United States Invasion of Panama

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| **Invasion of Panama** | |
| Part of the [War on Drugs](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/War_on_Drugs) | |
| U.S. soldiers preparing to take *La Comandancia* in the *El Chorrillo* neighborhood of Panama City, December 1989 | |
| |  |  | | --- | --- | | **Date** | 20 December 1989 – 31 January 1990 (1 month, 1 week and 4 days) | | **Location** | [Panama](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Panama) | | **Result** | U.S. Strategic victory   * [Manuel Noriega](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Manuel_Noriega) deposed * Dissolution of the [Panama Defense Forces](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Panama_Defense_Forces) | | |
| **Belligerents** | |
| [Panama](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Panama) | [United States](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States) [Panama](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Panama) [Panamanian opposition](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_political_parties_in_Panama) |
| **Commanders and leaders** | |
| [Panama](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Panama) [Manuel Noriega](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Manuel_Noriega) [(POW)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Prisoner_of_war) | [United States](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States) [George H. W. Bush](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/George_H._W._Bush) [United States](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States) [Dick Cheney](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dick_Cheney) [United States](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States) [Maxwell R. Thurman](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Maxwell_R._Thurman) [Panama](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Panama) [Guillermo Endara](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Guillermo_Endara) |
| **Strength** | |
| 20,000 | 27,000 |
| **Casualties and losses** | |
| 234–314 killed 1,908 captured | 23 killed 325 wounded |
| Panamanian civilians killed according to:  U.S. military: 202 Americas Watch: 300 United Nations: 500 Central American Human Rights Commission: 2,000–3,000  1 Spanish journalist killed | |

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| --- | --- | --- |
| |  |  | | --- | --- | |  | This article is part of a series about  [George H. W. Bush](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/George_H._W._Bush) | |
| * [Family](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bush_family) * [Electoral history](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Electoral_history_of_George_H._W._Bush)   **Pre-vice presidency**   * [U.S. Representative for Texas's 7th](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Texas%27s_7th_congressional_district) * [U.S. Ambassador](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ambassadors_of_the_United_States)   + [U.N.](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_Ambassador_to_the_United_Nations)   + [China](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_ambassadors_of_the_United_States_to_China#List_of_Chiefs_of_the_U.S._Liaison_Office_in_Beijing) * [Chair of the RNC](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Republican_National_Committee#Chairs_of_the_Republican_National_Committee) * [Director of Central Intelligence](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Director_of_Central_Intelligence)   **Vice President of the United States**   * [Reagan administration](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Presidency_of_Ronald_Reagan) * [Reagan assassination attempt](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Attempted_assassination_of_Ronald_Reagan) * [Deregulation](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Deregulation)   **President of the United States**   * [Presidency](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Presidency_of_George_H._W._Bush)   + [Timeline](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Timeline_of_the_George_H._W._Bush_presidency)   **Policies**   * [Environmental](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Environmental_policy_of_the_United_States#The_George_H._W._Bush_Administration_(1989%E2%80%931993)) * [Foreign](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Foreign_policy_of_the_George_H._W._Bush_administration)   + [International trips](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_international_presidential_trips_made_by_George_H._W._Bush) * [Pardons](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_people_pardoned_by_George_H._W._Bush)   **Appointments**   * [Cabinet](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Presidency_of_George_H._W._Bush#Administration) * [Judiciary](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_federal_judges_appointed_by_George_H._W._Bush) * [Inauguration](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Inauguration_of_George_H._W._Bush) * [Thousand points of light](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thousand_points_of_light)   + [Foundation](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Points_of_Light) * Invasion of Panama * [Gulf War](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gulf_War) * [Operation Restore Hope](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Unified_Task_Force) * [NAFTA](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/North_American_Free_Trade_Agreement) * Timeline   + ['89](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Timeline_of_the_George_H._W._Bush_presidency_(1989))   + ['90](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Timeline_of_the_George_H._W._Bush_presidency_(1990))   + ['91](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Timeline_of_the_George_H._W._Bush_presidency_(1991))   + ['92](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Timeline_of_the_George_H._W._Bush_presidency_(1992))   + ['93](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Timeline_of_the_George_H._W._Bush_presidency_(1993))   show  **Presidential campaigns**  **Post-presidency**   * [Presidential Library](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/George_H.W._Bush_Presidential_Library_and_Museum) * [Bibliography](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bibliography_of_George_H._W._Bush) * [Memorials and awards](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_memorials,_honors,_and_awards_of_George_H._W._Bush) * [Bush School of Government](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bush_School_of_Government_and_Public_Service) * [Death and state funeral](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Death_and_state_funeral_of_George_H._W._Bush)   [George H. W. Bush's signature](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/George_H._W._Bush) |
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The **United States Invasion of Panama**, codenamed **Operation Just Cause**, lasted over a month between mid-December 1989 and late January 1990. It occurred during the administration of President [George H. W. Bush](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/George_H._W._Bush) and ten years after the [Torrijos–Carter Treaties](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Torrijos%E2%80%93Carter_Treaties) were ratified to transfer control of the [Panama Canal](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Panama_Canal) from the U.S. to Panama by 1 January 2000. During the invasion, [*de facto*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/De_facto) Panamanian leader, general and dictator [Manuel Noriega](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Manuel_Noriega), who for a long time worked with the [Central Intelligence Agency](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Central_Intelligence_Agency), was deposed citing [racketeering](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Racket_(crime)) and drug trafficking. Following the operation, the [Panama Defense Forces](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Panama_Defense_Forces) were dissolved and President-elect [Guillermo Endara](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Guillermo_Endara) was sworn into office.

Background

The United States had maintained numerous military bases and a substantial garrison throughout the [Canal Zone](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Panama_Canal_Zone) to protect the American-owned Panama Canal and to maintain American control of this strategically important area. On 7 September 1977, U.S. President [Jimmy Carter](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jimmy_Carter) and the *de facto* leader of Panama, General [Omar Torrijos](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Omar_Torrijos), signed Torrijos–Carter Treaties, which set in motion the process of handing over the Panama Canal to Panamanian control by 2000. Although the canal was destined for Panamanian administration, the military bases remained and one condition of the transfer was that the canal would remain open for American shipping. The U.S. had long-standing relations with General Noriega, who served as a U.S. intelligence asset and paid informant of the [Central Intelligence Agency](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Central_Intelligence_Agency) from 1967, including the period when Bush was head of the CIA (1976–77).

Noriega had sided with the U.S. rather than the USSR in Central America, notably in sabotaging the forces of the [Sandinista](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sandinista) government in Nicaragua, and the revolutionaries of the [FMLN](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/FMLN) group in [El Salvador](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/El_Salvador). Noriega received upwards of $100,000 per year from the 1960s until the 1980s, when his salary was increased to $200,000 per year. Although he worked with the [Drug Enforcement Administration](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Drug_Enforcement_Administration) to restrict illegal drug shipments, he was known to simultaneously accept significant financial support from drug dealers, because he facilitated the laundering of drug money, and through Noriega, they received protection from DEA investigations due to his special relationship with the CIA.

In the mid-1980s, relations between Noriega and the United States began to deteriorate. In 1986, U.S. President [Ronald Reagan](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ronald_Reagan) opened negotiations with General Noriega, requesting that the Panamanian leader step down after he was publicly exposed in *The New York Times* by [Seymour Hersh](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Seymour_Hersh), and was later implicated in the [Iran-Contra Scandal](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Iran-Contra_Scandal). Reagan pressured him with several drug-related indictments in U.S. courts; however, since extradition laws between Panama and the U.S. were weak, Noriega deemed this threat not credible and did not submit to Reagan's demands.

