

Operations “Just Cause” and “Promote Liberty” The Implications Of Military Operations Other Than War.

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Subject Area Operations

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

**Title:** Operations “Just Cause” and “Promote Liberty”: The Implications of Military Operations Other Than War

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**Thesis:** Operation Just Cause and Promote Liberty contained many aspects of Military Operations Other Than War, the military actions were underpinned by political objectives and could not be entirely solved by the military alone. Using the six principles of MOOTW, examine how both the military and political objectives were achieved.

**Discussion:** The U.S. has faced a number of new issues and challenges since the end of the cold war. The Department of Defense was involved in numerous Military Operations Other Than War (MOOTW) during the 1990s. Operation Just Cause and Promote Liberty in Panama were the first of such operations. I examined the situation that led up to the intervention in Panama and the complexity of the issues that influenced the actions of the U.S. military and government.

Operation Just Cause, proved to be an extremely successful operation for the United States. Its success can be attributed to clear direction from the National Command Authority, a unified command structure, joint synergy and the ability of the commanders at the strategic, operational and tactical levels of war to apply complementary operational concepts. The follow-on operation, Promote Liberty, was not as successful for the opposite reasons; the objectives were not as clearly defined, the planning was restricted and somewhat inadequate, the command structure was disjointed, and the overall environment was awkward and muddled to the military.

Operation Just Cause involved the simultaneous striking of 27 targets designed to rapidly paralyze the Panamanian Defense Forces and capture Noriega with minimal casualties. Once the PDF was neutralized, the restoration of a legitimate government in Panama began under operation Promote Liberty. Promote Liberty proved to be a major challenge for the military, who were charged with the creation of new democratic government, a task it was neither well suited for, nor well prepared to accomplish.

**Conclusion(s) or Recommendation(s):** The six principles of MOOTW are interrelated and depend on each other. The commander must pay close attention to the application of the principles and incorporate them into the planning and decision making process when determining courses of actions to achieve his desired end-state. MOOTW actions are complicated and political by nature, and require more than just conventional military solutions to problems that the commander will inevitably face. Failing to consider one principle lends vulnerability to others. The enemy, resistors, or political factions will almost certainly seek to derail U.S. efforts to achieve its goals and will attempt to exploit these vulnerabilities. These six principles derived from the principles of war provide the guidelines for successful operations.

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## *Preface*

The U.S. has faced a number of new issues and challenges since the end of the Cold War. The Department of Defense was involved in numerous Military Operations Other Than War (MOOTW) during the 1990s. Operation Just Cause and Promote Liberty in Panama were the first of such operations. In this paper I examined the situation that led up to the intervention in Panama and the complexity of the issues that influenced the actions of the U.S. military and government.



## Introduction

There were numerous events spanning several years that led up to the U.S. intervention in Panama. General Manuel Noriega's brutal quest for power and wealth was at the center of a stormy relationship between Noriega and the different agencies of the United States that ended in armed intervention. The crisis would build amid allegations of drug smuggling, double-dealing intelligence with the Cubans, money laundering, murder, suppression of political opponents and election fraud.<sup>1</sup>

Initially the U.S. responded with mixed signals, interpreted by Noriega as a lack of resolve and credibility. Diplomatic pressures, economic sanctions and a show of military force were all ignored by Noriega and served to strengthen his position with the Panama Defense Forces. Political, economical and informational elements of force were not enough to drive Noriega from power, and in May of 1989 it became apparent to the Bush Administration that a military intervention was the best course of action.<sup>2</sup>

The resulting operation, Just Cause, proved to be an extremely successful operation for the United States. Its success can be attributed to clear direction from the National Command Authority, a unified command structure, joint synergy and the ability of the commanders at the strategic, operational and tactical levels of war to apply complementary operational concepts. The follow-on operation, Promote Liberty, was not as successful for the opposite reasons; the objectives were not as clearly defined, the planning was restricted and somewhat inadequate, the command structure was disjointed, and the overall environment was awkward and muddled to the military.

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<sup>1</sup> Colin Powell with Joseph E. Persico, *My American Journey* (New York, NY: Random House, 1995), 415.

<sup>2</sup> Susan G. Horwitz, "Indications and Warning Factors," in *Operation Just Cause: The U.S. Intervention in Panama* ed. Bruce W. Watson and Peter G. Tsouras (Boulder: Westview Press, 1991), 53.

Operation Just Cause involved the simultaneous striking of 27 targets designed to rapidly paralyze the Panamanian Defense Forces and capture Noriega with minimal casualties.<sup>3</sup> Once the PDF was neutralized, the restoration of a legitimate government in Panama began under operation Promote Liberty. Promote Liberty proved to be a major challenge for the military, who were charged with the creation of new democratic government, a task it was neither well suited for, nor well prepared to accomplish.

Overall this campaign, involving two major operations, was unique because it contained many aspects of Military Operations Other Than War (MOOTW). The military actions conducted during the campaign were underpinned by political objectives that could not be entirely resolved by the military alone. This paper reviews the events that shaped the overall conflict, and use the six principles of Military Operations Other Than War (MOOTW) to examine the multifaceted operations that took place and how both the military and political objectives were achieved.

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<sup>3</sup>Lt. Gen. Edward M. Flanagan, Jr., USA (Ret.), *Battle for Panama: Inside Operation Just Cause* (Washington: Brassey's (US), Inc. 1993), 48.

# Chapter 1

## Strategic Situation

General Noriega succeeded the previous Panamanian dictator, General Omar Torrijos, who died in a plane crash in 1983.<sup>4</sup> Some intelligence analysts raised the speculation that Noriega was somehow instrumental in this crash. Intimidation, brutality and corruption characterized Noriega's rise to power. By 1988 he had successfully consolidated his power over Panama through a series of power plays and restructuring moves that would place all political, economic, informational and military elements of power under his control. His national strategy was centered on self-preservation and dictatorial dominance of all facets of power within Panama. Noriega clung to power by the destruction of political opponents and their property, resorting to murder when coercion failed.

Despite his corruption, he was considered an ally to various organizations within the U.S. government. "Noriega had been on the payrolls of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) and Defense Intelligence Agency going back 25 years."<sup>5</sup> Manuel Noriega was a street urchin, the son of a prostitute and an unknown father when he was first employed by the CIA to report on the high school dissident groups who were demonstrating to have the U.S. Canal Zone turned over to Panama. With CIA backing, Noriega was admitted to the University of Panama where he continued being a CIA informant. Upon graduation he sought a commission in the PDF and was rejected but

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<sup>4</sup> Ronald H. Cole. *Operation Just Cause: The Planning and Execution of Joint Operations in Panama, February 1988-January 1990*. (Washington, Joint History Office, Office of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, 1995), 6.

<sup>5</sup> Colin Powell with Joseph E. Persico, *My American Journey* (New York, NY: Random House, 1995), 415.



with CIA influence he was given his commission and eventually became the head of PDF intelligence. He was also a graduate of the School of the Americas.<sup>6</sup> He provided vital intelligence information to the U.S. Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA) and had been awarded a letter of commendation for his efforts. He provided bases for the Central Intelligence Agency to train and arm the Nicaraguan contras.<sup>7</sup> Noriega played a cunning hand, careful to remain in good favor with the American agencies with whom he dealt, but always mindful of his own self-interests and survival.

Eventually the CIA and the DEA began to recognize Noriega's double-dealing and began to back away from him slowly. In February 1988, Noriega's fortune changed when he was indicted by two American grand juries on drug trafficking charges.<sup>8</sup> These indictments forced a rapid and significant shift in the Reagan Administration's policy. Noriega was no longer an internal problem for Panama, but had now become a foreign policy problem for the United States. With the American public aware of the drug charges, Noriega could no longer be ignored and was asked to step down from power.

Noriega's refusal to step down was met with economic sanctions and the deployment of 1300 additional military personnel to Panama on April 1, 1988.<sup>9</sup> General Frederick Woerner, Commander in Chief of U.S. Southern Command, opposed this step because he knew that Noriega would think that the United States was merely bluffing and did not intend to intervene at this time.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Colonel William J. Conley, USMC Ret, Interview by author, 22 February 2001.

<sup>7</sup> Powell, 416.

