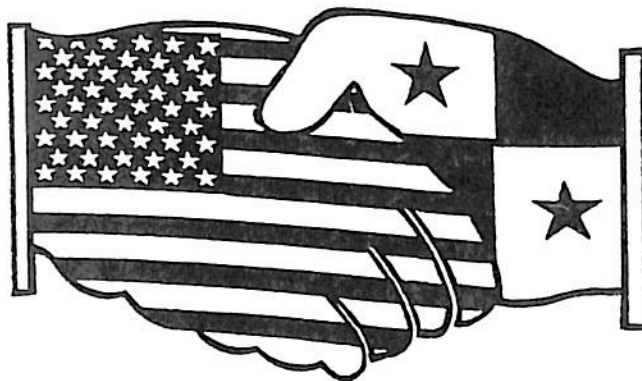


OPERATION JUST CAUSE /
PROMOTE LIBERTY
SUPPLEMENT

ANNUAL COMMAND HISTORY

FISCAL YEAR 1990



HISTORY OFFICE
U.S. ARMY

SOUTH

Panama

Noriega walked out of the Nunciatura on 3 January 1990 and was immediately flown to Miami for arraignment on drug trafficking charges. With Noriega and his cronies out of power, U.S. Forces turned their attention to stability operations. One of the most pressing needs in the immediate aftermath of battle was for assistance to the populace of Panama City. Foreign governments wanted to evacuate their nationals and an airport had to be opened to receive relief shipments. The needs of the population of Chorrillo were most pressing. Burned out of house and home, they fled into Balboa. The Balboa High School athletic stadium offered a refuge and a location military authorities could easily control and administer.

The model for restoring law and order followed in Panama City utilized precincts and zone police chiefs. In the interior of Panama, Special Forces A-Teams were initially posted to assist in the development of the new security forces and to ensure that new patterns of behavior developed.

In summary, Operation JUST CAUSE was the largest use of strategic air assets to date to introduce tactical forces directly into combat in the history of the U.S. military. During initial operations, it delivered the equivalent of a division minus onto tactical drop zones and had delivered an entire division within the first 36 hours.

Enemy personnel losses were difficult to categorize due to the use of the paramilitary DIGBATS and the haste in which the majority of the uniformed PDF divested themselves of their uniforms soon after the initiation of hostilities. However, the official U.S. estimate was 220 Panamanian civilian, 300 Panamanian military dead and over 125 wounded.

U.S. casualties were relatively light with just one percent of the total force being killed or wounded. The light casualty rate is vindication of the employment of overwhelming force and a tribute to the training standards set by U.S. soldiers and their medical community.

Although reports of arms shipments to Noriega had been received, U.S. Forces were astounded at the magnitude of their catch. Enough weapons were uncovered to arm five, 10,000-man infantry divisions -- Noriega was not only a drug trafficker, but an arms trafficker as well. It must be pointed out that most of the caches were identified to the soldiers on the ground by loyal Panamanian citizenry and the Weapons for Cash Program was well received.¹⁶

The 7,740 days of military dictatorship in Panama since 11 October 1968, until 19 December 1989, were over! Panamanians could now start to rebuild their fragile democracy and impoverished nation.

On 11 January 1990, the XVIII Airborne Corps Command Group departed and JTF-SQ passed control of Operation JUST CAUSE to the Commander, JTF-P.⁴¹ In addition to guarding against potential hostilities by dissident Panamanian factions, JTF-P was faced with rebuilding the nation and promoting confidence in the newly elected civilian government. Operation PROMOTE LIBERTY was developed to restructure the PDF into a national police agency answerable to the civilian government.

JTF-P had both in-country and regional responsibilities with primary emphasis on nation building. The mission essential task of assisting the Republic of Panama in the establishment of the Public Police Force (PPF), later called the Panama National Police (PNP) as a force capable of ensuring internal security and preservation of law and order was paramount in requesting directed military overstrength from HQDA to staff the JTF-P activity called the USMSG-PM. Both JTF-P and the USMSG-PM were stood-up and became operational interfacing with the new Panamanian government, their ministries, and various international relief organizations.⁴²

Unfortunately, although the CINC, USSOUTHCOM directed that JTF-P and the USMSG-PM be activated on 11 January 1990 to provide command and control for the duration of Operation JUST CAUSE to meet stability and nation assistance requirements during post Operation JUST CAUSE, manning requirements were never recognized.

