

**AAI'26**  
*By the Strike of the Gavel.*  
**TRAIN**

**UNESS**  
**AGENDA ITEM:**

**ASSESSMENT AND CONSEQUENCES  
AND NECESSITATION OF PANAMA  
INVASION 1989**

**UNDER SECRETARY-GENERAL:  
HÜSEYİN DEMİREL**

**UNDER SECRETARY-GENERAL:  
MUSTAFA AKCA**

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# **1. Welcome Letters**

## **1.1. Letter from the Secretary-General**

Firstly, it is with immense pride and enthusiasm that I extend my warmest welcomes to all participants of the Antalya Anatolian High School Train Model United Nations Conference 2026, taking place on April 11th-12th in Antalya.

I am Güney Deniz Ala, Secretary-General of this distinguished conference. It is both an honor and a privilege to lead this organization in this position. Model United Nations has always been far more than a simulation, it is a journey. Whether you're a more experienced delegate or a first-timer, with AALTRAIN'26 I promise unparalleled growth and inspiration.

Our Academic Team: Under-Secretary Generals, Academic Assistants, and Board Members, represent the finest minds in Antalya, each meticulously selected to deliver your committees of exceptional caliber. From beginner to advanced committees, every session has been crafted for the maximum impact.

My deepest gratitude goes to our Principal Mr. Kılıç and our dedicated advisor Mrs. Bilici, whose unwavering support made this vision reality. I extend special thanks to the AALTRAIN'26 participants, whose passion set the standard we strive to exceed, and a personal note of appreciation to my Executive Team whose brilliance knows no bounds.

As we gather, let us draw inspiration from the eternal words of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, founder of modern Turkey:

"Ey Türk gençliği! Birinci vazifen, Türk istiklâlini, Türk Cumhuriyeti'ni, ilelebet muhafaza ve müdafaa etmektir. Mevcudiyetinin ve istikbalinin yegâne temeli budur. Bu temel, senin en kıymetli hazinendir."

To delegates: embrace the challenge, defend your interests, and leave AALTRAIN'26 having elevated your voice on the world stage. I am eager to witness your brilliance.

Sincerely,

Güney Deniz Ala

Secretary-General, AALTRAIN'26

Antalya Anatolian High School

## 1.2. Letter from the Under Secretaries-General

### **Distinguished Delegates of the AALTRAIN'26 Conference,**

I would like to begin my remarks by expressing my deepest gratitude and appreciation to our esteemed Secretary-General, Güney Deniz Ala, and the distinguished Secretariat team for providing us the opportunity to bring this committee to life. It is truly a great honor, both for myself and my academic team, to take part in such an established and valuable training conference. Welcome, all of you, to our committee.

Before addressing our agenda item and the functioning of our committee, I would like to emphasize that we will handle the issues in a highly multi-layered and multi-dimensional manner. In this structure, which we have designed in accordance with the training conference concept, our primary goal is not merely to provide you with a debate environment; it is also to equip you with multiple competencies such as crisis management, strategizing by considering different dynamics, developing these strategies, and writing directives in cooperation with other delegates in your cabinet. We hope that this objective will be met with your dedicated efforts, and by the end of this process, you will leave the conference with a mastery of multiple procedures and negotiation skills.

This study guide, which is the product of a wonderful collaboration with my dear Co-USG Hüseyin Demirel with whom I have worked side-by-side and with immense pleasure since the beginning and our esteemed Academic Assistant Ömer Talha Demirel, contains all the historical and technical information you will need throughout the committee. Naturally, for our delegates who have a close interest in the subject, research from different sources, documentaries you may watch, or podcasts you may listen to will allow you to approach the topic from different perspectives. However, to prevent any confusion among you, I must underline this clearly and firmly: You must not allow information obtained from different sources to distance you from the actual framework of our committee. We do not want the flow to deviate from our main operational and political goals and turn into an open-ended discussion.

As long as you come to the committee with this awareness, I have no doubt that each of you will do great work and conduct a flawless process. I wish you all an enjoyable conference and productive reading in advance, and I kindly ask you not to hesitate to contact us regarding any topic you have in mind or are curious about.

Sincerely,

**Mustafa Akca**

**Co-Under Secretary General**

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Distinguished Delegates,

It is my distinct honor and great pleasure to welcome you all to the United Nations Emergency Special Session (UNESS) at AALTRAIN 2026. We are delighted to have you join this dynamic and fast-paced committee, where critical thinking, adaptability, and diplomacy will be essential.

In moments when the international community is confronted with urgent and unforeseen crises, it becomes the responsibility of this committee to respond swiftly, decisively, and thoughtfully. Your role as delegates is not only to represent your respective nations, but also to uphold the principles of diplomacy, cooperation, and international law.

The agenda before you—the and the scope of the crisis—invites a critical examination of one of the most debated interventions in modern history. Initiated in December 1989, the invasion sought to remove the Panamanian leader , while aiming to secure regional stability and protect foreign nationals. However, the events that unfolded raised significant questions regarding sovereignty, proportionality, and the legitimacy of unilateral military action.

As delegates, you are encouraged to explore the crisis not only as a historical case but also as a framework for understanding contemporary global challenges. Consider the balance between national security and international norms, the role of organizations such as the , and the broader implications of rapid-response decision-making in times of crisis. The scope of this situation extends beyond military engagement; it encompasses humanitarian concerns, political transitions, and the enduring debate over intervention.

UNESS, by its very nature, requires adaptability and critical thinking. Unlike traditional committees, you will be expected to react in real-time to evolving circumstances, negotiate under pressure, and craft solutions that are both effective and sustainable. Diplomacy will be your greatest tool, and collaboration your strongest asset.

I would also like to extend my sincere gratitude to Mustafa Akca and Omer Talha Demirel for their invaluable support and hard work throughout the preparation of this committee. Their dedication has played a significant role in making this session possible.

Furthermore, I would like to recognize and thank the Executive Team of AALTRAIN 2026 for their commitment, effort, and leadership in organizing this conference. Their tireless work behind the scenes ensures that this experience is both enriching and memorable for all participants.

Once again, welcome to AALTRAIN 2026. I encourage you to approach this committee with open minds, respect for diverse perspectives, and a commitment to constructive dialogue. The success of this session will depend on your ability to think critically, act responsibly, and engage meaningfully with one another.

I wish you all the best of luck in your deliberations and look forward to witnessing your innovative and thoughtful solutions.

Respectfully,  
Hüseyin Demirel, Co-Under-Secretary-General of UNESS

### **1.3. Letter from the Academic Assistant**

Dear participants,

As the academic assistant of the committee, I want to declare that it's a magnificent honor to take a role in this prestigious conference.

The United Nations Emergency Special Session has great potential to ensure it is one of the best experiences of yours. With the agenda of the Panama Invasion 1989, it mentions the one of the biggest crisis at post Cold War . I would like to propose that you read all of this guide carefully and research your country's politics in detail.

Lastly, I want to express my gratitude to my under secretaries general for sharing their most significant experiences with me and teaching me a lot. At the end of my words, I would like to express my gratitude to the Executive Team for providing me with this opportunity.

Kind Regards

Academic Assistant  
Ömer Talha Demirel

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## **2. Introduction to the Committee**

### **2.1. Nature and Purpose of Special Committees and UNESS**

Special Committees are committees worldwide that do not adhere to a fixed procedure; they generally simulate historical or futuristic topics such as a senate, a treaty, or a negotiation. Due to their structure, they differ from General Assembly and Crisis Committees. The reason these types of committees are needed stems from the fact that certain historical and futuristic discussions and meetings were not held under the United Nations General Assembly and that

the negotiation process cannot be handled sufficiently and efficiently by the Crisis or GA procedures. Special Committees, with their committee-specific procedures, types, and objectives, aim to create the most efficient and accurate environment for the committee's potential or necessary setting.