<sup>8</sup> Philip Shenon, "Noriega Indicted by U.S. for Links to Illegal Drugs," *New York Times*, 6 February 1988. Magnuson, Ed. "Sowing Dragon's Teeth; How Operation Just Cause 'decapitated' Panama's Defense Forces, the bogged down in scattered, and surprisingly tough, street fighting", *The Time Inc. Magazine Company Time*, January 1990

<sup>9</sup> Kevin Buckley, *Panama: The Whole Story*, (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1991), 139.

<sup>10</sup> Eytan Gilboa, "The Panama Invasion Revisited: Lessons for the Use of Force in the Post-Cold War Era", *Political Science Quarterly*, by Demetrios James Carley (ed), 6

Noriega was correct in assuming the U.S. would not get involved based upon the divide in the Reagan Administration, Congress and the military over whether or not to forcefully remove him from power<sup>11</sup>. Noriega would continue to underestimate American resolve to remove him from power when George Bush replaced Reagan in January 1989.

The American strategy for dealing with Noriega was based on Flexible Deterrent Options (FDO). FDOs are deliberate plans that are designed to deter aggression through a show of military force combined with diplomatic, informational, and economic instruments of power. The common objectives of FDOs are to confront the enemy with unacceptable costs for his aggression, to isolate him from his neighbors, and to build up combat power to deter aggression.<sup>12</sup> The end result was to bring “an early resolution prior to armed conflict by sending an appropriate message to belligerent parties.”<sup>13</sup> For FDOs to work it is imperative that they be integrated with extensive and continuous coordination at the inter-agency level in order to maximize their effect.<sup>14</sup>

Diplomatically the Reagan administration sought to build support for a Noriega resignation from the Organization of American States. Reagan also reduced the number of American personnel at the American Embassy. The economic options included trade sanctions, seizure of Panamanian assets by U.S. banks, and cancellations of military and economic aid.<sup>15</sup> Without coordination and integration these unilateral actions failed to have the desired impact needed to bring down Noriega.

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<sup>11</sup> Powell, 416.

<sup>12</sup> Joint Publication 5-00, Appendix J, J-2.

<sup>13</sup> Joint Publication 5-00, Appendix J, J-1.

<sup>14</sup> Joint Publication 5-00, Appendix J, J-2.

<sup>15</sup> Gilboa, 9.

Before 1989, these options were ineffective because there was little unity of effort throughout the U.S. government agencies. By the summer of 1988, General Woerner had come up with a military plan that was “an integrated, holistic plan that could not be executed piecemeal.”<sup>16</sup> Regardless, he was instructed to execute the plan in individual segments.

Subsequently, each agency that dealt with Noriega sent different signals while military actions were perceived as mere threats. The mixed signals, divided administration actions, and hollow threats destroyed U.S. credibility with the Panamanian populace and failed to succeed in putting serious pressure on Noriega. This division gave Noriega enough wiggle room to remain in power.<sup>17</sup> The economic and political sanctions that were implemented had little effect on him. When military aid was cut off, he turned to Cuba and Nicaragua for help. When economic sanctions were levied he cut deals with the drug cartels and Libya.<sup>18</sup> Whenever the U.S. used a show of force, he simply ignored it. To quell civil unrest Noriega formed “dignity battalions”, hired thugs that beatdown the opposition and maintained his hold on the people by his demonstrated willingness to use force against anyone who opposed him. Noriega held the strategic advantage as long as the U.S. remained disorganized and did not intervene.

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<sup>16</sup> Anthony Gray and Maxwell Manwaring, *Panama: Operation Just Cause* (Washington D.C.: National Defense University Press), 48.

<sup>17</sup> Eytan Gilboa, 2. In this article the author sites numerous policy contradictions that destroyed American credibility and served as symbolic victories that enabled Noriega to remain in power.

## Road to Intervention

A change in U.S. leadership, a unified approach and a commitment to use force given the right catalyst was what President Bush brought to the crisis when he came to office. In 1989 three significant events occurred that served to shape future actions in Panama.

The first was the 1989 May elections in Panama. The Bush Administration pushed free elections to bring a peaceful resolution to the Panama Crisis from within Panama. Despite the fact that Noriega had rigged the election in his favor, the Panamanian people, given the opportunity for a free political choice, voted overwhelmingly against him. When Noriega failed to win the election, he nullified its results, and refused to allow a legal transition of power and activated his Dignity Battalions to oppress his opposition.<sup>19</sup> The American news media captured the brutal beatings of his political opponents and aired them on the nightly news.

President Bush quickly and publicly condemned Noriega's regime and emphasized that the "the will of the people should not be thwarted by this man and his Doberman thugs".<sup>20</sup> He then took steps to insure the security of U.S. interests and citizens by sending an additional 1900 U.S. military personnel to Panama under the operational code name Nimrod Dancer.<sup>21</sup> The objectives for the operation were to protect American citizens and exercise the right of movement in Panama under the treaty agreement.

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<sup>18</sup> Powell, 416

<sup>19</sup> Bob Woodward, *The Commanders* (New York: Simon & Schuster Inc.),53.

<sup>20</sup> John R. Greene *The Presidency of George Bush* (Kansas: University Press of Kansas, 2000), 101.

<sup>21</sup> Cole, 11.

Lastly, President Bush replaced General Woerner with General Maxwell Thurman as CINCSOUTH. General Woerner felt that a political solution resolved from within Panama would end the crisis rather than military intervention. When the American policy shifted to a more aggressive posture, General Woerner was at odds with President Bush and replaced.<sup>22</sup>

The second event came in October 1989, just as General Thurman took over as CINC. A coup to replace Noriega was attempted from within the PDF. General Thurman was poised to act but advised the CJCS that the coup was a “fatally flawed plan” and now was not the time to interfere.<sup>23</sup> Noriega survived the ill-planned coup, purged the PDF of dissidents, and stepped up the harassment of Americans.<sup>24</sup>

The U.S. press and Congress reacted by attacking the Bush Administration for not supporting or getting decisively involved in the coup attempt. Columnist George Will accused the President of having an “unserious presidency”, while Senator Jesse Helms called the administration a bunch of “Keystone Cops.”

Three significant factors resulted from the failed coup attempt; (1) the Bush Administration was now determined to bring down Noriega (2) the U.S. would determine the terms of intervention and when they did, the PDF would have to go,<sup>25</sup> and (3) valuable

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<sup>22</sup> Bob Woodward, 52,66. General Woerner had a reputation as a wimp in Washington. He was opposed to aggressive U.S. military intervention in Latin America. Shortly after Bush’s inauguration Woerner had publicly stated that there was a policy vacuum in Washington on Panama. Brent Scowcroft National Security Advisor to the President scolded Woerner saying, “I want you to know the President was furious with your speech”. General Maxwell Thurman had the reputation of an aggressive commander, a “no-bullshit” straight-ahead guy who made things happen when he was in charge.

<sup>23</sup> Bob Woodward, 93.

<sup>24</sup> Cole, 16.

<sup>25</sup> Powell, 416. “I had thought all along if we ever become involved in Panama, dumping Noriega would not end the problem. His power base was the PDF. When we got rid of Noriega, another PDF goon would rise up to take his place.”

intelligence was gained as to what forces would remain loyal to Noriega<sup>26</sup>. The Chairman of the Joint Chief of Staff (CJCS), General Powell, directed General Thurman to put the planning for the execution of Operation Just Cause, a military intervention aimed at removing Noriega from power, into high gear.

The third and most significant event came in December 1989. Noriega and his national assembly declared that Panama was in “a state of war with the United States.” Harassment of Americans was intensified culminating in the shooting death of Marine Corps Lieutenant Robert Paz at a PDF roadblock. A Navy lieutenant and his wife witnessed this shooting and were taken into custody by the PDF. During their interrogation the Navy Lieutenant was beaten and his wife was groped until she collapsed.<sup>27</sup> This was widely publicized, increasing public pressure on the Bush Administration to act.