Manning requirements were submitted to the CINC, USSOUTHCOM, for both organizations. The document indicated a structure strength of 168 billets for JTF-P, and a structure strength of 49 billets for the USMSG-PM. HQS, USARSO hand carried to HQDA (DAMO-ODO) a complete packet outlining justification for manning requirements for 117 personnel on 25 January 1990. Initially, both JTF-P and the USMSG-PM were manned by elements of the XVIII Airborne Corps, the 7th Infantry Division, and HQS, USARSO. On 11 February 1990, the XVIII Airborne Corps and the 7th Infantry Division returned to the U.S. and USARSO ended up manning both organizations from within its meager resources.⁴³ (Refer to Figures 3-3 and 3-4).

U.S. Military Support Group - Panama

This organization was officially formed by the CINC, USSOUTHCOM, on 22 December 1989, as a joint headquarters under JTF-P, to control Civil Affairs, Psyops, Intelligence, Logistics, Communications, Military Police, Special Forces, Engineers, and Operation efforts directly in support of the new government of Panama.⁴⁴

However, it was originally known as the U.S. Forces Liaison Group. On 18 December, Major General Cisneros directed Colonel Normal D. Higgenbotham, the DCSLOG, to be prepared to set up and operate a small cell that would be the focal point for rebuilding the Panama Public Forces (PPF) to replace the defunct PDF. He

gathered six people on the 19th, and explained the directive. On 27 December, Major General Cisneros ordered the group to move to the former Panama Traffic Bureau (Dirección Nacional de Tránsito Terrestre [DNTT]). As undertakings expanded, additional operations were set up on the third floor of Building 1, Fort Amador, (Noriega's former headquarters on Fort Amador).⁴⁵

On 17 January 1990, Colonel James J. Steele arrived and took over the command group organization and Colonel Higgenbotham became the Deputy until April 1990 when Colonel Jack Pryor took over as Deputy enabling Colonel Higgenbotham to return to his former duties as DCSLOG.⁴⁶

The USMSG was originally envisioned as a joint organization, a 47 man element, with a certain number of spaces for Air Force, and Navy, but majority Army. However, the Air Force and Navy never filled any of the allocations and the 47 soldiers were provided by USARSO as authorized overstrength positions in addition to administrative support personnel for a total of 60. Unfortunately, the organization never received a unit identification code.⁴⁷ (Refer to Figure 3-5).

The Group's principal function was to coordinate policy matters among the U.S. military, the Ambassador and his staff, and government of Panama officials. In addition, the Group monitored and contributed advice to the U.S. Embassy staff on security assistance matters related to Panama. It assisted the Government of Panama in planning and coordinating engineer and other humanitarian assistance projects, and advised or reported to the CINC, USSOUTHCOM, and the CDR, JTF-P on policy matters concerning U.S. and Panama relations.⁴⁸ (Refer to Figure 3-6).

The USMSG-PM's efforts were channelled through four major categories of U.S. military support:

- Rebuilding the public force
- Providing host nation support
- Expanding humanitarian assistance, civic action and PSYOP assistance.
- Providing innovative timely initiatives to improve economic growth, government problem solving, force multiplication, U.S. image, and training opportunities.

The standing-up of the new Panamanian police was the heart of all its efforts. The main program objective was to develop a police force that was subordinate to the democratically elected government that would adhere to internationally recognized standards of justice and fully respect human rights, and to ensure that it was competently led, professionally organized, and adequately equipped.

