

## PANAMA: Aftermath of Torrijos's Death

*The domestic political situation following the death of General Omar Torrijos is likely to be in a state of flux in the coming months and will depend substantially on the intention of the military high command.* [redacted]

The allegiance of the military to Torrijos was based largely on the benefits it received for supporting the coup in 1968, and the power vacuum that now exists is unlikely to be filled soon. Torrijos kept his subordinates politically isolated and often fueled their mutual antagonism to enhance his own control. [redacted]

The officer corps is not likely to work well with President Royo, a figurehead retained by the military because of Torrijos's desire to maintain the integrity of the presidency. Royo will be concerned with the possibility of a coup before his term ends in 1984, and he could choose to hold presidential elections sooner. [redacted]

If the newly appointed commander of the National Guard, Colonel Florez, chooses not to accept his scheduled retirement next month, Deputy Chief of Staff Lieutenant Colonel Paredes could begin to plot against him. Intelligence chief Lieutenant Colonel Noriega has also traditionally been viewed as a prime mover in any conspiracy to seize power. [redacted]

Whether or not the elections are moved up, parties and groups on both ends of the political spectrum probably will be more active in pursuing policies affecting their interests. If the potential for street violence or strikes were to grow, the Royo government could feel compelled to divert domestic attention to external issues such as US regional policy or Canal treaty matters. [redacted]

Royo occasionally has demonstrated a certain recklessness and naivete in foreign policy, and without Torrijos to keep him in line, he may try to assert himself in foreign affairs, particularly in Central America. [redacted]



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