

**Fighting in Panama: Statements in Washington**

**The Pentagon**

**Excerpts From Briefings on U.S. Military Action in Panama**

Special to The New York Times  
 WASHINGTON, Dec. 20 — Following are excerpts from briefings on the Panama invasion given by Secretary of Defense Dick Cheney and Gen. Colin L. Powell, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, at the Pentagon this morning, and by Lieut. Gen. Thomas W. Kelly this afternoon, as provided by the Federal News Service, a transcription company:

**Morning Briefing**

**THE STATEMENTS**

**Making the Decision**

CHENEY. On Sunday, the President made the decision to order U.S. forces to Panama, specifically, as he indicated earlier, with the mission of protecting American lives, of protecting American interests in connection with our responsibilities under the Panama Canal Treaty, with the effort being made also to restore democracy and to bring General Noriega to justice, should we capture him. The order went out late on Sunday to implement a plan that had been in existence for some time. It was one of the first items I was briefed on when I became Secretary of Defense last spring.

At this point, of course General Noriega is still at large. He is no longer the maximum leader in Panama. A democratic government has been re-established with the duly elected officials selected by the people of Panama last May. He is, at this point, a fugitive.

**The Augmenting of Forces**

POWELL. As you know, at the direction of the President, United States armed forces undertook operations in combat in Panama just before 1 this morning. The participating units include in-place forces in Panama, the 193d Infantry Brigade, which in recent months had been reinforced by Marine units, by a battalion from the 7th Infantry Division at Fort Ord, California, by a mechanized battalion from the 5th Infantry Division at Fort Polk, Louisiana, as well as additional supporting forces to include military police.

In the course of the evening additional forces have been added, and I'll describe how they have been added. Those additional forces include a brigade of the 82d Airborne Division, two Ranger battalions, selected special operating units. All of this, of course, was supported superbly by the United States Air Force and the United States Navy, and there are additional reinforcing units that will assist in stability operations coming from the 7th Infantry Division at Fort Ord, California, as well as from the 16th M.P. brigade at Fort Bragg, North Carolina.

**The Plans for Operations**

We conducted operations this morning, beginning just before 1 A.M., in three general areas that General Kelly will point out on the map. First, in the central Panama Canal Zone area, to the east of that, near the International Airfield, and to the west down by Rio Hato.

Let me now turn to the larger map and discuss each one of these pieces in turn. Let's start up on the Atlantic Caribbean side, with Task Force Atlantic. Task Force Atlantic consisted of a battalion from the 7th Infantry Division and a battalion from the 82d Airborne Division, which was in the Jungle Operations Training Center in Panama. Their mission was to secure several critical sites in the southern portion of Task Force Atlantic AO — the prison at Gamboa [map, 1], which was secured in the course of the morning and within which there are some P.D.F. personnel who had been put in jail as a result of the coup attempt earlier in the fall, and we now have some 47, 48 very happy prisoners who have been released; the electrical distribution center at Cerro Tigre is now secure; and Madden Dam [map, 2], a critical facility, is also secure.