The situation in Panama was deteriorating rapidly and Noriega had provided the U.S. with the “just cause” to intervene. On December 17th, 1989, President Bush was briefed on the plan, and after numerous questions, approved the execution of Operation Just Cause.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Flanagan, 30

<sup>27</sup> Cole, 27

<sup>28</sup> Cole, 30. The president asked, “Would the plan work? Did it have to be so big? How many casualties would there be? How much damage would be done? What would be the diplomatic consequences throughout Latin America?” After receiving the appropriate explanations he said “ Okay, let’s do it. The hell with it!”

### *Planning for Intervention*

In February 1988, the initial planning for Panama was conducted under the guidance of General Woerner CINCSOUTH. The objectives were: “(1) to protect U.S. citizens and property, (2) to keep the Panama Canal open, (3) to conduct noncombatant evacuation operations in peaceful or hostile environments, and (4) to develop a plan to assist any government that might replace the Noriega regime.”<sup>29</sup>

General Woerner and his planners developed a series of plans under the code name Elaborate Maze. The contingencies were then grouped into a four-phase plan called Prayer Book. The first phase was called Klondike Key. This plan dealt with the noncombatant evacuation of U.S. citizens throughout Panama. The second phase, called Post Time, dealt with the defense of the U.S. installations and Citizens within Panama. The third, Blue Spoon, was an offensive phase to defeat the PDF and capture Noriega. Once Blue Spoon was completed, the fourth and final phase of the campaign was a civil-military operation that would begin under the code name Blind Logic.<sup>30</sup> Blue Spoon and Blind Logic would later be renamed Operations Just Cause and Promote Liberty respectively.<sup>31</sup>

Following the October 1989 coup attempt and due to the rapidly escalating situation in Panama, the strategy for Just Cause changed from a gradual build up of forces, to a surprise coup to takedown the Noriega regime. General Powell also felt that the plan for U.S. forces did not emphasize their full potential and that the plan should reflect more modern U.S. capabilities, developed during the cold war. These capabilities

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<sup>29</sup> Cole, 7

<sup>30</sup> Cole, 7-8.

included applying rapid overwhelming combat power at night to surprise and decisively defeat an enemy in the shortest period of time with minimal casualties.<sup>32</sup> “Decisive force ends wars quickly and in the long run saves lives,” stated General Powell.<sup>33</sup>

Due to the urgency of operation Just Cause and the time that was needed for its planning, operation Promote Liberty, the second phase of the campaign, was given a lower priority until it was executed. In addition, Promote Liberty had to be approved by the CINC, and this approval did not come until hostilities were well underway on 20 December 1989.

During the initial planning for Blind Logic, General Woerner asked to coordinate planning with the State Department on post conflict resolutions. He thought it was fundamentally important to coordinate with the State Department since he envisioned they would have a lead role in the restoration of democracy. Due to the secrecy of the plan, however, this request was denied.<sup>34</sup> The planning had to remain solely within the DOD channels.

This lack of coordination between the military and the Department of State proved to be a major problem during the execution of Promote Liberty. The original plan was built upon the assumption that the U.S. Military would be in charge of Panama until a new government was ready to take power. This assumption proved to be wrong. Additionally the plan did not account for the fact that the removal of Noriega did not entirely remove his influence within the Panamanian government. The U.S. military

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<sup>31</sup> Powell, 426.

<sup>32</sup> Woodward, 86.

<sup>33</sup> Powell, 434.

<sup>34</sup> General Fredrick Woerner, Interview by author, 12 April 2001.



would be forced to coordinate its efforts during the campaign with the residual judicial and legislative branches that had all been corrupted under Noriega.

During the accelerated planning that was initiated after the October 1989 coup, operation Promote Liberty would take a back seat in priority to the planning for Just Cause. As a result, when the execution of Promote Liberty was ordered, it created challenges that had to be quickly overcome to achieve success. This fact would permeate the entire campaign.

## Chapter 2

*“Direct every military operation toward a clearly defined, decisive, and attainable objective.”*<sup>35</sup>

### Objectives of the Campaign

Strategic objectives are designed by the National Command Authority (NCA) and given to the Commander-in-Chief (CINC) in order to facilitate operational planning in his theater of operations. The strategic objectives are derived from political policies, and the CINCs must develop military objectives to achieve the strategic aims. In order to achieve the military objective, the Commander must “understand the strategic aims, set appropriate objectives, and insure that these aims and objectives contribute to a unity of effort.”<sup>36</sup>

The National Command Authority’s (NCA) strategic political objectives for operation Just Cause/Promote Liberty were as follows:

“(1) To protect American Lives (2) protect American interest and rights under the Panama Canal Treaty, (3) apprehend the leader of Panama, Manuel Noriega, for trial on drug charges in the United States, and (4) restore Panamanian democracy.”<sup>37</sup> The constraints placed on the operation were to: (1) limit collateral damage and (2) minimize casualties on both sides.

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<sup>35</sup> Joint Publication 3-07, *Joint Doctrine for Military Operations Other Than War* ( Washington, DC: Joint Chiefs of Staff, 1995), II-1.

<sup>36</sup> Joint Pub 3-07, II-1.

<sup>37</sup> Jennifer M. Taw, *Operation Just Cause: Lessons for Operations Other Than War*. (Santa Monica, CA, Rand Corporation, 1996), 9.

General Thurman then updated the operational plan and developed a three-phase approach that defined the concept of operations.

“Phase 1: Combat operations at the onset were designed to neutralize and fix in place the PDF, capture Noriega, install a new government, and protect and defend U.S. citizens and key facilities. Phase 2: Stability operations to ensure law and order and begin the transition to support a newly installed government. Phase 3: Nation-building that supported the new Endara government to include restructuring and training the new government.”<sup>38</sup>

The campaign would thus logically be divided into a combat phase and restoration phase (Just Cause and Promote Liberty respectively). The military planned in detail for the combat operations, something they were quite proficient at and well trained for. Consequently the combat operations went very well. The military objectives during the combat phase were quite clear and logically tied to the strategic political objectives.

### **Just Cause**

General Thurman identified Noriega as the “enemy’s” strategic center of gravity. His capture was key to the success of the operation. The PDF was correctly identified as the operational center of gravity from which Noriega derived his power. The PDF forces were dispersed throughout Panamanian towns, with the key strongholds mainly in central Panama along the corridor paralleling the canal and in Panama City. In case of an attack by the U.S., Noriega's followers, the PDF and dignity battalions, were expected to take hostages, and then move into the mountains to conduct guerilla and terrorist operations.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Flanagan, 40.

<sup>39</sup> Flanagan, 41.

In order to counter the enemy's expected course of action, General Thurman's strategy was to conduct a simultaneous application of overwhelming force at decisive points designed to shock, disrupt, and force the enemy to surrender as quickly as possible.<sup>40</sup> Taking in mind the disposition of the PDF, the geography of the countryside combined with his strategy, General Thurman then developed the make up of forces that would execute the plan.

The joint force for operation Just Cause numbered 26,000<sup>41</sup>, which was truly overwhelming. Considering there were 35,000 American citizens living in Panama, and 27 key facilities that had to be neutralized simultaneously, the number was justified and approved by the NCA.

The strategic objectives executed during operation Just Cause were purely military and achieved by armed intervention. They were achieved through clearly defined operational and tactical objectives; mission type orders with centralized command and decentralized control, rehearsals, integrated use of the principles of war, synergistic use of all elements of the military and the sheer determination and professionalism of the U.S Forces. This was something the military trained for and was ready to execute. By the end of Just Cause, the PDF was defeated and incapable of mounting any resistance, Noriega was in the hands of the DEA and the legitimate government of Panama was in place.

The first three policy objectives were resolved by military means, while the fourth, restoring democracy, would require the involvement of numerous U.S. Government agencies and Army civil affairs resources. The objective of restoring

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<sup>40</sup> Flanagan, 41.

Panamanian democracy was a political objective that was not attainable by the exclusive use of the military. This problem was exacerbated by the lack of detailed planning between both departments of Defense and State as previously mentioned.

Promote Liberty was designed to facilitate the ultimate end-state and would take considerably more time to execute. But it received far less consideration in the planning process than Just Cause. Unfortunately the two phases of the campaign were planned separately and did not mutually support each other. The lack of a well-conceived plan that integrated military and interagency cooperation in Promote Liberty created problems from the beginning.