This was accomplished through the establishment of two major elements: the Rural Area Police Element (RAPEL) and the Metropolitan Police Liaison Element (MAPLE). These elements maintained teams in their respective areas to observe and report the progress and problems the new Panamanian police were having. Their charter included the establishment of combined U.S./Panamanian patrols. Their information was provided to the International Criminal Investigative Training Assistance Program (ICITAP) who had the charter to train the police. In accordance with the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961, Sections 660 and 534, U.S. military cannot train foreign police. In spite of these and other statutory prohibitions, the U.S. military was allowed to and did conduct programs such as combined patrols, precinct house administration, and monitoring and reporting adherence to training standards.⁴⁹

Major Subordinate Commands

The 193d Infantry Brigade (Light), code named Task Force Bayonet during the operation, seized and occupied seven critical targets on D Day. These included the Comandancia, Modelo Prison, Fort Amador, Balboa Police Station/DENI, Ancon DENI, the Panama Traffic Bureau (DNITT), and the Curundu Engineer compound. As Task Force Bayonet's combat missions stabilized, the 193d conducted security missions throughout Panama City. Additionally, the Brigade was actively involved in the restoration of law and order and civil military operations throughout its area of operations.⁵⁰ (Refer to Chapters 2 and 3).

The 470th Military Intelligence Brigade provided signals intelligence, human intelligence, imagery intelligence, and counter intelligence in general support of Joint Task Force-South, United States Southern Command, and national agencies, before, during, and after Operation JUST CAUSE. The 470th provided tactical combat electronic warfare intelligence support to the 193d Infantry Brigade, XVIII Airborne Corps, and Task Force Black. It provided imagery production and analysis for JTF-SO and national consumers. Counterintelligence (CI) and human intelligence (HUMINT) support included both tactical support to ground commanders and the operation of the Joint Interrogation Facility, special interrogation facilities, and the Document Exploitation Facility. CI and HUMINT elements also provided direct support to the Deputy Commander, JTF-SO, in his successful effort to get key PDF officers and units to surrender. Signals intelligence support provided timely intelligence to ground commanders, CDR, JTF-SO, the CINC, USSOUTHCOM, and national consumers. CI and HUMINT troops also supported nation-assistance and security efforts under the USMSG-PM throughout Panama.⁵¹

The Military Police Command Physical Security and Crime Prevention personnel constructed and operated the enemy Prisoner of War Camp. Military Police units secured the Bridge of the