In 1988, [Elliot Abrams](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Elliot_Abrams) and others in the Pentagon began pushing for a U.S. invasion, but Reagan refused, due to Bush's ties to Noriega through his previous positions in the CIA and the Task Force on Drugs, and their potentially negative impact on Bush's presidential campaign. Later negotiations involved dropping the drug-trafficking indictments. In March 1988, Noriega's forces resisted an attempted coup against the government of Panama. As relations continued to deteriorate, Noriega appeared to shift his Cold War allegiance towards the Soviet bloc, soliciting and receiving military aid from Cuba, Nicaragua, and Libya. American military planners began preparing contingency plans to invade Panama.

[](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:PanamaJustCause1991.jpg)

A U.S. Marine Corps [LAV-25](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/LAV-25) in Panama

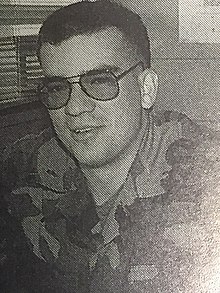
In May 1989, during the [Panamanian national elections](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Panamanian_general_election,_1989), an alliance of parties opposed to the Noriega dictatorship counted results from the country's election precincts, before they were sent to the district centers. Their tally showed their candidate, Guillermo Endara, defeating [Carlos Duque](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Carlos_Duque), candidate of a pro-Noriega coalition, by nearly 3–1. Endara was physically assaulted by Noriega supporters the next day in his motorcade. Noriega declared the election null and maintained power by force, making him unpopular among Panamanians.

Noriega's government insisted that it had won the presidential election and that irregularities had been on the part of U.S.-backed candidates from opposition parties. Bush called on Noriega to honor the will of the Panamanian people. The United States reinforced its Canal Zone garrison, and increased the tempo of training and other activities intended to put pressure on Noriega.

In October 1989, Noriega foiled a [second coup attempt](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1989_Panamanian_coup_d%27%C3%A9tat_attempt) by members of the [Panamanian Defense Forces](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Panama_Defense_Forces) (PDF), led by Major [Moisés Giroldi](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mois%C3%A9s_Giroldi). Pressure mounted on Bush. Bush declared that the U.S. would not negotiate with a drug trafficker and denied knowledge of Noriega's involvement with the drug trade prior to his February 1988 indictment, although Bush had met with Noriega while Director of the CIA and had been the Chair of the Task Force on Drugs while Vice President. On 15 December, the Panamanian general assembly passed a resolution declaring that a state of war existed between Panama and the United States.

The next day, four U.S. military personnel were stopped at a roadblock around 9:00 p.m. outside PDF headquarters in the *El Chorrillo* neighborhood of [Panama City](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Panama_City,_Panama). Marine Captain Richard E. Hadded, Navy Lieutenant Michael J. Wilson, Army Captain Barry L. Rainwater, and Marine First Lieutenant Robert Paz had left the [Fort Clayton military base](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fort_Clayton) and were on their way to have dinner at the [Marriott Hotel](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Marriott_Hotel) in downtown Panama City. The [U.S. Department of Defense](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_Department_of_Defense) reported that the servicemen had been unarmed, were in a private vehicle, and attempted to flee only after their vehicle was surrounded by an angry crowd of civilians and PDF troops.

The PDF asserted later that the Americans were armed and on a reconnaissance mission. The PDF opened fire and Lieutenant Paz was fatally wounded by a round that entered the rear of the vehicle and struck him in the back. Captain Hadded, the driver of the vehicle, was also wounded in the foot. Paz was rushed to [Gorgas Army Hospital](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gorgas_Hospital) but died of his wounds. He received the [Purple Heart](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Purple_Heart) posthumously. According to U.S. military sources, a U.S. Naval officer and his wife witnessed the incident and were detained by Panamanian Defense Force soldiers. While in police custody, they were assaulted by the PDF. The U.S. Naval officer spent two weeks in hospital recovering from the beating. PDF soldiers sexually threatened his wife. The next day, President Bush ordered the execution of the Panama invasion plan; the military set [H-Hour](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/H-Hour) as 0100 on 20 December.

[](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Robert_Paz.jpg)

1LT Robert Paz, 2nd Bn, 9th Marines

United States' justification for the invasion

The official U.S. justification for the invasion was articulated by President George H. W. Bush on the morning of 20 December 1989, a few hours after the start of the operation. Bush cited Panama's declaration of a state of war with the United States and attacks on American troops as justification for the invasion.

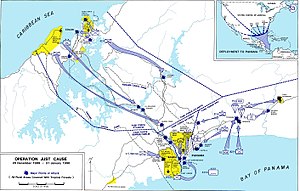
Bush further identified four objectives of the invasion:

* Safeguarding the lives of U.S. citizens in Panama. In his statement, Bush stated that Noriega had declared that a state of war existed between the U.S. and Panama and that he threatened the lives of the approximately 35,000 U.S. citizens living there. There had been numerous clashes between U.S. and Panamanian forces; one U.S. Marine had been killed a few days earlier.
* Defending democracy and human rights in Panama.
* Combating [drug trafficking](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Drug_trafficking). Panama had become a center for drug [money laundering](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Money_laundering) and a transit point for drug trafficking to the U.S. and Europe.
* Protecting the integrity of the [Torrijos–Carter Treaties](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Torrijos%E2%80%93Carter_Treaties). Members of Congress and others in the U.S. political establishment claimed that Noriega threatened the neutrality of the Panama Canal and that the U.S. had the right under the treaties to intervene militarily to protect the canal.

U.S. military forces were instructed to begin maneuvers and activities within the restrictions of the Torrijos-Carter Treaties, such as ignoring PDF roadblocks and conducting short-notice "Category Three" military exercises on security-sensitive targets, with the express goal of provoking PDF soldiers. U.S. SOUTHCOM kept a list of abuses against U.S. servicemen and civilians by the PDF while the orders to incite PDF soldiers were in place. As for the Panamanian legislature's declaration of a state of war between the U.S. and Panama, Noriega insists that this statement referred to a state of war directed by the U.S. against Panama, in the form of what he claimed were harsh economic sanctions and constant, provocative military maneuvers ([Operations Purple Storm](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Operation_Purple_Storm) and [Sand Flea](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Operation_Sand_Flea)) that were prohibited by the Torrijos-Carter Treaties. The U.S. had turned a blind eye to Noriega's involvement in drug trafficking since the 1970s. Noriega was then singled out for direct involvement in these drug trafficking operations due to the widespread public knowledge of his involvement in money laundering, drug activities, political murder, and human rights abuses.

Bush's four reasons for the invasion provided sufficient justification to establish bipartisan Congressional approval and support for the invasion. However, the secrecy before initiation, the speed and success of the invasion itself, and U.S. public support for it (80% public approval) did not allow Democrats to object to Bush's decision to use military force. One contemporary study suggests that Bush decided to invade for domestic political reasons, citing scarce strategic reasoning for the U.S. to invade and immediately withdraw without establishing the structure to enforce the interests that Bush used to justify the invasion.

Military operations

[](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Operation_Just_Cause.jpg)

Tactical map of Operation Just Cause showing major points of attack

[](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:US_Parachutists_during_Operation_Just_Cause.jpg)

Elements of 1st Bn, 508th Infantry parachuting into a drop zone, during training, outside of Panama City.