### **Promote Liberty**

The objective for operation Promote Liberty was defined as “restore Democracy.” This was a complicated objective for two reasons. The first was that Panama had not seen democracy in 20 years. The years of dictatorships had weakened the political, social and economic structures within the country.<sup>42</sup> Corruption was institutionalized during the Noriega regime and it was something that could not be eliminated overnight. The second issue was that “three people, one President and two Vice Presidents do not constitute a government.”<sup>43</sup> When the Endara government came to power, it had no cabinet, no internal ministries; just the Civil Military Operations Task Force. This Task Force, headed by BGen Gann, consisted of the South Command J-5 Staff, augmented by 25

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<sup>41</sup> George Stewart and others, *JTF Operations Since 1983: Just Cause*, (Alexandria, VA: Center for Naval Analysis, 1994), 68.

<sup>42</sup> Richard H. Schultz, *In the Aftermath of War U.S. Support for Reconstruction and Nation-Building in Panama Following JUST CAUSE* (Alabama, Maxwell Air Force Base, Air University Press, 1993), 20

<sup>43</sup> Fishel, 33.

reservists, and an undermanned U.S. Embassy.<sup>44</sup> This skeleton of a staff would begin the initial construction of the new Panamanian government.

The operational objectives defined by the CINC were aid to the newly formed government, restoration of law and order through the creation of a security force, and distribution of humanitarian aid to those in need. These objectives had to be accomplished as quickly as possible if the Panamanian people were to believe the newly formed government was legitimate and credible. The new government had to be able to demonstrate its authority by maintaining civic order, the most basic act of governance. The urgency of this situation served to compound an ill-planned operation. The result was ad hoc, with frequently disjointed efforts, with short-term objectives and a slowly evolving process. At the time of operation Promote Liberty there was no military doctrine that could provide a template for nation building, and the CINC had to create that template when confronted with the operational dilemmas that occurred.

Planning for nation building operations was not fully integrated and thus did not allow for a seamless transition during the operation. One of the shortcomings of the transition was the lack of public security once the PDF had been neutralized. “The PDF not only included the Army but police, immigration, air control, and even postal authorities.”<sup>45</sup> The planners had properly identified the centers of gravity during the planning and the PDF had been neutralized, but the U.S. failed to realize the follow-on implications of their plan. Once the PDF was neutralized, there was no longer any agency providing for public security and other basic services. The shift of strategies from gradual build up of forces centered on Panama City to surprise attack centered on a

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<sup>44</sup> Fishel, 33.

<sup>45</sup> George Stewart, 73.

simultaneous takedown of the PDF meant fewer U.S. forces were available in the city to help maintain civil order.<sup>46</sup>

The lack of coordination between the Joint Task Force South (JTFSO in charge of Just Cause) and Civil Military Operations Task Force (CMOTF in charge of Promote Liberty) planners led to a vacuum of internal security and a breakdown of civil order throughout Panama City. The rioting and looting in Panama City began on 20 December 1989 and continued until 24 December 1989,<sup>47</sup> costing a billion dollars in damage before American forces brought it under control.<sup>48</sup> The introduction of U.S. military police on the heels of the assault force might have maintained civil order and prevented the death and injuries of numerous innocent Panamanians. Regardless of fault, when the shooting stopped, Promote Liberty had to pick up the pieces and focus on the objectives for rebuilding a nation.

The looting that took place did more damage to the Panamanian economy than all the U.S. imposed economic sanctions combined.<sup>49</sup> These unintended consequences uncovered a major problem that would become a central issue of Promote Liberty which was the need for a new capable Panamanian police force. Thus, the first objective of Promote Liberty was to restore order and create a new police force subordinated to civilian authorities. Originally unplanned for, this critical task proved difficult to achieve.

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<sup>46</sup> Fishel, 26.

<sup>47</sup> Cole, 53-54.

<sup>48</sup> Gray and Manwaring, 6.

<sup>49</sup> Kevin Buckley, *Panama: The Whole Story* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1991), Chaps 10 and 11.

## Chapter 3

### Unity of Effort

*“Seek unity of effort in every operation”<sup>50</sup>*

“Unity of effort is derived from the principle of war, unity of command. It emphasizes the need for ensuring all means are directed to a common purpose.”<sup>51</sup> Implied within this statement is the fact that in the MOOTW environment the military commander does not have “command” over all the participating agencies, instead he must “rely heavily on consensus building in order to achieve unity of effort”<sup>52</sup> to ultimately achieve the assigned objectives. This process begins with deliberate planning when time permits which the commander must anticipate during crisis action planning. The commander must understand the mission, define his needs, and organize his force accordingly to achieve the strategic goals.

### Just Cause

General Thurman’s first action upon being notified he would replace General Woerner was to appoint LtGen Stiner, the Commanding General of the 18<sup>th</sup> Airborne Corps, as the Commander Joint Task Force South. This served to streamline and delineate the chain of command. Accredited to the Goldwater-Nichols Act of 1986, the chain of command was simple to understand; it went from President Bush to Defense Secretary Cheney, through the CJCS, then to CINCSOUTH General Thurman, and to

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<sup>50</sup> Joint Pub 3-07, II-3.

<sup>51</sup> Joint Pub 3-07, II-3.

<sup>52</sup> Joint Pub 3-07, II-3.



JTFSO LtGen Stiner.<sup>53</sup> General Thurman, U.S. combatant commander, worked directly with the CJCS instead of going through all the service heads for approval of his plan and the apportionment allocation and assignment of forces. General Thurman also had the authority to develop his own command and control architecture for the mission. He then took Joint Task Force Panama (JTFFPM) and Joint Special Operations Task Force (JSOTF) and placed them under the command of LtGen Stiner to make up Joint Task Force South (JTFSO).<sup>54</sup> This resulted in one commander being in-charge of all joint task forces.

LtGen Stiner was then able to further break down his command into nine separate task forces that could execute a complicated plan dispersed throughout Panama. He made sure each taskforce had the resources it needed to accomplish its objectives and react quickly without waiting on other forces to support them.<sup>55</sup>

Operation Just Cause was an excellent example of effective military unity of command. The chain of command was straightforward, as mentioned previously, thereby ensuring superb unity of effort throughout the JTF. The simultaneous attack on 27 locations meant that the operation had to be orchestrated by centralized planning with decentralized execution. LtGen Stiner had personally visited subordinate commanders to ensure their units were ready. The objectives for the invasion were understood, meticulously planned, and rehearsed by the executors. This type of detailed planning and clearly defined structure set the conditions for a synergistic unity of effort that was a force multiplier.

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<sup>53</sup> Flanagan, 40

<sup>54</sup> Cole, 74

## Promote Liberty

Unity of Effort begins with some type of command structure so that all means can be directed towards a common purpose. Achieving unity of effort is more difficult and complicated when a variety of players that do not traditionally work together and are brought together to accomplish a complex task.<sup>56</sup> The command structure for Promote Liberty was not only complicated but also evolved slowly over time after the operation had begun.

At 1000 on 20 December 1989, General Thurman appointed Brigadier General Benard W. Gann, his J-5, as the Commander of Civil Military Operations Task Force. General Gann was then placed under the operational control of the Charge d' Affaires at the U.S. Embassy, Mr. John Bushnell. "Thurman's instructions to Gann were to provide Bushnell what he needed to assist the newly inaugurated Panamanian government, as well as such additional support that might be required."<sup>57</sup> At this point the State Department was grossly understaffed and unprepared for Promote Liberty. Additionally, the newly established Panamanian government, consisting of three individuals, was not functional or effective. Brigadier General Gann found himself taking the lead in organizing the new government instead of following the direction of Mr. Bushnell and the Panamanian Government.<sup>58</sup> This was a result of the State Department not having a plan or the resources in country to lead such an endeavor.

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<sup>55</sup> Cole, 74

<sup>56</sup> Joint Pub 3-07, II-3.

<sup>57</sup> Fishel, 33.

<sup>58</sup> Fishel, 34. The U.S. Embassy staff was reduced to an authorized strength was 45 and an effective strength of 15 due to personnel on leave, rotations and lack of replacements. In addition there was no U.S. Ambassador .

