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# The United States 1989 military intervention in Panama: a just cause?

William Harrison Huff IV

*Louisiana State University and Agricultural and Mechanical College, whuff1@lsu.edu*

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THE UNITED STATES 1989  
MILITARY INTERVENTION IN PANAMA:  
A JUST CAUSE?

A Thesis

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the  
Louisiana State University and  
Agricultural and Mechanical College  
in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of  
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in

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in Liberal Arts

by  
William H. Huff IV  
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## **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

I want to thank my family, all of whom endured Operation JUST CAUSE and the experiences of war first hand, for their love and support.

I must express my gratitude to my father, who while commanding an infantry battalion in combat against the enemy placed the greatest of faith in his eldest son to ensure the safety and protection of our home and family - a defining moment in my life. I also want to thank my mother for providing strength and courage during Operation JUST CAUSE while in the midst of indirect fire from the enemy on our household. My brother deserves special recognition for his indescribable companionship and providing local armed security for our household. Lastly, I would like to thank my wife for her continuous support, encouragement and love.

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## **ABSTRACT**

American involvement in Panama dates back to 1903 when the United States helped bring independence to the Republic and soon after began construction of the Panama Canal. As the guarantor of Panamanian sovereignty, the U.S in the ensuing decades contributed to a non-democratic environment in Panama by supporting a series of dictators who promised stability in the region. The U.S. National Security policy just before Operation JUST CAUSE finally acknowledged the brutality of the Panamanian dictator, Manuel Noriega, forcing Washington to attempt numerous unsuccessful diplomatic maneuvers in an effort to avoid military intervention. Once combat operations commenced, the justification, necessity and amount of force committed in Panama came under critical review by some lawmakers and the public. However, military leaders task organized U.S. forces against Panamanian units and significant key locations in accordance with Army doctrinal correlation of forces and means for a deliberate attack. A comprehensive assessment of force ratios and insights on conduct during JUST CAUSE displays the successful application of a measured military force in adherence with strict rules of engagement.

History bound the United States with Panama ultimately forcing military intervention in order to restore democracy. The response, executed with measured force and conducted appropriately, resulted in all of the National Security objectives met and ensured democracy returned to the Republic of Panama and its people. The 1989 military intervention in Panama was a just cause.

## CHAPTER 1

### GENESIS OF INTERVENTION

“It has often been said that the Panama Canal is one of the most vital possessions of the United States, essential to defense and the fulfillment of national policy.”

- Norman J. Padelford, The Panama Canal in Peace and War.<sup>1</sup>

After the United States became the guarantor of Panamanian independence in 1903 and undertook construction of the Panama Canal, successive American governments sought to maintain political stability in the region for that would spell security for the new commercially invaluable and strategically indispensable waterway. The Canal not only served as a commercial artery uniting the waters of the Atlantic and Pacific, thus shortening trade routes, but it was a focal point of national defense, a base of operations for the protection of the Hemisphere and an instrument of national influence.<sup>2</sup>

The crisis in both the Atlantic and Pacific during World War II dramatized the significance of the Canal as an element in power projection by the U.S., and if the waterway's broad strategic value would diminish in the nuclear era, it would retain considerable military usefulness, while its role in international commerce would remain a vital one. Washington's search for stability on the Isthmus led it to support a series of Panamanian dictators who promised to keep nationalistic pressures under control. United States policy toward Panama thus contributed to a non-democratic environment in Panama and, it could be argued, incurred for the U.S. a “moral debt” for Panama's development and evolution. One alternative to anti-democratic rule in Panama would have been overt, systematic intervention in its internal politics to dictate how Panamanians should conduct their national affairs, a policy that would have raised cries of “Yankee imperialism” and further undermined Washington's influence in Latin America. The other option would have been a hands-off policy that would have encouraged

Communist activity and allowed the spread of an anti-American nationalism that inevitably would have posed risks to control and operation of the Canal, as well as to the lives of American civilians and military personnel living in the Canal Zone. Neither of those alternatives was acceptable to American policymakers. The U.S. thus acquiesced in the seizure of power by the Panamanian military in 1968 and its attitude toward autocratic regimes in Panama over the next two decades helped foster a “Time of Tyrants.”

The Spanish-American War of 1898 revealed the inability of the U.S. Navy to respond with warships in a timely manner. The U.S. not only had difficulty transferring ships from the Atlantic to Cuban waters, but any quick deployment from Cuba to the Philippines would have meant a time-consuming voyage around Cape Hope. American ground forces thus ran additional risks when deprived of support from the Navy’s mighty battleships. President Theodore Roosevelt, who had been Assistant Secretary of the Navy at the start of that conflict, was convinced that a canal someplace across Central America was a national security priority. His interest culminated in the Spooner Act of June 29, 1902, which provided for a canal through the Isthmus of Panama, and the Hay-Herrán Treaty of January 22, 1903, under which Colombia gave consent to such a project with a 100-year lease on an area ten kilometers wide. The Colombian Senate refused to ratify the treaty, however, and Roosevelt, determined to construct a canal, encouraged a separatist movement in Panama, then a Colombian province.

In July 1903, José Augustin Arango, an attorney for the Panama Railroad Company, along with Manuel Amador Guerrero and Carlos C. Arosemena, all from prominent Panamanian families, established a revolutionary junta in Panama. With financial assistance provided by Philippe Bunau-Varilla, a French national eager to sell to the United States his New Panama Canal Company, which had a soon-to-expire concession from the Colombian government,



the Panamanian leaders conspired to take advantage of American resentment toward Colombia. That fall, under the apparent protection of U.S. naval forces, they launched a successful uprising against Colombian rule. Acting, ironically, under the Bidlack-Mallarino Treaty of 1846 between the U.S. and Colombia, which provided that U.S. forces could intervene in the event of disorder on the isthmus to guarantee Colombian sovereignty and open transit across the isthmus, the U.S. prevented a Colombian force from moving across the isthmus to Panama City to suppress the insurrection.<sup>3</sup>

President Roosevelt quickly recognized the new Panamanian junta as the de facto government on November 6 and days later Bunau-Varilla, as the diplomatic representative of the “new” Panama, a role he had purchased through financial assistance to the rebels, concluded the Isthmian Canal Convention with Secretary of State John Hay in Washington. Panamanians ratified the treaty on December 2, and approval by the U.S. Senate came on February 23, 1904. The rights granted to the U.S. in the Hay-Bunau-Varilla Treaty were extensive. They included a grant “in perpetuity of the use, occupation, and control” of a ten mile-wide strip of territory and extensions of three nautical miles into the sea from each terminal “for the construction, maintenance, operation, sanitation, and *protection*”<sup>4</sup> of an isthmian canal. That treaty marked the beginning of a U.S. military presence in Panama that lasted nearly a century.<sup>5</sup>

According to Article I of the Hay-Bunau-Varilla Treaty, the U.S. guaranteed Panamanian independence. During the brief separatist struggle in 1903, an oversized battalion of former Colombian troops under the command of General Estéban Huertas had become the Panamanian army. Huertas and his soldiers supported the independence movement and switched their allegiance from Colombia to Panama. Named commander in chief of the small army, the general became one of Panama’s most prominent citizens. When he attempted to assert authority over

the new republic's first president, Manuel Amador Guerrero, however, the chief executive forced him into retirement and demobilized the army. Although Huertas failed in his effort to use the military as a political instrument, he established a precedent for such attempts.

The Corps of National Police created in December 1904 to replace the disbanded army would function as the country's only armed force for the next half-century. But it was not until the presidency of José Antonio Remón in the early 1950s that institutionalization of the corps took place as the National Police became the National Guard (*Guardia Nacional*). During the 1950s and 1960s, the Guardia took on the character of an army and a more professional one at that, largely with aid from Washington under the Mutual Security Act of 1951. This movement of the Guardia away from its police roots and toward a regular military status accelerated during the 1960s because of the perceived threat from Fidel Castro's Cuba. American military assistance, which included the training of more Panamanian officers and enlisted personnel at U.S. facilities in the Canal Zone, increased dramatically during the 1960s.<sup>6</sup>

The presence of American warships had influenced significantly the outcome of the Panamanian revolt in 1903. Eighty-six years later, the U.S. would once again intervene in Panama, but this time to remove a dictator and ensure the security of the Panama Canal and the American civilians living in Panama. The U.S. essentially had created the Republic of Panama, installed its politicians, and funded the local police force-turned-military. Born out of the first 1903 intervention and flourishing throughout the century under dictator after dictator, America had an obligation and the responsibility to intervene militarily for a second time in Panama.

In the wake of World War II the societies of Latin America underwent rapid changes as old land-owning elites began to lose their grip on power in the face of rising popular aspirations for social justice, economic equality, political participation, and in Panama, national

independence. The resulting instability threatened the typical client-state system and seemed to make Latin America vulnerable to revolutionary Marxism. In response, the U.S. embraced military regimes that seized power in various Latin American countries.<sup>7</sup>

A watershed in Panamanian history occurred on October 11, 1968. While the recently elected President, Arnulfo Arias, was watching a movie, the military took control of the Republic of Panama. The Guardia Nacional seized the presidential palace, and television and radio stations, forcing Arias to use back streets to seek asylum in the Canal Zone. His last and shortest-lived presidency (ten days) was over. Once Panama went under military control, the slogan “11 de Octubre” rang out for years.<sup>8</sup>

Arias had become president for the third time on October 1, 1968 after his previous terms had ended in scandals. His first administration, which began in 1940, had lasted only one year. When President Franklin Roosevelt asked him to authorize the arming of Panamanian flag vessels in support of the Allies, Arias had refused and the resultant American reaction to his seemingly pro-Axis sympathies had made his situation untenable and he fled into exile in Argentina. In 1948, Arias returned to Panama and charged into the presidency on a ticket promoting Panamanian nationalism. Without warning, in 1951 he dissolved the National Assembly, abolished the Supreme Court, and rescinded the Constitution, dictatorial moves that provoked violent protest demonstrations. Forced once again to abandon his office, he departed vowing to return to the presidency.<sup>9</sup>

The 1960's proved to be a turbulent period in Panamanian history as Castro's efforts to inflame Latin American nationalism against the U.S. seemed to bear fruit. Anti-American riots in the Canal Zone in 1964 were a sign of the volatility of the situation in Panama. By 1968 many notable Panamanians longed for strong leadership and, with their encouragement, Arias ran yet

again for office. Undoubtedly charismatic and thought to be adept at disciplining popular enthusiasm, he won the election - only to face immediate friction with the military. The commandant of the Guardia Nacional, Brigadier General Bolivar Vallarino, who had branded Arias a “fascist” in 1951, attempted to “steal” the recent election by having his supporters literally make off with ballot boxes at gunpoint. Against his desires, Vallarino nearly instigated a civil war. The crisis seemed to end when Arias agreed to allow him to retire in return for his public recognition of Arias as the legitimate president. This arrangement enraged Guardia officers loyal to Vallarino, and their anger deepened when Arias on October 9 decided against appointing the second-in-command, Colonel Jose Pinilla, as successor to Vallarino, instead ordering Pinilla’s early retirement and naming Lieutenant Colonel Bolivar Urrutia as Vallarino’s replacement.<sup>10</sup>

Between October 9 and 11, Major Boris Martinez, Guardia commander of the large Chiriqui province, organized a history-making coup. In Panama City to attend the transfer of command ceremonies, Martinez, a strong-willed officer respected by peers and superiors alike, found himself at the center of a growing sentiment to counter the President’s “evident intention to wreck the Guardia Nacional as an institution and its officers as military professionals.” Persuaded to act, Martinez enlisted the support of his friend, Lieutenant Colonel Omar Torrijos, and one of his own lieutenants, Manuel Noriega, before returning to his province that evening to recruit additional help.<sup>11</sup> The very next day he arrived back in Panama City on a DC-3 airplane loaded with supporters to proclaim the government’s overthrow and declare martial law. Other Guardia commanders backed the coup and Arias found himself fleeing for his life. The coup stunned Panamanians because their country was the only one in Latin America that had never experienced a military takeover. Indeed, Martinez and followers preferred civilian control and

offered the presidency to Vice President Raul Arango, who refused it. The next option was to attempt to form a junta of “notables,” but no suitable candidates were willing to serve. In the end Martinez set up a junta under his direction; the other two members were Colonel Pinilla and the new Guardia commandant, Urrutia. With those selections, Martinez protected Guardia seniority and ensured military control of the government. The junta existed in name only, since Martinez was the effective power-holder, but the ostensible sharing of authority mitigated somewhat the dictatorial character of the regime and facilitated international recognition. With the coup d'état, Panama began life under military supervision that lasted two decades with the full support of the U.S. as “a means to an end” during the Cold War.<sup>12</sup>

Boris Martinez's tenure as Panama's first dictator was short-lived but notable in that it marked the beginning of the U.S. support of dictatorial rule in Panama.<sup>13</sup> On November 13, 1968, a week after the election of President Richard M. Nixon, the U.S. recognized the Junta in the hope of ensuring stability and blocking any attempt by communists to take advantage of a seemingly vulnerable Panama.<sup>14</sup> If successful in exploiting the failure of democracy in Panama, the Soviet Union could have embarrassed the U.S. and perhaps weakened the policy of containment within the American sphere of influence.

Washington might have insisted on the restoration of the Arias government, but the former president was demagogic and extremely independent in his actions. As a result, the American government acquiesced in military rule, even though the junta reached a disconcerting understanding with the *Partido del Pueblo* (PDP) or People's Party.<sup>15</sup> The PDP was the Panamanian equivalent of a Moscow-controlled communist party, and the junta wanted its support in curbing anticipated labor strikes throughout Panama in response to the recent military take over of the government. In return, the junta apparently agreed to allow the PDP to continue

operating without undue harassment. Washington, although it was wary, opted to support the Guardia regime in part perhaps because many of its officers were in the pay of U.S. intelligence agencies, but above all because it promised stability.<sup>16</sup> Clearly it was American support that made it possible for the dictatorship to exist.

With silent approval from the U.S., Omar Torrijos betrayed his benefactor, Boris Martinez, and took over the helm of Panama in 1969.<sup>17</sup> The U.S. supported Torrijos simply because Boris Martinez had become too independent. American intelligence agencies, the root of support, encouraged the initial understanding with Torrijos when he came into power. Although the PDP was still working to keep its connections with whoever was in power in Panama and Torrijos indicated his desire to reciprocate, the U.S. allowed him to command the Guardia, reassured that it had a well-placed intelligence “asset” in Major Manuel Noriega. As the intelligence officer of Chiriqui province, Noriega had significant influence within that region, one in which a subsidiary of the United Fruit Company controlled banana production, an extremely lucrative business. The Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) had recruited him to monitor the activities of the left-leaning banana workers’ union sometime in 1966.<sup>18</sup>

Advised by friends late in 1969 that he needed to find an issue that would mobilize more popular support for the regime if it were to stay in power, Torrijos began to challenge the “exploitation” of Panama by the U.S., a tactic that, in fact, struck a responsive chord in public opinion. He projected the image of a defender of the Panamanian people against a common enemy (the U.S.).<sup>19</sup> Rhetoric about returning the Canal Zone to Panama fueled nationalist sentiment. To demonstrate further his independence from Washington, he maintained the dialogue with the communist PDP, which reinforced the leftist tone of his regime. The reestablishment of diplomatic relations with the Fidel Castro regime further polished his

nationalist credentials. The sympathy that Torrijos displayed toward leftist causes created an ironic situation in the Cold War in that both the U.S. and the Soviet Union supported the same dictator.<sup>20</sup>

Torrijos' talk of the need for a treaty that would turn control of the Panama Canal over to Panamanians continued for several years. This afforded him the opportunity and advantage to gain international recognition for his perceived struggle against "colonialism."<sup>21</sup> In 1973 he was able to engineer a United Nations Security Council resolution, vetoed by the U.S., urging prompt consideration of Panama's aspirations. Visits to Cuba and Yugoslavia in 1976 assured Torrijos of continued endorsement by the international leftist community.<sup>22</sup> While he traveled the world to promote his independent foreign policy and gain international support, Panama acquired the highest per capita national debt in the world with the worst ratio of debt to revenue.<sup>23</sup> Even with the Panamanian economy crumbling, the U.S. nonetheless continued to extend financial assistance to Torrijos in order to maintain "stability" in Panama and the region.

The signing in 1977 of the Panama Canal Treaty, which provided that the U.S would turn over control of the Canal to Panama in December 1999, left Torrijos once again without a central rallying cry. He needed a new banner to ensure that he and the Panamanian military remained popular in the public eye and he found it in Nicaragua by championing the cause of the Marxist-Leninist guerrilla movement in neighboring Nicaragua, the Sandinistas, in their struggle against the regime of Anastasio Somoza. Torrijos looked benevolently on the formation of a guerrilla force designed to assist the Sandinistas and quietly placed in command Doctor Hugo Spadafora, who trained volunteers first on a local island and then later in Costa Rica to help the Sandinistas. A majority of Panamanians seemed to loathe the Somoza regime, so Torrijos' involvement in the Nicaraguan crisis enabled him to maintain his popular appeal within Panama and placate the

domestic Left - at the same time that he pursued friendly relations with Washington.

