

OPERATION JUST CAUSE /  
PROMOTE LIBERTY  
SUPPLEMENT

# ANNUAL COMMAND HISTORY

FISCAL YEAR 1990



HISTORY OFFICE  
U.S. ARMY

**SOUTH**

*Panamá*

**Task Force Green:** U.S. Army Special Operations units and elements from the 4th Psychological Operations Group, 1st Special Operations Wing, and 160th Special Operations Aviation Regiment were to conduct numerous special surgical operations and have operational control of Task Force Gator (subordinate to Task Force Bayonet) for H-hour attack on the Comandancia and Modelo Jail.

**Task Force Semper Fidelis:** The Marines, reinforced with an engineer battalion, were called on to block the western approaches into the city and secure the Bridge of the Americas which spans the Canal at the Pacific entrance.

**Task Force Atlantic:** On the Atlantic side of the isthmus, this task force was to isolate Colon, neutralize the PDF 8th Infantry Company and Naval Infantry Company at Coco Solo, protect Madden Dam and free a number of political prisoners at the Renacer Prison located at Gamboa, midway across the isthmus. The remainder of the regiment, two battalions, were to conduct a parachute assault to neutralize the PDF 6th and 7th Infantry Companies at Rio Hato.

**Task Force Black:** Special Forces and elements from 4 Psychological Operations Group, 1st Special Operations Wing, 617th Special Operation Aviation Detachment and 228th Aviation were to conduct reconnaissance and surveillance missions at Tinajitas, Fort Cimmaron and TV-2 (Cerro Azul), secure Pacora River bridge, and mount operations to capture or rescue American hostages, if required.

**Task Force White:** USN Seal Platoons and Special Boat Unit-26 (SBU-26) with elements from 4th Psychological Operations Group and 1st Special Operations Wing were to destroy PDF patrol boats in Balboa Harbor and deny use of Paitilla Airport.

**Task Force Blue:** USN Special Operations units and elements from the 160th Special Operations Aviation Regiment and 1st Special Operations Wing conducted raids in the area of Colon.

**Task Force Pacific:** Forty-five minutes after the Ranger (Task Force Red) drop on Torrijos-Tocumen Airport, an element from the 82nd Airborne Division was to parachute assault onto the international airport, assemble rapidly and conduct helicopter air assault operations to neutralize PDF Battalion 2000 at Fort Cimarron, the 1st Heavy Weapons Infantry Company at Tinajitas, and the Cavalry Squadron and Special Forces elements located at Panama Viejo.<sup>1</sup>

Follow-on operations envisioned occupation of Panama City to restore law and order and movement to the interior of Panama to neutralize PDF elements located there.

The JTF-SO OPLAN 90-2, 3 November 1989, was designated JTF-SO

OPORD 90-2 per Execute Order message 191600Z December 1989.<sup>2</sup>  
Operation JUST CAUSE was on!

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Major General Marc A. Cisneros, Commander, USARSO, moved from his headquarters at Fort Clayton to Fort Amador shortly after 2300 hours December 1989, because of his concern for the safety of U.S. military and civilian dependents in the area. He ordered the closure of the front gate to Fort Amador and detention of the PDF guards there at 0030 hours.

Coincidentally, at 0030 hours, as the MP platoon was moving into position near Balboa harbor, it was fired upon by PDF guards at Pier 18. This precipitated an engagement and the MP's quickly secured the harbor area.

General Cisneros was in the vicinity of the Fort Amador main gate at 0033 hours when a firefight ensued as a PDF bus tried to run the gate and was engaged. Shortly, thereafter, at 0037 a PDF sedan also tried to flee Amador and was also engaged. The PDF at Amador were by now fully aware of a U.S. offensive. However, General Cisneros only had a party of 10 and a platoon-size element at Fort Amador at that time. (The airborne element from the 1st Battalion, 508th Infantry wasn't scheduled to assault Amador until 0100 hours). He was very vulnerable; they were up against a whole company of PDF. Recognizing possible retaliation against U.S. military and civilian families residing at Fort Amador by 5th Company PDF across the golf field, General Cisneros notified JTF-SO headquarters, and recommended that H-Hour be brought forward. General Stiner agreed and moved H-Hour to 0045 hours for in-country forces, but this was academic for the U.S. Forces at Amador since they were already involved in other firefights. In an attempt to thwart a the enemy, General Cisneros ordered U.S. ground forces at Amador to spread out to employ delaying actions if the PDF decided to attack until they were reinforced by airborne troops.<sup>3</sup>

Army Special Forces under Task Force Black conducted four missions at, or immediately prior to, H-Hour. President Elect Guillermo Endara and his Vice Presidents Ricardo Arias Calderon and Guillermo Ford were moved on-post a few minutes prior to H-Hour and were sworn into office by the President of the Panamanian Human Rights Committee.

Reinforced with two technical signal experts, a Special Forces team fast roped into Cerro Azul and removed a critical module of TV Channel 2's transmission facility to disable the TV. In its frequency band, VOLANT SOLO broadcasted information to the populace to remain inside and not to resist the U.S. invading forces. An interesting note is that the two technical experts who accompanied the Special Forces had never fast roped before. After a hurried five minute explanation of the technique, they fast roped with the team into combat.

Task Organization

TF Atlantic

HQ, 7th LID  
2d IN Bde, 7th LID  
5-21 IN (L)  
2-27 IN (L)  
3-27 IN (L)  
B/17 Engr

TF Pacific

HQ, 82d Abn  
1st Bde, 82d  
1-504 IN (A)  
2-504 IN (A)  
4-325 IN (A)  
1/75 IN (A)  
2 Plts, 511 MP Co

TF Bayonet

193d LIB  
TF 4-6 (M)  
5-87 IN (L)  
1-508 IN (A)  
519th MP Bn  
D/320 FA

3d IN Bde, 7th LID

4-17 IN (L)  
3-504 IN (A)  
C/7/15 FA  
A&B/2-62 ADA  
B/13 Engr  
549th MP Co  
Plt, 7th MP Co

9th Regt

1/9 IN (L)  
2/9 IN (L)  
3/9 IN (L)  
A/2-9 CAV  
A/13 Engr  
7th MP Co (-)

NAVAL FORCES (NAVFOR)

NAVSCIATTS  
Mine Div - 127

Air Force Forces (AFFOR)

830th Air Div  
24th Comp Wing  
61st MAG (COMALF)  
430th RIG  
24th SP Sqdn (+)

TF Semper Fi

MCSFOO  
I/3/6 IN  
K/3/6 IN (+)  
D/2 LAI  
1st FAST  
536th Eng Bn  
534th MP Co  
Det/2-62 ADA

TF Aviation

TF Hawk (7th LID)  
TF Wolf (82d Abn)  
TF Condor (Comp)  
1-228th Avn

JTF Control

16th MP Bde  
503d MP Bn

Joint Special Ops TF (JSOTF)

75th IN Regt  
NSWG-2  
SOC SO  
3-7th SFG(A)  
160th SOAG  
1st SOW (-)  
NSWU-8  
SEU-26

Figure 2-3