During the first week of the operation, Brigadier General Gann was manned with minimal resources from South Command J-5. At the same time that he was being ordered to execute Promote Liberty, he was still trying to sort out his staffing resources and own command structure.<sup>59</sup> The NCA's decision not to call up Army reserve Civil Affairs units further hampered the plan.

This meant that the CMOTF was comprised of a combination of South Command J-5 personnel and individual volunteer reserves. Although the reserve call up problem had been addressed during planning it was never fully resolved. Subsequently, the planners failed to realize that individual volunteer reservist, though knowledgeable do not make up a cohesive unit. The volunteers came from all over the country and had to be organized into units, once in country.<sup>60</sup>

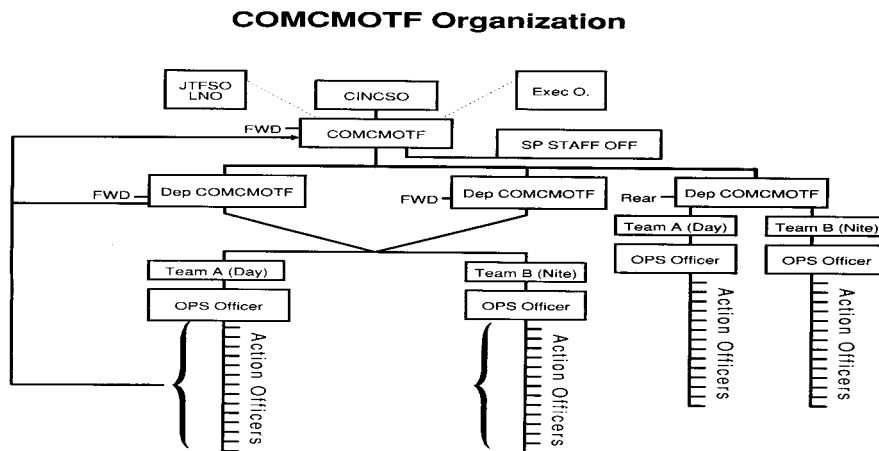
General Gann pressed on and organized the Civil Military Operation Task Force into three task forces (or teams), each headed by a deputy Commander. Directly under General Gann was an additional deputy Commander. This structure proved to be dysfunctional because of the redundancy of tasking and confusion as to exactly who was in charge. Figure 1-1 refers to the initial command structure, the staff consisted of the J-5 from South Command and 25 reservist. All requests for support had to be routed through BGen Gann to the CINC then over to JTFSO. JTFSO would then task units to support CMOTF.

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<sup>59</sup> Fishel, 32.

<sup>60</sup>, LtCol Jeffery Greenhut and others, "Civil Affairs in Operation Just Cause", *Special Warfare*, Winter 91, 36-37

(Fig 1-1)



Despite the setbacks, the task forces were able to set up operations centers that coordinated restoration of basic services and assisted in the organization of government departments, as well as activities of U.S. Government and private relief agencies.<sup>61</sup> The action officers were instrumental in setting up the framework for the ministries of government. In addition to the task force teams, a liaison officer was designated to act as an aide to President Endara and his two vice presidents. This provided a direct link from the new Panamanian government to the CINC that was very beneficial over time.

The main focus of the CMOTF was to assist the government of Panama in organization. However, while the CMOTF was busy trying to assist the Panamanian Government, widespread looting and chaos had developed in Panama City. The security problem was addressed by the creation of the United States Forces Liaison Group. Major General Marc A. Cisneros, commander of U.S. Army South and the deputy commander JTF SO, created the USFLG to provide U.S. military forces for security and the initial

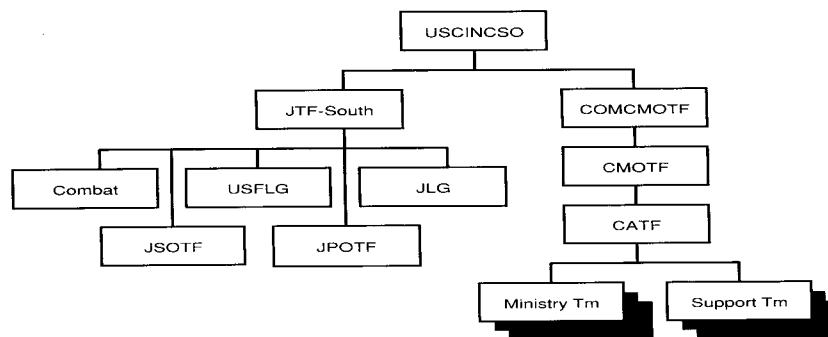
<sup>61</sup> Fishel, 34

training and equipping of the new Panamanian National Police.<sup>62</sup> This was an interim fix for the problem, filled by the 193<sup>rd</sup> Infantry Brigade, who had not been trained in the mission of policing a city. The 193<sup>rd</sup> was eventually augmented by military police to aid in the effort.

The make up and command structure of the CMOTF had become more and more disjointed as situations developed within Panama. Each time a crisis developed, new units were brought into the Civil Military Operations arena, but they remained subordinate to the JTFSO commander. There soon was a urgent need to reorganize in order to operate more effectively under one joint task force commander.

(Fig 1-2)

**CMO Organizations**

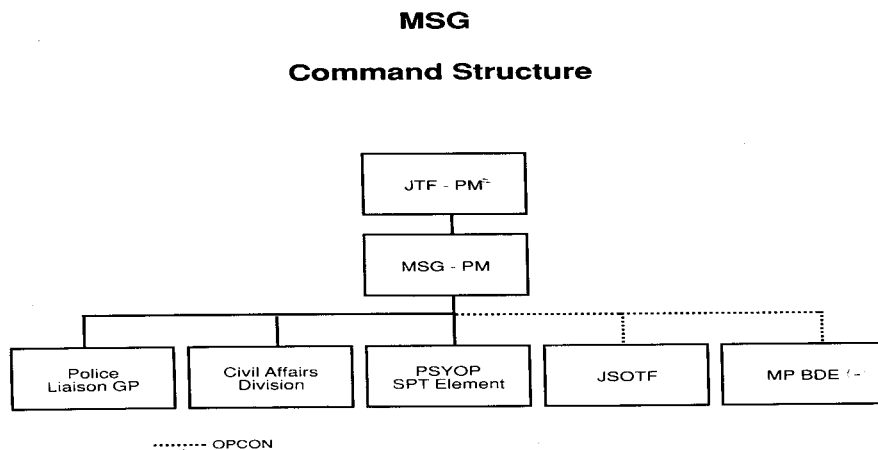


With the help of General James Lindsay, CINC, U.S. Special Operations Command (USSOCOM), General Thurman and his staff restructured the CMOTF to provide for long-term stability operations.<sup>63</sup> The new command structure would absorb the somewhat fragmented efforts of “nation building” under one command called the Military Support Group. On January 17th, the MSG was activated and consisted of the

<sup>62</sup> Shultz, 29.

Police Force Liaison Division (PFLD) formerly USFLG, Civil Affairs Division, Psychological Operations Support Element, Joint Special Operation Task Force and Military Police Brigade.<sup>64</sup>

The MSG was commanded by Colonel (Brigadier General Select) Jim Steele. Colonel Steele was sent by General Lindsey based upon his expertise in civil military affairs and Latin America.<sup>65</sup> Colonel Steele was able to begin planning a comprehensive strategy with specific objectives for each division within the MSG. On January 20<sup>th</sup> Just Cause officially ended, and JTFSO was dissolved and re-deployed. The MSG was then placed under Joint Task Force Panama headed by Major General Cisneros. The command structure was now clearly defined. (Fig 1-3)



At the same time that the military was re-organizing its forces, the State Department began to organize and play a bigger role in the nation-building effort. Mr. Deane Hinton was personally asked by President Bush to become the new ambassador and to help in the Panamanian Project. Mr. Hinton was very experienced in Latin

<sup>63</sup> Fishel, 39.

<sup>64</sup> Shultz, 37.

<sup>65</sup> Shultz, 35.

American affairs and particularly skilled in economic relationships.<sup>66</sup> The years of U.S. economic sanctions coupled by the corruption of the Noriega regime had put Panama's debt at 6.2 billion dollars.<sup>67</sup> Mr. Hinton's expertise was sorely needed. On January 17<sup>th</sup> the newly appointed ambassador began to assess the situation in Panama.