Indeed, Torrijos proved to be an astute politician and he occasionally helped to keep the U.S. out of embarrassing situations during the Cold War. In the case of Nicaragua, as the Sandinistas were closing in on Somoza, Torrijos intervened to prevent his assassination and later, as the Shah fled Iran under pressure from Islamic fundamentalists, Torrijos offered him asylum in Panama. By having a foot in both Cold War camps, Torrijos managed to appease both the U.S. and the Soviet Union - and thus provide the overall stability so eagerly sought by Washington.<sup>24</sup>

Omar Torrijos died in a plane crash in 1981 and shortly afterward Manuel Noriega seized power of the Guardia. Panama had a civilian president, Eric Delvalle, but Noriega, like his predecessors, wielded the real power. Still on the CIA payroll, he now saw his annual confidential salary raised to \$200,000 and he gave service in return.<sup>25</sup> Indeed, he played an important role in Washington's covert anti-communist program in the Caribbean. In December 1982, the U.S. Congress passed the Boland Amendment, a plan designed to spoil President Reagan's desire to support the anti-Sandinista rebels in Nicaragua, the so-called Contras, by prohibiting the CIA and the Defense Department from providing "military equipment, military training or advice . . . for the purpose of overthrowing the government of Nicaragua."

In June 1985, Oliver North, a United States Marine Corps Lieutenant Colonel assigned to the National Security staff, met with Noriega aboard a yacht anchored in the Balboa Harbor off the coast of Panama City to make an unusual request. In view of the congressional ban on direct assistance to the contras, would Noriega be willing to allow them to train on Panamanian military bases? Noriega recently had changed the name of the Guardia to *Fuerzas de Defensa Panama*, or Panamanian Defense Force (PDF)<sup>26</sup>, and he readily agreed to allow American instructors to use PDF facilities; and contra leaders would be welcome to visit Panama, he told



North.<sup>27</sup> Washington's clandestine support of the contras thus continued through the PDF, deepening a murky relationship with the unsavory Panamanian strongman.

Noriega continued to provide assistance to the American government in its campaign against the Sandinistas. The government of Costa Rica had expressly forbidden use of its territory by the United States for anti-contra activity, so Noriega, prodded by Washington, set up a dummy corporation, the Udall Research Corporation, which built an airstrip in Costa Rica that American agents secretly utilized. In another extraordinary episode, Noriega, in cooperation with American authorities, falsified a ship's manifest to make it appear that the Sandinistas were attempting to supply arms (some 1,500 82-KF rifles, 1,500 rocket propelled grenade launchers, thousands of rounds of ammunition, and thirty-two military vehicles) to leftist insurgents in El Salvador - and then he participated in a successful scheme to have contra patrol boats seize the ship on the high seas before it reached its ostensible destination. Thus, with Noriega's collaboration, the contras received weapons and the Sandinistas appeared to be spreading trouble throughout Central America.<sup>28</sup> In addition to such aid, Washington could count on a trouble-free environment in the operation and activities of its military installations in Panama, a crucial benefit. As a high-ranking State Department official told a Senate committee in 1985:

"In a region where we have too many problems, the virtual absence of difficulty about our most significant military bases is notable and beneficial to us."

- Elliot Abrams, Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs during a 1985 U.S. Senate testimony on the importance of a "Friendly" Panama at the height of the Cold War.

The downfall of Noriega began in 1985 as an internal Panamanian affair with the government-sponsored killing of nationally recognized PDF critic, Dr. Hugo Spadafora. Three years later, a turning point in Noriega's relationship with the U.S. occurred when the George Bush administration declared drugs to be the major threat to American society and grand juries

in Florida indicted Noriega on drug-trafficking and money-laundering charges. Following these indictments, Washington set about to remove Noriega from power.

The killing of Spadafora on September 13, 1985, was an operation executed by PDF officers at Noriega's direction. Spadafora represented a thorn in the side of the regime and Noriega decided to act when it became known that the opposition leader planned to make public details of PDF corruption. Had Spadafora done so, he probably would have triggered created an uprising that might have toppled Noriega. Although the murder of Spadafora did not immediately cripple the regime in Panama City, it severely damaged Noriega's credibility. A series of mini-crises in his relations with the U.S. over the next few years further undermined his position; indeed, the administrations of Ronald Reagan and George Bush decided to have him removed from office. They preferred a Panamanian solution: a coup d'état, an election that would end Noriega's rule, or a popular uprising of the kind that removed from power dictators such as Somoza and Ferdinand Marcos of the Philippines. The possibility of such action presented itself in 1987 when a senior Panamanian military official made public horrendous crimes committed by Panama's dictators.

After a falling out with Noriega forced him into retirement and deprived him of promised material benefits, Noriega's former chief of staff, Colonel Roberto Diaz Herrera, made sensational disclosures about his former chief and the PDF to La Prensa, the opposition newspaper in Panama, in June 1987. In addition to revealing that his own \$500,000 home had been paid for out of profits from a visa-selling racket, Herrera claimed that Noriega had both Torrijos and Spadafora killed, fixed the 1984 elections, taken a \$12 million bribe from the Shah of Iran for asylum, and, along with PDF leaders, was involved in narcotics trafficking.<sup>29</sup> Public outrage led to the organization of the *Cruzada Civilista* (Civic Crusade) by twenty-six different

groups that demanded resignations of the top government officials while Herrera's charges were investigated. The Crusade's official recognition color was white, and white handkerchiefs, shirts, and signs, along with the banging of pots and pans, became the rallying symbols in a campaign of rampant civil disobedience and rioting that spread across Panama City.

The revelations in Panama came as no surprise to leaders in Washington. Senator Jesse Helms convened hearings that exposed the corruption and graft rampant in the PDF. The National Security Agency (NSA), National Security Council (NSC) staff, CIA, Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA), and the Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA) all provided negative information on Noriega, but Helms's hearings "showed a U.S. government deeply divided over what to think and do about Noriega." Official policy, for the moment, was to support Panama's President Delvalle and maintain distance from Noriega.<sup>30</sup> The National Security objectives outlined by the Reagan administration with regard to Panama included a restoration of democracy in that country, preventing Cuban inroads there, and eliminating Panama as a transshipment point for narcotics destined for the U.S. American strategists identified Noriega as the "enemy" center of gravity and made his removal from power their goal. The measures implemented to achieve that objective were to be primarily economic in nature, buttressed by simultaneous diplomatic pressure directly on Noriega.<sup>31</sup>

The Senate passed Resolution 239 expressing the "Sense of the Senate concerning support for human rights and the evolution of genuine democracy in Panama." In response and under the approving eye of the PDF, a mob attacked the American embassy in Panama with rocks and paint on June 29. Subsequently, the U.S. froze aid to Panama until its government paid \$106,000 in damages. Shortly afterward, the Senate enacted more resolutions, Public Law 100-180, the Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Years 1988 and 1989, and Public Law 100-

202, Foreign Operations, Export Financing, and Related Programs Appropriations Act, 1988.

These resolutions suspended U.S. assistance to Panama, prohibited funding of joint military exercises, suspended Panama's sugar quota, and instructed U.S. representatives of multilateral development banks to vote against loans to Panama.<sup>32</sup>

As American authorities worked behind the scenes to persuade Noriega to resign from office, a bombshell hit in February 1988 when grand juries in Tampa and Miami handed down indictments of Noriega on drug-trafficking and related charges. Outraged by what he considered American betrayal, Noriega reacted energetically. When Delvalle, with Washington's approval, attempted to dismiss him at the end of February, Noriega used his control of the Panamanian National Assembly to have the president voted out of office and sent into exile. Having recognized Delvalle as the legitimate head of the Panamanian government in exile, the Reagan administration intensified its negotiating effort to unseat Noriega, but made little progress.

Following an attempted coup d'état in March, in which a PDF officer sought to oust Noriega but was unable to overcome the fierce reaction by loyalist PDF troops headed by Major Moisés Giroldi, who would himself make a more serious coup attempt in October 1989, Reagan's attitude hardened. After multiple coups d'état and military dictators during the history of Panama, American policy toward Panama had seemed simply to bend with the wind. This most recent brand of dictator, however, was unlike his predecessors: Noriega was a murderer and a drug-trafficker.

With the situation clearly intolerable to the U.S., Reagan, whose primary foreign policy focus was the larger issues of East-West relations, "flexed the muscle" of U.S. power: economic sanctions. Panama uses the U.S. dollar as its currency and has a cultural predilection for things American. Panamanian revenues were heavily dependent on the U.S. and the Panama Canal.

Based on relative stability and secretive banking laws, hundreds of banks had established offices to take advantage of the offshore tax laws offered by Panama. Economic sanctions, aimed directly at the well-being and stability of the Panamanian economy, appeared to constitute the crowbar necessary to pry Noriega out of office and into retirement.<sup>33</sup>

Under the authority of the International Emergency Economic Powers Act (IEEPA) and the National Emergencies Act, Reagan's first step was to sign Executive Order 12635 blocking all assets of the government of Panama in the U.S. and prohibiting all direct and indirect payments to the Noriega regime by people and organizations both in the U.S. and in Panama. In addition, the Panama Canal Commission escrowed all payments due to the government of Panama.<sup>34</sup>

The first use of the military instrument as a component of the U.S. administration's strategy to oust Noriega began as a conservative response to the March coup attempt. Augmentee forces, mostly Marines and Military Police, deployed to Panama in order to present a "show of force" and provide the permanently stationed forces in Panama the flexibility to begin conducting intruder-interdiction patrols in the jungle areas comprising military defense sites and military areas of coordination.<sup>35</sup> In addition to activating a Crisis Action Team to monitor daily events in Panama, Southern Command (SOUTHCOM) began longer range planning for the neutralization of the PDF, calling it Operational Plan (OPLAN) BLUE SPOON, and created a subordinate Joint Task Force, JTF-PANAMA, to coordinate all military operations in Panama. Finally, SOUTHCOM initiated activities normally grouped under the heading of Psychological Operations, although never publicly acknowledged as such. This included the increased printing and distribution of its newspaper, the Tropic Times (also printed in Spanish), to overcome the

absence of a free press in Panama and the frequent delivery interruption of the only other daily newspaper, the Miami Herald.

While taking preliminary military steps, Washington hoped to avoid a violent confrontation for various reasons. For one thing, the limited availability of base housing in the Canal Zone meant that large contingents of American military personnel lived unprotected, without Military Police security, exposed and vulnerable in downtown Panama City to PDF violence. The combat strength of the permanent U.S. forces in Panama, moreover, was only 1000 men belonging to two infantry battalions stationed on the Panama City end of the Canal. And, finally, previous American intervention in Latin America had earned the U.S. a reputation as an imperialist power, a stigma that Washington preferred to avoid.

In truth, Noriega was part of a larger problem. General Frederick F. Woerner, commander of SOUTHCOM, and Brigadier General Marc A. Cisneros, his operations (J-3) chief and later Commanding General of U.S. Army South and JTF-PANAMA, realized that many PDF officers and noncommissioned officer formed a cancer that had to be removed along with Noriega. Graft and corruption permeated the PDF to the extent that extortion, kickbacks, and skimming were benefits of leadership. No longer a moral dilemma to accept payoffs, it was just part of the office.

In late 1988, with Noriega engaging in nationalistic harangues in which he branded as assaults on the national dignity of his country American efforts to oust him, elections in the U.S. diverted the White House's attention away from Panama and the situation settled into a routine. As 1989 dawned, another election, this scheduled for Panama in May, seemed to offer hope to the new administration of George Bush that the Panamanian people themselves might remove Noriega from power. Bush pursued a hands-off policy toward the upcoming elections, preferring

to lend low-level and covert support in the form of \$10 million to the opposition political party. A complicating factor in Panama was the increasing incidence of harassment of U.S. military personnel and their families. On the front page of the March 20, 1989 Army Times, emblazoned in large red print, was “Terror in Panama. U.S. servicemen in Panama have been abducted, beaten, kicked and had handguns held against their heads.” This sensational reporting created additional friction and undercut the ongoing diplomatic efforts to oust Noriega. The timely reporting did help fuel an emerging American opinion of outrage and strong public support to get rid of Noriega.<sup>36</sup>

Panamanians came out in record numbers to vote. Former Presidents Jimmy Carter and Gerald Ford visited voting areas as international observers. They saw massive fraud, as PDF personnel voted in multiple districts and several times. As it turned out, they did not vote for Noriega’s candidate, Carlos Duque. In many cases the PDF, expected to cast ballots for Duque, did exactly the opposite and voted for the Civilista candidates, Guillermo Endara, Rafael Calderón, and Guillermo Ford.<sup>37</sup> Before leaving the country, Carter announced that his investigators found Endara leading by a three-to-one margin over Duque and declared that Noriega should allow the peaceful transfer of power to the opposition. Instead, Noriega annulled the elections and on May 10 allowed members of his newly created paramilitary *Batallón Dignidad* (Dignity Battalions) to assault the rightful winners in downtown Panama City’s Santa Ana Square. Noriega’s street brawlers killed Ford’s bodyguard and battered the candidate with rubber hoses and baseball bats. The next day Bush, facing intensified pressure to intervene, ordered to Panama an increased augmentee force of 1,300 soldiers.<sup>38</sup>

Still reluctant to engage in armed intervention, Bush turned to regional diplomacy. The State Department pressured the Organization of American States (OAS), meeting on May 17, to

adopt a resolution condemning General Noriega and calling for his resignation. To that end, the OAS sent delegations to Panama to negotiate a settlement. By mid-July the OAS was aiming for a September 1st transfer of power to the Civilista's candidate Endara, from the May election, whom the international community considered the winner in the recent elections.<sup>39</sup> At the same time Bush, engaging in moderate "gunboat diplomacy," ordered all American military personnel and their dependents to remain in the Canal Zone. He also authorized Operation BLADE JEWEL, a series of exercises designed to enforce Panama Canal treaty guarantees and remind Noriega of his vulnerability to U.S. military power, began with armed freedom of movement convoys starting on the Pacific side at Fort Clayton and on the Atlantic side at Fort Sherman. The convoys would pass each other on the way to the other side and then return later in the afternoon to their point of origin. These types of exercises continued and expanded to include a variety of military operations known as "Sand Fleas" (after the ubiquitous insect that causes uncontrollable itching and painful sores). JTF-PANAMA would alert and deploy military forces to predetermined assembly areas on numerous occasions, a practice that later led the PDF to dismiss pre-JUST CAUSE deployments as mere exercises.<sup>40</sup>

Bush's attempts at indirect intervention failed to oust Noriega - and so did the coup d'état attempt led by PDF Major Giroldi on October 3. Indeed, the abortive uprising ended in disaster when the loyal 7th Infantry Company, *Macho de Monte* (Mountain Men), flew in from its base at Rio Hato to Tocumen Airport (the military side of the Torrijos-Tocumen International Airport) and drove to *La Comandancia* (Noriega's headquarters) in buses to save their general. The American press blasted Bush and SOUTHCOM Commander, General Thurman, for not aiding the rebel officers in their hour of need. In response, a flood of often-contradictory information came forth from government sources describing the situation as so confusing that there had



been no reliable way to determine whether Giroldi ever had gained sufficient control of the situation enough to allow U.S. assistance.<sup>41</sup>

November 1989 saw a further tightening of military resolve, as the U.S. Army limited access to facilities in the Canal Zone in response to a suspected PDF-supported drug cartel bombing attempt. In addition, the Pentagon shortened the standard three-year military tour length to one-year, symbolizing an area with a high potential for combat normally reserved for places such as the border of South and North Korea along its demilitarized zone, and barred dependents from accompanying military personnel to Panama. An exodus of dependents began and the JTF-PANAMA command continued focusing on “fighting” strength.

With regional diplomacy and coalition political pressure in a shambles and Noriega scorning the OAS's September 1 deadline for a transfer of power to Endara, the U.S. broke off all negotiations with Noriega - and Bush looked to his other components of power for a solution to the Panamanian situation. The Panamanian economy was in shambles as a result of the sanctions that, according to the Department of the Treasury, had denied over \$296 million to Noriega by August of 1989.<sup>42</sup> But economic sanctions alone had not resolved the problem. The remaining option was military intervention. By December 1989, many of the plans for quickly inserting combat forces into Panama were in place and continued security, augmentee forces training, and updating operational war plans made JTF-PANAMA the most combat-ready command in the world.

Consolidating his total control over Panama after the October coup d'état attempt, Noriega's rubber-stamp 500-member Assembly of People's Power named him General Coordinator with authority to direct the Assembly's proceedings. Its forty-one member Legislative Commission, which held law-making powers, convened on December 15 to

designate Noriega their “Maximum Leader” and, consequently, he could now claim to be the legal head of state. Then, in an act of collective political insanity if not suicide, the Assembly lashed out at the U.S., charging it with “aggression” and declaring Panama to be “in a state of war” with that country. “We the Panamanian people,” Noriega boasted, “will sit along the banks of the Canal to watch the dead bodies of our enemies pass by.”<sup>43</sup>

The declaration of a “state of war” strengthened Bush’s resolve to remove the Panamanian dictator. Noriega was the center of gravity and decapitating him from the PDF and Panama became the priority. Facing Bush was the problem of balancing the ways, ends, and means of his strategy to accomplish the goal of restoring democracy in Panama - and the inflammatory rhetoric emanating from the Noriega camp and ominous conduct of PDF elements seemed to indicate that time was limited.

On December 16, a day after the “state of war” proclamation, four American officers returning from dinner in Panama City blundered into a police checkpoint near La Comandancia manned by both PDF and Dignity Battalion soldiers. After a hostile crowd gathered and an attempt made to drag the officers out of their car, the driver sped away. The PDF fired at the car wounding one officer and killing another, Marine Lieutenant Robert Paz. A Navy lieutenant and his wife, also stopped at the checkpoint, witnessed the entire event. Their knowledge cost them a night of physical torture and verbal threats until their release the following morning. “Enough is enough,” Bush exclaimed on learning of the incident. “I can’t just sit back and wait until this thing deteriorates further.” Meeting with his advisers, who included the Secretary of Defense, Richard Cheney, and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Colin Powell, the president authorized the execution of Operation Plan BLUE SPOON, now renamed JUST CAUSE.<sup>44</sup> The invasion of Panama was on.