The U.S. [Army](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_Army), [Air Force](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_Air_Force), [Navy](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_Navy), [Marines](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_Marine_Corps), and [Coast Guard](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_Coast_Guard) participated in Operation Just Cause. Ground forces consisted of :

* combat elements of the [XVIII Airborne Corps](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/U.S._XVIII_Airborne_Corps),
* the [82nd Airborne Division](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/82nd_Airborne_Division),
* the [7th Infantry Division (Light)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/U.S._7th_Infantry_Division),
* the [7th Special Forces Group (Airborne)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/7th_Special_Forces_Group_(United_States)),
* the [75th Ranger Regiment](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/75th_Ranger_Regiment),
* [Tactical Air Control Parties](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tactical_Air_Control_Party) from the 507th and 602nd Tactical Air Control Wings and the [24th Composite Wing](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/24th_Composite_Wing)
* Combat Controllers from the 1721st Combat Control Squadron
* a [Joint Special Operations Task Force](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Joint_Special_Operations_Command),
* elements of the [5th Infantry Division](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/U.S._5th_Infantry_Division)
  + [1st Battalion, 61st Infantry Regiment](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/61st_Infantry_Regiment_(United_States))
  + [4th Battalion, 6th Infantry Regiment](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/6th_Infantry_Regiment_(United_States)) (replacing 1/61st in September 1989),
* [16th Military Police Brigade](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/16th_Military_Police_Brigade) (Airborne), Ft Bragg NC
* 503rd Military Police Battalion (Airborne), Ft Bragg NC
* 21st Military Police Company (Airborne), Ft Bragg NC
* 65th Military Police Company, Ft Bragg NC
* 108th Military Police Company (Air Assault), Ft Bragg NC
* 519th Military Police Battalion
* 1138th Military Police Company, [Missouri Army National Guard](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Missouri_Army_National_Guard)
* 988th Military Police Company, Ft Benning, GA
* 555th Military Police Company, Ft Lee, VA
* [193rd Infantry Brigade](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/193rd_Infantry_Brigade_(United_States))
  + [5th Battalion, 87th Infantry Regiment](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/87th_Infantry_Regiment_(United_States))
  + [1st Battalion, 508th Infantry Regiment](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/508th_Infantry_Regiment_(United_States))
* 8th Ordnance Company (Ammo), Ft Bragg, NC (Select detachment attached to SOUTHCOM)
* Marine Security Forces Battalion Panama,
* Company K, [3rd Battalion, 6th Marines Regiment](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/6th_Marine_Regiment_(United_States)),
* [Marine Fleet Antiterrorism Security Teams](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Marine_Corps_Security_Force_Regiment#Fleet_Antiterrorism_Security_Team),
* [2nd Light Armored Reconnaissance Battalion](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2nd_Light_Armored_Reconnaissance_Battalion),
* [2nd Marine Logistics Group](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2nd_Marine_Logistics_Group) 39th Combat Engineer Battalion Co C.
* 511th Military Police Company, Ft Drum NY
* 1097th Transportation Company (Medium Boat), Fort Davis, Panama

Air logistic support was provided by the 22nd Air Force with air assets from the 60th, 62nd, and 63rd military airlift wings.

The military incursion into Panama began on 20 December 1989, at 1:00 a.m. local time. The operation involved 27,684 U.S. troops and over 300 aircraft, including [C-130 Hercules](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/C-130) tactical transports flown by the [317th Tactical Airlift Wing](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/317th_Tactical_Airlift_Wing) (which was equipped with the Adverse Weather Aerial Delivery System or AWADS) and [314th Tactical Airlift Wing](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/314th_Tactical_Airlift_Wing), [AC-130 Spectre](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/AC-130) gunships, [OA-37B Dragonfly](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/A-37_Dragonfly) observation and attack aircraft, [C-141 Starlifter](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/C-141) and [C-5 Galaxy](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/C-5_Galaxy) strategic transports, [F-117A Nighthawk](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/F-117_Nighthawk) stealth aircraft flown by the [37th Tactical Fighter Wing](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/37th_Training_Wing), and [AH-64 Apache](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/AH-64_Apache) attack helicopters. The invasion of Panama was the first combat deployment for the AH-64, the [HMMWV](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/HMMWV), and the F-117A. Panamanian radar units were jammed by two [EF-111As](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/EF-111A) of the 390th ECS, 366th TFW. These aircraft were deployed against the 16,000 members of the PDF.

The operation began with an assault of strategic installations, such as the civilian [Punta Paitilla Airport](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Operation_Nifty_Package) in Panama City and a PDF garrison and airfield at Rio Hato, where Noriega also maintained a residence. U.S. Navy SEALs destroyed Noriega's private jet and a Panamanian gunboat. A Panamanian ambush killed four SEALs and wounded nine. Other military command centers throughout the country were also attacked. The attack on the central headquarters of the PDF (referred to as *La Comandancia*) touched off several fires, one of which destroyed most of the adjoining and heavily populated *El Chorrillo* neighborhood in downtown Panama City. During the firefight at the Comandancia, the PDF downed two special operations helicopters and forced one [MH-6 Little Bird](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/MD_Helicopters_MH-6_Little_Bird) to crash-land in the Panama Canal. The opening round of attacks in Panama City also included a special operations raid on the Carcel Modelo prison (known as [Operation Acid Gambit](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Operation_Acid_Gambit)) to free Kurt Muse, a U.S. citizen convicted of espionage by Noriega.

Fort Amador was secured by elements of the 1st Battalion (Airborne), 508th Parachute Infantry Regiment, 5th Infantry Division [Scouts] and 59th Engineer Company (sappers) in a nighttime air assault which secured the fort in the early hours of 20 December. Fort Amador was a key position because of its relationship to the large oil farms adjacent to the canal, the [Bridge of the Americas](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bridge_of_the_Americas) over the canal, and the Pacific entrance to the Panama Canal. Key command and control elements of the PDF were stationed there. C Company 1st Battalion (Airborne) 508th PIR was assigned the task of securing La Comandancia. Furthermore, Fort Amador had a large U.S. housing district that needed to be secured to prevent the PDF from taking U.S. citizens as hostages. This position also protected the left flank of the attack on La Comandancia and the securing of the *El Chorrillos* neighborhood, guarded by [Dignity Battalions](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dignity_Battalions), Noriega supporters that the U.S. forces sometimes referred to as "Dingbats". Military police units from Ft. Bragg, North Carolina deployed via strategic airlift into Howard Air Force Base the next morning, and secured key government buildings in the downtown area of Panama City. MPs seized PDF weapons, vehicles and supplies during house-to-house searches in the following days, and conducted urban combat operations against snipers and Dignity Battalion holdouts for the following week.

A few hours after the invasion began, Guillermo Endara was sworn in at Fort Clayton. According to The Los Angeles Times, Endara was the "presumed winner" in the presidential election which had been scheduled earlier that year.

A platoon from the [1138th Military Police Company](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1138th_Military_Police_Company), [Missouri Army National Guard](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Missouri_Army_National_Guard), which was on a routine two-week rotation to Panama was called upon to set up a detainee camp on Empire Range to handle the mass of civilian and military detainees. This unit was the first National Guard unit called into active service since the Vietnam War.

