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U.S. PRESS CORPS REACTION TO PANAMA SITUATION

The American newsmen covering the overthrow of Arnulfo Arias in Panama seemed to view the events with a mixture of cynicism and disgust. For the hard core idealist, like Jim Goodsell of the CSM, there was great disappointment that once again a Latin American constitutional government had been ousted by the military.

But Goodsell was probably in the minority. Most of the correspondents seemed to believe that "after all, this is Panama, and what else could you expect." There appeared to be widespread agreement that Arnulfo brought much of what happened on himself by acting so quickly against the Guardia. Many commented on the lack of reaction among the people to the ouster. This was seen as ~~characteristic~~ characteristic of a people and a nation uncommitted to any ideology and disenchanted with democracy and its processes as practiced here. After the junta announced new elections, there was much cynical predicting that most of the Arias followers would soon be deserting his ship to feather a new political nest.

Concerning the U.S. role, there was some disappointment expressed that the U.S. did not assume a more forceful ~~active~~ attitude in defense of a constitutional government. There was considerable amusement over what was felt must surely be the embarrassment of the U.S. government over a coup staged by Panama's Guardia--so closely linked to the U.S. military in training and equipment.

But for the most part, correspondents did not express their views and biases with the passion that was aroused by the events in Santo Domingo three years ago. The prevailing feeling appeared to be that what happened in Panama has been going on in Latin America for a long time, and will continue to go on in the future.

(This information was supplied by Voice of America correspondent Harry Caceda who spent much of his time with the American correspondents who were covering the Panama story.)