Through a series of crises with Panama and specifically with Noriega, the U.S. had attempted to avoid military intervention. The murder of a Marine Corps officer, however, left the White House with no option but to take action against the odious regime in Panama City. Failure to do so would damage American credibility, place American citizens at risk in various other countries, and allow Noriega to strengthen his grip on Panama.

On December 20, 1989, more than 27,000 soldiers, sailors, airmen and marines carried out Operation JUST CAUSE, a joint military action that was the largest American use of armed force since Vietnam, to ensure democracy in Panama. The success of JUST CAUSE marked the end of a century-long policy of pacification and toleration of Panamanian dictatorship. The cost to the U.S. was the lives of twenty-three personnel, yet their lives not only protected important American interests, but enabled Panama to regain the freedom of democratic rule.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Norman J. Padelford, The Panama Canal in Peace and War, Ch. 1.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> David G. McCullough, The Path Between the Seas: The Creation of the Panama Canal 1870-1914, pp. 328-332, 377.

<sup>4</sup> Emphasis added.

<sup>5</sup> McCullough, The Path Between the Seas, pp. 379-391, 393.

<sup>6</sup> United States, Library of Congress, Panama: A Country Study, p. 221.

<sup>7</sup> R. M. Koster and Guillermo Sanchez, In the Time of Tyrants: Panama, 1968-1990, pp. 55-56.

<sup>8</sup> William P. McLaughlin, Canal Zone Images.

<sup>9</sup> Koster and Sanchez, In the Time of Tyrants, pp. 62-63.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., pp. 63-68.

<sup>11</sup> Frederick Kempe, Divorcing the Dictator, p. 63.

- <sup>12</sup> Koster and Sanchez, In the Time of Tyrants, pp. 69-80.
- <sup>13</sup> Ibid, p. 95.
- <sup>14</sup> David N. Farnsworth and James W. McKenney. U.S.-Panama Relations, 1903-1978: A Study in Linkage Politics, p. 71.
- <sup>15</sup> Koster and Sanchez, In the Time of Tyrants, p.87.
- <sup>16</sup> Ibid., p. 94.
- <sup>17</sup> Kempe, Divorcing the Dictator, p. 66.
- <sup>18</sup> Koster and Sanchez, In the Time of Tyrants, pp. 133, 273.
- <sup>19</sup> Kenneth J. Jones, The Enemy Within: Casting Out Panama's Demon, p. 22.
- <sup>20</sup> Koster and Sanchez, In the Time of Tyrants, pp. 125, 145.
- <sup>21</sup> John Dinges, Our Man in Panama, p. 78.
- <sup>22</sup> Koster and Sanchez, In the Time of Tyrants, p. 186.
- <sup>23</sup> Ibid., p. 122.
- <sup>24</sup> Ibid., pp. 224-228.
- <sup>25</sup> Ibid., p. 275.
- <sup>26</sup> The *Guardia* was relegated to police functions.
- <sup>27</sup> Kevin Buckley, Panama: The Whole Story, p. 44.
- <sup>28</sup> Ibid., pp. 57-58.
- <sup>29</sup> Guillermo Sanchez Borbon, Panama Fallen Among Thieves, p. 58.
- <sup>30</sup> Dinges, Our Man in Panama, p. 301.
- <sup>31</sup> United States, Congress, United States Policy Toward Panama in the Aftermath of the May 1, 1989 Elections, p. 30.
- <sup>32</sup> Christina Jacqueline Johns and P. Ward Johnson, State Crime, The Media, and The Invasion of Panama, p. 11.
- <sup>33</sup> Kempe, Divorcing the Dictator, p. 348.

- <sup>34</sup> Edward F. Dolan, Panama and the United States: Their Canal, Their Stormy Years, p. 140.
- <sup>35</sup> Bob Woodward, The Commanders, p. 90.
- <sup>36</sup> Dinges, Our Man in Panama, p. 302.
- <sup>37</sup> Koster and Sanchez, In the Time of Tyrants, p. 363.
- <sup>38</sup> Woodward, The Commanders, pp. 84-87.
- <sup>39</sup> Dolan, Panama and the United States, p. 138.
- <sup>40</sup> Joseph M. Nemmers, Daniel C. Wagner, Robert F. Cargie and Dolores De Mena, Staff Ride: Operation JUST CAUSE, p. 7.
- <sup>41</sup> Buckley, Panama, p. 206.
- <sup>42</sup> United States, United States Policy Toward Panama, p. 244.
- <sup>43</sup> Ivan Musicant, The Banana Wars, p. 396.
- <sup>44</sup> The Tropic Times, p. 1.
- <sup>45</sup> Cole, Operation Just Cause: The Planning and Execution of Joint Operations in Panama, February 1988-January 1990, p. 65.

## CHAPTER 2

### MISSION, ENEMY, TERRAIN, TROOPS & TIME (METT-T)

President George Bush, after exhausting diplomatic and economic alternatives, authorized the execution of Operation JUST CAUSE on December 17, 1989. This second use of significant military intervention, the first since the 1903 Panamanian secession from Columbia, came after years of tension in U.S. relations with Panama and increasing threats to American citizens in that country. The implementation mechanism of the military intervention in Panama began in February 1988 immediately after the indictment of Noriega for drug-trafficking by American authorities. The U.S. military uses a term, METT-T, which provides the basis upon which to build and carry out operational plans or orders in the application of military force. Mission, enemy, terrain, troops, and time (METT-T) define the operating environment surrounding Panama. The mission of Operation JUST CAUSE included five distinct tasks: to safeguard lives; protect the Canal; establish democracy; neutralize the Panamanian Defense Force (PDF); and bring Noriega to justice. The enemy included Noriega and the entire PDF, which became the rationalization for the degree of force applied by the U.S. Terrain also requires analysis since during JUST CAUSE, not only were civilian personnel and facilities present in both urban and jungle settings, but the location of over 142 key targets affected the calculation and application of force and influenced the relative combat force ratio that initially favored the U.S. vis-à-vis the PDF. The overall troop strength made available for JUST CAUSE stood in direct correlation to the size of the enemy force. Time relates to the strategic level plan to deploy forces, the operational plan on when to conduct offensive action, notably when to set H-Hour, and the tactical timeline, in the pursuit of prosecuting the mission.

The Joint Chiefs of Staff in early 1988 ordered the preparation of a contingency plan (ELABORATE MAZE) for military intervention in Panama. In response, the commander of U.S. Southern Command (SOUTHCOM), General Frederick F. Woerner and director of Operations (J-3), General Marc A. Cisneros, developed initial contingency plans for an invasion collectively known as FISSURES.<sup>1</sup> The overall vision of the plan was a massive build-up of U.S. forces within Panama in an attempt to pressure and intimidate Noriega and the PDF. The Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, Admiral William J. Crowe, further directed that the contingency plan include four distinct operation orders to facilitate execution. Collectively codenamed PRAYER BOOK, the four orders were KLONDIKE KEY, noncombatant evacuation operations escorting U.S. civilians in Panama to safe areas; POST TIME, defense of U.S. citizens, installations and the Panama Canal utilizing the 193rd Infantry Brigade already permanently stationed in country and other combat units from the Continental U.S.; BLUE SPOON, a joint offensive operation to defeat the PDF and protect the lives of U.S. citizens, property and the Panama Canal; and KRYSTAL BALL, civil-military operations designed to reestablish public safety and health, restore essential services, reconstruct the PDF, and institutionalize the PDF's loyalty to civilian authority and democratic government. BLUE SPOON, later changed to JUST CAUSE, initially called for eight days of combat operations involving 12,000 troops already stationed in Panama, followed by a two-week period in which an additional 10,000 combat forces would take part. The Commander in Chief of SOUTHCOM (CINCSOUTH) exercised overall command and control of BLUE SPOON with support from U.S. Atlantic Command (LANTCOM), U.S. Transportation Command (TRANSCOM), Strategic Air Command (SAC), U.S. Pacific Command (PACOM), and U.S. Forces Command (FORSCOM). The command

structure planned for all tactical control of conventional forces under the Joint Task Force PANAMA (JTFPM) Commander.<sup>2</sup>

On March 3, 1989, the PDF seized twenty-one U.S. school buses with children aboard. Although defused within hours, the momentary crisis highlighted the real danger to U.S. citizens from the PDF and sent shock waves through the public and congress. In view of the threatening conduct of the PDF, American planners revamped KRYSTAL BALL, the civil-military portion of PRAYER BOOK, and resubmitted it to the Joint Staff under a new codename, BLIND LOGIC.<sup>3</sup>

Noriega's May 1989 nullification of the democratic elections held in Panama and increased PDF harassment of U.S. civilians instigated a deployment of 1,900 troops to protect U.S. citizen's lives and property (Operation NIMROD NANCER). Since April 1988, BLUE SPOON had remained unchanged in plan and command structure. But a planning review, completed in August with Noriega's increased defiance and preparations to confront the U.S. in mind, concluded that a phased force build-up would not suffice. Without massive overwhelming force during the initial combat stages, Noriega's forces might be able to take hostages and escape to the countryside to fight a protracted guerrilla war - with a heightened risk of greater U.S. casualties. As a result, to accommodate better the necessary increase in initial rapid deployment forces and manage the complicated execution of joint combat operations, the Pentagon shifted tactical command of Joint Task Forces in Panama for the execution of BLUE SPOON from U.S. Army South, already stationed in Panama, to the XVIII Airborne Corps at Fort Bragg, North Carolina. The Joint Chiefs of Staff reviewed and approved the redesigned operational plan (now titled BANNER SAVIOR) and agreed upon a compressed execution timeline with sufficient forces committed to defeat the PDF.



On October 3, 1989, Major Moisés Giroldi of the PDF (and commander of the Fourth Infantry Company) attempted his ill-fated coup against Noriega. General Maxwell R. Thurman, having taken command of SOUTHCOM just three days earlier, trusted neither the fast-developing situation nor Giroldi sufficiently to intervene on his behalf and a critical after-action review concerning the lack of U.S. participation to assist in the coup resulted in another revision of BLUE SPOON.<sup>4</sup> Assuming that President Bush would insist on a more active presence of U.S. forces to make any future anti-Noriega uprisings successful, Thurman scrapped BANNER SAVIOR, the new operation plan in development, in favor of the old BLUE SPOON with modified command and control features. The need for more forces in Panama quickly became the operational requirement. In anticipation of another “triggering event,” the early activation of Joint Task Force South (JTFSO) occurred on October 10. A significant challenge facing the National Command Authority in Washington D.C., however, was determining just what that event would be. And underlying all calculations was a keen awareness of the crucial factor of time.

The SOUTHCOM staff completed the revised BLUE SPOON in late October and issued Operational Order (OPORD) 90-1 with JCS approval on November 3. The updated OPORD called for deployment of 27,000 men within four to five days, as opposed to the older plan’s figure of 22,000 in twenty-two days. In direct support of SOUTHCOM was LANTCOM providing naval and air coverage to protect deploying forces from any interference by Cuban or Nicaraguan aircraft; TRANSCOM, with its strategic lift, sealift and terminal maintenance; FORSCOM, which could furnish Army active and reserve forces; and SAC conducting aerial refueling and strategic reconnaissance. In addition, SOUTHCOM had support from four defense agencies: The Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA) with National Military Intelligence Support

Teams, the National Security Agency (NSA) with cryptographical elements, Defense Communications Agency (DCA) and the Defense Mapping Agency (DMA).<sup>5</sup>

Operational Plan (OPLAN) 90-2, a tactical plan developed in support of BLUE SPOON OPORD 90-1, laid out in detail the specific requirements for execution of the military intervention. Joint Task Force SOUTH, headquartered by XVIII Airborne Corps at Fort Bragg, NC, commanded all Army, Air Force, Naval, Marine and Special Operations forces in direct support of BLUE SPOON numbering slightly over 27,000.<sup>6</sup>

The 22,000 Army troops split into four conventional task forces. BAYONET, the Panama-based 193rd Infantry Brigade, comprised the 5th Battalion, 87th Infantry (Light), 1st Battalion (Airborne), 508th Infantry Regiment, 4th Battalion, 6th Infantry Regiment (Mechanized) from Fort Polk, Louisiana's 5th Infantry Division, the 519th Military Police Battalion, a platoon of M551A1 Sheridan tanks from the 82nd Airborne Division's Company C, 3rd Battalion, 73rd Armored Regiment, and Marine Corps Light Armored Vehicles (LAVs) from the 2nd Light Armored Infantry Battalion at Camp Lejeune, North Carolina. The mission of BAYONET was to seize La Comandancia (PDF Headquarters), neutralize the PDF's 5th Infantry Company and numerous critical PDF sites within Panama City, secure Fort Clayton, Quarry Heights (command center of SOUTHCOM), and Gorgas Military Hospital. A second task force, ATLANTIC, consisted of the 7th Infantry Division based at Fort Ord, California. Subordinate units included the 3rd Infantry Brigade pre-positioned in Panama, the 4th Battalion, 17th Infantry (Light), and the cadre of the Jungle Operations Training Battalion along with the current rotational unit of the Jungle Operations Training Center (JOTC), the 3rd Battalion, 504th Parachute Infantry Regiment. Their task was to neutralize the PDF's 8th Infantry Company, seize targets in the Canal Operating Zone, and secure the Atlantic entrance to the Panama Canal.

The 82nd Airborne Division based at Fort Bragg, North Carolina, formed Task Force PACIFIC. It comprised the 1st Brigade's 1st and 2nd Battalions, 504th Parachute Infantry Regiment reinforced with the 4th Battalion, 325th Airborne Infantry Regiment, and its role was to conduct an airborne insertion and assault the northeast portion of Panama City to neutralize multiple PDF units (Battalion 2000, the PDF's 1st Infantry Company, and the PDF's Cavalry Troop) and secure the airfield at Torrijos-Tocumen. The final conventional task force was SEMPER FI, based on Joint Task Force SOUTH's Marine Forces, consisting of the 900 Marines of the 6th Marine Expeditionary Battalion, from Camp Lejeune, North Carolina. Their mission was to secure the Bridge of Americas and numerous land avenue of approaches prohibiting PDF influence in Panama City and access to critical Pacific Canal nodes.

The U.S. Air Forces, headquartered by the 830th Air Division stationed in Panama, comprised 3,400 airmen with numerous supporting aircraft deploying from over twenty-one different Air Wings around the U.S. Two EF-111s and six EC-130s provided active jamming and broadcast of media messages during the opening hours of JUST CAUSE. Nine AC-130 gunships from the 1st Special Operations Wing (SOW) based at Hulbert Field, Florida supported Rangers at Rio Hato and provided fire suppression during the assault on La Comandancia. The 37th Tactical Air Wing, Tonopah, Nevada supported air operations with six F-117 Stealth Fighters (although only two actively dropped ordnance at Rio Hato). The Military Airlift Command deployed 111 aircraft to support the initial invasion with seventy-seven C-141, twenty-one C-130, and twelve C-5 to air land 6,000 troops and to drop 4,000 parachutists. Helicopters from both the Army and Air Force supported operations with eleven AH-64 Apaches from the 82nd Aviation, Fort Bragg, North Carolina; eleven AH-6 "Little Bird" gunships from Company A, 1st Battalion, 160th Special Operations Aviation Regiment (SOAR), Fort

Campbell, Kentucky; twenty MH-60 Blackhawks from the 160th SOAR; nine MH-6s from Company B, 1st Battalion, 160th SOAR; five Chinooks (three CH-47 and two MH-47) from 160th SOAR; five MH-53 Pave Lows and four MH-60 Pavehawks from 1st SOW; along with multiple AH-1 Cobras, UH-1 Hueys, and OH-58 scout aircraft from both the Panama based 1st Battalion, 228th Aviation Regiment and the 7th Infantry Division's Aviation Brigade stationed at Fort Ord, California.<sup>7</sup> Along with the Army, Marines, and Air Force, the Navy contributed a small mine division and security group to JUST CAUSE; however, most of the 700 sailors involved were associated with Special Operations.

The Joint Special Operations Task Force (JSOTF), comprising the elements of all four services, divided into five unconventional task forces: GREEN, the U.S. Army's 1st Special Forces Operational Detachment - Delta (Delta Force) with a mission to rescue a U.S. citizen imprisoned downtown Panama City and to conduct numerous direct action missions in order to capture Noriega; BLACK, U.S. Army Special Forces' 3rd Battalion, 7th Special Forces Group, protecting Panamanian political leaders and securing critical terrain in support of offensive operations at H-Hour; BLUE, U.S. Navy SEAL Team-Six available to rescue anticipated hostages throughout Panama; WHITE, U.S. Naval Special Warfare Group Two including SEAL Teams 2 and 4, Little Creek, Virginia, conducting maritime operations against Panama City, Balboa Harbor, and Colón Harbor; and RED, the 1st, 2nd and 3rd Battalions, 75th Ranger Regiment conducting an airborne assault on Torrijos-Tocumen airfield to attack the 2nd PDF Infantry Company and Rio Hato airbase to neutralize Panamanian Defense Forces' 6th and 7th PDF infantry companies. Additionally a significant number of forces remained under direct control of JTF-SOUTH and included Military Police, Military Intelligence, and of special importance, Psychological Operations and Civil Affairs units.