## **2.2. Hybrid Procedure: From GA Format to Crisis Format**

Special Committees are formed by a blend of the procedural elements of General Assembly (GA) and Crisis Committees (CC), but all procedural arrangements of the committees are dependent on the Committee Secretariat. Nevertheless, there are some fundamental types of special committees. These are:

**Treaty Committees:** In this type of special committee, when past or potential treaties are simulated, delegates usually role-play as officials authorized in the relevant field for their country, rather than as country representatives, and discuss with the aim of signing an agreement on the issue.

**Senate Committees:** In Senate Committees, delegates take on the roles of members of a parliament or a senate and typically engage in discussion and problem-solving using the procedures of the senate to which the committee belongs.

Although Special Committees generally follow different procedures, they have some fundamental differences from GA and CC committees. The primary difference is that the delegates in a special committee are often more authorized and part of the decision-making mechanism compared to delegates in GA committees. Furthermore, while most special committees utilize the use of directives, verbal discussion and problem-solving are also central to the committee's work.

## **2.3. Mandate and Jurisdiction of the Committee**

The United Nations Emergency Special Session (UNESS) is the highest-level diplomatic crisis desk that steps in during those most critical and deadlocked moments when the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) fails to fulfill its primary responsibility of maintaining international peace and security. The existential foundation and jurisdiction of this committee are based on the historic "Uniting for Peace" resolution number 377 A (V) adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on November 3, 1950. In the Panama invasion crisis, the fact that some of the 5 permanent members (P5) of the Security Council (the United States, the United Kingdom, France) used their veto rights and deadlocked the process directly transferred the resolution of the crisis to this Emergency Special Session, which is the common conscience of the international community.

The jurisdiction and decision-making mechanism of the committee are separated from a traditional Security Council session with sharp lines. While the Security Council can take legally binding military and economic sanction decisions for member states under Chapter 7 of the United Nations Charter, the Emergency Special Session produces "recommendations" on paper because it is subject to the General Assembly acquiescence. However, this situation should never underestimate the power of the committee. Because a UNESS decision reflects the common political will of the overwhelming majority of the states of the world, it represents the highest moral and diplomatic authority in the international system.

In this context, there are massive diplomatic instruments that delegates can use within the borders of the committee's mandate. The committee can call on the international community to take collective measures in situations where peace is violated and an act of aggression occurs (like the 27000 American soldiers entering Panama). These measures include suspending diplomatic relations, recommending economic and commercial embargoes (sanctions), establishing independent international investigation commissions (Fact-Finding Missions), and demanding the opening of emergency humanitarian corridors to prevent civilian casualties and reach more than 20000 Panamanians who fell into the position of refugees. In the Draft Resolution or Communique they will write, delegates are obliged to use this broad authority of the committee to "condemn, recommend, and put international pressure" in the most aggressive and creative way.

#### **2.4. Vision Expected from Delegates and Required Research**

The United Nations Emergency Special Session (UNESS) is not a standard sub-committee where routine condemnation texts are read. In December 1989, it is a historic crisis desk that will determine the borders and rules of the new world order being built on the ruins of the Cold War. Therefore, the most basic vision expected from the delegates is for them to display a pragmatic and proactive diplomatic intelligence that can build a bridge between the strict theoretical borders of international law and the asymmetric and bloody reality created by 27000 American soldiers on the ground. Delegates must ruthlessly defend the foreign policy of the countries they represent not merely on a "good-bad" moral axis, but in the triangle of national interests, regional alliances, and sovereignty principles. The committee demands visionary solution proposals (amendments) that can simultaneously intervene in the military, legal, and humanitarian dimensions of the crisis, rather than epic speeches that merely condemn or praise "Operation Just Cause".

The focus of the research that a delegate preparing for this diplomatic clash should do is to flawlessly figure out the geopolitical codes and bloc affiliation of the country they represent in 1989. The basic legal documents that a delegate must definitely master before coming to the committee are these: paragraph 4 of Article 2 of the 1945 United Nations Charter regulating the ban on the use of force, its Article 51 recognizing the right of self defense, the 1961 Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations, and the 1977 Torrijos Carter Treaties. In addition to

these, it is mandatory for committee bloc formations that delegates deeply analyze their country's official vote choice (accept, reject, or abstain) in the United Nations General Assembly's draft resolution number 44/240 dated December 29, 1989 (the historic voting condemning the Panama invasion) and the pragmatic motivations lying behind this choice.

The ultimate goal expected from the delegates is to produce instantly applicable (actionable) solution clauses (operative clauses) regarding the massive problems waiting on the table. In the middle of a wreckage where the Panama Defense Forces collapsed, 1 billion dollars of looting events paralyzed the capital, and more than 20000 civilians became homeless and fell into the position of refugees in American concentration camps; the committee must go beyond just discussing who is right. Delegates must reflect that sharp and guiding diplomatic vision in the Communique drafts on how they will build the country's security mechanism from scratch under United Nations supervision, how they will solve the Nunciature (Vatican Embassy) crisis without violating the diplomatic armor, and how they will guarantee the international operational security of the Panama Canal, which is the lifeblood of global trade.

## **2.5. Basic Terminology**

***Operation Just Cause:*** It is the official name in Pentagon documents of the total military invasion launched by the United States army against Panama on December 20, 1989, and attended by 27000 fully equipped soldiers. The Washington administration strategically used this term to strengthen the thesis that the intervention was not an aggression in international law, but a legitimate police operation aiming to protect its citizens and restore democracy.

***United Nations Emergency Special Session (UNESS):*** It is the highest level General Assembly diplomatic crisis desk convened to ensure international peace and security in case one or more of the 5 permanent members (P5) of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) uses their veto right and drags a global crisis into a deadlock. The diplomatic process, which was deadlocked due to the vetoes of the United States, the United Kingdom, and France in the Panama crisis, was carried directly to this format as a reflection of the global conscience.

***Uniting for Peace (Resolution 377 A (V)):*** It is the historic resolution adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on November 3, 1950, which gives the General Assembly the authority to convene extraordinarily in veto moments when the Security Council is paralyzed. This resolution provides the committee with the jurisdiction to call on member states to take large scale collective measures ranging from diplomatic embargoes to military interventions and to produce recommendation decisions in cases where international peace is violated.

***Panama Defense Forces (PDF):*** It is the massive national security apparatus of which Manuel Noriega was the commander in chief since 1983, gathering the country's police, customs, immigration, and traditional military units under a single hierarchical roof. Consisting of about 16000 personnel, this structure was completely disbanded when its command level collapsed in the first hours of the American invasion in 1989, creating a massive security vacuum in the country and paving the way for the looting (saqueo) events that lasted for days.

***Dignity Battalions (Batallones de la Dignidad):*** They are the paramilitary civilian militia forces that are bound to the Noriega regime with absolute loyalty and armed directly by the state. Carrying out the harassments against American citizens and acts of violence against political opponents (like the attacks in the 1989 elections) before the invasion, these groups caused an increase in civilian casualties by conducting an asymmetric urban guerrilla war in poor neighborhoods like El Chorrillo after the regular units of the American army crushed them.

***Apostolic Nunciature:*** It is the official name given to the highest level diplomatic representation, meaning the embassy, of the Vatican in independent states. This building in Panama City, where Manuel Noriega requested political asylum and hid on December 24, 1989, in the Panama crisis, is the biggest diplomatic deadlock center of the crisis. It is the place where American elite troops waited at the door, could not enter due to the diplomatic immunity armor provided by the 1961 Vienna Convention, and conducted that destructive psychological war (Operation Nifty Package) that lasted for days.

***Extraterritoriality:*** It is the attempt of a state to forcefully carry its own domestic law rules, laws, and local court decisions beyond international borders and put them into practice in another sovereign state. In the context of Panama, this term is the most controversial doctrinal equivalent in international law of the United States invading an independent state to capture Manuel Noriega, who was wanted for drug trafficking by Florida courts, and trying a foreign leader in its own courts.