**Noriega's capture**

*Main articles:*[*Manuel Antonio Noriega*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Manuel_Antonio_Noriega)*and*[*Operation Nifty Package*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Operation_Nifty_Package)

[Operation Nifty Package](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Operation_Nifty_Package) was an operation launched by Navy SEALs to prevent Noriega's escape. They sank Noriega's boat and destroyed his jet, at a cost of four killed and nine wounded. Military operations continued for several weeks, mainly against military units of the Panamanian army. Noriega remained at large for several days, but realizing he had few options in the face of a massive manhunt and a $1 million reward for his capture, he obtained refuge in the [Vatican](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Holy_See) diplomatic mission in Panama City. The U.S. military's psychological pressure on him and diplomatic pressure on the Vatican mission, however, was relentless, as was the playing of loud rock-and-roll music day and night in a densely populated area. The report of the Office of the Chairman of the [Joint Chiefs of Staff](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Joint_Chiefs_of_Staff) claimed that the music was used principally to prevent [parabolic microphones](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parabolic_microphone) from being used to eavesdrop on negotiations, and not as a psychological weapon based around Noriega's supposed loathing of rock music. Noriega finally surrendered to the U.S. military on 3 January 1990. He was immediately put on an [MC-130E Combat Talon I](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/MC-130E_Combat_Talon_I) aircraft and flown to the U.S.

**Casualties**

[](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:PanamaM-113JustCauseUS-Invasion.jpg)

A U.S. Army [M113](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/M113_Armored_Personnel_Carrier) in Panama

According to official Pentagon figures, 516 Panamanians were killed during the invasion; however, an internal U.S. Army memo estimated the number at 1,000.

The UN estimated 500 deaths whereas [Americas Watch](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Americas_Watch) found that around 300 civilians died. President Guillermo Endara said that "less than 600 Panamanians" died during the entire invasion. Former Attorney General [Ramsey Clark](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ramsey_Clark) estimated 3,000 civilian deaths. Figures estimating thousands of civilian casualties were widely rejected in Panama. The Roman Catholic Church estimated that 673 Panamanians were killed in total. [Physicians for Human Rights](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Physicians_for_Human_Rights), said it had received "reliable reports of more than 100 civilian deaths" that were not included in the U.S. military estimate but also that there was no evidence of several thousand civilian deaths.

US military casualties in the invasion were 23 killed and 325 wounded. In June 1990, the US military announced that of its casualties, 2 dead and 19 wounded were victims of [friendly fire](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Friendly_fire). The number of Panamanian military dead was initially estimated at 314, but the [United States Southern Command](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_Southern_Command), then based on Quarry Heights in Panama, later estimated the number of Panamanian military dead at 205.

Civilian fatalities included two American school teachers working in Panama for the Department of Defense Schools. They were Kandi Helin and Ray Dragseth. Rick Paul, the adult son of another teacher, was also killed by friendly fire as he ran an American road block. Also killed was a Spanish freelance press photographer on assignment for [*El Pais*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/El_Pais), Juan Antonio Rodriguez Moreno. Rodriguez was killed outside of the Marriott Hotel in Panama City early on 21 December. In June 1990, his family filed a claim for [wrongful death](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wrongful_death_claim) against the United States Government. When the Rodriguez claim was rejected by the U.S. government, in 1992 the Spanish government sent a [Note Verbale](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Note_Verbale) extending [diplomatic protection](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Diplomatic_protection) to Rodriguez and demanding compensation on behalf of his family. However, the U.S. government again rejected the claim, disputing both its liability for warzone deaths in general and whether Rodriguez had been killed by U.S. rather than Panamanian gunfire.

[Human Rights Watch](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Human_Rights_Watch)'s 1991 report on Panama in the post-invasion aftermath stated that even with some uncertainties about the scale of civilian casualties, the figures are "still troublesome" because

[Panama's civilian deaths] reveal that the "surgical operation" by American forces inflicted a toll in civilian lives that was at least four-and-a-half times higher than military casualties in the enemy, and twelve or thirteen times higher than the casualties suffered by U.S. troops. By themselves, these ratios suggest that the [rule of proportionality](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Proportionality_(law)#International_law) and the duty to minimize harm to civilians, where doing so would not compromise a legitimate military objective, were not faithfully observed by the invading U.S. forces. For us, the controversy over the number of civilian casualties should not obscure the important debate on the manner in which those people died.

**Women's roles in the invasion of Panama**

Operation Just Cause involved unprecedented use of U.S. military women during an invasion. Approximately 600 of the 26,000 U.S. forces involved in the invasion were women. Women did not serve in direct combat roles or combat arms units, but they did serve as military police, truck drivers, helicopter pilots, and in other logistical roles. Captain [Linda L. Bray](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Linda_L._Bray), commander of the 988th Military Police Company of Fort Benning, Georgia, led her troops in a three-hour firefight against Panamanian Defense Forces who refused to surrender a dog kennel which (it was later discovered) they were using to store weapons. Bray was said to be the first woman to lead U.S. troops in battle and her role in the firefight was widely reported and led to controversy in the media and in Congress over women's roles in the U.S. military. Bray requested and received a discharge in 1991. 1LT Lisa Kutschera and Warrant Officer Debra Mann piloted UH-60 ("Blackhawk") helicopters ferrying infantry troops. Their helicopters came under fire during the invasion, and like their male counterparts, both women were awarded Air Medals for their roles during the invasion.

**Origin of the name "Operation Just Cause"**

Operation plans directed against Panama evolved from plans designed to defend the Panama Canal. They became more aggressive as the situation between the two nations deteriorated. The [*Prayer Book*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Operation_Prayer_Book) series of plans included rehearsals for a possible clash ([Operation Purple Storm](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Operation_Purple_Storm)) and missions to secure U.S. sites ([Operation Bushmaster](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Operation_Bushmaster)).

Eventually, these plans became *Operation Blue Spoon* which was then, in order to sustain the perceived legitimacy of the invasion throughout the operation, renamed by The Pentagon to *Operation Just Cause*. General Colin Powell said that he liked the name because "even our severest critics would have to utter 'Just Cause' while denouncing us."

The post-invasion civil-military operation designed to stabilize the situation, support the U.S.-installed government, and restore basic services was originally planned as "Operation Blind Logic", but was renamed "Operation Promote Liberty" by the Pentagon on the eve of the invasion.

The original operation, in which U.S. troops were deployed to Panama in early 1989, was called "Operation Nimrod Dancer".

Legality

The US government invoked self-defense as legal justification for its invasion of Panama. Several scholars and observers have opined that the invasion was illegal under international law. The justifications for invading given by the U.S. were, according to these source, factually baseless, and moreover, even if they had been true they would have provided inadequate support for the invasion under international law. Article 2 of the [United Nations Charter](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_Nations_Charter), a cornerstone of international law, prohibits the use of force by member states to settle disputes except in self-defense or when authorized by the [United Nations Security Council](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_Nations_Security_Council). Articles 18 and 20 of the [Charter of the Organization of American States](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Charter_of_the_Organization_of_American_States), written in part in reaction to the history of US military interventions in Central America, also explicitly prohibit the use of force by member states: "[n]o state or group of states has the right to intervene, directly or indirectly, for any reason whatever, in the internal affairs of any other state." (Charter of the [Organization of American States](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Organization_of_American_States) (OAS), Article 18.) Article 20 of the OAS Charter states that "the territory of a states is inviolable; it may not be the object, even temporarily, of military occupation or of other measures of force taken by another state, directly or indirectly, on any grounds whatever." The US has ratified the UN Charter and the OAS Charter and therefore they are among the highest law of the land in the US under the [Supremacy Clause](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Supremacy_Clause) of the US Constitution. Other international law experts who have examined the legal justification of the US invasion have concluded that it was a "gross violation" of international law.