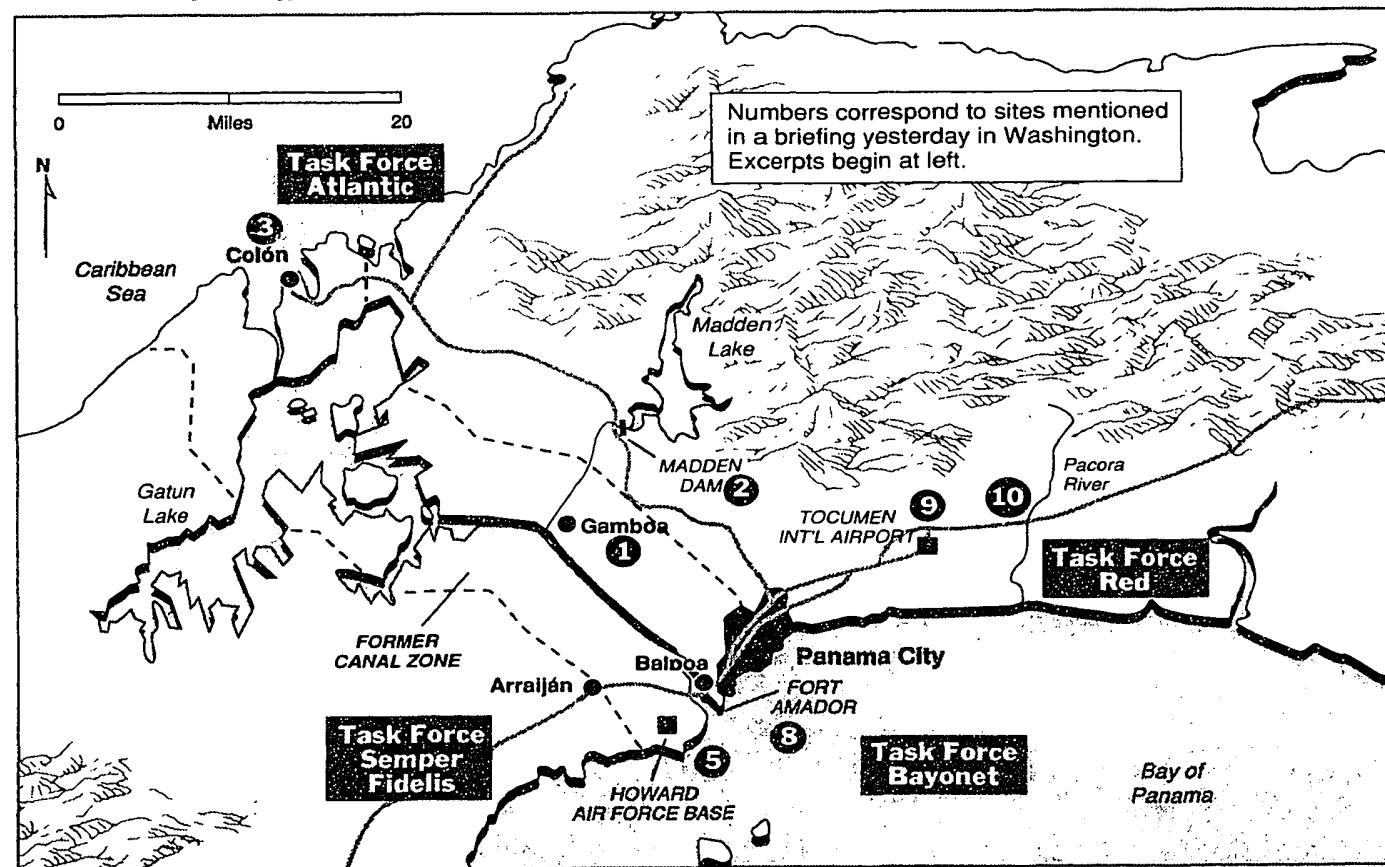
Other elements of Task Force Atlantic also insured the security of our installations in the Colon area [map, 3], and they neutralized the 8th Infantry Company of the P.D.F., which did not take too active a role in this operation, as well as neutralizing the naval infantry unit, located up toward the north. There is still some sporadic firing up there. The situation isn't completely resolved, but for the most part, Task Force Atlantic has completed its assigned missions.

**Securing Bridge**

Let me turn now to Task Force Semper Fidelis, which is essentially a Marine rifle company and a light armored infantry company, marine as well as some additional M.P.'s assigned to Task Force Semper Fidelis. Their principal mission was to secure the Bridge of the Americas [map, 4], insure the

**Panama Task Forces: Who They Were, What They Did**

American military strategy as described by Gen. Colin L. Powell, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, in a briefing yesterday.



Numbers correspond to sites mentioned in a briefing yesterday in Washington. Excerpts begin at left.