ACCESS AND INFLUENCE

GOVERNMENT OF PANAMA

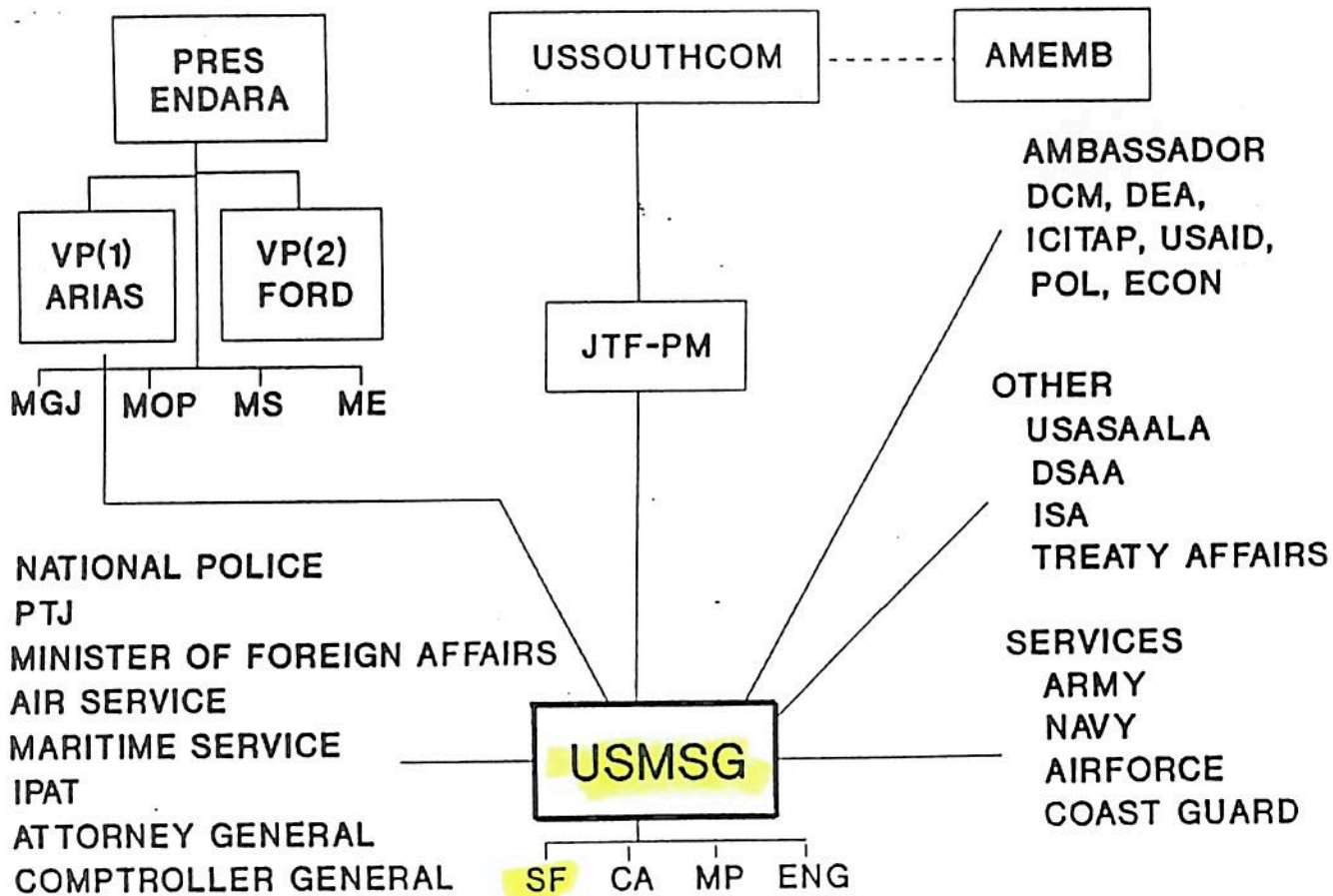


Figure 3-6

CHAPTER 4

NATION ASSISTANCE

The events leading up to Operation JUST CAUSE and the aftermath, devastated the infrastructure of the Panamanian government. The looting and civil disobedience throughout the Republic required immediate action on the part of the U.S. to employ a nation-building program.

On 11 January 1990, JTF-SO was deactivated and JTF-P was officially re-activated to complete the mission of Operation JUST CAUSE and conduct Operation PROMOTE LIBERTY.¹

The Operational Planning Group (OPG) again became the focal point for JTF-P. Major Lewis (USA), Major Madrigan (USMC) and Captain Johnson (USA) researched and wrote the JTF-P Campaign Plan for reestablishing the economy and Government of Panama. Additionally, the OPG planned, coordinated and executed 81 joint operations from 11 January 1990, through 31 January 1990, to complete Operation JUST CAUSE. From 1 February 1990, through 31 March 1990, the OPG planned, coordinated and executed 71 joint operations to initiate Operation PROMOTE LIBERTY.²

JTF-P OPORD 2-90 (PROMOTE LIBERTY) was written to replace OPLAN BLIND LOGIC. BLIND LOGIC was the USSOUTHCOM's plan to reconstruct the civilian government of Panama. Although the plans for offensive operations had been thoroughly refined over a 21 month period, plans for follow-on operations were fragmentary at best. There was no JTF-SO implementing plan for BLIND LOGIC. This resulted in an absence of initial guidance, poor preparation, erratic execution and an over-stretched command and control system.³

Operation PROMOTE LIBERTY became the operation conducted throughout Panama to protect U.S. lives, property and interests, defend the canal, promote democracy, promote Panamanian confidence in its democratically elected government, exercise all rights established by international law and U.S./Panama bilateral treaties, and support the nation assistance process in Panama.

The Campaign Plan, for which Operation PROMOTE LIBERTY was written, was divided into three phases. Phase I (Tactical Operations) was completed officially 31 January 1990. Phase II (Law and Order) was scheduled to be completed NLT 1 June 1990. Phase III (Socio/Economic/Political Stability) would continue at that point to December 1999.⁴

The mission of Phase I was to conduct operations in Panama that ended any organized PDF/DIGBAT activity, enhanced stability by identifying and controlling criminal activity, continued a U.S. presence, and deployed forces in a manner that enabled a quick reaction to any situation. It was the intent to clear the

country of all organized PDF/DIGBAT activities, if any existed, in order to identify and control sheer lawless activity caused by the dismantling of the Noriega regime until the Panamanian government effectively assumed its police functions.