### **3.Crisis Procedure**

#### **3.1. Nature and Purpose of the Crisis**

Crisis committees, unlike the classical MUN format, take as a basis a more dynamic, fast, and scenario-based negotiation structure. The main purpose of these committees is to include delegates in decision-making processes in international crisis environments that develop instantly and to simulate how real-world diplomacy functions under pressure. With this aspect, crisis committees highlight not only policy production but also the abilities of strategic thinking, giving fast reactions, and making multidimensional analysis.

Because of the nature of crisis committees, events do not progress in a linear way. Periodic “updates” provided by the Crisis Directorate remind delegates that the international environment they are in is constantly changing. These changes can sometimes be a military

development, sometimes an economic shock, and sometimes a rupture occurring in domestic politics. While responding to these developments, delegates must consider national interests, regional balances, and international law at the same time.

Another important aspect of crisis committees is that individual and collective action constantly affect each other. Delegates both work in coordination with their own crisis cabinets and participate in the diplomatic processes carried out in the committee in general. This two-way structure closely reflects real-world decision-making mechanisms. In addition, every decision made, every directive written, and every strategy created directly shapes the course of the committee; that is, the actions of the delegates produce results.

The purpose of crisis committees is not only to bring a situation under control. It is also to understand why crises emerge, evaluate their possible consequences, and develop sustainable solutions. For this reason, committees encourage delegates to think about both short-term urgent intervention and long-term stability. As a result, crisis committees provide the opportunity for delegates to develop a comprehensive perspective in interconnected fields such as international politics, military strategy, economy, society, and security.

### **3.2. How Will the Crisis Operate in UNESS?**

This committee will operate with a two-stage hybrid procedure, completely different from standard crisis cabinets or traditional General Assembly committees. Delegates are expected to strike a strategic balance between diplomatic negotiation processes and instant crisis interventions. The primary goal of the committee is to produce a concrete and actionable Final Declaration (Communique), rather than conducting general discussions. Delegates will start the sessions in a standard debate format, and the limits of the debate will be drawn within the framework of the main goals stated in the relevant section of this study guide. During this first stage, no crisis updates will be given to the committee in any way; all the energy and focus of the delegates will be to design, negotiate, and pass this communique through the committee by voting, which will solve the issue at hand.

The crisis mechanism in the committee is entirely conditional and designed in a reactive way to the actions of the delegates. For the crisis mode to be triggered, it is a must for the final communique to be officially accepted and published. The second the communique is published, the committee will instantly turn into a crisis cabinet, and the reflections of all the decisions taken on the ground will be activated. The sanctions, diplomatic moves, or operational decisions included in the communique will have consequences in the real world, and delegates will face live crisis updates showing the results of these decisions they took themselves. They will have to give new directives quickly to manage this new operational situation that arises. Considering the two-day conference duration, whether or not to move to the crisis stage depends entirely on the speed and efficiency of the committee. If the delegates cannot finish

the communique on time, the committee will complete its sessions without seeing the crisis stage.

### **3.3. Transition to Crisis Procedure**

At the UNESS committee, proceedings initially run in the classical Security Council order; delegates deliver their opening speeches, outline the general framework of the agenda, and create a diplomatic atmosphere regarding through which priorities the committee will proceed. However, the most fundamental feature of the committee is that this order does not continue in the same way for long. The transition to crisis procedure creates a breaking moment unique to UNESS that suddenly changes the structure and functioning of the committee.

The start of the crisis procedure generally occurs in an unexpected manner. A crisis update informing the delegates of an urgent development happening on the ground is delivered, and this notification causes a sudden shift from diplomatic discussions to operational thinking. From this moment on, the committee turns into a structure that moves faster, takes risks, and directly responds to every development on the ground. Delegates cease to be merely spokespersons representing their states; they transform into actors who manage the national decision-making mechanism. A process begins in which military, diplomatic, economic or humanitarian steps are planned and implemented.

With the transition to crisis procedure, the working style of the delegates also shows a clear change. Instead of long negotiations, quickly thought-out moves, direct intervention decisions, intelligence requests, operational preparation, urgent diplomatic contacts and sudden policy changes become important. The crisis updates being delivered to the committee at regular intervals allow delegates to see the results of their previous moves and take new positions according to the new developments. This dynamic structure significantly increases the tempo of the committee and keeps delegates constantly on alert.

The transition to crisis procedure changes not only the delegates but also the overall order of the committee. The Chair begins to manage the speaking flow more flexibly, times shorten, discussions accelerate and the decision-making mechanism intensifies enough to reflect the crisis environment of the real world. The session takes on a structure that requires less formality and more strategic thought. The preparation of draft resolutions, the writing of individual and group directives, and the close monitoring of the situation on the ground constitute the main agenda of the committee.

This transition also reshapes the internal dynamics of the committee. The crisis environment creates a field in which the diplomatic reflexes and strategic skills of the delegates become visible. While some delegates follow more aggressive and interventionist policies,

others may take more cautious and calculated steps. This creates an environment rich in both cooperation and competition and encourages the creativity of the delegates.

### **3.4. Types of Directives**

Particularly in crisis or special committees, directives are a crucial component of delegate interaction and strategy. These directives, categorized mainly into personal, joint, and intelligence directives, allow delegates to shape the committee's decisions and outcomes actively. Each type of directive serves a specific function and context.

#### ***3.4.1. Personal Directives***

Personal directives are unilateral actions taken by a single delegate, representing their assigned country or character. These directives are crafted solely by the delegate without the need for collaboration or approval from other participants, although their effectiveness might depend on the reactions of others in the committee. A typical personal directive includes specific actions, policy implementations, or responses to crises that align with the delegate's national policy and objectives. These directives can range from military maneuvers and diplomatic negotiations to economic measures and public statements. The main purpose of a personal directive is to assert a delegate's position, make immediate decisions, and respond to unfolding events in the simulation. They allow for quick, decisive action that can significantly influence the committee's direction.

#### ***3.4.2. Joint Directives***

Joint directives are collaborative efforts where two or more delegates come together to form a consensus on a particular action or policy. These directives require negotiation, cooperation, and sometimes compromise among the involved parties. These directives typically cover actions or policies that benefit from or require multilateral support, such as international agreements, coordinated military actions, or joint humanitarian aid efforts. The effectiveness of joint directives often hinges on their ability to gather widespread support or create coalitions. They demonstrate the power of diplomacy and collective action in addressing complex international issues.

#### ***3.4.3. Intelligence Directives***

Intelligence directives are unique to crisis committees and involve the management and use of information to gain strategic advantages. These directives can be issued by individual delegates or groups and are directed at the crisis staff who simulate intelligence agencies and other informational resources. Intelligence directives request or direct the gathering, analysis, and dissemination of crucial information relevant to the ongoing crisis or committee scenario. They may involve espionage, reconnaissance, or the securing of confidential communications. The primary goal of intelligence directives is to enhance a delegate's situational awareness and strategic positioning by obtaining valuable, often secret, information that can influence the committee's decisions and outcomes.

#### ***3.4.4. Committee Directives***

It is the type of directive written by the committee together. It is a type of directive written for solutions to very important crises. For example, since the atomic bombing of Japan by the USA in the Second World War was a major development, it requires the signature of the entire committee and is considered a committee directive.

#### ***3.4.5. Top Secret Directives***

Top Secret Directives cover actions involving high secrecy by nature that a delegate does not want to be known by other committee members or the rival cabinet. These directives are not read aloud or voted on in the committee session; instead, they are transmitted directly on paper or through a special communication channel to the Crisis Team. Generally, assassination attempts, espionage activities, sabotages, bribery, secret alliance negotiations, or covert military operations fall into this category. The main purpose of such directives is to obtain a strategic advantage on the field without the rivals' knowledge. However, in the case of these actions failing, there is a risk of exposure (leak); this can shake the delegate's credibility or cause serious diplomatic consequences.