The [United Nations General Assembly](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_Nations_General_Assembly) passed a resolution strongly deploring the 1989 U.S. armed invasion of [Panama](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Panama). The resolution determined that the U.S. invasion was a "flagrant violation of international law." A similar resolution proposed in the [United Nations Security Council](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_Nations_Security_Council) was supported by the majority of the Security Council but was vetoed by the US, France and the UK.

Independent experts and observers have concluded that the US invasion of Panama also exceeded the authority of the president under the US Constitution because Article I, Section 8 of the Constitution grants the power to declare war solely to the Congress, not to the president. According to observers, the US invasion also violated the [War Powers Resolution](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/War_Powers_Resolution), a federal law designed to limit presidential action without Congressional authorization, because the president failed to consult with Congress regarding the invasion of Panama prior to the invasion.

Local and international reactions

The invasion of Panama provoked international outrage. Some countries charged that the U.S. had committed an act of aggression by invading Panama and was trying to conceal a new manifestation of its interventionist policy of force in Latin America. On 29 December, the [General Assembly of the United Nations](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/General_Assembly_of_the_United_Nations) voted 75–20, with 40 abstentions, to condemn the invasion as a flagrant violation of international law.

On 22 December, the [Organization of American States](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Organization_of_American_States) passed a resolution deploring the invasion and calling for withdrawal of U.S. troops, as well as a resolution condemning the violation of the diplomatic status of the Nicaraguan Embassy in Panama by U.S. Special Forces who had entered the building. At the [UN Security Council](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_Nations_Security_Council), after discussing the issue over several days, seven nations initiated a draft resolution demanding the immediate withdrawal of U.S. forces from Panama was [vetoed](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_Vetoed_United_Nation_Security_Council_Resolutions) on 23 December by three of the permanent members of the Security Council, France, United Kingdom, and the United States, which cited its right of self-defense of 35,000 Americans present on the Panama Canal.

[Peru](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Peru) recalled its ambassador from the U.S. in protest of the invasion.

Some claim that the Panamanian people overwhelmingly supported the invasion. According to a CBS poll, 92% of Panamanian adults supported the U.S. incursion, and 76% wished that U.S. forces had invaded in October during the coup. The poll was conducted in 158 randomly selected areas of the country covering about 75 percent of Panama's adult population. CBS News said the margin of sampling error was plus or minus four percentage points. [Human Rights Watch](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Human_Rights_Watch) described the reaction of the civilian population to the invasion as "generally sympathetic". According to [Robert Pastor](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Robert_Pastor), a former U.S. national security advisor, 74% of Americans polled approved of the action.

Eighteen years after the invasion, Panama's [National Assembly](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/National_Assembly_of_Panama) unanimously declared 20 December 2007 to be a day of national mourning. The resolution was vetoed by President [Martin Torrijos](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Martin_Torrijos). On 19 December 2019 the Panamanian government declared 20 December to be a National Day of Mourning (Dia de duelo nacional) to be marked by lowering the national flag to half-staff.

*The Washington Post* disclosed several rulings of the Office of Legal Counsel, issued shortly before the invasion, regarding the U.S. armed forces being charged with making an arrest abroad. One ruling interpreted [an executive order](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Executive_Order_11905) which prohibits the assassination of foreign leaders as suggesting that accidental killings would be acceptable foreign policy. Another ruling concluded that the [Posse Comitatus Act](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Posse_Comitatus_Act) of 1878, which prohibits the armed forces from making arrests without Congressional authorization, is effective only within the boundaries of the U.S., such that the military could be used as a police force abroad—for example, in Panama, to enforce a federal court warrant against Noriega.

Aftermath

[](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Panama_clashes_1989.JPEG)

20,000 were displaced from their homes. Disorder continued for nearly two weeks.

[Guillermo Endara](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Guillermo_Endara), in hiding, was sworn in as president by a judge on the night preceding the invasion. In later years, he staged a hunger strike, calling attention to the poverty and homelessness left in the wake of both the Noriega years and the destruction caused by the U.S. invasion.

On 19 July 1990, a group of 60 companies with operations in Panama filed a lawsuit against the U.S. government in [Federal District Court in New York City](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_District_Court_for_the_Southern_District_of_New_York) alleging that the U.S. action against Panama was "done in a tortuous, careless and negligent manner with disregard for the property of innocent Panamanian residents". Most of the businesses had insurance, but the insurers either went bankrupt or refused to pay, claiming that acts of war were not covered.

About 20,000 people lost their homes and became refugees as a result of [urban warfare](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Urban_warfare). About 2,700 families that were displaced by the Chorrillo fire were each given $6,500 by the U.S. to build a new house or apartment in selected areas in or near the city. However, numerous problems were reported with the new constructions just two years after the invasion.

The government of Guillermo Endara designated the first anniversary of the U.S. invasion a "national day of reflection". Hundreds of Panamanians marked the day with a "black march" through the streets of Panama City to denounce the U.S. invasion and Endara's economic policies. Protesters echoed claims that 3,000 people were killed as a result of U.S. military action. Since Noriega's ousting, Panama has had four presidential elections, with candidates from opposing parties succeeding each other in the [Palacio de las Garzas](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Palacio_de_las_Garzas).

Panama's press, however, is still subject to numerous restrictions. On 10 February 1990, the Endara government abolished Panama's military and reformed the security apparatus by creating the [Panamanian Public Forces](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Panamanian_Public_Forces). In 1994, a constitutional amendment permanently abolished the military of Panama. Concurrent with a severe recession in Latin America throughout the 1990s, Panama's GDP recovered by 1993, but very high unemployment remained a serious problem.

Noriega was brought to the U.S. to stand trial. He was subsequently convicted on eight counts of drug trafficking, racketeering, and money laundering and sentenced to 40 years in prison. His sentence was later reduced to 30 years.

On 20 December 2015, Vice President [Isabel De Saint Malo de Alvarado](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Isabel_Saint_Malo) announced Panama's intention to form a special independent commission with the aim to publish a report to mark the 26th anniversary of the U.S. invasion of Panama. The commission's goal would be to identify victims so that reparations could be paid to their families, as well as to establish public monuments and school curriculums to honor history and reclaim Panama's collective memory. Victims' families have claimed that past investigations into the invasion had been funded by Washington and therefore were biased.

Timeline

Information in this section

September 1987

* U.S. Senate passes resolution urging Panama to re-establish a civilian government. Panama protests alleged U.S. violations of the Torrijos–Carter Treaties.

November 1987

* U.S. Senate resolution cuts military and economic aid to Panama. Panamanians adopt resolution restricting U.S. military presence.

February 1988

* Noriega indicted on drug-related charges. U.S. forces begin planning contingency operations in Panama (OPLAN Blue Spoon).

March 1988

* 15 March: First of four deployments of U.S. forces begins providing additional security to U.S. installations.
* 16 March: PDF officers attempt a coup against Noriega.

April 1988

* 5 April: Additional U.S. forces deployed to provide security.
* 9 April: Joint Task Force Panama activated.