**Task Force Atlantic**

Battalion from the 7th Infantry Division; battalion from the 82d Airborne Division. Secured prison at Gamboa, electrical distribution center at Sierra Tigre, and Madden Dam. Protected installations in the Colon area. Neutralized 8th Infantry Company of the Panama Defense Forces. Blocked a Panamanian infantry unit in the north.

**Task Force Semper Fidelis**

Marine rifle company; Marine light armored infantry company; MP's. Secured the Bridge of the Americas; secured Howard Air Force Base.

**Task Force Red**

Ranger battalion parachute unit; special forces of Southern Command. Neutralized Rio Hato; blocked the Pacora River Bridge.

**Task Force Bayonet**

6th Mechanized battalion; light tank platoon; 5th battalion of 87th Infantry. Mechanized battalion blocked the Comandancia, Noriega's headquarters. Blocked Panamanian military units at Fort Amador.

**Task Force Pacific**

82d Airborne Brigade. Attacked cavalry squadron at Viejo; engaged the infantry company at Finajitas and Battalion 2000.

**How the Capital Was Seized**

United States troops of the 193th Infantry Brigade, 5th Mechanized Brigade, Marines and light infantry isolated the Panamanian Defense Headquarters at the outset of the fighting, then mechanized forces and infantry systematically attacked and destroyed it.

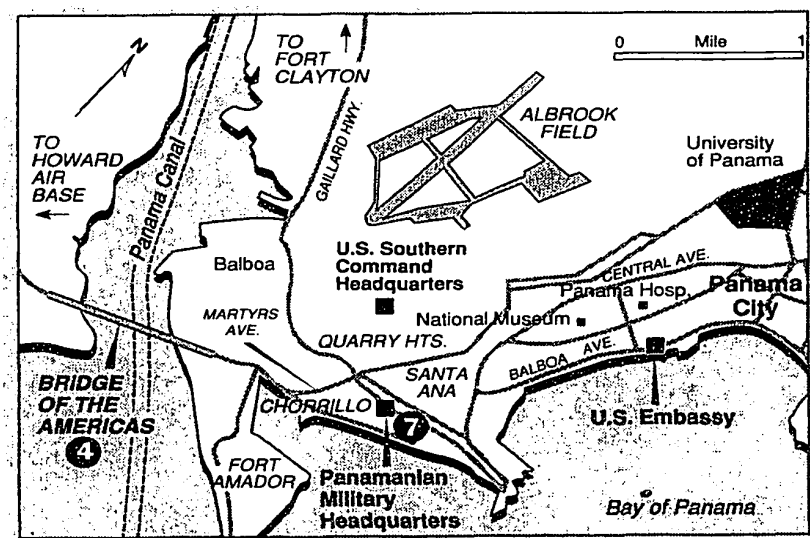
The area is on a peninsula surrounded by the Bay of Panama and the Pacific approaches to the Panama Canal. To the north is Quarry Heights, the American military headquarters, from which U.S. operations were directed.

The Avenue of the Martyrs, between the Panamanian headquarters and Quarry Heights, is the route Noriega loyalists used to reinforce the Panamanian stronghold from outside the city during a failed coup attempt in October. United States forces sealed this route by engaging

Panamanian forces west of the city and closing the Bridge of the Americas connecting Panama City with the eastern side of the Canal.

The Americans also cut the route from nearby Fort Amador, another Panamanian stronghold. American paratroopers and Rangers seized Torrijos international airport east of the city in an airborne operation. Together with special operations forces secretly parachuted in earlier, they blocked the Pacora River Bridge north of the airport to prevent the 2000 Battalion from moving. Rangers also parachuted into the coastal region of Rio Hato to disperse two companies of Panamanians stationed there.

American units were used to neutralize Panamanian forces in Colon on the Atlantic side and to secure the canal.



security of Howard Air Force Base [map, 5] and environs around Howard Air Force Base. Task Force Semper Fi has completed their mission successfully.