As the diplomatic mission began to estimate the situation in Panama, its members were surprised at how deeply involved the U.S. military had become with the affairs of the new Panamanian Government. Both the military and Department of State realized that there needed to be a shift from predominantly military involvement to a more appropriate U.S. government and civilian effort.<sup>68</sup> This problem had plagued the operation and was a direct result of a lack of communication and limited planning between the two agencies.

In late January 1990, the Department of Justice sent the Director of International Criminal Investigative Training Assistance Program (ICITAP) Mr. David Kriskovich to assess the situation.<sup>69</sup> He brought with him personnel from the Agency for International Development to solicit appropriations to boost the stability effort. The results of this mission manifested itself with "\$42 million in emergency assistance for Panama."<sup>70</sup> But this assistance came with a hitch. The ICITAP took over the mission of the training and establishment of the Panamanian National Police (PNP). At the same time, the U.S. military was prohibited from training the PNP. "Although they [U.S.military] could not train the PNP they could conduct joint patrols, support precinct house administration and other law enforcement functions to maintain order, and monitor adherence to training

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<sup>66</sup> Fishel, 43-44.

<sup>67</sup> Shultz, 29.

<sup>68</sup> Fishel, 38

<sup>69</sup> Fishel, 49

standards.”<sup>71</sup> In other words, the ICITAP had enough personnel to conduct the training of the PNP, but it did not have the personnel to support the implementation of placing a trained PNP force back on the street and among the populace. The MSG had gone to great lengths to set up a successful training program that was eventually terminated and replaced by the marginal ICITAP police academy.

Other problems that resulted from the ICITAP take over were, (1) the gapping of the advisor position to the Director General of the PNP, (2) lack of permanent personnel located in country during the first six months of the operation, and (3) “the initial refusal to accept advice and assistance as offered by the MSG and the PFLD.”<sup>72</sup> All these were counterproductive to the overall goal of establishing an internal security force for Panama.

Unity of command was achieved during the combat phase of operation because it was planned for in detail and the military was accustomed to accepting direction in combat situations. Unity of effort during stability operations was not planned for and resulted in duplication of effort, a disjointed command structure, and competition between U.S. agencies. The military ended up initially taking the lead in rebuilding a government, a task they neither wanted nor were necessarily prepared to do.

Unity of effort was eventually achieved during Promote Liberty through the development of personal relationships between the MSG and General Thurman, Ambassador Hinton, President Endara, and Vice Presidents Calderon and Ford.<sup>73</sup> An integrated and holistic plan that included interagency cooperation would have alleviated

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<sup>70</sup> Fishel, 49.

<sup>71</sup> Fishel, 50.

<sup>72</sup> Taw, 9.



some of these challenges in the beginning. Instead, it was a trial and error evolution, slow but successful.

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<sup>73</sup> Gray and Manwaring, 56.

## Chapter 4

### *Security*

*“ Never permit hostile factions to acquire a military, political, or informational advantage.”<sup>74</sup>*

### **Just Cause**

The security considerations for Just Cause were achieved by exploiting the element of surprise, under the cover of darkness, by using overwhelming force, and by multiple simultaneous strikes that dominated the land, air, and sea. An overwhelming U.S. presence during the combat phase of operations translated into security through strength. The use of military force also served as leverage against opposition during follow-on stability operations. Despite Just Cause’s success, there were some deficiencies regarding security.

The first problem was the breach of security warning of the impending invasion of Panama by U.S. forces. A PDF soldier overheard two U.S. troops talking about the invasion that was to take place at 0100 that evening.<sup>75</sup> He warned the PDF Headquarters of the attack, but they did not take the necessary measures to assemble their forces. General Stiner reacted to this security breach by moving up the special operations forces attacks by 15 minutes to maintain the element of tactical surprise.

The second problem was allowing the Noriega government radio station, Radio National, to broadcast propaganda all morning (20 December 1990). The radio station

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<sup>74</sup> Joint Pub 3-07, II-3.

<sup>75</sup> Cole, 35.

urged resistance fighters to “go out and face the aggressors...be prepared to die for your country”. At one point Noriega’s personal bodyguard came on the air and reported that Noriega was “well and in a safe place”.<sup>76</sup> When the press reported that the Radio Nacional was still operational, Washington directed General Thurman to knock it out.<sup>77</sup> For a brief period of time the U.S. forces allowed the Noriega resistors to gain the informational advantage in the city.

The third problem with the security plan concerned the personnel at the American Embassy. Because of poor diplomatic relations the American Ambassador and staff were recalled to Washington D.C. leaving only minimal personnel on duty.<sup>78</sup> Failure to reinforce the compound with military forces resulted in numerous RPG rounds impacting the embassy building during the intervention. This could have been avoided by inserting more security personnel following the shooting of 1<sup>st</sup> Lt. Paz.

The final problem with security was intelligence shortcomings. For example, “HUMINT resources did not accurately report on the strength of the Dignity Battalions, which fought heavily for several days.”<sup>79</sup> These groups were paramilitary units, poorly trained but capable of terrorist operations and promoting civil uprisings. Clothed in civilian attire they could be used to disrupt rear areas through sniping at U.S. forces and civilians, looting, and arson. The location and presumed area of operations of such

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<sup>76</sup> Kenneth J. Jones and others, *The Enemy Within Casting out Panama’s Demon*, (Republic of Panama: Focus Publications, 1990), 83.

<sup>77</sup> Powell, 431-432. The military did not have troops in that part of town to take control of the tower and had anticipated the Endara government would need it once the fighting stopped in a day or two.

<sup>78</sup> Cole, 65.

<sup>79</sup> Michael E. Seitz “Command, Control, Communications, and Intelligence (C3I) Factors” in Bruce Watson and Peter Tsouras, eds. *Operation Just Cause: The Intervention in Panama* (Boulder, CO: Westview, 1991), 110.

battalions may have helped to curb some of the looting and criminal activity that occurred.

Despite some problems, security was achieved partly by the use of psychological operations personnel being assigned to combat units. They helped persuade barricaded PDF soldiers to come out of their barracks, using implicit threats, knowledge of the language and culture, and sincere promises of safety and fair treatment.<sup>80</sup> Taped messages broadcast over public address systems also helped to direct refugees to collection points and shelters to keep them out of harm's way. Psychological operations are a force multiplier that can win the advantage and save lives during both combat and stability operations.

Another key to success of combat operations was the use of intelligence. Intelligence gathered from years of working with the PDF and Noriega was instrumental in the military planning of the operation. This unique situation provided the insight into the enemy's capabilities and intentions. After witnessing the October coup attempt, planners were able to identify key units and decisive points that had to be neutralized in order to achieve rapid success. In addition, the U.S. forces that were based in Panama were able to become thoroughly familiar with terrain, road structure, PDF security positions, and key facilities in the area of operations. This type of hands-on intelligence assisted commanders in developing courses of action for success and ensuring security of U.S. forces.

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<sup>80</sup> Taw, 25

### **Promote Liberty**

Security should also take into consideration the protection of infrastructure and the local populous. By neutralizing the PDF, the U.S. forces destroyed the agency designed to maintain civil order. The partial solution to the problem of security was U.S. military presence, but the long-term strategy was the creation of a new Panamanian security force.

After years of repression under the Noriega and Torrijos regimes, the new Endara government knew they did not want a military force that would create the same problems. Simply put, they did not want to create a new force that would grow powerful enough to control the government. It was decided that there was no need for a formal military and that a police force would serve as public security.

The next problem was U. S. policy. It favored a quick reduction of U.S. military forces from the internal security role in Panama. The new Panamanian government had limited resources from which they could create a new security force. This drove them to two options for creating a police force.

The first option was to create a new police force. Creating a new police force would take too much time and leave 13,000 former PDF to organize against the new government. The second option was to use the former PDF members to reconstitute the police force. This would allow for a Panamanian force to quickly restore order and allow the U.S. forces to assume a secondary, less visible role in Panamanian internal affairs.