The concept of operation included the systematic analysis, reconnaissance, search, and stabilization of the regions throughout Panama to end any organized PDF/DIGBAT activity that might exist. Reconnaissance elements attempted to locate hostile activity in the area. The unit reacted quickly to any confirmed hostile activity. Each operation lasted three to four days. Areas were targeted for recurring operations if organized PDF/DIGBAT activity was confirmed.

Phase II consisted of four goals: 1) Stability operations, 2) Making the PPF a credible force, 3) Nation assistance, and 4) Anti-Drug program.

The objectives of the stability operations were to protect U.S. lives, property and interests, defend the Panama Canal, maintain Civil-Military relations, improve intelligence gathering throughout Panama and neutralize any armed threat.

The objectives of goal #2 (Make PPF a credible force) were to organize the national police staff, train the national police, resource the national police, and improve the national police image. (Refer to Figure 4-1 for public force structure).

The objectives of goal #3, (nation assistance) were to restore basic services, revitalize public transportation, reestablish the educational system, reestablish the port authority, improve the economy, establish a coast guard, reestablish an air service, reestablish the judicial system, reestablish the penitentiary system, reestablish the intelligence agency, reestablish health care, distribute food and care for displaced persons.

The objectives of goal #4, (the Anti-Drug program) were to establish a Panamanian anti-drug program and develop intelligence collection.

The goals and objectives of Phase III were the same as Phase II, but were re-prioritized, and continued to assist the reestablishment of Panamanian agencies under civilian control. The goals of Phase III in order of priority were: 1) nation assistance, 2) stability operations, 3) PPF operation, 4) anti-drug program.

In the aftermath of Operation JUST CAUSE the United States continued to assist Panama in its rebuilding process. The USARSO USESG-PM's Engineer Division, in addition to JCS exercises and

active component DFTs, was instrumental in the planning, coordination and execution of construction projects throughout the Republic of Panama.⁵

COSECHA AMISTAD PANAMA 90 was a name given to the many assistance projects undertaken by the 536th Engineer Battalion and other attached units to maintain the momentum of U.S. commitment to Panama in the five months gapping the annual FUERTES CAMINOS joint exercises. In the Darien and San Blas provinces schools, health clinics and municipal buildings were upgraded. The Pan American Highway (14 KM) and El Chario Road (22 KM) were upgraded and repaired. The 536th helped coordinate, plan and operate the road fill operation with Ministry of Public Works-Panama (MOP). This resulted in the Piña Road in the Colon Province being upgraded and repaired. In Las Tablas Township, two separate sewer projects were completed by the 536th. These projects were a first for this area. In summary, during COSECHA AMISTAD PANAMA 90, 44 projects were completed including 19 schools, seven hospitals and clinics, 13 water wells, 23 kilometers of roads, a foot bridge and a sewer.

FUERTES CAMINOS 90 was a project undertaken by Task Force 536. Task Force 536 was composed of an engineer battalion and augmented by reserve component platoons. The mission performed by Task Force 536 was upgrading and repairing of secondary roads (farm to market roads) as well as bridges, schools, medical clinics and municipal buildings throughout Panama's provinces. During FUERTES CAMINOS 90, 75 projects were completed including the repair of 46 schools, three hospitals, several seawalls, 14 bridges, 500 kilometers of roads, one prison, and four other public buildings.

The last six months of FY90 were devoted to the implementation of PROMOTE LIBERTY OPORD 2-90, April 90. To deal with various threats to U.S. lives, installations, property, and interests to the stability of the Government of Panama, FRAGOS #01 through #17 to OPORD 2-90 were written. The most significant of these were:

--#01 (251540Z April 90) - This FRAGO set up the areas of operation (AOs), AO responsibilities, and reaction force requirements to implement OPORD 2-90 (PROMOTE LIBERTY).

--Execution Order (241942Z May 90) -- This FRAGO outlined the redeployment of forces from Panama.

--#09 (091325Z June 90) -- This FRAGO outlined support to the Government of Panama during President Endara's wedding on 11 June 1990.

--#15 (041230Z August 90) -- This FRAGO outlined the security requirements at Coco Solo Housing Area to prevent squatters from illegally occupying the housing after the U.S. Forces vacated, prior to turning over to the Government of Panama.

--#17 (September 90) -- This classified FRAGO dealt with a Command Field Exercise (CFX) to rehearse procedures for a High Value Transit through the Panama Canal.