The crisis erupted on December 15, 1989, when Noriega declared the Panamanian Forces to be in a state of war with U.S. and the trigger came the following day. A car with four U.S. military officers made a wrong turn in downtown Panama City and came under direct PDF fire. With one U.S. service man killed, the incident led the White House to order the U.S. military into Panama. President Bush outlined his political and national objectives and provided the military forces its mission: to safeguard the lives of nearly 30,000 U.S. citizens residing in Panama; to protect the integrity of the Panama Canal and 142 U.S. defense sites; to help the Panamanian opposition establish genuine democracy; to neutralize the PDF; and to bring Noriega to justice. In justifying the large amount of military forces involved, General Colin L. Powell, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, stated that “the entire PDF was corrupt and must be dismantled.” Accomplishing this with a measured military force to neutralize the PDF was the first step towards reconstruction. Additionally, General Powell felt the large force package would minimize the time available for the PDF to seize American citizens.<sup>8</sup> President Bush concurred and soon after the JCS set 1:00 a.m. on December 20, 1989 (Panama time) as H-Hour for Operation BLUE SPOON.<sup>9</sup>

On December 17 at 8:00 p.m. in Washington (H-54 hours), the first elements of the Joint Special Operations Task Force moved towards Panama. The official operational order went out the next evening at 6:25 p.m. to FORSCOM and then to the JTF-SOUTH commander at 8:00 p.m. FORSCOM additionally placed the 24th Infantry Division at Fort Stewart, Georgia under the operational control of JTF-SOUTH as a strategic reserve if required (it never was). Prior to issuing the execution order, the Joint Staff agreed that the name of BLUE SPOON should be changed to a more fitting and memorable one: General Thomas Kelly, the Joint Chief’s operations officer, recommend the title, JUST CAUSE, and General Powell agreed.<sup>10</sup> The final

decision as to whether or not to proceed rested with the President. Assured the plan was correct and confident that the operation was justified, he gave SOUTHCOM the order to go ahead at 2:30 p.m. on December 19. The first airlift began that same day with a contingent of Rangers from Fort Lewis, Washington departing for Fort Benning, Georgia to join the rest of Task Force RED en route to Panama.

Facing the U.S. was the Panamanian Defense Force comprised of 12,800 soldiers, organized with a headquarters staff managing four branches. On December 20, the PDF's 6,000-man ground force consisted of two infantry battalions, five light infantry companies, one mechanized infantry company, one cavalry troop, two public order companies and various combat support units. Panama City was the center of gravity with two-thirds of the ground force's fighting strength stationed within, or just outside, the city limits. The remainder of forces maintained a presence across the entire country and along the borders with Costa Rica and Columbia.<sup>11</sup>

The largest infantry organization of combat forces was *Batallón 2000* (Battalion 2000). It comprised 550 troops headquartered in the Panama Province, near the city of Pacora at Fort Cimarron, whose mission was to assume the defense of Canal once Panama secured rights to it in the year 2000. Combat power included two light infantry companies, the *Compañía de Maniobras "Aguila"* ("Eagle" Maneuver Company) and the *Compañía de Maniobras "Furia"* ("Fury" Maneuver Company), along with a light mechanized company, *Compañía de Maniobras "Mecanizada"* (Mechanized Maneuver Company). The battalion had its own support company, *Compañía de Apoyo de Combate "Loyola"* ("Loyola" Combat Support Company), which allowed for self-sustainment outside the urban area of Panama City. Noriega also placed two

more companies under operational control of Batallón 2000: the *1o Compañía de Infantería “Tigre”* and the *2o Compañía Aerotransportada “Puma”*.

The second battalion-sized unit did not influence action on D-Day during JUST CAUSE, but Task Force ATLANTIC would have to deploy additional forces to neutralize it. The *2o Batallón Paz* (2nd Peace Battalion) had its headquarters in Chiriquí province at the District of Renacimiento on the far western side of Panama bordering Costa Rica; the unit’s mission was to control the northwestern frontier and its border. Its task organization included the *Compañía de Comando* (Headquarters Company) and two companies capable of air assaults - the *Compañía A de Asalto Aéreo “Fortuna”* (‘A’ “Fortune” Aerial Assault Company) and *Compañía B de Asalto Aéreo “Copal”* (‘B’ “Incense” Aerial Assault Company). To ensure that neither of these companies would effectively engage U.S. troops, task forces WHITE, RED, and ATLANTIC had the assignment of disabling or capturing all aircraft that might serve the 2nd Peace Battalion.

Created but never formed before JUST CAUSE, the *Batallón Atlántico* (Atlantic Battalion) kept U.S. planners acutely aware of the possibility that Noriega could quickly organize new battalions in response to U.S. offensive operations. The province of Colón in all probability would headquarter the Atlantic Battalion. The overall PDF plan was to deploy four battalions in each of the four Military Regions, but it was never able to do so.

The *Primera Compañía de Montana, 4o Batallón Cemaco* (First Mountain Company, Fourth Cemaco Battalion) was the sole company, organized with three platoons, in a battalion headquartered in Cemaco District in Darién province at La Palma. Its mission was to control the southeastern frontier and Columbian border.

The remainder of PDF Army combat power consisted of nine company-sized units. The *Primera Compañía de Infantería de Combate y Apoyo de Fuego “Tigre”* (First “Tiger” Combat

and Fire Support Infantry Company) comprised 200 troops in Panama province at Cuartel de Tinajita (San Miguelito Special District) who had the important mission of providing firepower to Battalion 2000. Tiger Company's task organization included a *Pelotón de Comando* (Headquarters Platoon), three *Pelotones de Fusileros* (Rifle Platoons), two *Secciones de Morteros* (Mortar Sections) and a *Sección Antitanque* (Antitank Section).

The *Segunda Compañía de Infantería Aerotransportada "Puma"* (Second "Puma" Air-transported Infantry Company) comprised 200 troops headquartered in Panama Province at the Torrijos-Tocumen Airport with detachments at the District capital of Chepo and the city of Canitas (both further east from Tocumen). Its mission was to provide paratroopers able to deploy rapidly throughout the Republic of Panama in support of Battalion 2000. Its task organization included a *Pelotón de Comando* (Headquarters Platoon), three rifle platoons, a mortar section, and a *Pelotón de Guardia Interior* (Interior Guard Platoon).

The *Tercera Compañía de Infantería "Diablo Rojo"* (Third "Red Devil" Infantry Company) was based in Chiriquí Province and had the multiple tasks of defending the 5th Military Zone, supporting the 2nd Peace Battalion and protecting the border with Costa Rica. Its task organization included a headquarters platoon, three rifle platoons, a mortar section, a *Unidad Especial* (Special Unit) that carried out questionable activities related to Noriega's ruthless control over all provinces in Panama, and one interior guard.

The *Cuarta Compañía de Infantería "Urraca"* (Fourth "Magpie" Infantry Company) actually disbanded shortly after the ill-fated October 1989 coup attempt. Before breaking up, its headquarters had been in Panama province at La Comandancia, the PDF headquarters in the El Chorillo section of downtown Panama City, and its mission had been to provide security for of La Comandancia. It was comprised of a headquarters platoon, three rifle platoons, a *Pelotón de*



*Armas de Apoyo* (Weapons Support Platoon). Its relevance is that although its former commander, Major Giroldi, had been killed after the abortive coup, the company's combat power had been absorbed by other units.

The *Batallón de Policía Militar "Victoriano Lorenzo"* ("Victoriano Lorenzo" Military Police Battalion) comprised the Fifth and Eighth Infantry Companies. The battalion headquarters was located in Panama province at Fort Amador and its mission was to provide public order. Its task organization included a command headquarters, the *Quinta Compañía de Infantería* (Fifth Infantry Company) with 300 troops headquartered at Fort Amador (Pacific side of the Canal Zone) and the *Octava Compañía de Infantería* (Eighth Infantry Company) with 175 troops headquartered at Fort Gulick (Atlantic side of the Canal Zone) and fifty troops at La Comandancia. Additionally the Battalion included a *Sección Canina* (One Canine Section) with a Dog Compound located on Juan Pablo II Avenue in Panama City, four rifle platoons, a *Sección de Inteligencia* (Intelligence Section), and *Unidades de Transito, Enlace, Comunicaciones y Transporte* (Transit, Liaison, Communications and Transportation Units).

The *Sexta Compañía Expedicionaria Mecanizada* (Sixth Mechanized Expeditionary Company) comprised 200 troops headquartered at the Rio Hato Airfield in Cocle province over fifty miles from Panama City and fifty troops at La Comandancia in the capital. Its mission was mechanized combat and the company was task organized with a command headquarters, three mechanized infantry platoons, a *Pelotón de Apoyo de Fuego* (Fire Support Platoon), and anti-tank, mortar, and maintenance sections

The *Septima Compañía de Infantería "Macho de Monte"* (Seventh "Mountain Men" Infantry Company) comprised 200 troops headquartered at the Rio Hato Airfield in the Cocle province some fifty miles from Panama City and fifty troops at La Comandancia in the capital.

Its mission was to conduct guerrilla combat and the company was task organized with a headquarters command, three rifle platoons, a mortar section, an interior guard platoon, and four *Secciones Especiales de Comando* (Four Commando Special Sections) consisting of *Hombres de Rana* (Frog Men specializing in maritime operations), *Hombres de Explosivistas* (Explosives Men or demolition specialists), *Hombres de Pana-Jungla* (Panamanian Jungle Men specializing in jungle warfare), and, interestingly, a *Sección Motorizada de "Cocuyos Montaneros"* ("Lightning Mountaineer" Motorized Section, a mixture of light wheeled vehicles and motorcycles).

The *Escuadrón de Caballería "General José A. Remon C."* ("General José A. Remon C." Cavalry Squadron) comprised 150 troops headquartered at La Comandancia with a mission to provide security for it and to execute ceremonial demonstrations. Its task organization included a headquarters and staff, a *Escuela de Equitación* (Riding School), a *Pelotón de Servicio Especial* (Special Service Platoon), and a *Pelotón de Fuerza Regular* (Regular Forces Platoon).

The PDF also had an extremely well equipped and trained *Comando Operacional de Fuerzas Especiales (COFFEE)*, or Special Forces Operational Command, headquartered at Buildings 8 and 47 in Fort Amador. COFFEE comprised the frogman unit stationed at Perico Island, organized along the lines of U.S. Navy SEAL's, and skilled in underwater demolition; the Commando Unit at Fort Espinar (Atlantic side), the Panamanian equivalent of the U.S. Army Special Forces; the *Unidad de Explosivos* (Explosives Unit), which was similar to U.S. military's Explosive Ordnance Detachments and skilled in sabotage and demolition; and finally the *Unidad Especial de Seguridad Antiterror (UESAT)*, or Antiterrorist Security Special Unit, which had its headquarters at Flamenco Island (the Panamanian owned portion of Fort Amador). UESAT

operated as did a U.S. military Special Mission Unit specifically trained in close-quarter combat and represented such a significant threat that Task Force WHITE and Task Force BLUE designated elements to neutralize it.<sup>12</sup>

Significant PDF ground equipment consisted of four V-150 command vehicles, thirteen V-150 armored personnel carriers, thirteen V-300 armored personnel carriers (with fire support and medical variants) assigned to the 6th Infantry Company in Rio Hato and Battalion 2000 at Fort Cimarrón near the Tocumen Airport. These ground vehicles provided firepower and mobility that potentially could out-maneuver U.S. infantry forces and reinforce other PDF units throughout Panama. JTF-PANAMA devoted two Ranger Battalions to ensure these PDF elements were not available to exploit any success the Panamanians might achieve. The predominant small arms weapon was the Soviet-manufactured AK-47, which had replaced the worn out U.S. M-16's. Heavy weapons included twenty ZPU-4 quad anti-aircraft machine guns, 60mm U.S. M2, 81mm U.S. M29 and 4.2" U.S. M30 mortars. Training in the use of many of these weapons had come from American military instructors before hostilities commenced and thus much of the PDF's forces were capable of waging effective combat.<sup>13</sup> The PDF would use the mortars, although not efficiently, as instruments of terror, lobbing rounds into American housing areas in an attempt to kill unarmed civilians and military family members.<sup>14</sup>

The Panamanian Air Forces, headquartered in the Panama Province at Tocumen with bases in Panama province at Curundu and Paitilla (Panama City), Veraguas province at Santiago, and Chiriquí province at David numbered 500 men and thirty-seven aircraft with the bulk of the air force consisting of twenty-one UH-1 helicopters for troop transport. The Air Force consisted of three squadrons: *Escuadron de Rescate* (Rescue Squadron), *Escuadron de Transporte* (Transport Squadron) and *Transporte Aéreo Militar* (Military Aerial Transport). Not one of the

Panamanian aircraft flew during JUST CAUSE, so the U.S. enjoyed absolute air supremacy. A Navy SEAL platoon had the task of ensuring that Noriega did not attempt to flee in one of his jets, a mission that ultimately cost the lives of four U.S. sailors.<sup>15</sup>

The 500-man Panamanian Navy, headquartered at Fort Amador, operated eight coastal patrol craft, five landing craft, two logistical ships and one troop transport boat along with one *Infantería de Marina* (Naval Infantry) unit headquartered at Coco Solo on the Atlantic side of the Canal Zone and organized similarly to U.S. Marines. Panama's naval forces, although small, constituted a clear threat to the continued operation of the Panama Canal, the security of which was one of President Bush's primary objectives. As a result, the elimination of hostile naval forces as a whole became a primary target of JUST CAUSE.<sup>16</sup>

The police forces, a subordinate of the Defense Force, numbered 5,000 personnel and included a large number of human intelligence sources - informers and undercover agents - and an anti-demonstration company. The *Fuerza de Policia* (Police Force) comprised *Dirección Nacional de Transito Terrestre (D.N.T.T.)*, or National Directorate of Land Transit headquartered in Balboa with a mission to patrol roads; a *Departamento Nacional de Investigaciones (D.E.N.I.)* (National Department of Investigations) headquartered in Ancon, outside Panama City; the *Patrulla de Caminos* (Highway Patrol); and the *Policía* (Police) consisting of *Policía de Turismo* (Tourism Police), *Policía Comunitaria* (Community Police), *Policía Movil* (Mobile Police), and the *Policía de Antimotines* (Anti Riot Police), the so-called "Dobermans." This infamous formation, nicknamed for its ferocious attacks on unarmed civilians in the streets of Panama, patrolled the city streets enforcing the PDF's rule with rubber hoses. Large vehicles that sprayed water labeled "Smurf-mobiles" (for the painted image on the side of the truck) would accompany the patrols.

Lastly, the *Guardia Nacional* (National Guard), the final conventional police force comprised of the *Guardia Penitenciaria* (Penitentiary Policemen) headquartered at *Carcel Modelo* (Model Prison) across the street from La Comandancia, *Guardia Presidencial* (Presidential Policemen), *Guardia Forestal* (Forestry Policemen) headquartered in Gamboa, and *Guardia Portuaria* (Port Policemen).

Noriega controlled the entire country through four Military Regions and twelve Military Zones that encompassed Panama's ten provinces. Each of the military zones had a reaction platoon of men and sizable influence in its respective region. The *Primera Región Militar* (First Military Region) included the two provinces of Panama and Colón. Three military zones further divided Panama province, Panama City and District, and Western Panama (specifically the city and district of Chorrera and the San Miguelito Special District). The zones included the *1a Zona Militar* (1st Military Zone) in Panama District and the metropolitan area of Panama City; the *2a Zona Militar* (2nd Military Zone) located in Colón province where a special Reaction Platoon, the "Cazadores" (Hunters) was stationed; the *10a Zona Militar* (10th Military Zone) located in Panama province's Western Panama and Chorrera District; and the *11a Zona Militar* (11th Military Zone) located in the Panama province's San Miguelito Special District, which was home to a Reaction Force of three platoons.

The *Segunda Región Militar* (Second Military Region) included the provinces of Darien and San Blas. The zones included the *9a Zona Militar* (9th Military Zone) in Darien, and the *12a Zona Militar* (12th Military Zone) in the San Blas Region.

The *Tercera Región Militar* (Third Military Region) included four provinces: Veraguas, Cocle, Herrera, and Los Santos. The zones included the *3a Zona Militar* (3d Military Zone) in the Province of Veraguas and included a Reaction Platoon, "Quibian," named in honor the

Indian chief who in 1503 drove Christopher Columbus out of Panama when he attempted to start a new colony; the *4a Zona Militar* (4th Military Zone) in Herrera; the *6a Zona Militar* (6th Military Zone) in Cocle, where a Reaction Platoon, “*Indio*” (Indian), was stationed; and the *7a Zona Militar* (7th Military Zone) in the Los Santos, with its own Reaction Platoon, “*Los Bravos de Canajagua*” (The Canajagua Valiant - the name of a Panamanian folkloric figure).

The final region, the *Cuarta Región Militar* (Fourth Military Region) included the provinces of Chiriqui and Bocas del Toro. The zones included the *5a Zona Militar* (5th Military Zone) located in Chiriqui and the *8a Zona Militar* (8th Military Zone) Bocas del Toro; the latter was home to the “*Bucaneros*” (Buccaneers) reaction platoon.