#### ***3.4.6. Press Releases***

Press Releases are official or unofficial statements published by delegates or cabinets with the aim of influencing the public opinion in the "simulation world," other states, or the civilian population. The primary purpose of these directives is to conduct perception management rather than performing a physical action. It is used with targets such as propaganda, raising the public's morale, instilling fear in the enemy (psychological warfare), spreading disinformation, or gaining the support of the international community. For example,

making a won naval victory a headline in newspapers or publishing a declaration questioning a rival leader's legitimacy falls into this scope. An effective press release can

### **3.5. How to Write an Effective Directive?**

#### **I. Provide Clear and Explicit Information**

Know precisely what you want to achieve, and write it down. Be brief, but not so vague that misunderstandings arise. Instructions must be clear from the point of view of the person executing them.

#### **II. Keep it Short and Direct**

Avoid long instructions. Just write down all the necessary steps, giving enough information for the recipient to take effective action.

#### **III. Develop Your Strategy Step by Step**

Actions that are complex should be decomposed into smaller, manageable steps or activities. Specify the sequence and timing of each action, including who is responsible and what resources are required.

#### **IV. One Directive, One Issue**

Each directive should be for one purpose only to avoid confusion. One should never combine several objectives in one command. 5. Refer back to previous instructions Refer to any approved prior steps, if applicable, to maintain continuity and avoid gaps. Define what or whom specifically is being referred to, such as a unit, location, or symbol. 6. Use Exact Numbers Whenever possible, use concrete numbers instead of vague percentages. This applies to personnel, resources, or operational targets. Specific numbers create clarity and speed-up implementation.

Summary: Be specific and concise in directions and when building step-by-step action plans; focus instructions; refer to previously given instructions when appropriate; and use specific numbers. These tips ensure that directions are doable, clear, and easy to follow by the backroom staff during a crisis.

## **4. Introduction to the Agenda: The Invasion of Panama and the Scope of the Crisis**

### **4.1. Official Agenda Statement: Evaluation of the Consequences and Necessity of the Invasion**

The purpose of convening the United Nations Emergency Special Session (UNESS) is to activate global diplomacy and law at moments when the Security Council is deadlocked in maintaining international peace and security. In the final days of 1989, the large-scale military invasion initiated by the United States against Panama, which it termed "Operation Just Cause," ignited exactly such an international crisis. The primary agenda item of this committee is to deeply evaluate the legitimacy, necessity, and destructive consequences on the ground of the said invasion under international law. The fact that the world's greatest superpower ousted a head of state and disbanded the country's security forces by landing tens of thousands of troops on the territory of a sovereign state is in direct conflict with the principles of sovereignty and non-interference in internal affairs, which form the foundation of the United Nations Charter. In this session, delegates will not only condemn or approve a military operation but will also establish a historical precedent for how the international system will take a stance against such unilateral interventions in the future.

The debate over the necessity of the invasion represents one of the committee's most complex legal and moral dilemmas. The United States puts forward the reconstruction of democracy in Panama, the protection of the lives and safety of American citizens, the dismantling of international drug trafficking networks, and the securing of the Panama Canal's neutrality as the fundamental justifications for the operation. However, although the crimes and anti-democratic practices of Manuel Noriega's regime are known by the international community, the destruction of an entire country's infrastructure and the heavy casualties suffered by the civilian population for the purpose of toppling a dictator raise extremely serious question marks regarding the proportionality of the military intervention. In this context, the committee must decisively rule whether the argument of preventing human rights violations and narcotic crimes provides a sufficient and legitimate ground for violating the borders of an independent state. Otherwise, the way will be paved for powerful states to invade weaker states at any time by citing their own security or moral standards as justification.

On the other hand, the evaluation of the practical consequences created by the invasion on the ground requires emergency crisis management and diplomatic intervention at least as urgently as the legitimacy of the operation. The massive security vacuum created in the country by the total destruction of the Panama Defense Forces is setting the stage for the arming of civilians, looting, and the potential start of an urban guerrilla war. The fact that thousands of people have been left homeless, that refugee movements are spreading to neighboring countries, and that the operational security of the Panama Canal, which is the lifeblood of global trade, is endangered due to hot conflicts reveals not only the local but also the global

dimensions of the crisis. The primary duty of the delegates is to shape urgent diplomatic, humanitarian, and, if necessary, collective military measures to mitigate these destructive consequences, to design a multilateral transition process that will enable a legitimate civilian government to stand on its own feet in the country, and to guarantee the neutrality of the canal on behalf of the entire world. The decisions to be taken and the steps to be followed in this process will directly determine not only the fate of Panama but also the flexibility of international law and the world order being reshaped in the final stages of the Cold War.

#### 4.2. What is "Operation Just Cause"?

"Operation Just Cause" is a comprehensive invasion operation that went down in history as the largest-scale military intervention undertaken by the American military since the Vietnam War up to that time, launched at midnight on December twenty, nineteen eighty-nine, by order of United States President George H. W. Bush. This operation was not merely a simple point operation or a limited special forces raid aimed at toppling a leader; it was a massive demonstration of military power in



which more than twenty-seven thousand fully equipped American soldiers made simultaneous landings on Panamanian territory with the coordinated participation of air, land, and sea forces. The fundamental military strategy of the operation was built upon paralyzing the command and control centers of the Panama Defense Forces within the first hours by using overwhelming and instantaneous firepower, completely collapsing communication networks, and seizing strategic points such as the country's military bases and airports with lightning speed. In this direction, the most advanced military technologies, including stealth aircraft that were in the American military inventory and had not been tested on the battlefield until that day, were used directly in conflict zones where civilian settlements were also located, and the destructive dimension of the operation immediately exceeded the boundaries of international law.

The official justifications for the operation were presented to the international public by the Washington administration under four main headings. These were: ensuring the life safety

of American citizens located in Panama, restoring the disrupted democratic order in the country by toppling the dictatorship of Manuel Noriega, capturing Noriega, who was at the center of international drug trafficking and money laundering networks, to hand him over to American justice, and finally, protecting the integrity of the treaties guaranteeing the functioning of the canal. However, these official justifications and legal pretexts were destined to remain in the shadow of the disproportionate violence used on the ground to achieve the targeted results. Within the scope of the operation, the heavy bombardment of densely populated civilian areas, especially those around the military headquarters in the capital, led to thousands of civilians losing their lives, being injured, or becoming homeless, and the operation launched with the discourse of democracy and justice quickly turned into a complete humanitarian catastrophe. The fact that the United States invaded a sovereign state from top to bottom to capture a foreign state leader it declared an international criminal and to protect its own political interests placed the claim of justification in the operation's name at the center of a massive global ethical and legitimacy debate.

In this context, it is essential for the delegates within the committee to read the operation in question not merely as a military victory or a tactical move, but through the deep rupture it created in the international system. This operation became the most concrete declaration that, in the closing phase of the Cold War, the United States could now change regimes as it pleased in Latin America, which it saw as its own backyard, not through the threat



of communism but under the discourses of fighting drugs and exporting democracy, and could disband the entire army and police force of a country when necessary. Delegates are obliged to prevent this unilateral military shock doctrine from becoming an international norm, to hold to account the physical and economic destruction the Panamanian people were subjected to, and to establish diplomatic pressure mechanisms that will ensure the withdrawal of

occupying forces from sovereign lands. Resurrecting the principle of national sovereignty, which is gasping for air at the muzzles of heavy weapons on the ground, and resolving the crisis centered on the person of Noriega without turning it into an asymmetrical war that will spread to the region, is the most fundamental task that delegates must build upon the wreckage of this operation.