U.S. humanitarian assistance efforts were characterized by subdued visibility, with fairly significant impact. In the early stages of Operation PROMOTE LIBERTY, the needs identified spanned the spectrum of government services. Most immediate were Denton amendment donation transfers totalling over 234 thousand dollars, food and medical distribution worth over 2.1 million dollars and excess Department of Defense System School equipment transfers exceeding 4500 items. A dengue fever prevention campaign removed over 1000 abandoned car hulks from municipal areas.

The public sector requirements in Panama following Operation JUST CAUSE and the looting rampage were extensive. Noriega's neglect of public institutions outside the PDF was total. Official Panamanian government vehicles were immediately repaired: 174 sedans, 35 motorcycles, four paddywagons, 18 buses, 74 utility trucks, 32 jeeps, four ambulances, six wreckers, and one fire truck. Forty-five sedans were leased to give the Panamanian leadership interim mobility to assess damage, solve problems, and patrol the cities.

As this historical report period is ending on 30 September 1990, there are many other projects ongoing and planned which should continue to assist and benefit Panama.

At this time, the situation in Panama remains stable. JTF-P elements continue to report no hostile activity throughout the area of operation; however, crime in the municipal areas has been on a steady climb for the past several months. The U.S. Government and Government of Panama representatives continue to coordinate and facilitate nation assistance and law enforcement activities throughout Panama.

PUBLIC FORCE STRUCTURE

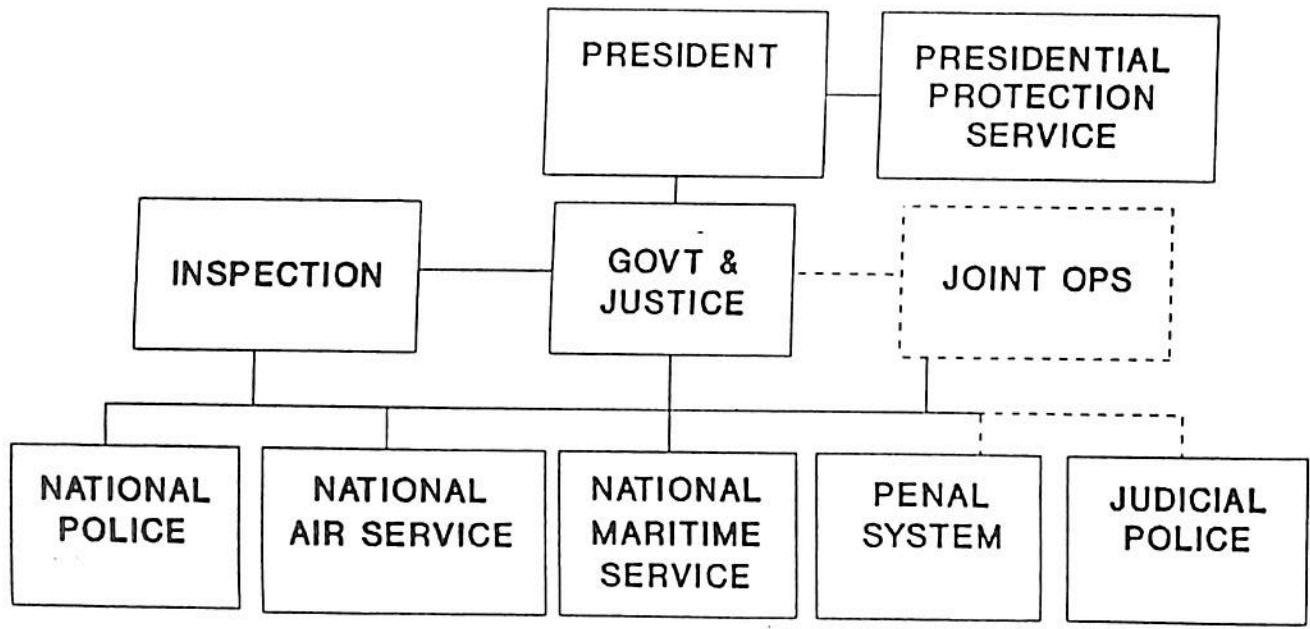


Figure 4-1