An additional threat, not usually recognized in formal order of battle analysis but one that nonetheless posed a sizeable danger to the security of American citizens residing in Panama, was the paramilitary “Dignity Battalions.” Formed in 1988 with the assistance of Cuba and designed as Civilian Defense Committees, the “Dignity Battalions” comprised armed paramilitary civilians (men and women of all ages) loyal to Noriega. “Dig Bats” consisted of six battalions, with 300 personnel each, totaling 1,800 people. They constituted a severe threat to U.S. civilians during the execution of JUST CAUSE and formed the nucleus of anticipated guerilla attacks after the end of formal combat.<sup>17</sup>

The U.S. enjoyed a large advantage in uniformed troop strength: 27,000 compared to 12,800, or a simple force ratio of 2.1:1. With half of the U.S. fighting strength already in Panama, the remainder conducted forced entry operations utilizing over 200 aircraft from the USAF Military Airlift Command (MAC) and Strategic Airlift Command (SAC), which employed KC-10 and KC-135 tanker aircraft from twenty-six various aerial refueling squadrons at fourteen bases to support the massive movement of troops to Panama.<sup>18</sup> The large and sudden

movement of aircraft across the U.S., along with an announced emergency deployment “exercise” for the 82nd Airborne Division at Fort Bragg, North Carolina, alerted the American press and eventually gave the PDF advance notice of American intentions. The compromising of surprise at the strategic level had a domino effect and, according to the JTF-PANAMA commander, General Carl Stiner, denied the U.S. forces tactical surprise as well.<sup>19</sup>

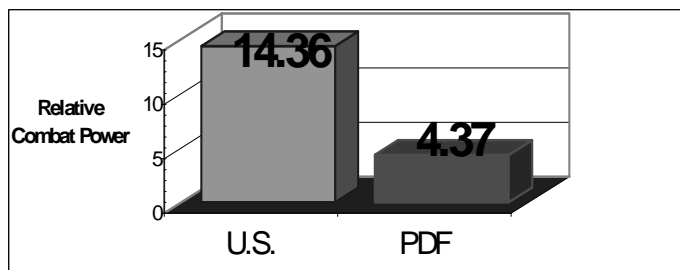
The fact that Panama was forewarned significantly influenced the correlation of forces, or force ratio, between the U.S. and the PDF. Relative combat power force ratio is the effect created by combining maneuver, firepower, protection, and leadership - the dynamics of battlefield power - in combat against the enemy. The integration and application of the effects of these elements with other potential combat multipliers (such as combat support and USAF assets) against an enemy can generate overwhelming combat power, thus bringing victory at a minimal cost. Relative combat power requires an assessment of both tangible and intangible factors - such as the enemy training status, and equipment serviceability and lethality compared to U.S. equivalents - as well as consideration of a number of factors that affect the potential outcome of the battle, for example, enemy leadership and loyalty of the fighting soldiers.<sup>20</sup>

The relative combat power force ratio of U.S. to Panamanian forces was 3.29:1 (Table 4.1). The historical planning factor for an attack upon a prepared defended fortification calls for a force ratio of 3:1.<sup>21</sup>

TABLE 4.1, CORRELATION OF FORCES AND MEANS

## Force Ratios

U.S. Forces					Panamanian Defense Forces (PDF)				
Number	Strength	Type	F.E.	Total	Number	Strength	Type	F.E.	Total
8	100%	Infantry Bn (Airborne)	0.70	5.60	2	100%	PDF Light IN BN	0.48	0.96
7	100%	Infantry Bn (Light)	0.48	3.36	5	100%	PDF Light IN CO	0.16	0.80
1	100%	Infantry Bn (Mech)	1.00	1.00	1	100%	PDF MECH CO	0.33	0.33
1	100%	USMC Infantry Bn	0.80	0.80	1	100%	PDF CAV/TRP	0.16	0.16
2	100%	FA Bn (105T)	0.80	1.60	2	100%	PDF Public Order CO	0.16	0.32
1	50%	Atk Helo Bn (24xAH64)	4.00	2.00	6	100%	PDF DIGNITY BN	0.08	0.48
					12	100%	PDF MILITARY ZONE	0.08	0.96
					1	100%	PDF NAVAL FORCES	0.26	0.26
					1	100%	PDF AIR FORCES	0.10	0.10
U.S. Force Equivalent				<b>14.36</b>	PDF Force Equivalent				<b>4.37</b>
Ratio of U.S. to PDF					Ratio of PDF to U.S.				
3.29:1					0.30:1				



Source: United States, CGSC Student Text 100-3, Ch. 8.

The methodology utilizes assignment of Force Equivalents (F.E.) to initial committed forces dedicated to attacking the PDF unilaterally. Force Equivalent weights are standard percentages centered on firepower, mobility, shock, and destructive capability derived from historical planning factors provided by the U.S. Army.<sup>22</sup>

The basis of PDF values for nonstandard units, such as Dignity Battalions, is an assessment of the effective fighting strength in comparison to U.S. forces. Much of the PDF



equipment was American-made and the overwhelming majority of its troops had been trained to U.S. military standards by American forces during the Cold War. Extensive research into the type, size and equipment of each PDF unit provides for an accurate force equivalency.<sup>23</sup>

After considering the total aggregate hostile enemy forces (police and “Dig Bats”) along with equipment lethality and applying the loss of strategic and tactical surprise, the U.S. barely met the minimum requirement of 3:1 relative combat power force established by the U.S. Army when planning an attack. Furthermore, when measuring the amount of force to be used against Panama and its effectiveness, American planners had to consider the likely environmental and operational impacts on the balance of force ratio.

The attack on Panama was not on the country itself, but on the PDF and Noriega. The planning for JUST CAUSE centered on the removal of Noriega from power, the neutralization of Panamanian Forces, the security of U.S. citizens residing in the combat area, and the protection of the Panama Canal and its continued operation. Panama comprises approximately 77,082 square kilometers with a canal dividing it in half. Mountainous regions rising to 11,500 feet form the interior along with nearly 500 impassable rivers.<sup>24</sup> To reach quickly each end of this rugged countryside requires air transport and firepower. JUST CAUSE planners overcame the inhibiting terrain with a large contingent of aircraft. More than 161 Army and nine Air Force helicopters provided the flexibility that air assault forces needed to deploy throughout Panama in mere hours.<sup>25</sup> Moreover, because twelve PDF military zones were spread across the countryside with ground forces located in the interior and along the border of Costa Rica, American planners had to include additional combat soldiers to the order of battle in order to ensure that guerilla warfare, based in mountains, did not prolong the fighting. The physical terrain of Panama, in other words, was a force ratio multiplier for the PDF. The large area

required the commitment of additional U.S. forces and the numerous sites along the Canal itself demanded attention. Otherwise, one successful breach of the Canal could have had devastating affects on the accomplishment of the U.S. forces' mission and might have encouraged the PDF to continue fighting a sabotage war.

American planners specified thirteen key objective areas, the capturing of which would necessitate simultaneous attacks on twenty-seven different locations; the targets included not only enemy forces but also vital terrain.<sup>26</sup> The center of gravity was Panama City with the key target, La Comandancia. The design of the plan was to eliminate the headquarters and cripple the PDF's ability to coordinate a counter attack and communicate effectively to its remaining forces - in other words, destroy its command and control capability. All other targets supported the center of gravity; their neutralization or capture either would eliminate the enemy threat or establish American control over terrain features critical to the success of the military operations. The objectives included Panama City, Colón City, Rio Hato Military Base, Torrijos-Tocumen Airport, Balboa City and Harbor, Gatun Locks, Madden Dam, Pacora River Bridge, the Bridge of Americas, Coco Solo, Gambóá, Arrijan, and the electrical substation of Cerro Tigre along the interior of the Canal.

The twenty-seven subordinate targets includes La Comandancia in Panama City; Modelo Prison in downtown Panama city, where one American was being held; the 1st PDF Infantry Company in Tinajitas (Panama City); Patillia airfield with Noriega's jet in Panama City; one PDF Cavalry Troop in Panama Viejo (Panama City); Rio Hato Military Base, housing the 6th and 7th PDF Infantry Companies; Torrijos-Tocumen Airport with the 2nd PDF Infantry Company and Panamanian Air Forces just outside Panama City; the 5th PDF Infantry Company at Fort Amador; the Ancón DNTT (PDF police unit); the Ancon DENI (PDF police unit); the

Balboa DENI (PDF police unit); the PDF Engineer Compound near Albrook Air Base; PDF police dog compound in Curundu (outside Panama City); multiple PDF naval boats in Balboa Harbor and Pier 18; the Gatun Locks; the 8th PDF Infantry Company at Fort Espinar; the PDF Naval Marine Company at Coco Solo; Renacer Prison housing an American and improperly imprisoned PDF officers in Gambóia; Pacora Bridge, which supported the avenue of approach to the Tocumen airport; Fort Cimмерón with the Battalion 2000; Madden Dam, a critical node of the Panama Canal; Cerro Tigre, a supply and electrical base supporting the PDF and canal; Cerro Azul TV2 antenna in downtown Panama City in order to cease Noriega propaganda and allow the EC-130 “Volant Solo” to broadcast American intentions to the public; Flamenco Island housing a PDF anti-terrorist special forces unit (UESAT); France airfield with Panamanian aircraft on the Atlantic side of the canal; DNTT station Number 2 in the city of Arrijan; and the Bridge of America crossing the mouth of the Pacific entrance to the Panama Canal.

Examination of the twenty-seven initial multiple targets for D-Day makes it clear that the force allotted to neutralize the PDF, while sufficient, did not account for the numerous targets that required securing. But since intelligence did not indicate that the PDF had assigned troops to many of those targets, it was difficult for American planners to judge what was necessary to secure them. That further reduced the overall relative force ratio as numerous targets were required to be secured, even without hostile forces threatening them; however, their criticality to the Panama Canal or to the safety of American and host nation civilians mandated the need for additional soldiers.

In addition to the environmental considerations when applying force, there are operational factors that limit full employment of lethal weapon systems and thus lower the force effectiveness of U.S. combat units. Of primary concern to the military and political leaders in

the U.S. was the continued relationship with the country and the people of Panama. Naturally, the protection of innocent civilians within a combat zone is a fundamental requirement for any U.S. force that initiates combat. That rule of engagement applied to the neutralization of the PDF. In all cases, some type of warning, relayed via speaker, bullhorn, even through telephones, provided the PDF the opportunity and ability to surrender before U.S. forces commenced tactical offensive operations.<sup>27</sup>

Before the Rangers conducted their airborne assault in Rio Hato, two F-117 stealth fighters dropped two 2,000 pound bombs close to, but not on, the PDF barracks in an effort to stun and demoralize the would-be defenders. On the night of H-Hour, eight F-117A Black Jets from the 415th Tactical Fighter Squadron deployed from Tonopah, Nevada 3,000 miles away, conducting five aerial refuelings en route with the KC-10A tankers out of Beale Air Force Base, California. Two back-up aircraft returned to base after the initial refueling and, just before entering Panamanian airspace, four of the remaining six, which were to take part in a still classified operation by special operation forces to capture Noriega, received orders to abort. The remaining two stealth fighters accomplished their mission, dropping two 2,000 pound Mark 84 bombs with a lethal radius of 130 meters and capable of blowing out eardrums half a mile a way. The first bomb impacted forty-five meters from the barracks and the second detonated 300 meters wide, which meant that now alert enemy troops were prepared to attack the U.S. force. As a result, the engagement resulted in four U.S. Rangers' being killed in action and more than a dozen wounded.<sup>28</sup>

Prosecuting a war against an armed enemy prepared to fight and given notice of an impending attack further reduced the force effectiveness and combat power ratio advantage that U.S. enjoyed "on paper" at the onset of combat operations. Examining further the relative force

ratio in light of the environmental and operational impacts and reapplying the ratio with respect to enemy troops or key terrain, the amount of forces deployed in support of JUST CAUSE meets the minimum planning figures when balanced against the U.S. Army's model of historical planning ratios. The military intervention in Panama, in other words, involved an appropriate, but not excessive, application of force to overwhelm quickly the PDF with minimal loss of human life.

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<sup>1</sup> Anthony Gray and Maxwell Manwaring, Panama: Operation Just Cause, Chapter 2.

<sup>2</sup> Ronald H. Cole, Operation Just Cause: The Planning and Execution of Joint Operations in Panama, February 1988-January 1990, pp. 7-9.

<sup>3</sup> Gray and Manwaring, Panama, Chapter 2.

<sup>4</sup> Lieutenant General (Retired) Edward M. Flanagan, Battle for Panama: Inside Operation Just Cause, pp. 27, 31.

<sup>5</sup> Cole, Operation Just Cause, pp. 19-20.

<sup>6</sup> Jennifer Morrison Taw, Operation Just Cause: Lessons for Operations Other Than War, p. 12.

<sup>7</sup> Bruce W. Watson and Peter G. Tsouras, ed. Operation Just Cause: The U.S. Intervention in Panama, pp. 115-117.

<sup>8</sup> General (Retired) Colin L Powell, My American Journey, p. 424.

<sup>9</sup> Thomas M. Donnelly, Margaret Roth, and Caleb Baker, Operation Just Cause: The Storming of Panama, p. 101.

<sup>10</sup> Bob Woodward, The Commanders, p. 173.

<sup>11</sup> Cole, Operation Just Cause, p. 37.

<sup>12</sup> Panama, Fuerzas de Defensa: Fuerzas Armadas de Panama, pp. 31-35.

<sup>13</sup> Gordon L. Rottman, Panama 1989-90, p. 14.

<sup>14</sup> William H. Huff IV, a personal experience during the opening hours of Operation JUST CAUSE as two mortar rounds landed within meters of my house at Fort Clayton, Panama.

- <sup>15</sup> Rottman, Panama, p. 11.
- <sup>16</sup> Martin C. Arostegui, Twilight Warriors: Inside the World's Special Forces, p. 281.
- <sup>17</sup> Watson, Operation Just Cause, p. 70.
- <sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, p.77.
- <sup>19</sup> Cole, Operation Just Cause, p. 34.
- <sup>20</sup> United States, Department of the Army, CGSC Student Text 100-3, Ch. 8.
- <sup>21</sup> USDA, Field Manual 34-130, Appendix B.
- <sup>22</sup> CGSC Student Text 100-3, Chapter 8.
- <sup>23</sup> Panama. Fuerzas de Defensa: Fuerzas Armadas de Panama, Chapter One and Rottman, Panama, pp. 10-17.
- <sup>24</sup> United States, Panama: A Country Study, pp. 70-73.
- <sup>25</sup> Noris Lyn McCall, *Assessing the Role of Air Power*, pp. 117-118.
- <sup>26</sup> Taw, Operation Just Cause, p. 12.
- <sup>27</sup> Major Robert K. Wright, Interview with Task Force WILDCAT, Audiocassette.
- <sup>28</sup> Donnelly, Operation Just Cause, pp. 340-343 and <<http://www.fl17a.com/panama.html>>.

## CHAPTER 3

### CONDUCT OF FORCE APPLICATION

With military intervention amply warranted, the execution of Operation JUST CAUSE was successful in achieving its objective of neutralizing the Panamanian Defense Force (PDF) with a minimal loss of enemy life. The United States, in other words, carefully measured the use of force necessary to accomplish its objective so that, even at greater risk to its own troops, the intervention would not cause undue harm to Panamanian nationals, military and civilian. Highly trained, well-led soldiers, using innovative techniques, carried out the use of military force in Panama, systematically offering the enemy an opportunity to surrender before employment of lethal weapon systems. The rules of engagement established set very strenuous parameters under which field commanders could prosecute their combat mission. Many critics, among them former U.S. Attorney General, Ramsey Clark, condemned the military intervention, characterizing it as “shear, overwhelming use of raw firepower.”<sup>1</sup> Oscar award-winning filmmaker Barbara Trent produced a documentary released in 1993 that claimed the U.S. had used “overwhelming force beyond any possible justification” against Panama.<sup>2</sup> What such comments reveal is a woefully inadequate understanding of the tactical combat during the opening hours in Panama and the lengths to which the U.S. military went to avoid bloodshed.

Of the four conventional task forces, Task Force (TF) BAYONET in particular had the arduous job of securing downtown Panama City and the populated suburban areas surrounding the Canal Zone. That mission, involving an urban environment, had not been the focus of the jungle-based TF just less than one year prior to JUST CAUSE. The flexibility and adeptness of the BAYONET’s infantry battalion leaders was crucial to the successful neutralization of the PDF with limited collateral damage to civilians and the infrastructure. BAYONET’s combat

actions reflected the strenuous and detailed level at which the U.S. military trains for combat in order to reduce friendly casualties and consciously not kill surrendering enemy or the local populace. Panama was the first significant use of American military force since the Vietnam War era two decades earlier and senior American leaders were determined to avoid the mistakes made during that conflict. Consequently, an enormous amount of force-oriented training, conducted with particular emphasis on the rules of engagement (ROE), occurred in preparation for JUST CAUSE. The ROE limited the amount of lethal firepower used against the enemy, and the unique way in which the U.S. literally tossed aside tactical surprise in order to allow the enemy an opportunity to surrender the enemy was perhaps the most dramatic reflection of Washington's desire to avoid bloodshed. It is important to recognize how effectively the U.S. military applied measured force. The experience of one infantry battalion in combat in downtown Panama provides perhaps the best example of that phenomenon.

TF BAYONET comprised three infantry task forces: BLACK DEVIL, consisting of the 1st Battalion (Airborne), 508th Infantry, stationed at Fort Kobbe in Panama and commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Billy Ray Fitzgerald; GATOR, built around the 4th Battalion, 6th Infantry (Mechanized) from the 5th Infantry Division (Mechanized) stationed at Fort Polk, Louisiana and forward deployed to Panama months prior to JUST CAUSE under the command of Lieutenant Colonel Jim Reed; and WILDCAT, comprising the 5th Battalion, 87th Infantry (Light) stationed at Fort Clayton in Panama, and commanded by Lieutenant Colonel William H. Huff III. TF WILDCAT had the arduous task of executing a non-illuminated, night attack against multiple critical targets within an urban operational setting. Huff's force, however, represented just one of the numerous units that fought complicated battles and successfully accomplished their missions, a reflection of the manner in which the U.S. applied deadly force.<sup>3</sup>



The training of TF WILDCAT underwent a significant change in focus in preparation for Operation JUST CAUSE. As the Battalion Commander, LTC Huff, recalled:

Jungle warfare used to be our big emphasis, but that was before the political situation changed. MOUT operations were not part of our wartime mission, but they are now. In July of 1989, we reoriented our Mission Essential Task List to include Military Operations in Urban Terrain. We concentrated previously on jungle operations. Now we are going into specifically two tasks: attack of a built-up area and defense of a built-up area.

