988 he was offered a deal by senior U.S. officials, who he claimed would have dropped the drug trafficking indictments against him in return for his promise to leave Panama.

This, Noriega said, would then have allowed the Reagan-Bush administration to install "a puppet government" in Panama. This friendly government would have permitted U.S. forces to remain in Panama and have let the United States continue to control the Panama Canal long after 2000, the year President Jimmy Carter had agreed to relinquish operation of the canal to Panama.

Noriega said he "was captured and tried because he 'would not sell' his country to Reagan or Bush, who wanted a Panamanian leader who was 'submissive, dependent and

subservient." He added, "This 'no' is the reason why I am here today." However, however, told Noriega that the reason he was in federal court in Miami today was because he was indicted of drug charges and found guilty by a jury.

"Politics was not part of this case, and should not be part of it," Hoeweler said. "What happened outside the four corners of this case is somebody else's burden, not mine."

Bush, in a statement issued from his vacation home in Kennebunkport, Maine, called Noriega's sentence "a fitting punishment for drug crimes that have harmed all Americans."

Bush said that the December 1989 U.S. invasion "reared the people of Panama from a brutal tyranny; the sentence handed down today demonstrates that it also led to the conviction and just punishment of an unrepentant drug criminal. For that, Americans and our allies have reason to be proud."

U.S. Attorney Michael Sullivan characterized Noriega's speech as "a farce" and the Panamanian's various charges "a figment of his imagination."

Indeed, the trial seemed to end much as it began, with many references to dirty dealing by the Reagan and Bush administrations but little concrete evidence of wrongdoing. Noriega asked, for example, why there was no evidence allowed about his meetings with former CIA director William J. Casey, but Noriega said nothing about what those meetings entailed. Noriega attacked his accusers, many drug dealers who had cut deals with the government prosecutors, as liars.

His comments about Bush could not have been more personal. At one point, Noriega held up a letter he said Bush had addressed to him.

At another, he waved a photograph of himself and the president, asking Hoeweler sarcastically why so many top U.S. officials, including top-ranking members of the Drug Enforcement Agency, had consorted with a drug dealer.

But prosecutors said Noriega failed to defend himself. "Due to his overweening pride and arrogance, he

merely vented his spleen," Sullivan said. "It was he who subjected so many others to terror and injustice."

Noriega's attorneys said they will appeal the conviction; that could take as long as four years. Noriega is still under indictment on marijuana smuggling charges. U.S. attorneys said they were "pressing ahead" on that trial in Tampa.

Staff writer Ann Devroy in Kennebunkport contributed to this report.