### 4.3. Why was the United Nations Emergency Special Session Convened?

In the institutional architecture of the United Nations system, the primary responsibility and authority for the maintenance of international peace and security lies within the monopoly of the Security Council in accordance with the organization's charter. The Security Council, which is the authority to take binding decisions and, if necessary, approve the use of collective force in the face of any threat to peace, breach of peace, or direct act of aggression, convened urgently following the massive military invasion initiated by the United States against



Panamanian territory on December twenty, nineteen eighty-nine. In these emergency meetings initiated upon the request of Nicaragua and other regional countries, various draft resolutions demanding the immediate withdrawal of the occupying forces from Panama were presented, emphasizing that the unilateral intervention carried out by the United States was a

clear violation of the prohibition on the use of force and the principle of national sovereignty contained in the fourth paragraph of the second article of the United Nations Charter. However, the chronic institutional deadlock of the Cold War manifested itself once again at this point; the United States, by using its right of veto arising from being a permanent member of the Security Council with the support of the United Kingdom and France, completely paralyzed any diplomatic condemnation or sanction decision that could be taken against it while still at the voting table. The fact that a global superpower blocked the international judgment of an act of invasion, of which it was the perpetrator, through its own vote dragged the peacekeeping mission of the United Nations into a deep crisis of legitimacy.

The fact that the Security Council remained completely dysfunctional due to the veto blockade and fell into silence in the face of the blatant violation of international law caused a great outcry, especially among the Latin American bloc, the Non-Aligned Movement, and the countries of the global South, who feared that such unilateral interventions would set a precedent for their own national security. In a scenario where the capital of a sovereign state was bombed by a foreign army, its security forces were destroyed, and its head of state was ousted, the helpless waiting of the international community was considered an unacceptable diplomatic bankruptcy. In order to overcome this political and legal congestion and to make the voices of small and medium-sized states heard against the superpower monopoly hiding behind the veto shield, the necessity arose to resort to one of the most exceptional and powerful legal weapons of the United Nations mechanism. Based on the fact that the fate of the world cannot be left solely to the initiative of the five permanent members, the diplomatic center of gravity was shifted to the General Assembly, which is the most democratic and widely participated organ of the organization.

At precisely this point, the historical mechanism envisaging that the General Assembly take immediate initiative in cases where the Security Council fails to fulfill its primary duty regarding the provision of international peace and security was activated, and a call was made to convene the United Nations Emergency Special Session. The reason for convening this session is not to conduct an ordinary general assembly debate or to take superficial decisions of a recommendatory nature; it is to defend the rule of law against the military ambitions of superpowers from a podium representing the common will of the international community. Delegates have come together in this session not only to vote on the invasion of Panama but also to prove what kind of alternative power mechanism the United Nations can create in moments of crisis. The Emergency Special Session was constructed as a platform for collective resistance and crisis management for the states of the world trying to protect their national sovereignty against the elitist and deadlock-prone structure of the Security Council; the Panama issue became one of the heaviest and most urgent historical tests placed upon the shoulders of this platform.

#### **4.4. Deadlock of the Security Council and Veto Wars of the Big Five**

Although the United Nations Security Council is the highest-level executive body authorized to maintain peace in the international system and to take binding measures against acts of aggression, it has been unable to escape falling hostage to the political interests of superpowers throughout history due to the system of permanent membership and the right of veto inherent in its structure. The Big Five, consisting of the United States, the Soviet Union, the United Kingdom, France, and China (the victors of the Second World War) have often used this extraordinary privilege granted to them to ensure global security as a diplomatic shield to evade the oversight of international law for their own imperial and strategic moves. What happened under the roof of the Security Council immediately after the total invasion of Panama by the United States on December twenty, nineteen eighty-nine, has gone down in history as one of the most concrete manifestations of this structural paralysis and injustice. With the start of the invasion, a large part of the international community, especially Latin American countries and the Non-Aligned Movement, submitted urgent draft resolutions to the Security Council aimed at condemning this clear violation of sovereignty, demanding the immediate withdrawal of American troops from Panamanian territory, and stopping the bloodshed. However, these diplomatic initiatives defending the rule of law and the fundamental principles of the United Nations Charter fell



victim to the power balances and alliance networks within the Big Five while still at the negotiating table.

The unhesitating use of the right of veto by the United States to prevent the international judgment of an act of invasion that it directly conducted and was the lead actor of revealed the greatest paradox within the system. Not only the United States but also its closest allies in the international arena, the United Kingdom and France, provided diplomatic protection to the Washington administration by using their veto rights against the draft resolutions in question, turning the Security Council from a resolution authority into a mechanism for legitimizing the actions of the Western bloc. The prohibition of the threat or use of force, contained in the fourth paragraph of the second article of the United Nations Charter, was violated by the permanent members themselves who were obligated to protect this very prohibition and gained immunity through the votes of those same members. The support of the Soviet Union and China, located on the opposite front, for the resolutions condemning the invasion, rather than resolving the situation, caused the issue to become part of the habitual polarization politics of the final stages of the Cold War and imprisoned the council in a literal diplomatic trench war. This degree of deadlock in the Security Council carried a terrifying message for small and medium-sized states worldwide; for the system was allowing a global power to erase an independent state from the map whenever it wished and to continue this action without facing any sanctions. This institutional congestion not only pushed the crisis into a state of irresolution but also revealed in all its nakedness the fact that world peace cannot be left solely to the mercy of five countries, making the convening of the United Nations Emergency Special Session an inevitable historical necessity.

#### **4.5. Legal Force of the "Uniting for Peace" Resolution**

The "Uniting for Peace" resolution is one of the most critical legal lifelines that redefines the constitutional boundaries of the United Nations system and prevents the organization from freezing during moments of crisis. This resolution, numbered three hundred seventy-seven and adopted in nineteen fifty to overcome Soviet Union vetoes during the Korean War, acknowledges the primary responsibility of the Security Council in maintaining international peace and security, yet transfers the initiative directly to the General Assembly in cases where this body fails to fulfill its duty due to a lack of unanimity among the permanent members. The legal framework of the resolution allows the General Assembly to seize the situation by convening in the format of an Emergency Special Session within twenty-four hours when there is a threat to peace, a breach of peace, or an act of aggression, and the Security Council is deadlocked. This transfer of authority is not merely a procedural change of form; it also grants the General Assembly a massive legal power, such as recommending collective measures to member states, including the use of armed force when necessary, to maintain or restore international peace and security. This sphere of authority, expanded in harmony with articles ten and eleven of the United Nations Charter, possesses the quality of a

historical legal revolution that enables states without the right of veto to move from being passive observers in global crises to becoming active decision-makers.

For this committee convened on the axis of the invasion of Panama, the legal power of the "Uniting for Peace" resolution is the sole foundation determining the delegates' field of maneuver. The consecutive vetoing of resolutions condemning its own military intervention by the United States in the Security Council, with the support of the United Kingdom and France, completely paralyzed the ordinary functioning of the system and made the invocation of resolution three hundred seventy-seven inevitable. While acting on this legal ground, delegates must be aware that they are moving far beyond the limits of taking non-binding recommendatory decisions of a standard General Assembly committee. Thanks to the extraordinary authority provided by the "Uniting for Peace" mechanism, the decisions to be taken in this session have the potential to cover a broad and impactful spectrum ranging from the establishment of an international sanctions regime for the withdrawal of occupying forces to the deployment of a multinational peacekeeping force to the region for the restoration of the disrupted order in Panama. Consequently, committee members are obliged not only to draft a text of diplomatic condemnation but also to construct, through this legal resolution, the collective security architecture that will restrain the disproportionate use of force by great powers and effectively stop violations of national sovereignty on the ground. In this context, the resolution in question is the sharpest diplomatic sword that small and medium-sized states can wield against superpower hegemony, and how effectively this sword is swung depends entirely on the maneuvering capability of the delegates at the moment of crisis.