The only existing problem, and rightfully so, was a distrust and fear of the former PDF members.<sup>81</sup>

The new Endara government in concert with the U.S. mentors agreed that with proper screening the PDF could be used as a basis from which the new police force would be created. The criteria for screening the new force was as follows; 1) the leaders of the new police force should not be tainted by Noriega, 2) those individuals that were tainted, would be weeded out, and 3) the new organization was divided into several entities that were subordinate to civilian control and too weak to challenge the new government.<sup>82</sup>

Training the new force proved too problematic, as U.S. laws prohibited the U.S. military from directly training foreign police forces.<sup>83</sup> As discussed earlier, the ICITAP took over the task of police training, but due to their lack of expertise and personnel, ICITAP had to rely on the U.S. military for help. The U.S. military became the enabling force, which “monitored” training vice directly training the force. Joint patrols helped to facilitate monitoring, training, and ensuring the application of citizen’s rights.

Further complications came when criminals were apprehended. Most of the prison infrastructure was destroyed during combat operations. In addition, there was no judicial system to ensure just prosecution. The creation of the Judicial Liaison Group (JLG) helped to advise and assist the Panamanians on legal and judicial matters.<sup>84</sup> The JLG was able to help organize and assist the new Panamanian government in setting up the beginnings of a judicial system. This was an example of how security issues forced

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<sup>81</sup> Gray and Manwaring, 57.

<sup>82</sup> Gray and Manwaring, 57.

<sup>83</sup> Schultz, 37. Specified in section 660 of the Foreign Assistance Act.

<sup>84</sup> Fishel, 37. Major General Marc Cisneros created the JLG during the initial phase of the operation.

the military to become involved in matters that the U.S. Justice Department was better suited to handle.

Creating a public security force was quite challenging during Promote Liberty. It required a unity of effort between all the agencies involved. Understanding the implications of one's objectives by putting them into context enables forces to anticipate and plan for the desired end-state.

## Chapter 5

### Restraint

*"Apply appropriate military capability prudently. A single act could cause significant military and political consequences; judicious use of force is necessary. Restraint requires the careful balancing of the need for security, the conduct of operations, and the political objectives. Excessive force antagonizes those parties involved, thereby damaging the legitimacy of the organization that uses it while possibly enhancing the legitimacy of the opposing party."*<sup>85</sup>

### Just Cause

Restraint was a prime concern early in the planning of the campaign. The direction from the NCA was to limit casualties on both sides. The ROEs addressed this concern and were adjusted throughout the campaign by General Thurman.

The ROE for operation Just Cause were restrictive in order to prevent civilian casualties and limit collateral damage. "Upon General Thurman's insistence, during the combat phase of the operation, ROE required minimum use of firepower, deliberate avoidance of inflicting civilian and PDF casualties, and limited destruction of property."<sup>86</sup>

During the combat phase of the operation, the use of indirect fire weapons, and aerial fired munitions around civilians were prohibited without the permission of a ground maneuver commander with at least the rank of Lieutenant Colonel.<sup>87</sup> The use of warning shots and implicit threats of violence were key to deterring resistance. Training and understanding of the ROE were instrumental in limiting collateral damage and

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<sup>85</sup> Joint Pub 3-07, II-4

<sup>86</sup> Taw, 24.

<sup>87</sup> Taw, 24.



casualties. "Troops were prepared for these more stringent ROE through in-depth briefings and situational training exercises."<sup>88</sup>

Despite these efforts during Just Cause, a fairly large number of Panamanians were killed or wounded. The official estimates submitted by General Thurman put casualties at 23 U.S. killed and 322 wounded, 297 Panamanians killed and 123 wounded.<sup>89</sup> Considering the number and variety of troops involved and the complexity of the operation, this appears to be a fairly low number of casualties on both sides. It should be noted that the casualties could have been significantly higher without detailed ROE, adequate training, and the overall prudent use of force.

Psychological operations were also key to limiting the use of force. Numerous firefights were avoided by the threatened use of force and the techniques applied by commanders in the field. For example one technique used to force a peaceful surrender of towns still occupied by the PDF was the "Ma Bell approach".<sup>90</sup>

Major Gilberto Perez, of the 7<sup>th</sup> Special Forces Group, a Spanish-speaking commander, skilled in the culture and institutions of Panama, would telephone the headquarters of the PDF and ask to meet with the commander of the local *cuartel*. Once the *cuartel* commander appeared, Major Perez would then inform him that he had Ranger Battalion standing by and that the commander must surrender. There were three conditions the commander had to meet: 1) the surrender was unconditional, 2) all

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<sup>88</sup> Taw, 24.

<sup>89</sup> Cole, 65-66. Casualty figures for U.S. forces remained constant, but Panamanian figures fluctuated. By 8 January 1990, the U.S. forces raised the number of Panamanian military dead to 314; the Endara government estimated that 203 civilians died during the fighting. On 21 May 1990, based upon actual body count, the Panamanian Minister of Health provided new numbers of Panamanians killed during Just Cause: 51 uniformed PDF, 58 unidentified civilians, and 143 identified civilians for a total of 252. General Kelly attributed the higher JTFSO figures to the tendency of combatants firing at the same target to each claim credit for it.

weapons were to be placed in the police station and 3) all members of the PDF were to assemble on the parade deck. Once the *cuartel* commander agreed a helicopter would fly U.S. leaders over the parade ground to make sure their conditions were met. If the PDF refused an AC-130 would fire rounds into the unoccupied portion of the compound to persuade the PDF to comply. The Ranger Battalions would then be airlifted by helicopter into the town and *cuartel* to accept the surrender, confiscate the weapons and occupy the town to prevent looting.<sup>91</sup>

The prudent use of force coupled with psychological operations was a powerful tool in preventing the loss of life. Having military personnel trained in the culture, customs and language were a force multiplier in the MOOTW environment. These specially trained soldiers had a positive impact on the success of the application of restraint.

### **Promote Liberty**

During Promote Liberty the ROE became more restrictive to meet the sensitive political concerns of the mission. Once Noriega was captured, the resistance all but stopped and the people of Panama went back to the activities of daily living. The presence of U.S. forces was reduced as the redeployment was underway. The focus shifted from combat operations to a nation building effort. A weapons buy back program was instituted to reduce the risk of armed uprising and the psychological campaign was shifted to boost support for the new Endara government.<sup>92</sup> The U.S. military was careful to exercise the principle of restraint in order to maintain the

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<sup>90</sup> Flanagan, 216.

<sup>91</sup> Flanagan, 216.

<sup>92</sup> Cole, 54.

legitimacy of the operation.

## Chapter 6

### Perseverance

*"Prepare for the measured, protracted application of military capability in support of strategic aims."<sup>93</sup>*

### Just Cause

The use of overwhelming force quickly brought an end to the fighting in Panama. Within seven hours of the operation the PDF was crushed and incapable of mounting any organized resistance. Once the military and political objectives of Just Cause were achieved the combat forces deployed during the operation began to return home.

While the U.S. hailed Just Cause as a victory, it wasn't looking ahead to the internal security vacuum that needed to be filled and the civil structure corrupted by Noriega. The force applied during Just Cause facilitated the rapid transition to the nation- building phase of the campaign and set complex obstacles for Promote Liberty. While the concept of protracted application of military capabilities did not apply to Just Cause, it held true for Promote Liberty.

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<sup>93</sup> Joint Pub 3-07, II-4.

## Promote Liberty

The lack of planning for the execution, the complexity of the problem and the ambiguous political objectives led to the slow start of Promote Liberty. The success of the mission would eventually involve political, diplomatic, economic and informational measures to supplement military efforts.<sup>94</sup>

Economically the Panamanians required funding from the U.S. The appropriation of funds was both slow in coming and insufficient for an economy devastated by the years of sanctions and recent looting.<sup>95</sup> The looting itself cost the business community \$325 million, causing a large number of Panamanian businesses never to re-open again. This pushed unemployment even higher and undermined the new Endara government's credibility to govern. The sanctions imposed by both the Reagan and Bush administrations were targeted at Noriega while instead they destroyed the elements of society that would be responsible for the rebirth of economy. The reconstruction of the Panamanian economy would take years to rebuild, making it difficult to achieve decisive improvements.

