

**Special
Pull-
Out
Section**

Inside

Classifieds.....8A-9A
Columns.....10A-11A
Feature.....2A
Sports.....6A-7A
World & Nation.....3A-5A

**CATHOLIC
COURIER**

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**Noriega tests
U.S.-Vatican
relationship**

By John Thavis
Catholic News Service

VATICAN CITY — The strange case of deposed Panamanian dictator Gen. Manuel Noriega, who took refuge in the Panama City nunciature Dec. 24, set off a week of delicate negotiations and diplomatic tensions between the Vatican, the United States and Panama.

As the new year arrived, Noriega was still enjoying what the Vatican carefully termed "temporary diplomatic asylum" in the nunciature, the Vatican's embassy. Meanwhile, U.S. troops kept up their watch outside the building, hoping to nab Noriega and bring him to the United States for trial on drug charges.

As the week ended, no third country had publicly offered political asylum to Noriega. With Panama's new government hesitant to take custody of Noriega and the Vatican unwilling to hand him over directly to the United States, the situation appeared to remain at an impasse.

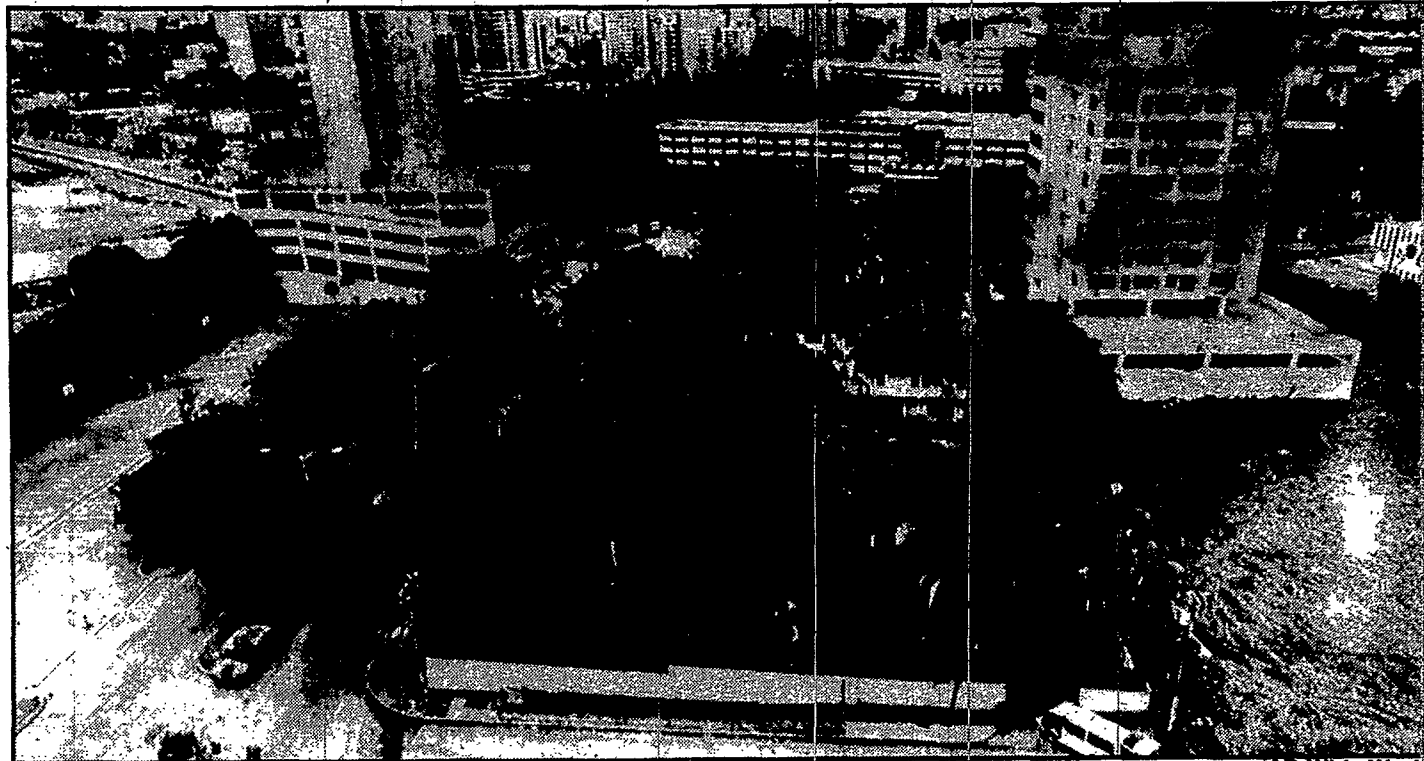
On Dec. 29, Panama's bishops told Pope John Paul II in a letter that Noriega must "be turned over to justice." They did not, however, specify whose justice he should be handed to.

The Vatican sent an experienced diplomatic official, Monsignor Giacinto Berloco, to Panama to "lend a hand" to the nuncio, a spokesman said Jan. 2. Monsignor Berloco is the Vatican's counselor to the Panamanian nunciature and routinely handles other Latin American affairs at the Vatican Secretariat of State. He was described by co-workers as well-versed in legal affairs.