May 1989

* 7 May: Civilian elections are held in Panama; opposition alliance tally shows their candidate, Guillermo Endara, beating Noriega's candidate, Carlos Duque, by a 3 to 1 margin. The election is declared invalid two days later by Noriega.
* 11 May: President Bush orders 1,900 additional combat troops to Panama (Operation Nimrod Dancer).
* 22 May: Convoys conducted to assert U.S. freedom of movement. Additional transport units travel from bases in the territorial U.S. to bases in Panama, and back, for this express purpose.

June–September 1989 (Operation Nimrod Dancer)

* U.S. begins conducting joint training and freedom of movement exercises ([Operation Sand Flea](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Operation_Sand_Flea) and Operation Purple Storm). Additional transport units continue repeatedly traveling from bases in the territorial U.S. to bases in Panama, and back, for this express purpose.

October 1989 (Operation Nimrod Dancer)

* 3 October: PDF, loyal to Noriega, defeat second coup attempt.

December 1989

* 15 December: Noriega refers to himself as leader of Panama and declares that the U.S. is in a state of war with Panama.
* 16 December: U.S. Marine lieutenant shot and killed by PDF. Navy lieutenant and wife detained and assaulted by PDF.
* 17 December: NCA directs execution of Operation Just Cause.
* 18 December: Army lieutenant shoots PDF sergeant. Joint Task Force South (JTFSO) advance party deploys. JCS designates D-Day/H-Hour as 20 December/1:00 a.m.
* 19 December: U.S. forces alerted, marshalled, and launched.

D-Day, 20 December 1989

* U.S. invasion of Panama begins. The operation was conducted as a campaign with limited military objectives. JTFSO objectives in PLAN 90-2 were to: protect U.S. lives and key sites and facilities, capture and deliver Noriega to competent authority, neutralize PDF forces, neutralize PDF command and control, support establishment of a U.S.-recognized government in Panama, and restructure the PDF. Major operations detailed elsewhere continued through 24 December.
* JCS directs execution of Operation Promote Liberty.

3 January 1990 (D-Day + 14)

* Noriega surrenders to U.S. forces.

31 January 1990 (D-Day + 42)

* Operation Just Cause ends.
* Operation Promote Liberty begins.

September 1994 (D-Day + approximately 4.5 years)

* Operation Promote Liberty ends.

Major operations and U.S. units involved

**Operations**

All 27 objectives related to the Panamanian Defense Force were completed on D-Day, 20 December 1989. As initial forces moved to new objectives, follow-on forces from the 7th Infantry Division (L) moved into the western areas of Panama and into Panama City.

18 December 1989 (D-Day – 2)

* SFODA-795/796 of Company C, 3rd Bn, 7th Special Forces Group (Airborne), part of Task Force Black, moves to Albrook Air Force Station as a forward element in preparation to secure the Panamanian President-elect Endara and his two vice presidents-elect, by force, if necessary.

19 December 1989 (D-Day − 1)

* Company A, 1st Bn, 7th Special Forces Group (Airborne)-already deployed into Panama, along with 3rd Bn, 7th Special Forces Group (Airborne)-then permanently headquartered at Fort Davis, Panama, both elements of Task Force Black, moved to predetermined positions.
* Task Force Black receives Presidential cross-border authority message from President Bush.
* Company C, 3rd Battalion, 7th Special Forces Group (Airborne) is stood down from its mission to rescue of the duly elected Panamanian Presidency and awaits a new mission.
* 3d Bde, 7th Infantry Division (L) (4/17th Inf), already deployed as part of peacekeeping forces in the region, was deployed to predetermined positions.
* 2nd Bde, 7th Inf Div (L), was alerted for deployment. DRF 1 (3/27th Inf) and DRF 2 (2/27th INF) were deployed.
* Tow Platoon, HHC, 5/87th Inf (L), conducts pre-invasion recon of all objectives for Task Force Wildcat.

20 December 1989 (D-Day)

* 3d Bde, 7th Infantry Division (L) (4/17th Inf) began operations in Colon City, the Canal Zone, and Panama City.
* The remainder of the 2d Bde was deployed and closed in Panama.
* Elements of 1st and 3rd Bn, 7th Special Forces Group (Airborne) conducted air assault and secured Pacora River Bridge preventing PDF reinforcements from reaching Omar Torrijos Airport and Panama City.
* The entire 75th Ranger Regiment, split into two elements (Team Black and Team Gold), conducted simultaneous parachute drops at Rio Hato Airfield, along with half the command and control of the HQ 75th RGR, the entire 2nd Battalion 75th RGR, and two companies from 3rd Battalion 75th, to neutralize PDF and Macho de Montes units present, seize the runway, and secure Manuel Noriega's beachside facility.
* The other half of HQ 75th RGR C&C, along with 1st Battalion 75th RGR and the remaining elements of 3rd Battalion 75th RGR, dropped into Omar Torrijos Airport to seize the runway and tower for follow-on operations by elements of the 82nd Airborne Division, deployed by C141 airdrop/airland elements of the 317th Combat Control Squadron, 507th Tactical Air Control Squadron.
* 193d Infantry Brigade (Light) assaulted PDF headquarters at La Commandancia, PDF Engineer Battalion, PDF 5th Company at Fort Amador, PDF units at Balboa and Ancon.
* 45 minutes after the 75th RGR RGT conducted their parachute drop onto Omar Torrijos Airport the 1st BDE 82 ABN DIV begins parachuting onto the airfield, and then assembles for movement to assigned follow on objectives.
* Company C, 3rd Battalion, 7th Special Forces Group (Airborne) conducts a daylight raid on Panama National Radio in downtown Panama City by fast-roping onto the roof of its 20 story building from MH-60 helicopters, destroying its FM broadcast capability. In a short turn around operation with 15 minutes warning and on order from the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the unit air assaults the Radio Panama AM radio transmitter site destroying the transmission tower and cutting off Noriega's final link to rally his supporters.

21 December 1989 (D-Day + 1)

* JCS directed execution of Operation Promote Liberty (renamed from Plan Blind Logic).
* The Panama Canal reopened for daylight operations.
* Refugee situation became critical.
* C Company, 5th Battalion, 87th Infantry Regiment (193d Infantry Brigade) repelled a PDF counterattack at the PDF DNTT headquarters and rescued Panamanian Vice President Ford, whose convoy was also attacked.
* TF Bayonet began CMO in Panama City.
* Marriott Hotel was secured and hostages evacuated.

22 December 1989 (D-Day + 2)

* FPP established.
* CMO and stability operations became primary focus.
* 2d Bde, 7th Inf Div (L), deployed to Rio Hato.
* 1st Bde (9th Regiment), 7th Inf Div (L), was alerted for deployment.

23 December 1989 (D-Day + 3)

* International airport reopened.
* 2d Bde, 7th Inf Div (L) and SF elements began operations in west.
* 96th CA Bn assumed responsibility for DC Camp from USARSO.
* 1st Bde (9th Regiment) 7th Inf Div (L) closed in Panama.

24 December 1989 (D-Day + 4)

* Noriega entered Papal Nunciatura.
* Money for Weapons program initiated.
* Combined U.S./FPP patrols began.

25 December 1989 (D-Day + 5)

* Rangers secured David.
* Operations in western Panama continued successfully.

3 January 1990 (D-Day + 14)

* Noriega surrendered to U.S. forces.
* Combat and stability ops continue.

31 January 1990 (D-Day + 42)

* Operation Just Cause ends.
* Operation Promote Liberty begins.

September 1994 (D-Day + approximately 4.5 years)

* Operation Promote Liberty ends.