Creating a credible internal security force was also a task that could not be achieved overnight. Only the military had the necessary capabilities to fill the initial security gap and to field the new police force free of corruption. This was a near impossible task that would take years. This held true for the judicial and penal systems that required additional rebuilding if the police force was to be effective.<sup>96</sup> The military could not achieve this task without the help of various agencies within the U.S.

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<sup>94</sup> Joint Pub 3-07, II-4.

<sup>95</sup> Schultz, 55.

<sup>96</sup> Gray and Manwaring, 61-62.

government and more importantly the consultation of the Endara government. The lack of prior planning and unity of effort resulted in slowing the progress.

Promote Liberty did not formally end until September 1994. The military played a key role in the reconstruction of Panama and helped to lay the foundations for a new democratic government. The patient and persistent pursuit of the overall strategic and political objectives was required to achieve the success of Promote Liberty.

## Chapter 7

### Legitimacy

*"Legitimacy is a condition based on the perception by a specific audience of the legality, morality, or rightness of a set of actions. Committed forces must sustain the legitimacy of the operation and of the host government, where applicable."<sup>97</sup>*

"Legitimacy is so fundamental that it should be listed first. All objectives should be rooted in legitimacy."<sup>98</sup> Legitimacy must be perceived by the U.S. public, the host nation citizens and to the world. If an action is perceived as illegitimate then the objectives are doomed to failure. It is imperative that all actions and objectives maintain their legitimacy throughout the campaign in order to achieve the desired end-state. The commander and his subordinates must be cognizant of legitimacy in their actions and adjust their actions to achieve objectives perceived as legitimate.

### Just Cause

Operation Just Cause was perceived as a legitimate operation in the eyes of the American people based on the events that led up to the intervention. The indictment on drug charges and the derailing of an elected government coupled with the real threat to Americans in Panama justified the intervention. Undoubtedly, in the eyes of Americans,

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<sup>97</sup> Joint Pub 3-07, II-4.

<sup>98</sup> Joe Strange, *Perspectives on Warfighting, Number Six, Capital "W" War* (Marine Corps University, 1998) 38

Noriega was corrupt and at the time Just Cause was executed it was the only way to remove him from power and eliminate him as a threat to Americans.

The Panamanian people also considered operation Just Cause legitimate. They agreed that the Endara government had won the election in May 1989. The protests that followed reinforced this fact, while Noriega's use of force to oppress his people further proved the illegitimacy of his regime. After the installation of the Endara government CBS conducted a poll that showed 9 out of 10 Panamanians favored the U.S. intervention.<sup>99</sup>

The problem arises in trying to sustain legitimacy throughout the intervention. This was done in a number of ways. Recall the original name for operation Just Cause, Blue Spoon. The name of the operation was changed to reinforce the just action of intervention, *jus ad bellum*. Just Cause had an inspirational ring, a call to arms appeal. General Collin Powell especially liked the fact that "even our severest critics would have to utter "Just Cause" while denouncing us."<sup>100</sup> Promote Liberty versus Blind Logic had the same effect.

Just prior to American forces crossing the line of departure, a Panamanian Justice of the Peace swore in the new Endara government.<sup>101</sup> By swearing in the new Government at the onset of military intervention, the U.S. obtained a legitimate alternative to the Noriega regime. This gave the New Endara government "face legitimacy". The lack of planning for the re-establishment of civil order, as previously mentioned, undoubtedly jeopardized the legitimacy of the new Endara government. By

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<sup>99</sup> Powell, 434.

<sup>100</sup> Powell, 426.

<sup>101</sup> Fishel, 29.



restoring and maintaining order the Endara government was able to ensure it's legitimacy.

### **Promote Liberty**

After the conclusion of Just Cause, the understanding between the U.S. and Endara Government was that U.S. forces would help form a government that was responsive to the needs of the Panamanian people.<sup>102</sup> The U.S. military and policy makers were keenly aware that the highly visible involvement in providing security in the streets gave a perception of “occupation” vice liberation. The creation of a new Panamanian police force was critical to prove legitimacy to both the Panamanian people and Latin American States. A Panama government dependent on the U.S. for the provision of internal security, the most basic act of governance, would have measurably degraded the government's international legitimacy.<sup>103</sup> While the creation of the police force was slow to evolve, the use of joint patrols helped to maintain a perception of legitimacy.

Psychological operations were used throughout the initial phases of Promote Liberty to boost support for the government and national police. Their objectives were to:

1. Make the PNP (Panamanian National Police) a motivated, effective, professional police force, dedicated to law and order, respectful of the GOP (Government of Panama).
2. Enhance popular support and respect for the PNP.
3. Enhance the internal respect for the GOP.
4. Neutralize disinformation and hostile propaganda directed against the GOP, PNP, the population of Panama and the United States.
5. Enhance the image of the U.S. in Panama and in the region.

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<sup>102</sup> Cole, 54.

<sup>103</sup> John T. Fishel and Richard Downie, 67

6. On order, support counternarcotics efforts by the U.S. and GOP.<sup>104</sup>

The emphasis of psychological operations was on the first three objectives while there was negligible propaganda to counter and little time for the last two objectives. These types of operations proved very successful, but on 7 June 1991 the psychological operation support element was ordered to leave Panama.<sup>105</sup>

Psychological operations were part of a grass roots campaign to build support for the Endara Government and U.S. actions. The New Panamanian government was ushered in by the U.S. military and placed in power. The Panamanian people approved of the U.S. presence and that was key to the success of the operation. A fear of the new police force and lack of confidence in a corrupt justice institution initially undermined the new Endara government and proved extremely challenging to overcome throughout Promote Liberty. Gaining and maintaining legitimacy is central to success in the MOOTW environment, and this held true during Promote Liberty.

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<sup>104</sup> Shultz, 58.

<sup>105</sup> Shultz, 57. According to senior embassy officials, most notably John Bushnell, the reason had to do more with specific aspects of the PSYOPS campaign, particularly those activities aimed at enhancing the internal prestige of the GOP among the Panamanian people. Bushnell believed it was beyond the mandate of military psychological operations.

## **Chapter 8**

### ***Conclusion***

Operation Just Cause and Promote Liberty were the result of failed stewardship. The lack of a synergistic approach to foreign policy utilizing all elements of national power ultimately led to the invasion of Panama. This lack of unity in strategic policy allowed Noriega to negotiate the fault lines of disunity and remain in power. As a last resort the military was brought in to remove Noriega and liberate the people of Panama. Just Cause was an overwhelming victory for the American military.

Just Cause was an extremely complicated plan but very successful for a number of reasons. The objectives from the National Command Authority were clear, and the political objectives and desired outcome were easily tailored into military objectives. Thanks to the Goldwater-Nichols act, the chain of command was simple and for the most part the civilian leadership, confident in the military's leadership, allowed the military to execute the plan unchanged.

Promote Liberty was also complicated but it lacked the detail of planning Just Cause received and was treated as a completely separate operation. The political objectives for the operation were formulated without an appreciation of military resources, capabilities and limitations. In addition, the political objectives for Promote Liberty were less clearly defined and did not translate well into military objectives. The secrecy of the plan served to exacerbate a lack of unity of effort, leading to ad hoc responses to problems that occurred during the operation. Re-building an internal security system for Panama was a huge task with complicated issues on both sides.

Security legitimizes the basic right of governance and we continue to wrestle with this issue in MOOTW today. The key to success in Panama, and elsewhere, was and is legitimacy. If our actions are not perceived as legitimate the mission is doomed. Without the acceptance of the people, the operation will almost certainly fail, or only last as long as military forces are present. It is important that U.S. leaders fully understand any potential conflict and put it in context, so the country does not waste scarce resources or underestimate the amount of effort required.

The six principles of MOOTW are interrelated and depend on each other. The commander must pay close attention to the application of the principles and incorporate them into the planning and decision making process when determining courses of actions to achieve his desired end-state. MOOTW actions are complicated and political by nature, and require more than just conventional military solutions to problems that the commander will inevitably face. Failing to consider one principle lends vulnerability to others. The enemy, resisters, or political factions will almost certainly seek to derail U.S. efforts to achieve its goals and will attempt to exploit these vulnerabilities. These six principles derived from the principles of war provide the guidelines for successful operations.

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