## **5. Historical and Political Origins of the Crisis**

### **5.1. Historical Development of US-Panama Relations and the Geopolitical Importance of the Canal**

The foundation of the deep-rooted and turbulent relations between the United States and Panama was built upon the Washington administration's emergence onto the historical stage as a global imperial power by expanding the Monroe Doctrine in the late nineteenth century and the necessity for its navy to be able to pass quickly between two oceans. American military strategists, who felt the need to ensure a decisive naval superiority in both the Atlantic and Pacific oceans following the Spanish-American War, made transforming the narrowest isthmus of Central America into a maritime trade and military transit route their number one national security priority. Rising upon the wreckage of the first canal attempt, which was initiated by the French under the leadership of Ferdinand de Lesseps but ended in bankruptcy due to diseases and engineering errors, the American vision was embodied by the aggressive foreign policy of then-President Theodore Roosevelt. The plans to build a canal in the Panama isthmus, which was legally a part of Colombian territory at the time, turned into a major diplomatic crisis when the Colombian senate rejected the heavy concession treaty offered by the United States. However, this political and legal congestion did not lead Washington to abandon its strategic



goals; on the contrary, it led it to conduct an overt "gunboat diplomacy" by surreptitiously financing separatist Panamanian movements in the region and sending warships to the coast. The independence of Panama, declared in nineteen hundred and three under the shadow of the battleship USS Nashville, was actually the official start of the asymmetrical relationship, the interventionist doctrine, and the forced alliance between the two countries.

The Hay-Bunau-Varilla Treaty, signed only a few days after the declaration of independence, is the most tragic legal document of how Panama's sovereign rights were usurped before they were even born. With this treaty, signed by the French engineer Philippe Bunau-Varilla, who represented the new republic in Washington and under which no Panamanian official's signature appeared, the United States obtained full sovereign rights that would last "forever" for the construction, operation, and military defense of the canal zone, effectively placing Panama under an American protectorate. With the opening of the canal in nineteen hundred and fourteen at the cost of a superhuman engineering effort and the lives of tens of thousands of workers, the geopolitical importance of the isthmus reached not only a continental but a global dimension. This massive engineering marvel, which reduced the tens of thousands of kilometers of dangerous sea route between the Atlantic and the Pacific to a single strait, formed the jugular vein of the American military's worldwide military transit capability in addition to being the epicenter of global trade networks. The ten-mile-wide Panama Canal Zone created around the canal took on the status of a "state within a state" that was not just an administrative area but was surrounded by wire fences, had its own police, courts, schools, and mail service, and where American laws were fully applicable.

This exclusionary structure opened irreparable wounds in the demographic and socio-economic fabric of the isthmus. The system established during the construction and subsequent operation process of the canal created a mechanism of institutional racism and economic exploitation in which white American employees received high salaries and lived in luxury under the "Gold Roll," while black workers brought from the Caribbean and local Panamanians were condemned to poverty wages under the name of the "Silver Roll." The fact that Panamanians could not enter these strategic lands located at the very heart of their own country, being treated as foreigners, prepared the ground for a deep national loss of pride in Panamanian society over time and an increasingly escalating, explosive anti-imperialist nationalism. The United States, ignoring this rising local anger toward the region, turned the canal and its surroundings into one of the world's largest military garrisons during the Second World War and the subsequent Cold War period. With the establishment of the headquarters of the United States Southern Command (SOUTHCOM) here, the canal zone became the host of institutions such as the "School of the Americas," used to suppress communist movements in

Latin America, fight leftist guerrillas, and train right-wing military dictators who would serve American interests.

The fact that the canal ceased to be a waterway facilitating international trade and turned into the operational center of American military hegemony in Latin America further sharpened the perception of occupation in the eyes of the Panamanian masses. This longing for independence and demand for sovereignty accumulated over the years turned into a bloody rebellion during the "Martyrs' Day" events in January of nineteen hundred and sixty-four, which resulted from high school students wanting to enter the Canal Zone to plant the Panamanian flag and American soldiers opening fire on the crowd. This turning point, in which twenty-one Panamanian civilians lost their lives, shattered the illusion of peaceful coexistence between the United States and Panama forever. This series of events proved to Washington that the canal could not remain under American control forever, while simultaneously creating the psychological infrastructure for the populist and anti-American rhetoric upon which military figures like Manuel Noriega would rise. In summary, the reduction of Panama to the position of a tenant in its own lands from its founding and the strategic weight of the canal crushing the country's independent identity became the largest historical minefield laid on the road to the nineteen eighty-nine invasion.

## **5.2. 1977 Torrijos-Carter Treaties and Tensions in the Canal Transfer Process**

Following the bloody Martyrs' Day events of 1964, the increasingly radicalizing nationalist wave in Panama and the demand for the isthmus's full independence were carried into a brand new and uncompromising diplomatic dimension with the military coup carried out by General Omar Torrijos in 1968. Torrijos's determined stance on reclaiming the sovereignty of the canal and his internationalization of this issue by taking it all the way to the United Nations Security Council found a historical ground for compromise with the election of Jimmy Carter as President of the United States. The Carter administration accepted renegotiating the status of the Canal Zone, which had been seen as a symbol of imperialism for more than half a century, with the aim of correcting the interventionist and colonial American image in Latin America, building a new foreign policy focused on human rights, and winning a diplomatic victory in the ideological battlefield of the Cold War. After years of tough, grueling, and at times near-breaking point negotiations, the Torrijos-Carter Treaties signed in Washington on



September 7, 1977, became a turning point that fundamentally changed the legal framework of the asymmetrical relationship between the two countries. This package of treaties actually consists not of a single text but of two separate critical documents that complement each other while simultaneously harboring the seeds of future major crises, even an invasion. The first treaty, the Panama Canal Treaty, envisaged ending the legal existence of the American-controlled Canal Zone as a "state within a state," gradually transferring the sovereignty of these lands to Panama, and the definitive transition of the full operational control of the canal to the Panamanian government on December 31, 1999. While this decision was celebrated by the Panamanian people as the ultimate victory of their decades-long struggle for independence, a long and painful 20-year transition period was planned by establishing a joint commission for the operation and defense of the canal.

However, the second part of the package, which is most pregnant with international legal debates, is the Treaty Concerning the Permanent Neutrality and Operation of the Panama Canal. This second document ensured that while the United States would transfer physical control over the canal over time, Washington would retain the right to intervene militarily indefinitely against any situation that would threaten the canal's openness and neutrality. This vague and highly interpretation-prone military intervention authority created deep fault lines in the domestic politics of both countries. On the United States side, hawk conservative circles, primarily Ronald Reagan, evaluated these treaties as a heavy blow to American national security, the throwing away of a massive strategic asset they had built themselves, and a great weakness shown in Central America against the Soviet threat, effectively accusing the Carter administration of treason. On the Panamanian side, while radical nationalists and leftist groups welcomed the reclamation of lands on paper, they argued that these documents did not bring full independence, asserting that the Neutrality Treaty provided the United States with an endless and legitimate excuse to intervene in Panama's internal affairs with weapons whenever it wished. Indeed, by the 1980s, with the death of General Torrijos in a highly suspicious plane crash in 1981 and the subsequent rise of Manuel Noriega, who seized key points of the state, this 20-year handover process drifted into a spiral of great paranoia and distrust. The Washington administration began to see the idea of leaving this geopolitical center (which is the jugular vein of global trade and possesses a multi-billion dollar military infrastructure) in the hands of an unpredictable dictator who associated with drug cartels and was sliding towards an increasingly anti-American line, as an unacceptable national security risk. Consequently, the Torrijos-Carter Treaties, while attempting to repair a historical injustice by legally recognizing Panama's sovereign rights on one hand, hidden within their own lines on the other hand, through that massive diplomatic gap provided by the Neutrality Treaty, the most fundamental legal pretext and ground for intervention for the destructive military invasion that would be launched in 1989.