Above information in this section

**United States military forces involved in Operation Just Cause**

[](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Operation_Just_Cause_Rangers_2d_plt_La_Comandancia_secure_small.jpg)

U.S. soldiers holding a [U.S. flag](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/U.S._flag) at *La Comandancia*

[**United States Southern Command**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_Southern_Command)

* [United States Army South](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_Army_South) (USARSO)
  + [XVIII Airborne Corps](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/XVIII_Airborne_Corps_(United_States)) – Joint Task Force South
  + [1st Corps Support Command (United States)](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=1st_Corps_Support_Command_(United_States)&action=edit&redlink=1) (Fort Bragg)
    - [46th Support Gp.](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=46th_Support_Gp.&action=edit&redlink=1)
      * [189th Maintenance Battalion](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=189th_Maintenance_Battalion&action=edit&redlink=1)
        + [8th Ordnance Company (ammo)](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=8th_Ordnance_Company_(ammo)&action=edit&redlink=1) attached to SOUTHCOM to augment the 565 Ordnance Detachment (ammo)
    - [525th Military Intelligence Brigade](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/525th_Military_Intelligence_Brigade) (Combat Electronic Warfare and Intelligence) (Airborne)(FT Bragg)
      * [319th Military Intelligence Battalion](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/319th_Military_Intelligence_Battalion) (Operations) (Airborne) (FT Bragg)
        + A Co. 319th MI BN (Corps Tactical Operations Support Element)
        + B Co. 319th MI BN (Signal)
      * [519th Military Intelligence Battalion](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/519th_Military_Intelligence_Battalion) (Tactical Exploitation) (Airborne) (FT Bragg)
        + A Co 519th MI BN (Interrogation)
        + B Co. 519th MI BN (Counterintelligence)
        + C Co. 519th MI BN (SIGINT and Voice Intercept)
    - [16th MP Brigade](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/16th_Military_Police_Brigade_(United_States)) [Fort Bragg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fort_Bragg_(North_Carolina))
    - 92nd MP Battalion Fort Clayton
      * + 549th MP Company [Fort Davis](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fort_Davis,_Panama)
        + 1138th MP Company, Det. 1, [Missouri Army National Guard](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Missouri_Army_National_Guard), Doniphan, Missouri
    - 1109th Signal Brigade
      * + 35th Signal Brigade (25th Signal Battalion/426th Signal Battalion) Fort Bragg North Carolina
    - 142nd Medical Battalion
    - 324th Support Group
    - 470th Military Intelligence Brigade
      * 747th MI BN, Galeta Island
      * 29th MI BN, Fort Davis
    - '[*193rd Infantry Brigade*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/193rd_Infantry_Brigade_(United_States))*, Task Forces Bayonet*
      * 1st Battalion (Airborne), 508th Parachute Infantry Regiment (United States)
      * [5th Battalion, 87th Infantry](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/87th_Infantry_Regiment_(United_States))
      * [4th Battalion, 6th Infantry](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/6th_Infantry_Regiment_(United_States)). Detach from [5th Infantry Division (Mechanized)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/5th_Infantry_Division_(United_States))
        + C Company, 3rd Battalion, 73rd Armor Regiment (Airborne), Detach from 82nd ABN Div
        + D Company, [2nd Light Armored Infantry Battalion](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2nd_Light_Armored_Reconnaissance_Battalion) (USMC)
      * D Battery, 320th Field Artillery Regiment
      * 59th Engineer Company (Sapper)
      * 519th Military Police Battalion, [Fort Meade](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fort_George_G._Meade), MD
        + 209th Military Police Company, Fort Meade, MD
        + 555th Military Police Company, [Fort Lee](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fort_Lee_(Virginia)), VA
        + 988th Military Police Company, Fort Benning Georgia
      * 401st Military Police Company, [Fort Hood](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fort_Hood)
    - [**7th Infantry Division (Light)**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/7th_Infantry_Division_(United_States))**, Task Force Atlantic**
      * A Troop, 2nd Squadron, [9th Cavalry](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/9th_Cavalry_Regiment_(United_States))
      * [2nd Brigade](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2nd_Brigade,_7th_Infantry_Division_(United_States))
        + 2nd Battalion, 27th Infantry Regiment (DRF 2)
        + 5th Battalion, 21st Infantry Regiment
        + 3rd Battalion, 27th Infantry Regiment (DRF 1)
        + 6th Battalion, [8th Field Artillery Regiment](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/8th_Field_Artillery_Regiment)
        + A Battery, 2-62d ADA
        + B Company, 27th Engineer Battalion
        + B Company, 7th Medical Battalion
        + B Company, 707th Maintenance Battalion
        + B Company, 7th Supply and Transportation Battalion
      * [3rd Brigade](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/3rd_Brigade,_7th_Infantry_Division_(United_States))
        + 4th Battalion, 17th Infantry Regiment
        + 3rd Battalion, 17th Infantry Regiment

C Company, 2d Battalion, 27th Infantry Regiment

* + - * + 3rd Battalion, [504th Parachute Infantry Regiment](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/504th_Parachute_Infantry_Regiment), Detach from 82nd ABN Div
        + B Battery, 7th Battalion, [15th Field Artillery Regiment](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/15th_Field_Artillery_Regiment_(United_States))
        + B Battery, 2d Battalion, 62nd Air Defense Artillery Regiment
        + C Company, 27th Engineer Battalion
        + C Company, 7th Medical Battalion
        + C Company, 707th Maintenance Battalion
        + C Company, 7th Supply & Transportation Battalion
        + 3d Platoon, Company B, 127th Signal Battalion
      * 127th Signal Battalion (-)
      * 27th Engineer Battalion (-)
      * 7th Military Police Company (-)
      * 107th Military Intelligence Battalion (-)
      * 5th [Public Affairs Detachment](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Public_affairs_(military))
    - [**82nd Airborne Division**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/82nd_Airborne_Division_(United_States))**, Task Force Pacific**
      * 1st Brigade
        + 1st Battalion, 504th Parachute Infantry Regiment
        + 2d Battalion, 504th Parachute Infantry Regiment
        + 3d Battalion, 504th Parachute Infantry Regiment
        + 4th Battalion, 325th Airborne Infantry Regiment (-)

A Company, 3d Battalion, 505th Parachute Infantry Regiment

* + - * + A Battery, 3d Battalion, 319th Airborne Field Artillery Regiment
        + A Battery, 3d Battalion, 4th Air Defense Artillery Regiment
        + C Company, 3d Battalion, 73d Armored Regiment (-)
        + A Company, 307th Engineer Battalion
        + A Company, 782d Maintenance Battalion
        + B Company, 307th Medical Battalion
        + A Company, 407th Supply & Services Battalion
        + A Company, [313th Military Intelligence Battalion](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/313th_Military_Intelligence_Battalion_(United_States))
      * [1st Brigade, 7th Infantry Division](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1st_Brigade,_7th_Infantry_Division_(United_States))
        + 1st Battalion, 9th Infantry Regiment
        + 2d Battalion, 9th Infantry Regiment
        + 3d Battalion, 9th Infantry Regiment
        + A Company, 13th Engineer Battalion
        + A Company, 707th Maintenance Battalion
        + A Company, 7th Medical Battalion
        + A Company, 7th Supply and Transportation Battalion
        + 1st Platoon, B Company, 127th Signal Battalion
      * Company B, 82d Signal Battalion (-)
      * 82d Military Police Company (-)
      * 511th Military Police Company, [Fort Drum](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fort_Drum)
    - **Aviation Brigade, 7th Infantry Division, Task Force Aviation**
      * [1st Battalion, 228th Aviation Regiment](http://www.dismith.com/files/DIWarCollege.pdf)
        + 195th Air Traffic Control Platoon
        + 214th Medical Detachment
      * 3rd Battalion, 123d Aviation, Task Force Hawk (Fort Ord)
        + E Company, 123d Aviation Regiment (-)
      * [1st Battalion, 82d Aviation Regiment](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/82nd_Aviation_Regiment_(United_States)), Task Force Wolf (Fort Bragg)
        + 1st Battalion, 82d Aviation Regiment (-)

