

Panama Court to Try Noriega for 1970 Murder of Leftist Leader



Panama City, May 6 (teleSUR-RHC)-- Former Panamanian leader Manuel Noriega will face trial for his alleged role in the 1970 disappearance and death of leftist leader Heliodoro Portugal, Panama's Supreme Court announced on Monday.

In 2010, the court began investigating Noriega for his role in Portugal's case, when Noriega was the head of Panama's now extinct national guard. Noriega, who is currently serving a 60-year sentence at the *El Renacer* prison in Panama for the disappearance and killing of his opponents during his time in power, will go on trial again May 21st.

A truth commission in Panama found at least 110 cases of murders and disappearances of Noriega opponents during his rule, which began in 1983. Noriega was on the CIA payroll for decades, until relations between his regime and Washington began to deteriorate in the 1980s.

The former Panamanian leader was ousted in 1989 following "Operation Just Cause," the U.S. invasion, which bombed the low-income neighborhood of *El Chorillo* in Panama City, killing as many as 3,500 Panamanians and leaving some 15,000 people homeless.

Following his removal from power, he was jailed for 20 years in the United States for drug trafficking, then extradited to France and jailed there two years for money laundering. France extradited him back to Panama in 2011.

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