Not having a real MOUT training facility, Huff used an old coast artillery bunker complex to train his troops in basic room-clearing techniques. This training developed into squad, and eventually platoon, dry-fire run-throughs of objectives using MILES, a simulated laser system design to provide instant feedback on a weapon's engagement and whether or not it hit or missed its target.<sup>4</sup>

TF WILDCAT progressed into live-fire MOUT training on mock-building complexes built on a local live-fire range. The live-fires developed into more complicated situations and in November 1989, the battalion progressed to company-level MOUT live-fires at night with artillery, engineer, and mechanized infantry support and with "non-combatant" targets in multiple buildings. Each company had to clear the building complex with no "non-combatant casualties" to receive a rating of "trained" in the task.

By November, the battalion task force was working a seven-day per week training schedule. Earlier in the year, the SOUTHCOM Commander, General Maxwell Thurman, had initiated a series of freedom-of-movement exercises around Panama City called "Sand Flea" operations and intended to test the rights of the U.S. Military as guaranteed under the Panama Canal Treaty of 1977. These aggressive operations proved to be very important intelligence-gathering missions, as leaders could document the enemy's reaction patterns and conduct reconnaissance of actual objectives. TF WILDCAT participated in a variety of these operations,

ranging from convoys to simulated air assaults in downtown areas to movements in and around known PDF locations. More than one of these missions turned into armed standoffs between U.S. and PDF forces that came precariously close to actual firefights. The operational tempo was high, with several live-fires and “sand flea” operations within one week. The soldiers’ alert status fluctuated between a two-hour recall to, at times, a thirty-minute recall.

H-Hour was set for 1:00 a.m. on December 20, 1989 and TF WILDCAT completed its remaining pre-combat checks and inspections at its home station of Fort Clayton on the western side of the Panama Canal. At 4:30 on the afternoon of December 19, LTC Huff briefed the Task Force, underscoring the importance of the Rules of Engagement: give the enemy every possible chance to surrender.

The mission of TF WILDCAT was to conduct operations to protect U.S. lives, property, and vital Panama Canal facilities by fixing and neutralizing PDF units in Area of Operation ANTIETAM.

The Task Force comprised three light infantry companies (Alpha, Bravo, and Charlie, 5th Battalion, 87th Infantry) and one mechanized company (Alpha, 4th Battalion, 6th Battalion [Mechanized]) operating M113 tracked personnel carriers, along with its organic Headquarters and Headquarters Company consisting of mortars and reconnaissance elements.

The Battalion Commander’s intent was to seize key PDF locations and establish several roadblocks at important intersections to control access to the areas. Alpha Company was to fix and, on order, seize the Panamanian Engineer Battalion Compound to prevent the reinforcement of the Brigade Task Force's main objective: La Comandancia. Bravo Company’s mission was to neutralize the Balboa DENI (police station) and enemy forces in the area, protect the Balboa housing area, and secure the electrical substation located nearby. Charlie Company’s mission

was to isolate the PDF police headquarters, called the DNTT, and the Ancon DENI (police station). The mechanized company's mission was to establish roadblocks to prevent the reinforcement of La Comandancia.

Bravo Company and Charlie Company crossed their lines of departure out the back gate of Ft. Clayton in a convoy of 2-½ ton trucks at half past midnight and proceeded along Gaillard Highway to their respective objectives. At the same time, Alpha Company, dismounted, and the mechanized company crossed their lines of departure in the Curundu Housing area approximately six kilometers away.<sup>5</sup>

Alpha Company's objective, the Engineer Compound, was approximately 1000 meters by 500 meters, and consisted of eleven main buildings. By a quarter to one, the company had established three support-by-fire positions around the compound: one to the northwest, one to the northeast, and a third to the east. In accordance with the Rules of Engagement (ROE), the company made several announcements on a loudspeaker telling the enemy to surrender. When the reply came in the form of machine gun fire, the Company commander, Captain Bill Flynt, ordered a firepower demonstration onto the buildings. A few enemy soldiers, one a first sergeant, surrendered to 3rd Platoon. He claimed that most of the soldiers inside wanted to surrender, but that a few officers were refusing to allow them to do so. At 1:00 a.m., three automobiles attempted to enter the compound apparently to reinforce the PDF garrison, but 1st Platoon destroyed them. Among the wounded in the vehicles was a PDF captain who claimed to be a company commander. When Flynt asked him tell the Panamanian soldiers inside to surrender, the captain said that there were approximately 130 soldiers in the compound, ready to fight to the death. When Flynt then assured him that they "would all be killed," however, the captain changed his mind and unsuccessfully attempted to convince the soldiers to surrender.

The exchange of firepower demonstrations and surrender requests continued for a few hours, with little success and at 5:45 Flynt received orders from Lieutenant Colonel Huff to seize the compound. The assault began with an attack on the first building by 2nd Platoon, and 3rd Platoon quickly followed and seized the second building. While 1st Platoon kept up a suppressive fire, 2nd and 3rd platoons cleared the buildings in successive bounds towards the south, encountering hostile and non-hostile enemy soldiers along the way. The U.S. soldiers remained disciplined, followed their ROE and targeted only threatening Panamanian troops. Some of the buildings included multiple office rooms off larger rooms, making their clearing a time-consuming effort. The assault concluded with 1st Platoon clearing the eastern-most buildings. At 1:00 p.m. on December 20, Captain Flynn reported to Huff that the Engineer Compound was secure.

Bravo Company's main objective, the Balboa DENI, was located in a commercial region of Balboa surrounded by residential dwellings and several other buildings. The target was approximately one hundred meters by one hundred meters in size and contained a multitude of rooms and furniture. Bravo's commander, Captain Marc Conley, had 1st Platoon protecting the Balboa housing area to safeguard the civilians who lived there, while he positioned 2nd Platoon to neutralize the Balboa DENI. To 3rd Platoon fell the assignment of securing vital Panama Canal Commission (PCC) facilities in the area, ensuring the safe operation of the Panama Canal, and preventing the reinforcement of the Balboa DENI. As soldiers departed along the route to their objectives, a squad-sized enemy force ambushed 3rd Platoon from two different locations. Bravo Company managed to destroy the ambush, sustaining three friendly casualties. Following the clash, 3rd Platoon moved into the PCC building facility and cleared the electrical substation and the maritime headquarters, capturing nine prisoners of war (POWs). It also seized another

office complex, the Marine Bureau, and provided security for the TF BAYONET's Tactical Operations Center. At the same time, 1st Platoon conducted a series of patrols through the housing area, encountering minimal contact with enemy forces.

Bravo Company's 2nd Platoon, reinforced with a rifle squad, completed its encirclement of the Balboa DENI by 12:45 a.m. The platoon had four squad size attack-by-fire positions: one in a restaurant, one in a library, one in a YMCA, and another in a church. As with Alpha Company, Bravo Company followed the prescribed ROE and made several broadcasts calling on the enemy soldiers inside to surrender. Attaining little success, the company commander ordered small fire demonstrations to persuade the PDF troops lay down their arms, an effort that netted only three soldiers who then tried to escape. LTC Huff gave the order to attack and with the aid of an AC-130 Spectre gunship - in effect, a flying 105mm howitzer - Captain Conley accomplished established a foothold with a barrage of fires, which permitted his men eventually to breach the enemy positions and clear the building. At a quarter to five, the company commander reported to Huff that the objective was "cold."

Charlie Company had two objectives: the police headquarters, called the DNTT, and the Ancon DENI, an investigations bureau. The company commander, Captain Don Currie, gave 2nd Platoon the mission of establishing a support-by-fire position to the south of the DNTT building complex, across a highway, to allow the company main effort, 3rd Platoon, to assault the objective. He gave 1st Platoon the task of neutralizing the Ancon DENI, a building the same size as the Balboa DENI. As 2nd Platoon began moving into its positions by a 2-½ ton truck convoy, it received fire from a building to the rear of where it was to set its support position, quickly suppressed the fire, and was able to get into position before one o'clock. Moving into an assault position to the west of the building complex, 3rd Platoon cleared a large warehouse along

the way and prepared for the attack. Again, the company offered several times to accept the surrender of PDF elements inside the building. Charlie Company had the same lack of success as Alpha and Bravo companies and similarly conducted a series of firepower demonstrations. At 3:30, Huff ordered Currie to seize the complex. When it initiated the assault on the first two buildings, 3rd Platoon sustained two casualties; 2nd Platoon moved forward onto the objective and continued the assault, securing the DNTT by 9:00 a.m.

As it moved into its local support, assault, and security positions from three different locations, 1st Platoon met resistance as well. The platoon leader, 2nd Lieutenant Dwayne Spurlock, requested mechanized support from Captain Currie. An M113 section from the mechanized company, equipped with .50 caliber machine guns, reinforced the platoon's support-by-fire position and suppressed the significant enemy fire, isolating and neutralizing the target. Upon Captain Currie's order, the platoon initiated its assault at 3:30 to seize the building. An hour and fifteen minutes later, Currie reported to Huff that the building had been secured.

Huff gave his only mechanized company, Alpha, 4-6 IN (M), the mission of establishing a series of five roadblocks to prevent the reinforcement of La Comandancia from Balboa or Ancón, which tied into Task Force GATOR's left flank. The mechanized company left the Curundu housing area and moved along Gaillard Highway towards Ancón, establishing the roadblocks as it moved. As one of the platoons was positioning its vehicles, it received sniper fire that killed one soldier. It suppressed the sniper and continued the mission. The company encountered little resistance, but its mission was vital to the success of TF BAYONET's main effort on La Comandancia, the center of gravity within JUST CAUSE.<sup>6</sup>

The successes of Task Force WILDCAT can be attributed in part to pre-assault training. The "Wildcats" trained as combined arms team with mortar and artillery fire, mechanized forces,

and engineer forces facing realistic and challenging scenarios using performance-oriented standards. Enhancing the intensity of the training was the fact that the “Wildcats” received the mission to conduct urban operations (MOU) only in July, just five months before Washington ordered execution of JUST CAUSE.

Keenly aware of the time factor, Lieutenant Colonel Huff and his S-3 staff Operations Officer, Major Jim Woods, created the task force’s training plan. From the outset, Huff ensured that his men trained as a combined arms team. It was initially composed of engineers, but evolved into mechanized support and artillery support. This emphasis on combined arms training proved critical to the command and control of the operations during the battle. When Alpha Company was assaulting the buildings of the Engineer Compound, 3rd Platoon used its attached engineer squad to its fullest extent, including taking the lead to clear rooms at times. For each of the company’s objectives, solid control over indirect fire assets was an absolutely necessity in order to prevent fratricide or unnecessary collateral damage. The companies became noticeably proficient during training at directing their indirect fire assets. Bravo Company used artillery, mortars, and AC-130 fires to destroy the Balboa DENI but was so accurate that the Christmas Nativity scene on the DENI’s front lawn remained virtually unscathed. For Charlie Company, the use of mechanized infantry support became critical to the success of 1st Platoon’s mission. The platoon leader learned how to use these assets effectively during training and properly employed an M113 section to suppress enemy fires.<sup>7</sup>

The realistic training that Huff and Major Woods conducted prepared the soldiers for what to expect in combat. “When we get a new 18 or 19-year-old kid in here, you can watch their eyes get big when you hand them live rounds the first time,” one soldier recalled. “But, after a while, it becomes a normal way of life. You start to accept that every time you get sent

out, it could be for the real thing.” The “sand flea” operations, usually conducted with live ammunition, were also invaluable to the overall successes.

The task force trained in other non-doctrinal and potentially hazardous techniques that were used in combat, including throwing grenades from “exposed” positions, maneuvering dangerously close to 60mm mortar fire, maneuvering under machine gun fire, and returning fire from vehicles. As Huff later explained,

Battalion and Company Commanders and all radio operators (RTOs) all went through some ‘bizarre’ training in case the war was started during a ‘sand flea’. . .using a HMMWV [military vehicle] as a firing platform, quick fires, etc. Jim Woods and I both carried 12 gauge shotguns with ‘witness protection grips’ for use from inside the ‘Hummer’ before and through the war.

The building-clearing forces of each company faced a variety of situations with respect to the enemy. There were some enemy soldiers cowering in corners, some returning fire, and others attempting to run away. Through extensive training with non-combatants during live-fires, the soldiers of Task Force WILDCAT reacted with only the minimum force necessary to neutralize the enemy. Each soldier was able to recognize the threat and react according to the ROE, as he had practiced during those numerous live-fires.

Because the “Wildcats” began training for a MOUT mission set for the first time in July, they had very little in the way of experience or standard operating procedures on which to base performance evaluation. They therefore used the performance standards outlined in various doctrinal field manuals and mission training plans to judge the effectiveness of their live-fires. With time, the experienced and knowledgeable soldiers created techniques and procedures to enhance the effectiveness of the MOUT doctrine. With these added techniques came new and more challenging standards. Each live-fire that the Task Force conducted had measurable standards, which would guide the unit to a successful endstate. The most notable performance



measure occurred during the company live-fires in November, when soldiers encountered non-combatant targets, forcing the soldiers to discriminate quickly and rule out threats in order to reduce enemy or civilian casualties. The companies improved their target-recognition skills that proved successful in combat.<sup>8</sup>

Efficient training has always been a cornerstone of combat success. Task Force WILDCAT used the fundamentals of training, specifically combined-arms training, realistic and challenging scenarios, and performance-oriented training in the months prior to combat to set the conditions for its success during Operation JUST CAUSE. All of the lessons learned from the “Wildcats” experience remain applicable to MOUT operations today. One of the main lessons learned was the effective use of weapon systems. All soldiers must know the weapon they are using and its capabilities. The misuse of a weapon due to ignorance could cause fratricide, which is avoidable with proper training. Along the same lines, another lesson learned is the fact that soldiers clearing a building must know its construction. If a room’s walls are made of plaster, a fragmentation grenade thrown into the room will penetrate the walls upon detonation and project shrapnel where it is not supposed to go, creating additional friction on the battlefield. Good intelligence on buildings will prevent fratricide.

Another lesson learned is the imperative of training to react to unexpected situations. TF WILDCAT trained with many different and creative scenarios for each live-fire, conditioning soldiers to expect anything during combat. During one of the building-clearing operations, enemy soldiers were in the rafters of the ceiling firing down at the clearing team. Sustaining no casualties, the team neutralized the enemy.

During the period from 8:55 p.m. on December 19, 1989 to 6:40 a.m. on December 23, TF WILDCAT suffered one killed and twenty wounded in action. At the same time it inflicted

twenty-two fatal casualties on the PDF, wounded sixteen, and took 185 prisoners of war. These battlefield statistics provide eloquent proof that training using the appropriate fundamentals saves lives and reduces collateral damage.<sup>9</sup>

Combat operations comprised the opening hours of JUST CAUSE, but the military prepared for host nation support with its fourth operation plan in prayer book. Operation BLIND LOGIC, addressing the future of Panama through civil-military operations, began almost simultaneously with the initiation of combat operations. Within hours of the cessation of combat operations, looting began in Panama City, creating an urgent need to restore order. BLIND LOGIC underwent a hurried update and, once approved by the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Operation PROMOTE LIBERTY evolved.<sup>10</sup> A testament to the United States' determination to ensure democracy in Panama, military units within hours shifted from a combat role to a peace-keeping one, providing health care, food and protection to displaced Panamanian civilians. The new operational requirement in Panama was now not simply neutralizing Noriega's die-hard supporters within the PDF, but taking steps to ensure a stable and secure environment so that democratic rule might prevail.

U.S. forces devoted as much time to planning and dedicating forces for civil-military operations as they did to defeat the enemy in combat. The 96th Civil Affairs Battalion, Fort Bragg, North Carolina initially deployed forces with the first combat elements parachuting into Panama. These soldiers helped to provide population control and support and set up camps for displaced civilians during the fighting. The PDF set fires to many of the homes within the vicinity of La Comandancia as a diversion against the onslaught of U.S. troops, which created a special problem of civilian dislocation in the center of the capital. Utilizing the nearby Department of Defense Balboa High School sports field, American units provided housing, food

and medical attention to a vast number of civilians. In the end the civil affairs task force helped reconstruct Panama and lessen the devastation of combat with nineteen major engineering projects and over 220 nationwide civic action projects focused on improving health, education, and economic conditions.<sup>11</sup>

The U.S. clearly conducted military operations with an effort to minimize enemy casualties while using an appropriate amount of offensive force to safeguard American lives and protect the Panama Canal. Many soldiers routinely risked their lives in order to provide the PDF an opportunity to surrender and to assist thousands of displaced civilians with health care. Operation JUST CAUSE was a model combat operation precisely because it incorporated a civil affairs component that would minimize the impact of military intervention on the general population. The successful execution provides a strong example of appropriate humanitarian support embedded in within combat operations.

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<sup>1</sup> “The U.S. Military Charged with Mass Murder.” The Winds, pp. 1-3.

<sup>2</sup> Stephen Danner, “Operation Just Cause” was Anything but Just, p. 3.