Troop D, 1st Squadron, 17th Cavalry Regiment

* + - * + 1st Battalion, 123d Aviation Regiment (-)
        + Company D, 82d Aviation Regiment (-)

[**United States Marine Corps**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_Marine_Corps)

* 6th Marine Expeditionary Brigade, **Task Force Semper Fi** (MARFOR)
  + I Company, [3rd Battalion, 6th Marine Regiment](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/3rd_Battalion_6th_Marines)
  + K Company, 3d Battalion, 6th Marines
  + Company D, [2nd Light Armored Infantry Battalion](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2nd_Light_Armored_Reconnaissance_Battalion) (-)
  + G and H Detachment, Brigade Service Support Group 6
* 1st Platoon, [Fleet Antiterrorism Security Teams](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Marine_Corps_Security_Force_Regiment#Fleet_Antiterrorism_Security_Team)
* Marine Corps Security Guard Detachment (U.S. Embassy)
* Marine Corps Security Force Company Panama
* 534th Military Police Company (U.S. Army), [Fort Clayton](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fort_Clayton)
* 536th Engineer Battalion (U.S. Army)

[**United States Special Operations Command**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_Special_Operations_Command)

* [7th Special Forces Group](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/7th_Special_Forces_Group)
* [160th Special Operations Aviation Regiment (Airborne)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/160th_Special_Operations_Aviation_Regiment_(Airborne))
* [SEAL Team 4](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_Navy_SEALs)
* [SEAL Team 6](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_Naval_Special_Warfare_Development_Group)
* [1st Special Forces Operational Detachment-DELTA](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Delta_Force)
* [75th Ranger Regiment](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/75th_Ranger_Regiment_(United_States))
* [96th Civil Affairs Battalion](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/96th_Civil_Affairs_Battalion)
* [4th Psychological Operations Group](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/4th_Psychological_Operations_Group)
* [8th Special Operations Squadron](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/8th_Special_Operations_Squadron)
* [16th Special Operations Squadron](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/16th_Special_Operations_Squadron)
* [20th Special Operations Squadron](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/20th_Special_Operations_Squadron)
* [55th Special Operations Squadron](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/55th_Special_Operations_Squadron)
* [919th Special Operations Wing](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/919th_Special_Operations_Wing)

[**United States Air Force**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_Air_Force)

* [24th Composite Wing](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/24th_Composite_Wing), [Howard AFB](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Howard_AFB)
* [317th Tactical Airlift Wing](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/317th_Tactical_Airlift_Wing)
  + [39th Tactical Airlift Squadron](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/39th_Tactical_Airlift_Squadron)
  + [40th Tactical Airlift Squadron](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/40th_Tactical_Airlift_Squadron)
  + [41st Tactical Airlift Squadron](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/41st_Tactical_Airlift_Squadron)
* [314th Tactical Airlift Wing](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/314th_Tactical_Airlift_Wing)
  + [50th Tactical Airlift Squadron](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/50th_Tactical_Airlift_Squadron)
* [146th Tactical Airlift Wing](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/146th_Airlift_Wing), California Air National Guard
* 815th Tactical Airlift Squadron
* [Twenty-Second Air Force](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Twenty-Second_Air_Force)
* [60th Military Airlift Wing](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/60th_Military_Airlift_Wing)
* [62d Military Airlift Wing](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/62d_Military_Airlift_Wing)
* [63d Military Airlift Wing](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/63d_Airlift_Wing)
* [437th Military Airlift Wing](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/437th_Military_Airlift_Wing)
* 433d Military Airlift Wing
* 32d Aeromedical Evacuation Group
* [34th Aeromedical Evacuation Squadron](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/34th_Aeromedical_Evacuation_Squadron)
* [512th Military Airlift Wing](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/512th_Military_Airlift_Wing)
* [172d Military Airlift Wing](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/172d_Military_Airlift_Wing)
* 363d Security Police Squadron
* 27th Security Police Squadron
* 3d Mobile Aerial Port Squadron (3d MAPS)
* [366th Tactical Fighter Wing](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/366th_Fighter_Wing)
* [37th Tactical Fighter Wing](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/37th_Training_Wing)
* 836th Security Police Squadron
* 63d Security Police Squadron
* [552d Airborne Warning And Control Wing](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/552d_Air_Control_Wing)
* 3d Combat Communications Group
* Aerospace Audiovisual Service (AAVS)
  + 1352d Combat Camera Squadron, [Norton AFB](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Norton_AFB), Calif.
  + 1361st Combat Camera Squadron, [Charleston AFB](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Charleston_AFB), South Carolina
  + 1369th Combat Camera Squadron, [Vandenberg AFB](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vandenberg_AFB), Calif.

[**United States Navy**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_Navy)

* [United States Navy SEALs](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_Navy_SEALs)
* Naval Special Warfare Unit EIGHT
* [Special Boat Unit TWENTY-SIX](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Special_Warfare_Combatant-craft_Crewmen)
* United States Naval Small Craft and Technical Training School (NAVSCIATTS)
* [USS *Vreeland* (FF-1068)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/USS_Vreeland_(FF-1068))

**Related operations**

* [Operation Nifty Package](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Operation_Nifty_Package): operation undertaken by SEALs to capture Manuel Noriega or destroy his two escape routes, destroying his private jet at Paitilla Airfield and his gunboat, which was docked in a canal. Noriega surrendered to U.S. troops on 3 January 1990.
* Operation Nimrod Dancer: reinforcing the forward-deployed U.S. forces with a brigade headquarters and an infantry battalion task force from the 7th Inf Div (L), a mechanized infantry battalion from the 5th Inf Div (M), and a U.S. Marine Corps Light Armored Infantry (LAI) Company. Augmentation continued with units rotating from both divisions under Operation Nimrod Sustain.
* [Operation Prayer Book](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Operation_Prayer_Book)
* Operation Promote Liberty: operation to rebuild the Panamanian military and civilian infrastructure.
* [Operation Purple Storm](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Operation_Purple_Storm): operation to assert, display, and exercise U.S. freedom-of-movement rights, with convoys traveling in and out of Panama for that express purpose.
* [Operation Sand Flea](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Operation_Sand_Flea): operation to exercise, display, and assert U.S. freedom-of-movement rights, with convoys traveling in and out of Panama for that express purpose.
* [Raid at Renacer Prison](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Raid_at_Renacer_Prison): a military operation which involved rescuing 64 prisoners and taking over the prison.

See also

* [*The Panama Deception*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Panama_Deception) Academy Award-winning documentary.
* [*Invasion*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Invasion_(2014_film)), a 2014 Panamanian documentary.
* [Foreign interventions by the United States](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Foreign_interventions_by_the_United_States)
* [United States involvement in regime change](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_involvement_in_regime_change)