Let me turn now to Task Force Red, which is off to the west down by Rio Hato [map, 6]. For those of you who were here on the 3d of October, you'll recall that that was the location from which the 7th Company launched their operation to come to the assistance of General Noriega during the coup attempt in October. Because of the criticality of that facility as well as two companies located there, a Ranger battalion parachute assaulted onto that location at H-hour, just about 1. All the things I'm describing so far all took place simultaneously about H-hour, 1 A.M. in the morning. In the course of their activities there, they succeeded in neutralizing Rio Hato. It is under our control. Some of the members of the 6th and 7th Company have dispersed away from Rio Hato, but we also took a number of prisoners. So it is neutralized and Task Force Red has accomplished its mission and is sweeping up in the area.

**Providing Security**

If I could now turn into the Task Force Bayonet area in the central section, the narrowest zone there. Task Force Bayonet consisted of a Mechanized battalion, the force of the 6th Mechanized. It also was supported by a platoon of light tanks as well as the 5th battalion of the 87th Infantry. And the mission of Task Force Bayonet was twofold really: to provide security for our major facilities in the Task Force Bayonet area of operations and the principal combat mission performed by the Mechanized battalion was to seize the Comandancia [map, 7], the headquarters of the P.D.F., General Noriega's headquarters, and that was also done beginning at about 1 in the morning.

They have accomplished that mission. The headquarters has been reduced. There has been considerable burning. I'm not quite sure how much of it has been burned out, but there has been quite a bit of fire down there. But they, for the most part — most part have ac-

complished their mission. There is sporadic firing that continues in the area, and some of the P.D.F. members who were in the Comandancia have now slipped out and are mixing in with the general population. And so there will still be a need for mopping up and stability operations in support of the new government.

The forces that were opposing them in the vicinity of the Comandancia are shown under the Comandancia listing, First Public Order Company, Second Public Order Company, and elements of the Sixth and Seventh Infantry, which I mentioned were out at Rio Hato.

Then also mentioned that as part of Task Force Bayonet, another unit was flown across the entrance of the canal in order to block the Fifth Infantry Company which is at Fort Amador [map, 8], and at the moment there is continuing work down there to completely neutralize the Fifth Infantry Company. But for the most part, Task Force Bayonet has accomplished its mission and is undertaking stability and sweep-up operations.

Let me turn now to the East to Task Force Red. Task Force Red consisted of another Ranger battalion which parachutists assaulted in at H-hour. Their mission was to take over the international airfield [map, 9], get it ready for follow-on forces coming from the 82d Airborne, and begin to block access for Battalion 2000, which as you know, also played an instrumental role in the events of 3d October. The Rangers landed on the ground, quickly seized the airport, began to put out patrols to the East. They were assisted, and I might add that throughout the area of operations, the special forces group elements belonging to Southern Command have been performing reconnaissance and surveillance, and some of those reconnaissance and surveillance efforts cut out to the Pacora River Bridge [map, 10] early and blocked that. There was some fighting out there but no main elements of P.D.F. units came down the road in the direction of the city, and the Rangers are now out in that location as well.

Beginning 55 minutes after H-hour, or about 1:55 this morning, the first element of

the 82d Airborne Division Ready Brigade arrived, 10 C-141's, and they conducted a parachute assault onto the international airfield in that vicinity. Ten C-141's arrived several hours later and at 0515 the second half of the 82d Airborne Division parachuted in. And their mission is sort of depicted by the arrows. They will move, one arrow going out to make sure Battalion 2000 stays where it is. Two other arrows coming back into the direction of the city to assist with stability operations and make sure the First Infantry Company and the Cavalry Squadron you see depicted, remain neutralized. In order to continue our stability operations and to make sure we really accomplish our mission of protecting Americans and assisting the newly inaugurated government, additional forces are being brought down from Fort Ord, California, the 7th Infantry division, a brigade, and as I mentioned earlier, the 16th M.P. brigade will be sending additional elements down.