<sup>3</sup> Captain Joseph M. Nemmers, Sergeant Daniel C. Wagner, Sergeant Robert F. Cargie and Dolores De Mena, Staff Ride: Operation JUST CAUSE, Task Force BAYONET, 20 December 1989 to 31 January 1990, p. 21.

<sup>4</sup> Colonel (Retired) William H. Huff III, Personal Interview, 17 March 2002.

<sup>5</sup> The account of the combat operations that follows is based on two sources:

The 5th Battalion, 87th Infantry Task Force WILDCAT After Action Report of “Just Cause”, Prod. The Southern Command Network, Videocassette.

Major Robert K. Wright, Interview with Lieutenant Colonel William H. Huff III, Commander, Task Force WILDCAT and 5th Battalion, 87th Infantry staff personnel, Audiocassette.

<sup>6</sup> Task Force WILDCAT After Action Report, Videocassette.

<sup>7</sup> Wright, Interview with Task Force WILDCAT, Audiocassette.

<sup>8</sup> Huff, Personal interview.

<sup>9</sup> Nemmers, Staff Ride, pp. 26-34.

<sup>10</sup> Anthony Gray and Maxwell Manwaring, Panama: Operation Just Cause, Chapter 2.

<sup>11</sup> Ronald H. Cole, Operation Just Cause: The Planning and Execution of Joint Operations in Panama, February 1988-January 1990, p. 66.

## CHAPTER 4

### SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

At 2:00 p.m. on December 24, 1989, four days after the execution of Operation JUST CAUSE, Noriega, tired of hiding and evading U.S. forces, quietly walked through the doors of the Papal Nunciatura in the Punta Paitilla district of Panama City and requested asylum. At 8:44 p.m. on January 3, 1990 Noriega walked back out of the doors of the Nuncio and into the waiting arms of U.S. forces and whisked away to a cell in Miami, Florida to await his trial on drug trafficking charges.<sup>1</sup> The complete neutralization of Noriega and the Panamanian Defense Forces by U.S. military intervention was the weight needed to balance the scales of U.S. policy towards Panama. With Noriega, the PDF, and the Dignity Battalions gone, the newly formed and sworn-in legitimate winners from the May 1989 Presidential elections, Endara, Calderon, and Ford began the arduous task of rebuilding Panama.

U.S. policy was clear: support for the new government and democratic institutions, immediate recognition of Endara's administration, and pressure for other international recognition. Visits by high-ranking administration representatives including the Secretary of Defense and the Vice President of the United States, and Congressional visits lent credibility to the new regime. Economically, an aid package to stimulate Panama's economy and release of escrowed funds back to the administration initiated the process of healing. Militarily, U.S. soldiers not only walked patrols with former PDF members but also provided security support to the newly formed Panamanian National Police (also equipping, training, supervising, and assisting to insure a smooth transition to a police force that served the people, not be served by them) during drug raids and arms confiscation searches.

During Operation PROMOTE LIBERTY, U.S. infantrymen “hit the bush” in search of outlaw Dignity Battalion members, arms caches, and to continued protecting U.S. and Panamanian lives and property while civic action programs conducted by U.S. engineers and medical personnel supplemented the new Panamanian bureaucracy to assist outlying areas.<sup>2</sup> The formation of the new *Policia Nacional de Panama (PNP)* (Panamanian National Police) eventually eliminated all former PDF colonels, eighty-three percent of lieutenant colonels, thirty-nine percent of majors, thirty-one percent of captains, nineteen percent of lieutenants, and a significant portion of the lower ranks. This effectively transitioned the PNP to a uniformed police agency responsible for daily law enforcement, community patrols, traffic control, and generally maintaining order.<sup>3</sup>

With policy balanced to the resources available, a workable strategy, and achievable ends, the democratization of Panama continues. The 1977 Carter-Torrijos Treaty marked December 31, 1999 as the end of U.S. involvement in the affairs of the Panama Canal and the Republic of Panama. Except for the caveat that the U.S. retains the right to intervene to defend the Panama Canal, the government of Panama provides for its own security. While the in-country military components of the instruments of power are gone, the U.S. still has a strategically based vital interest in both the operation of the canal and the functioning of the democratic institutions in Panama.

Twenty-three U.S. servicemen lost their lives during Operation JUST CAUSE: eighteen from the U.S. Army, four SEALs from the U.S. Navy and one U.S. Marine. Anytime an American service member dies overseas, the U.S. public demands, and rightfully so, a full accounting and explanation of the circumstances and Panama is no different. The twenty-three killed and 322 wounded Americans died providing a future for Panamanians. President Bush’s

goals of safeguarding lives of Americans, defending the democracy of Panama, combating drug-trafficking, and protecting the integrity of the Panama Canal Treaty are four extremely strong reasons to invoke military force.

The U.S. in 1903 created the country of Panama through “Gun Boat” diplomacy and stood throughout the years as the “big brother” watching over the struggling government. The U.S. shares some responsibility for Panama and Noriega. The history of the U.S. and Panama in the 20th century, and especially during the Cold War era when Washington sought political stability in Latin America and assistance in combating the spread of communism, was deeply intertwined. Because of that past, and especially the unique origins of Panama, the U.S. had a moral obligation to intervene in Panama to ensure a return to responsible government.

The legal justification for military intervention is clear and outlined in many sources. The United Nations Charter (Article 51) and the Organization of American States both recognize the right of self-defense and the action the U.S. took to defend its military personnel, civilians, and installations after the Panamanian government had declared the existence of a “state of war” and after a U.S. Marine had been killed. The U.S. furthermore had a responsibility under Article IV of the Panama Canal Treaty to protect and defend the waterway. Paving the way for the U.S. was the welcoming of military intervention by the rightful winners of the nullified May 1989 democratic elections. President Endara, recognized by the U.S. as the legally elected authority of Panama, acknowledged and welcomed the U.S. intervention.

A controversial aspect of Operation JUST CAUSE was the size of the force used to carry out the complex plan. The American-Panamanian correlation of forces was three-to-one and is consistent with military planning factors for a standard attack on a defended enemy site. The reality is that environmental and operational factors reduce the relative force ratio, particularly

when such factors include securing an enormous amount of property and providing protection to over 37,000 U.S. civilians.

With the large amount of force applied, the U.S. maintained a disciplined adherence to strict rules of engagement in an attempt to neutralize the PDF, not destroy the country and its friendly inhabitants. Panama and the U.S. share a unique history and to ensure a post-intervention harmony, civil-military operations planned and integrated Operation BLIND LOGIC. Renamed Operation PROMOTE LIBERTY, the civil-military plan helped restructure Panama's democratic society and began almost simultaneously with offensive combat operations.

Not only did Americans give their lives but Panamanians did also and the number of killed in action ranges from the conservative Defense Department estimate of 314 military and 203 civilian casualties to the extreme of over 2,000 reported by the Panamanian Human Rights Group, CODEHUCA.<sup>4</sup> One undisputed fact is the U.S. military fed up to 50,000 people for seven days following the initial invasion and provided shelter to over 20,000 displaced Panamanians for six months.<sup>5</sup> War game projections of civilian and collateral damages as estimated by the U.S. are not declassified. The fact that American authorities undertook such projections – and that U.S. military forces observed strict rules of engagement during the fighting and then provided humanitarian assistance to needy and unprotected Panamanian civilians – is eloquent testimony to Washington's profound desire to minimize bloodshed and safeguard human life.

Several crises, originating in the confessions of Colonel Herrera who named Noriega as a murderer of Hugo Spadafora and a drug-trafficker, led to JUST CAUSE. These confessions sparked outrage in the U.S. and in Panama. The people of Panama spoke symbolically during



the May 1989 elections and the subsequent crisis with Noriega's annulment of the election results. The Giroldi coup of October 1989 and Noriega's declaration of a state of war with the U.S. were the last crises before the triggering event, the killing of Lieutenant Paz. The U.S. quarrel with Noriega escalated from one crisis to the next with him apparently gaining strength all the while. The longer he stayed in power the stronger Noriega became and the weaker the U.S. appeared. Forced to use tougher measures after each crisis, the U.S. resorted to military intervention after exhausting all other means of influence to remove Noriega from power.

Military intervention was appropriate and just. The U.S., having incurred a moral obligation from the way in which the Republic of Panama had seen birth and from years of tutelage, and after all efforts to avoid war, carefully authorized the application of force. President Bush's justification was sound and within legal constraints clearly outlining the necessity to provide for the safety of Americans in grave danger and the security of the Panama Canal. Without subjugating Panama, the U.S. deployed a measured military force against the PDF in order to effect its neutralization, secure critical locations and protect civilian lives. The strategic objective of Operation JUST CAUSE was to reestablish democracy and the operational objectives were to protect American lives, ensure implementation of the Panama Canal Treaties, and remove General Noriega from power. Panama is free today because of Operation JUST CAUSE.

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<sup>1</sup> Frederick Kempe, Divorcing the Dictator, pp. 399, 416.

<sup>2</sup> Ronald H. Cole, Operation Just Cause, p. 53.

<sup>3</sup> Anthony Gray and Maxwell Manwaring, Panama: Operation Just Cause, Chapter 2.

<sup>4</sup> Christina Jacqueline Johns and P. Ward Johnson, State Crime, The Media, and The Invasion of Panama, p. 88.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 89-90.

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## APPENDIX A

### ENEMY (PANAMANIAN) ORDER OF BATTLE<sup>1</sup>

#### *Fuerzas de Defensa de Panama* (Panama's Defense Forces (PDF))

- I. *Comandancia General de las Fuerzas de Defensa* (General Command of the Defense Forces)
  - A. *Estado Mayor Personal* (Personal Staff. Includes Advisors for: Political, Legal, Economic, International and National Security issues).
  - B. *Estado Mayor Especial* (Special Staff. Includes an Office for: Chaplains, Public Relations, Women's Forces, War Service Materials, the Military Salute Battalion, Communications, the Presidential Guard, and Military Historian).
  - C. *Ayudantia General* (Adjutant General).
  - D. *Comando General de la Comision de Defensa y Seguridad (COGECODESE)* (General Command of the Defense and Security Commission. Designed for the Protection and Security of the Panama Canal. Established in response to the 1977 Panama Canal Treaty and the impending transfer of the Canal in 1999).
  - E. *Comando Operacional de Fuerzas Especiales (C.O.F.F.E.E.)* (Operational Command of Special Forces).
    1. *Unidad de Hombre Rana* (Frogman Unit).
    2. *Unidad de Comandos* (Commando Unit).
    3. *Unidad de Explosivos* (Explosives Unit).
    4. *Unidad Especial de Seguridad Antiterror (U.E.S.A.T.)* (Antiterrorist Security Special Unit).
- II. *Jefatura del Estado Mayor General* (Headquarters of the General Staff. Staff sections include: Personnel, Intelligence, Operations, Logistics, Civil Affairs, Defense Forces Service and Support Command, and the Inspector General).
- III. *Jefatura del Estado Mayor Conjunto* (Headquarters of the Combined Staff)
  - A. *Subjefatura de Estado Mayor de la Fuerza Terrestre* (Subordinate Headquarters of the Land Forces Staff).
    1. *Batallón 2000* (Battalion 2000).
      - a. *Compañía de Maniobras "Aguila"* ("Eagle" Maneuver Company).
      - b. *Compañía de Maniobras "Furia"* ("Fury" Maneuver Company).
      - c. *Compañía de Maniobras "Mecanizada"* (Mechanized Maneuver Company).
      - d. *Compañía de Apoyo de Combate "Loyola"* ("Loyola" Combat Support Company).
      - e. OPCON (Operational Control) of:
        - (1) *1º Compañía de Infantería "Tigre"* (see below).
        - (2) *2º Compañía Aerotransportada "Puma"* (see below).
    2. *2º Batallón Paz* (Second Peace Battalion).
      - a. *Compañía de Comando* (Headquarters Company).
      - b. *Compañía A de Asalto Aéreo "Fortuna"* ('A' "Fortune" Aerial Assault Company)
      - c. *Compañía B de Asalto Aéreo "Copal"* ('B' "Incense" Aerial Assault Company).
    3. *Batallón Atlántico* (Atlantic Battalion).

4. *Primera Compañía de Montana, 4º Batallón Cemaco* (First Mountain Company, Fourth Cemaco Battalion).
5. *Primera Compañía de Infantería de Combate y Apoyo de Fuego "Tigre"* (First "Tiger" Combat and Fire Support Infantry Company).
  - a. *Pelotón de Comando* (Headquarters Platoon).
  - b. *Tres Pelotnes de Fusileros* (Three Rifle Platoons).
  - c. *Dos Secciones de Morteros* (Two Mortar Sections).
  - d. *Una Sección Antitanque* (One Antitank Section).
6. *Segunda Compañía de Infantería Aerotransportada "Puma"* (Second "Puma" Airtransported Infantry Company).
  - a. *Pelotón de Comando* (Headquarters Platoon).
  - b. *Tres Pelotnes de Fusileros* (Three Rifle Platoons).
  - c. *Una Sección de Morteros* (One Mortar Section).
  - d. *Un Pelotón de Guardia Interior* (One Interior Guard Platoon).
7. *Tercera Compañía de Infantería "Diablo Rojo"* (Third "Red Devil" Infantry Company).
  - a. *Pelotón de Comando* (Headquarters Platoon).
  - b. *Tres Pelotnes de Fusileros* (Three Rifle Platoons).
  - c. *Una Sección de Morteros* (One Mortar Section).
  - d. *Una Unidad Especial* (One Special Unit).
  - e. *Una Guardia Interior* (One Interior Guard).
8. *Cuarta Compañía de Infantería "Urraca"* (Fourth "Magpie" Infantry Company).
  - a. *Pelotón de Comando* (Headquarters Platoon).
  - b. *Tres Pelotnes de Fusileros* (Three Rifle Platoons).
  - c. *Una Pelotón de Armas de Apoyo* (One Weapons Support Platoon).
9. *Batallón de Policía Militar "Victoriano Lorenzo"* ("Victoriano Lorenzo" Military Police Battalion).
  - a. *Un Comando* (Headquarters).
  - b. *Quinta Compañía de Infantería* (Fifth Infantry Company)
  - c. *Octava Compañía de Infantería* (Eighth Infantry Company).
    - (1) *Una Sección Canina* (One Canine Section).
    - (2) *Cuatro Pelotones* (Four Platoons).
    - (3) *Una Sección de Inteligencia* (One Intelligence Section).
    - (4) *Unidades de Transito, Enlace, Comunicaciones y Transporte* (Transit, Liaison, Communications and Transportation Units).
10. *Sexta Compañía Expedicionaria Mecanizada* (Sixth Mechanized Expeditionary Company).
  - a. *Un Comando* (Headquarters).
  - b. *Tres Pelotones de Infantería Mecanizada* (Three Mechanized Infantry Platoons).
  - c. *Una Pelotón de Apoyo de Fuego* (One Fire Support Platoon).
  - d. *Una Sección de Antitanque* (One Antitank Section).
  - e. *Una Sección de Morteros* (One Mortar Section).
  - f. *Una Sección de Mantenimiento* (One Maintenance Section).
11. *Septima Compañía de Infantería "Macho de Monte"* (Seventh "Mountain Men" Infantry Company).
  - a. *Un Comando de Compañía* (Headquarters Company).
  - b. *Tres Pelotones de Fusileros* (Three Rifle Platoons).



- c. *Una Sección de Morteros* (One Mortar Section).
- d. *Un Pelotón de Guardia Interior* (One Interior Guard Platoon).
- e. *Cuatro Secciones Especiales de Comando* (Four Commando Special Sections).
  - (1) *Hombres de Rana* (Frog Men).
  - (2) *Hombres de Explosivistas* (Explosives Men).
  - (3) *Hombres de Pana-Jungla* (Panamanian Jungle Men).
  - (4) *Una Sección de Motorizada "Cocuyos Montaneros"* (One "Lightening (fast) Mountaineer" Motorized Section).
- 12. *Escuadron de Caballeria "General Jose A. Remon C."* ("General Jose A. Remon C." Cavalry Squadron).
  - a. *Un Comando y su Plana Mayor* (Headquarters and Staff).
  - b. *Una Escuela de Equitacion* (Riding School).
  - c. *Un Pelotón de Servicio Especial* (Special Service Platoon).
  - d. *Un Pelotón de Foerza Regular* (One Regular Forces Platoon).
- 13. *Departamento de Comunicaciones* (Communications Department (Signal)).
- 14. *Servicio de Material de Guerra* (War Service Materials (Logistics & Ordnance)).
- 15. *Batallón de Transporte y Mantenimiento* (Transportation and Maintenance Battalion).
  - a. *Un Comando* (Headquarters).
  - b. *Una Compañía de Mantenimiento de Equipo Liviano* (One Light Equipment Maintenance Company).
  - c. *Una Compañía de Mantenimiento de Equipo Pesado* (One Heavy Equipment Maintenance Company).
  - d. *Una Compañía de Transporte* (One Transportation Company).
  - e. *Las Seccions de Mantenimiento del Sector Pacifico, del Sector Atlántico y Rio Hato* (Maintenance Sections for the Pacific Sector, Atlantic Sector, Rio Hato).
- B. *Subjefatura de Estado Mayor de la Fuerza Aerea* (Subordinate Headquarters of the Air Forces Staff).
  - 1. *Escuadron de Rescate* (Rescue Squadron).
  - 2. *Escuadron de Transporte* (Transport Squadron).
  - 3. *Transporte Aéreo Militar* (Military Aerial Transport).
- C. *Fuerza de Marina* (Naval Forces).
  - 1. *Flota del Atlántico* (Atlantic Fleet).
  - 2. *Flota del Pacifico* (Pacific Fleet).
  - 3. *Infantería de Marina* (Naval Infantry).
- D. *Fuerza de Policía* (Police Forces).
  - 1. *Direccion Nacional de Transito Terrestre* (D.N.T.T.) (National Directorate of Land Transit).
  - 2. *Departamento Nacional de Investigaciones* (D.E.N.I.) (National Department of Investigations).
  - 3. *Patrulla de Caminos* (Highway Patrol).
  - 4. *Policía* (Police).
    - a. *Policía de Turismo* (Tourism Police).
    - b. *Policía Comunitaria* (Community Police).
    - c. *Policía de Movil* (Mobile Police).
    - d. *Policía de Antimotines ("Doberman")* (Anti Riot Police).
- E. *Guardia Nacional* (National Guard).