### **5.3. The Rise of Manuel Noriega: From CIA Intelligence to Military Dictatorship**

The journey of Manuel Noriega's ascent to become the absolute ruler of Panama is one of the most concrete and destructive products of the pragmatic and often morally contradictory intelligence policies pursued by the United States in Latin America during the Cold War. Noriega, who began his military career by joining the Panamanian National Guard after receiving training in Peru, soon attracted the attention of American officials thanks to his ambitious nature and natural inclination for intelligence gathering. Establishing a deep and dark network of relations with the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) from the late 1960s onwards, Noriega became one of Washington's most reliable regional assets in exchange for the critical information he provided regarding leftist guerrilla movements, communist unions, and anti-American political groups in the region. Noriega, who also received psychological warfare and intelligence training at the famous School of the Americas established by the United States to train military personnel in Latin America, ruthlessly used this equipment to liquidate his rivals in his own country. Playing a key role in the military coup carried out by General Omar Torrijos in 1968, he rose to the position of Torrijos's closest and most feared man, and was subsequently appointed head of G-2, Panama's military intelligence service. During his years at the head of G-2, Noriega did not only blacklist his own people and eliminate dissidents but also masterfully built the profile of an indispensable ally for Washington by transforming Panama into the largest listening and operation center for American intelligence in Central America.

The death of General Torrijos in a suspicious plane crash in 1981 created a massive power vacuum in Panamanian politics, and this vacuum was filled with a ruthless maneuverability by Noriega, who had been weaving his own intelligence network behind the



for years. Manipulating the short-term leadership struggles and internal executions following Torrijos's death to his own advantage, Noriega sat at the peak of the military hierarchy by 1983, taking the title of commander-in-chief of the Panamanian army and becoming the de facto dictator of the country. To consolidate his power, his first task was to restructure the old National Guard and establish the Panama Defense

Forces (PDF), a massive military mechanism equipped with heavy weapons and directly loyal to himself. This new military structure transformed Panama into a literal military garrison state by swallowing all the vital organs of the state, from the country's police force to customs gates, from immigration bureaus to civil aviation. Although Noriega constructed a showcase democracy on paper where civilian presidents came to office through elections, in reality, all

political appointments, economic decisions, and foreign policy moves were dictated directly from the military headquarters under his control. During this period, the United States turned a blind eye to this oppressive and corrupt regime established by Noriega for a long time in return for the logistical support he provided to the American-backed Contra guerrillas fighting against the Sandinista government in Nicaragua and his cooperation against leftist rebels in El Salvador; thus, the anti-communist doctrine of the Cold War was deliberately used as a shield for the birth and empowerment of a dictator who would later become uncontrollable.

#### 5.4. Anti-Communist Doctrine in Central America at the End of the Cold War

Central America, which the United States has seen as its own backyard since the nineteenth century, turned into one of the bloodiest and most ruthless ideological battlefields of the Cold War that broke out on a global scale following the Second World War. Especially after

the Cuban Revolution in nineteen fifty-nine, the fear of the "birth of a second Cuba" felt to the core by the Washington administration completely imprisoned American foreign policy in the region within a paranoia of domino theory. In nineteen seventy-nine, the seizure of power by Sandinista guerrillas in Nicaragua by toppling the American-backed Somoza dictatorship and the increasing strengthening of leftist FMLN guerrillas in El Salvador mobilized the Ronald Reagan administration, and an aggressive anti-communist doctrine aimed at stopping the spread of communism in the region at all costs was put into effect. The fundamental philosophy of this doctrine was built upon seeing issues such as human rights violations, corruption, or the suspension of democratic values as



complete trivialities and unconditionally supporting any kind of right-wing dictatorship, military junta, or paramilitary death squad that could break the influence of the Soviet Union and Cuba in the region. On this geopolitical chessboard, Panama went far beyond being just a strategic waterway and became the nerve center of the United States' anti-communist operations in Central America. The massive military and intelligence presence of the United

States Southern Command (SOUTHCOM) in Panama functioned as an operational base where the flow of weapons and ammunition was provided to the Contra guerrillas trying to topple the leftist government in Nicaragua, where the El Salvadoran army was trained, and where leftist movements throughout Latin America were wiretapped and blacklisted. Manuel Noriega also appeared on the scene during this period as the most useful subcontractor of Washington's dirty war; thanks to the intelligence he provided to the CIA and the logistical support he gave to the Contras, a diplomatic shield was provided by the American state for years for the empire of drugs and violence he established in his own country.

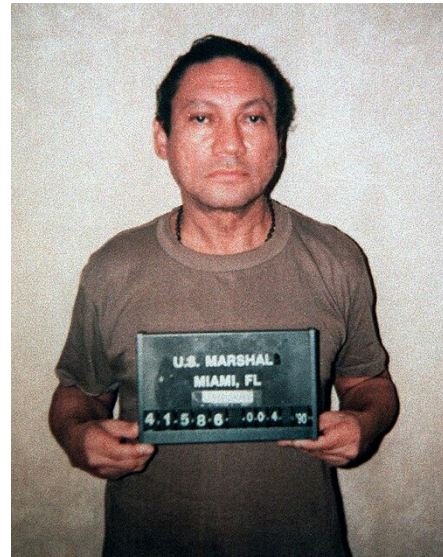
However, as the end of the nineteen eighties approached, seismic changes in the global power balances began to fundamentally shake this traditional anti-communist doctrine and alliance relations of the United States in Central America. The Glasnost and Perestroika initiatives launched by Mikhail Gorbachev in the Soviet Union, the cracking of the Eastern Bloc, and the fact that the Cold War was visibly nearing its end eliminated that great "communist threat" argument that justified Washington's military interventions and the support it gave to corrupt dictators in the region. It became impossible to convince the American public and Congress to fund dictators by merely saying "they are fighting against Moscow-backed leftists." This ideological vacuum made it mandatory for the United States to create a new enemy and a new intervention doctrine to maintain its hegemonic presence in Latin America. The enemy of the new era was identified no longer as communist guerrillas but as drug cartels poisoning the American continent and the "narco-terrorist" dictatorships cooperating with them; the new ground of legitimacy for intervention was constructed as the "promotion and construction of democracy." This massive paradigm shift became the beginning of the end for Manuel Noriega, who had been clad in an armor of immunity under the protective umbrella of the anti-communist doctrine for years. Losing his strategic value with the end of the Cold War and, moreover, starting to act independently by going out of control, Noriega was no longer declared an intelligence asset to be protected for Washington but a "global criminal" who had to be urgently destroyed and sentenced to an exemplary punishment. The most critical historical reality that delegates must not forget throughout the committee is this: the invasion of Panama is not just a drug operation, but the first and largest laboratory experiment of the United States assuming the role of global police in the unipolar new world order after the Cold War and shifting its foreign policy from anti-communism to the concept of "military intervention in the name of democracy and human rights."

## **5.5. Drug Cartels, Money Laundering Allegations, and Noriega's Double Game**

The most fundamental factor that prepared the collapse of the complex and dark alliance Manuel Noriega established with the United States was his positioning at the center of a massive global crime network by transcending the ideological boundaries of the Cold War and his commencement of an incredible double game. The nineteen eighties were a period when cocaine produced in South America flowed like a flood into the North American market and illegal structures such as the Colombia-based Medellin Cartel reached almost the capacity

of states. Panama, located right in the middle of this massive narcotic storm, became one of the most critical transfer stations of drug routes thanks to its geographical location and weak oversight mechanisms. Noriega saw this strategic position of his country not only as an opportunity to gain military and political power but also as a unique chance to increase his personal wealth to inconceivable dimensions. The dictator, who connected the country's airports, ports, and customs gates directly to the Panama Defense Forces under his own control, established an extremely profitable and secret partnership with Pablo Escobar and other high-level cartel leaders. Within the framework of this partnership, planes taking off from Colombia and carrying tons of cocaine landed safely at military bases in Panama, and drug shipments continued on their way toward the United States borders directly under the protection of Panamanian soldiers. Noriega did not only provide a transit route but also sold intelligence he acquired about the operations of the Colombian army and the American Drug Enforcement Administration to the cartels, rising to the position of the highest-level state-sponsored protector of illegal trade.