In the process of these operations we also took special actions to immobilize the P.D.F. navy. They have a small fleet of boats which were immobilized. And we also took actions to immobilize aircraft that could have been used for escape purposes. All of these actions that I have mentioned were marvelously supported by Air Force and Army gunships; magnificent support from the military airlift command, Tactical Air Command, and refueling tankers from the Strategic Air Command, Special Operations units as well as Special Forces reconnaissance and surveillance units.

**Noriega and the Embassy**

Let me mention a few specific events that I know are of interest to you. There are reports of hostages. In some cases hostages were taken and then released. And I don't want to go into any numbers or details because this is an ongoing operation, except to let you know that we are looking into every one of these and we believe we have adequate resources in the area to deal with that situation.

With respect to General Noriega, as you know, we're only seven hours into this operation. We have not yet located the General. He has a habit of changing locations in normal times four or five times a night. But we will continue our efforts to locate him. But, as a practical matter, we have decapitated him from the dictatorship of this country and he is now a fugitive and will be treated as such.

With respect to the embassy, the American Embassy did take some fire in the course of the evening. Nobody was injured. There was some minor damage to the embassy. And we have U.S. forces in strength at the embassy to secure it.

**QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS**

Q. General Powell, do you see the need to send further reinforcements or are we seeing all of the forces that are going to be necessary?

POWELL. The forces I mentioned that are being sent in now for reinforcement, the Seventh Division and the M.P.'s, I think that'll do it. I think that'll bring it up to around 24,000.

Q. General Powell, can you tell us where President Endara was sworn in, who did it?

POWELL. He was sworn in shortly before the operation. He was sworn in by a Panamanian justice of some kind...

Q. At an American base?

POWELL. Yes.

Q. Where was the heaviest fighting?

POWELL. There was heavy fighting down in the vicinity of the Comandancia. There was some fighting over on the western side as well, at Rio Hato...

**Afternoon Briefing**

PETE WILLIAMS (Defense Department spokesman). We have an update for you on the situation in Panama. The person who will answer most of your questions is General Tom Kelly, who is the Director of Operations for the Joint Staff. And also with him is Admiral Ted Sheaffer, also of the Joint Staff, whom many of you have met before.

KELLY. What I would like to do is show you what our forces in Panama have done during the day. The Chairman briefed you this morning on the point at which we had arrived then. Operations have continued; they have gone fairly well for us.

We'll start out here in Rio Hato where the two infantry companies were. You might recall that the infantry companies were instrumental in putting down the coup on the 3d of October, therefore they were considered to be very loyal. The Rangers went in, took them out; that's been completed. They took their arms room. They got 250 prisoners, roughly. The rest fled.

Over here in the Task Force Semper Fi area everything is pretty quiet. All of the P.D.F. resistance within that area has been reduced.

Up in the Task Force Atlantic area, everything up there has been reduced. First, the 8th Company elected not to fight very much in the first place, and the naval infantry company, which did fight, has been reduced. Therefore, the situation is calm up there.

We'll skip Task Force Bayonet now and go out to what we're calling Task Force Pacific, and that's the one that's built around the 82d Airborne Brigade, which jumped in last night. They have gotten organized, moved out. They have attacked the Cav squadron at Panama, Viejo, or engaged the cavalry squadron, and reduced it; there is no longer any resistance there. They have engaged the infantry company at Finajitas and reduced it; there is no resistance there. They have engaged the Battalion 2000, another anti-coup unit from the 3d of October, and found nothing when they got there. Actually an R&S team out along the bridge on the Pacora River last night called in airplanes, AC-130's, and they knocked out nine of their vehicles, which I think is a pretty good portion of their vehicles. And the rest fled.

Panama City, as you know, is a city of almost a million people. Urban operations are possibly the most difficult kind.