1. *Guardia Penitenciaria* (Penitentiary Policemen).
  2. *Guardia Presidencial* (Presidential Policemen).
  3. *Guardia Forestal* (Forestry Policemen).
  4. *Guardia Portuaria* (Port Policemen).
  5. *Guardia Ferroviaria* (Railway Policemen).
  6. *Guardia Aduanera* (Customs Policemen).
  7. *Guardia Costera Insular* (Island Coastal Policemen).
- F. *Las Regiones y Zonas Militares* (The Regions and Military Zones).
1. *Primera Region Militar* (First Military Region).
    - a. *1ª Zona Militar* (1st Military Zone).
    - b. *2ª Zona Militar* (2d Military Zone. Includes a Reaction Platoon "*Cazadores*" (Hunters)).
    - c. *10ª Zona Militar* (10th Military Zone).
    - d. *11ª Zona Militar* (11th Military Zone. Includes a Reaction Force of three platoons).
  2. *Segunda Region Militar* (Second Military Region).
    - a. *9ª Zona Militar* (9th Military Zone).
    - b. *12ª Zona Militar* (12th Military Zone).
  3. *Tercera Region Militar* (Third Military Region).
    - a. *3ª Zona Militar* (3d Military Zone. Includes a Reaction Platoon "*Quibian*" (Named in honor the Indian Chief that in 1503, fought and drove Christopher Columbus off Panama when he wanted to start a colony)).
    - b. *4ª Zona Militar* (4th Military Zone).
    - c. *6ª Zona Militar* (6th Military Zone. Includes a Reaction Platoon "*Indio*" (Indian)).
    - d. *7ª Zona Militar* (7th Military Zone. Includes a Reaction Platoon "*Los Bravos de Canajagua*" (The Brave Canajagua's {The name of a Panamanian folkloric figure})).
  4. *Cuarta Region Militar* (Fourth Military Region).
    - a. *5ª Zona Militar* (5th Military Zone).
    - b. *8ª Zona Militar* (8th Military Zone. Includes a Reaction Platoon "*Bucaneros*" (Buccaneers)).

#### IV. *Batallón de Dignidad* (Dignity Battalion (Digbats)).<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Several sources:

Ronald H. Cole, Operation Just Cause: The Planning and Execution of Joint Operations in Panama, February 1988-January 1990. p 37.

Panama, Fuerzas de Defensa: Fuerzas Armadas de Panama, pp 27-35.

Panama, Panama Hoy, Ed. Kenneth J. Jones, pp. 18-20.

<sup>2</sup> Gordon L. Rottman, Panama 1989-90, pp.8-15.

## APPENDIX B

### FRIENDLY (U.S.) ORDER OF BATTLE<sup>1</sup>

#### U.S. SOUTHERN COMMAND (SOUTHCOM)

#### JOINT TASK FORCE SOUTH (Headquarters, XVIII Airborne Corps)

<u>Organization</u>	<u>Originally Based</u>
<b>AIR FORCES, PANAMA</b>	
830th Air Division	Panama
1st Special Operations Wing (AC-130)	Hurlburt Field, FL
24th Composite Wing	Panama
CORONET COVE (A-7D)	Panama
Detachment, 114th Tactical Fighter Group	South Dakota
24th Tactical Air Support Squadron (OA-37)	Panama
Tactical Air Control Party	Panama
24th Medical Group	Panama
1978th Communications Group	Panama
630th Air Control and Warning Squadron	Panama
OL-1 Air Rescue and Recovery Service	Panama
6933d Electronic Security Squadron	Panama
61st Military Airlift Group	Panama
VOLANT OAK (C-130)	
310th Military Airlift Squadron	Panama
6th Aerial Port Squadron	Panama
Detachment 1, 480th Reconnaissance Technical Group (FURTIVE BEAR)	Panama
4400th Air Postal Squadron	Panama
<b>NAVAL FORCES, PANAMA</b>	
Naval Security Group (Galeta Island)	Panama
Mine Division 127	Panama
<b>MARINE FORCES, PANAMA<sup>2</sup></b>	
Task Force Semper Fi	
6th Marine Expeditionary Battalion	Camp Lejeune, NC
Company I, 3d Battalion, 6th Marines	Camp Lejeune, NC
Company K, 3d Battalion, 6th Marines	Camp Lejeune, NC
Company D, 2d Light Armored Infantry Battalion (-)	Camp Lejeune, NC
Detachment's G and H, Brigade Service Support Group 6	Camp Lejeune, NC
1st Platoon, First Fleet Antiterrorist Security Team	Norfolk, VA
Marine Corps Security Guard Detachment (U.S. Embassy)	Panama
Marine Corps Security Force Company	Panama
534th Military Police Company (U.S. Army)	Panama

536th Engineer Battalion (U.S. Army)	Panama
Detachment, 6th Engineer	
Detachment, 7th Engineer	Fort Polk, LA
Detachment, 285th Engineer	Fort Leonard Wood, MO
2d Battalion, 27th Infantry Regiment (-) (U.S. Army)	Fort Ord, CA

#### ARMY FORCES, PANAMA

Task Force Bayonet (Headquarters, 193d Infantry Brigade) <sup>3</sup>	Panama
193d Infantry Brigade	Panama
5th Battalion, 87th Infantry Regiment	Panama
1st Battalion, 508th Infantry Regiment (Airborne)	Panama
4th Battalion, 6th Infantry Regiment (Mechanized)	Fort Polk, LA
Platoon, Company C, 3d Battalion, 73d Armored Regiment	Fort Bragg, NC
Platoon, Company D, 2d Light Armored Infantry Battalion	Camp Lejeune, NC
Battery D, 320th Field Artillery Regiment	Panama
59th Engineer Company	Panama
519th Military Police Battalion	Fort Meade, MD
209th Military Police Company	Fort Meade, MD
555th Military Police Company	Fort Lee, VA
988th Military Police Company	Fort Meade, MD
Task Force Pacific (Headquarters, 82d Airborne Division)	
82d Airborne Division (-)	Fort Bragg, NC
1st Brigade, 82d Airborne Division	Fort Bragg, NC
1st Battalion, 504th Parachute Infantry Regiment	Fort Bragg, NC
2d Battalion, 504th Parachute Infantry Regiment	Fort Bragg, NC
4th Battalion, 325th Airborne Infantry Regiment (-)	Fort Bragg, NC
Company A, 3d Battalion, 505th Parachute Infantry Regiment	Fort Bragg, NC
Battery A, 3d Battalion, 319th Airborne Field Artillery Regiment	Fort Bragg, NC
Battery A, 3d Battalion, 4th Air Defense Artillery Regiment	Fort Bragg, NC
Company C, 3d Battalion, 73d Armored Regiment (-)	Fort Bragg, NC
Company A, 307th Engineer Battalion	Fort Bragg, NC
Company A, 782d Maintenance Battalion	Fort Bragg, NC
Company B, 307th Medical Battalion	Fort Bragg, NC
Company A, 407th Supply & Services Battalion	Fort Bragg, NC
Company A, 313th Military Intelligence Battalion	Fort Bragg, NC
1st Brigade, 7th Infantry Division	Fort Ord, CA
1st Battalion, 9th Infantry Regiment	Fort Ord, CA
2d Battalion, 9th Infantry Regiment	Fort Ord, CA
3d Battalion, 9th Infantry Regiment	Fort Ord, CA
Company A, 13th Engineer Battalion	Fort Ord, CA
Company A, 707th Maintenance Battalion	Fort Ord, CA
Company A, 7th Medical Battalion	Fort Ord, CA
Company A, 7th Supply and Transportation Battalion	Fort Ord, CA
1st Platoon, Company B, 127th Signal Battalion	Fort Ord, CA
Company B, 82d Signal Battalion (-)	Fort Bragg, NC

82d Military Police Company (-)	Fort Bragg, NC
401st Military Police Company	Fort Hood, TX
511th Military Police Company	Fort Drum, NY
Task Force Atlantic (Headquarters, 7th Infantry Division)	
7th Infantry Division (Light) (-)	Fort Ord, CA
2d Squadron, 9th Cavalry (-)	Fort Ord, CA
2d Brigade, 7th Infantry Division (-)	Fort Ord, CA
5th Battalion, 21st Infantry Regiment	Fort Ord, CA
3d Battalion, 27th Infantry Regiment	Fort Ord, CA
6th Battalion, 8th Field Artillery Regiment	Fort Ord, CA
Battery A, 2d Battalion, 62d Air Defense Artillery Regiment	Fort Ord, CA
Company B, 13th Engineer Battalion	Fort Ord, CA
Company B, 7th Medical Battalion	Fort Ord, CA
Company B, 707th Maintenance Battalion	Fort Ord, CA
Company B, 7th Supply and Transportation Battalion	Fort Ord, CA
3d Brigade, 7th Infantry Division	Fort Ord, CA
4th Battalion, 17th Infantry Regiment	Fort Ord, CA
Company C, 2d Battalion, 27th Infantry Regiment	Fort Ord, CA
3d Battalion, 504th Parachute Infantry Regiment	Fort Bragg, NC
Jungle Operations Training Center (JOTC) Battalion	Panama
Battery B, 7th Battalion, 15th Field Artillery	Fort Ord, CA
Battery B, 2d Battalion, 62th Air Defense Artillery Regiment	Fort Ord, CA
Company C, 13th Engineer Battalion	Fort Ord, CA
Company C, 7th Medical Battalion	Fort Ord, CA
Company C, 707th Maintenance Battalion	Fort Ord, CA
Company C, 7th Supply & Transportation Battalion	Fort Ord, CA
3d Platoon, Company B, 127th Signal Battalion	Fort Ord, CA
127th Signal Battalion (-)	Fort Ord, CA
13th Engineer Battalion (-)	Fort Ord, CA
7th Military Police Company (-)	Fort Ord, CA
107th Military Intelligence Battalion (-)	Fort Ord, CA
5th Public Affairs Detachment	Fort Polk, LA
Task Force Aviation (Headquarters, Aviation Brigade, 7th Infantry Division)	
Aviation Brigade, 7th Infantry Division	Fort Ord, CA
1st Battalion, 228th Aviation Regiment	Panama
195th Air Traffic Control Platoon	Panama
214th Medical Detachment	Panama
Task Force Hawk (Headquarters, 3d Battalion, 123d Aviation Regiment)	
3d Battalion, 123d Aviation Regiment (-)	Fort Ord, CA
Company E, 123d Aviation Regiment (-)	Fort Ord, CA
Task Force Wolf (Headquarters, 1st Battalion, 82d Aviation Regiment)	
1st Battalion, 82d Aviation Regiment (-)	Fort Bragg, NC
Troop D, 1st Squadron, 17th Cavalry Regiment	Fort Bragg, NC
1st Battalion, 123d Aviation Regiment (-)	Fort Ord, CA

Company D, 82d Aviation Regiment (-) Fort Bragg, NC

#### JOINT SPECIAL OPERATIONS TASK FORCE

Task Force Red (Headquarters, 75th Ranger Regiment)	
1st Battalion, 75th Ranger Regiment	Hunter AAF, GA
2d Battalion, 75th Ranger Regiment	Fort Lewis, WA
3d Battalion, 75th Ranger Regiment	Fort Benning, GA
Task Force Black (Headquarters, 3d Battalion, 7th Special Forces Group)	
3d Battalion, 7th Special Forces Group	Panama
Company A, 1st Battalion, 7th Special Forces Group	Fort Bragg, NC
Task Force White (Headquarters, Naval Special Warfare Group Two)	
SEAL Team's 2 and 4, Naval Special Warfare Group Two	Little Creek, VA
Naval Special Warfare Unit 8	Panama
Special Boat Unit 26	Panama
Task Force Green	
1st Special Forces Operational Detachment - Delta	Fort Bragg, NC
Task Force Blue	
SEAL Team 6	Dam Neck, VA
7th Special Forces Group (-)	Fort Bragg, NC
1st Battalion, 7th Special Forces Group	Fort Bragg, NC
2d Battalion, 7th Special Forces Group	Fort Bragg, NC
Support Company, 7th Special Forces Group	Fort Bragg, NC
112th Signal Battalion (-)	Fort Bragg, NC
528th Support Battalion	Fort Bragg, NC
160th Aviation Group (-)	Fort Campbell, KY
617th Aviation Detachment	Panama

#### SEPARATE ELEMENTS UNDER DIRECT CONTROL OF JTF-SOUTH

Headquarters and Headquarters Company U.S. Army South	Panama
1st Battlefield Control Detachment (-)	Fort Bragg, NC
49th Public Affairs Detachment	Fort Bragg, NC
470th Military Intelligence Brigade	Panama
29th Military Intelligence Battalion	Panama
284th Maintenance Detachment	Panama
746th Military Intelligence Battalion	Panama
747th Military Intelligence Battalion	Panama
525th Military Intelligence Brigade (-)	Fort Bragg, NC
Company A, 319th Military Intelligence Battalion	Fort Bragg, NC
519th Military Intelligence Battalion (-)	Fort Bragg, NC
35th Signal Brigade (-)	Fort Bragg, NC
1109th Signal Brigade	Panama
154th Signal Battalion	Panama
1190th Signal Battalion	Panama
1st Corps Support Command (-)	Fort Bragg, NC
58th Maintenance Company	Fort Bragg, NC
44th Medical Brigade (-)	Fort Bragg, NC

5th Mobile Army Surgical Hospital (-)	Fort Bragg, NC
32d Medical Supply, Optical and Maintenance Battalion (-)	Fort Bragg, NC
36th Medical Company (-)	Fort Bragg, NC
57th Medical Company (Air Ambulance) (-)	Fort Bragg, NC
257th Medical Company (Dental Services) (-)	Fort Bragg, NC
714th Medical Detachment (Entomology)	Fort Bragg, NC
142d Medical Battalion (-)	Panama
216th Medical Detachment	Panama
41st Support Group	Panama
93d Theater Area Command	Panama
193d Support Battalion	Panama
74th Quartermaster Detachment	Panama
489th Transportation Detachment	Panama
531st Quartermaster Detachment	Panama
565th Ordnance Detachment	Panama
1097th Transportation Company	Panama
24th Engineer Detachment	Panama
36th Ordnance Detachment	Panama
123d Ordnance Detachment	Fort Rucker, AL
146th Engineer Detachment	Panama
180th Finance Support Unit	Panama
Company E, 228th Aviation Regiment	Panama
535th Engineer Detachment	Panama
92d Personnel Services Company	Panama
79th Army Band	Panama
46th Support Group (-)	Fort Bragg, NC
Company I, 159th Aviation Regiment	Fort Bragg, NC
8th Ordnance Company	Fort Bragg, NC
406th Supply Company	Fort Bragg, NC
546th Transportation Company	Fort Bragg, NC
659th Maintenance Company	Fort Bragg, NC
259th Service Company	Fort Bragg, NC
364th Supply and Service Company	Fort Bragg, NC
503d Maintenance Company	Fort Bragg, NC
2d Support Center	Fort Bragg, NC
330th Transportation Center	Fort Bragg, NC
7th Transportation Battalion	Fort Bragg, NC
126th Transportation Company	Fort Bragg, NC
249th Supply Company	Fort Bragg, NC
403d Transportation Center	Fort Bragg, NC
612th Quartermaster Company	Fort Bragg, NC
129th Postal Detachment	Fort Bragg, NC
54th Quartermaster Company	Fort Lee, VA
551st Transportation Company	Fort Eustis, VA
870th Transportation Company	Fort Eustis, VA

4th Psychological Operations Group (-)	Fort Bragg, NC
1st Psychological Operations Battalion	Fort Bragg, NC
90th Psychological Operations Company	Fort Bragg, NC
94th Psychological Operations Company	Fort Bragg, NC
96th Civil Affairs Battalion	Fort Bragg, NC
16th Military Police Brigade	Fort Bragg, NC
503d Military Police Battalion	Fort Bragg, NC
21st Military Police Company	Fort Bragg, NC
65th Military Police Company	Fort Bragg, NC
108th Military Police Company	Fort Bragg, NC
92d Military Police Battalion	Panama
549th Military Police Company	Panama

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<sup>1</sup> Multiple sources:

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## VITA

Bill Huff is an officer in the United States Army, serving as an Observer/Controller with the Joint Readiness Training Center at Fort Polk, Louisiana. Born at Fort Benning, Georgia, the son of a career Army officer, Bill has lived in a military environment nearly his entire life.

While on Christmas vacation from Florida State University during the winter of 1989 visiting his family stationed in Panama, Bill found himself in the heart of Operation JUST CAUSE. He and his wife, Michelle, a fellow participant in Panama and daughter of a career Marine Corps officer, married shortly after and continue the family tradition of military service today. He will receive the degree of Master of Arts in Liberal Arts in August 2002.