Noriega was the target of an invasion Dec. 20 by more than 20,000 U.S. troops. He turned up at the nunciature four days later, after the fighting had left many soldiers and several hundred civilians dead.

Throughout the week, the Vatican sought to emphasize several points:

- The nuncio, Archbishop Jose Sebastian Laboa, had accepted Noriega temporarily, and only after the ousted



A general view of the Vatican Embassy compound, center foreground, where deposed Panamanian dictator Gen. Manuel Noriega took refuge on Dec. 24.

leader promised to call off his armed struggle against the invasion. In fact, Vatican spokesman Joaquin Navarro-Valls said Dec. 29, there had not been a single death in the fighting since Noriega entered the nunciature. Some Panamanians, however, said that after the attack began, Noriega became a fugitive controlling nothing but his own flight from a U.S. military dragnet.

- The Vatican could not simply consign Noriega to U.S. troops or "walk him to the door," as had been suggested by U.S. officials. For an embassy in one country to turn over a person seeking asylum to a third country would be "absolutely outside the norms of diplomatic procedures and international law," Navarro-Valls said.

- The Vatican was willing to consider a request for Noriega from Panama's new government, but as of Dec. 30 no such request had been made. The church was not trying to "block the course of justice concerning a person accused of serious crimes," said a statement Dec. 30 from the Vatican Secretariat of State.

- The nuncio was meanwhile trying to convince Noriega to leave the nunciature voluntarily — but without forcing

him to do so.

"Certainly, Gen. Noriega is not living in a hotel — so one day or another he must leave," Navarro-Valls said.

Negotiations between U.S. and Vatican officials on Noriega's fate continued on a "cordial" basis, with Ambassador Thomas Melady, U.S. envoy to the Vatican, meeting Dec. 27 with Archbishop Angelo Sodano, the Vatican's deputy Secretary of State. The United States kept pressing for Noriega to be handed over and the Vatican politely refused, a Rome source said.

Meanwhile, U.S. military actions around the nunciature prompted a sharply worded reaction at the Vatican.

In an apparent bid to unnerve Noriega and those hosting him, U.S. soldiers spent the week blasting non-stop rock music at the nunciature, frisking embassy personnel, stopping official cars from entering, shooting out street lights and buzzing the building by helicopter.

"An occupying power cannot interfere with the work of a diplomatic mission nor demand that a person seeking asylum there be handed over to it," Navarro-Valls said Dec. 29.

Eight demonstrators arrested in anti-abortion protest

By Lee Strong
Staff writer

ROCHESTER — Eight participants in a Catholic anti-abortion protest were arrested on trespassing charges Thursday, Dec. 28, after they occupied the office of Dr. David Gandell, 1400 Mt. Hope Avenue. Six of the eight were also charged with resisting arrest.

Those arrested were among approxi-



Abortion protester Sean McEntee of Rochester is carried out by police during a Dec. 28 rally at the Mt. Hope Avenue offices of Dr. David Gandell.

mately 100 anti-abortion activists who staged a protest at the doctor's office, claiming that he performs abortions there on Thursdays.

The protest began with a Mass at St. Theodore's Church, Gates, commemorating the Feast of the Holy Innocents.

Father Anthony Mugavero, parochial vicar at the church and one of the eight arrested at the doctor's office, delivered a homily in which he drew a relationship between the infants killed by Herod after the birth of Christ and those killed through abortion. Just as Joseph and Mary fled to Egypt to protect the infant Jesus, he explained, those who oppose abortion take action to protect the unborn.

"Good needs to be protected," Father Mugavero said.

After the Mass, the protesters traveled to Dr. Gandell's office, where one group marched outside and another group occupied the office and prevented patients from entering the building.

Dr. Gandell confronted the activists in his office, asking them to leave and saying that no abortions were scheduled there that day. He added that he is pro-choice and does perform abortions if his patients request them, however.

According to Rosalie Mugavero, a spokeswoman for the protesters, the group learned that at least one abortion was scheduled for the day of the protest. She said that the group had been monitoring the doctor's activity for some time and had discovered that Thursday was his regular day to perform abortions.



Dr. David Gandell attempts to squeeze past abortion protesters blocking the entrance to his offices in order to confer with patients waiting outside.

Mugavero, sister of Father Mugavero, acknowledged that the demonstration was inconveniencing Dr. Gandell's patients, but noted that protesters were distributing letters to all the patients apologizing and explaining the reason for the protest.

She said the protest was not intended just to close the office and to prevent abortions that day, but also to "raise the conscience of our society."

Demonstrators continued to march even after the arrests until the office was closed.

The eight arrested protesters — Father Mugavero; Robert Dorsheid of Penfield;

Patricia Weber of Greece; Dolores Dries of Henrietta; and Donna Kearney, Barbara Fredericks, Carol Crossed, and Sean McEntee, all of Rochester — were arraigned in Rochester City Court on Friday, Dec. 29, on charges of criminal trespass.

Father Mugavero, Dorsheid, Dries, Fredericks, Crossed and McEntee — whom police had to carry out of the building — were also charged with resisting arrest.

A pre-trial hearing is scheduled for Jan. 5, 1990, before City Court Judge Gary Smith.