Another pillar of this dark partnership, which was at least as destructive as the drug shipments, was the process of integrating billions of dollars of black money obtained from the drug trade into the international financial system. Thanks to the system Noriega constructed, Panama became not only a drug corridor but also the world's largest money laundering machine. The extremely flexible banking laws and strict bank secrecy practices in the country allowed cartels to deposit their bloody money into Panamanian banks without facing any legal oversight and to introduce it into the global economy from there under the guise of legal commercial investments. The most striking dimension of the matter, which would later trigger a massive diplomatic crisis, was the dangerous double game Noriega continued to play with American intelligence services while simultaneously managing this entire global crime network. While Noriega, on one hand, received a salary from the Central Intelligence Agency, surreptitiously provided weapons to Contra guerrillas, and had some rival drug traffickers caught by American Drug Enforcement Administration officials to collect letters of appreciation from them; on the other hand, he sat at the same table and took a share of the profit with the very drug lords these institutions were trying to destroy. When the intelligence apparatuses of the United States realized that their own "loyal dictator," whom they had nurtured and raised for years, was actually at the very heart of the largest drug network poisoning the American continent, the political shockwave and anger in Washington reached massive proportions. When this daring double game of Noriega was exposed, it led to him being coded not just as a corrupt and uncontrollable military leader, but as a fierce international narco-terrorist directly threatening American national security and public health; this situation formed one of the strongest moral arguments presented to the American people to justify the nineteen eighty-nine invasion and to step outside of international law.



## 5.6. 1989 Panama Elections, Annulment Decision, and Democratic Collapse

The presidential elections held in May 1989 went down in history as the last and most critical historical opportunity for the civilian opposition to overthrow the dictatorship through the ballot box in Panama's increasingly narrowing political space. The destructive effect of the heavy economic sanctions applied by the United States on the public and the ever-increasing oppression of the Manuel Noriega regime forced civilian political groups, which would normally compete with each other, to unite under a single roof. The Democratic Opposition Alliance, established under the leadership of Guillermo Endara and with the participation of



Ricardo Arias Calderon and Guillermo Ford, turned into a civilian resistance front that the overwhelming majority of the people pinned their hopes on against the military regime. When election day came, despite the intense intimidation by the Panama Defense Forces on the streets and systematic threats at the ballot boxes, the Panamanian people went to the polls with a record turnout and bravely showed their democratic will. According to the records kept by independent pollsters,

international church groups, and foreign observers, the opposition coalition won an overwhelming and undisputed victory against the regime-supported candidate at the ballot boxes by a ratio of almost 3 to 1. However, this democratic rise would soon hit the cold and bloody wall of the military dictatorship, which was sworn not to give up power at any cost, and it would be bitterly registered that Panama's political fate would be determined not at the ballot boxes, but in the shadow of guns.

The moment it was understood that the election results were finalized against the regime, a total attack was launched against the country's democratic institutions by the direct order of Noriega, and the election process was effectively hijacked with a state violence rarely seen. The vote counting process was forcibly stopped by armed soldiers, ballot boxes were confiscated, ballots were burned and destroyed in the middle of the streets, and ultimately the submissive election court tied to the regime announced that it completely canceled the elections with a baseless excuse claiming that American imperialism and foreign powers interfered in the election. However, the Noriega regime was not satisfied with just a legal cancellation decision; it unleashed paramilitary civilian gangs called the Dignity Battalions, which were directly tied to him, onto the streets to suppress civil disobedience, break the will of the people, and physically eliminate opposition leaders. Opposition leaders Endara and Ford, who organized a peaceful march to claim the election results and protest the cancellation decision, were attacked by these paramilitary groups with iron bars and weapons in front of the

international press cameras. The iconic photo of vice presidential candidate Guillermo Ford in his blood-soaked shirt, taken while his bodyguard was killed, became the global symbol of the Noriega regime's brutality. Former United States President Jimmy Carter, who was the architect of the Torrijos-Carter Treaties and was in the country to observe the elections on site, reported what happened to the world public as a clear robbery and a dictatorship disaster, which destroyed Noriega's last crumbs of legitimacy in the international arena. This democratic collapse not only completely isolated Panama from the world, but also offered the George Bush administration the opportunity on a golden platter to justify that massive military intervention, which had been planned in the Pentagon for months and was looking for a legal cover, with an extremely strong and undeniable moral argument like giving democracy back to the Panamanian people.

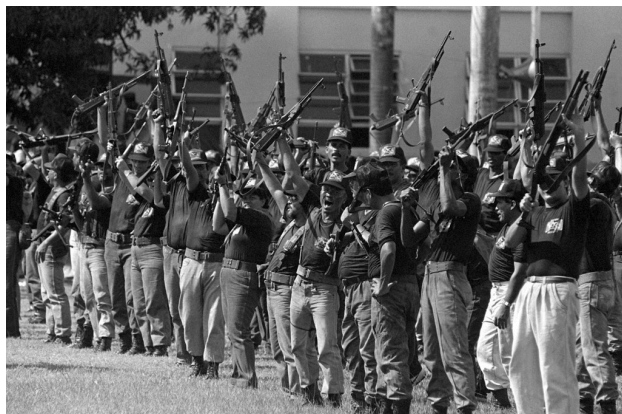
### **5.7. The Sparks that Ignited the Fire: Harassment of US Citizens and the Girón Incident**

After the bloody cancellation of the elections in May 1989, the increasingly narrowing political isolation in Panama and the growing economic embargoes of the United States dragged the Manuel Noriega regime into a deep paranoia and a feeling of being cornered. The dictatorship, which completely lost its international legitimacy, adopted an asymmetrical threat



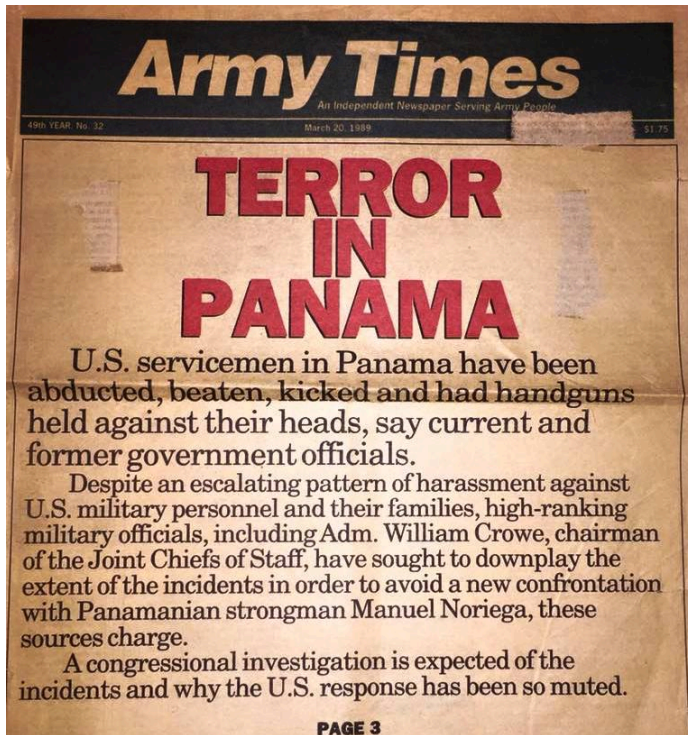
strategy to maintain its authority inside and challenge the Washington administration; it started a systematic psychological warfare and harassment campaign against tens of thousands of American military personnel and civilians living in the Canal Zone. The biggest striking force of the regime was not the regular army units, but the paramilitary gangs called "Dignity Battalions" (Batallones de la Dignidad), which were blindly loyal to Noriega and established directly to terrorize civilians. These

groups turned the checkpoints around the Canal Zone into armed threat centers with machetes, baseball bats, and submachine guns in their hands to turn the daily lives of American citizens into hell. Vehicles of American soldiers and diplomats were constantly stopped, detained for hours with unfair excuses, fake arrests were made, and civilian Americans were subjected to verbal and physical attacks by armed gangs in the middle of the street. This low intensity conflict strategy turned into a dangerous war of nerves where Noriega tested how far he could go against the United States; the anti American hysteria on the streets was fueled more every day directly through state media. The



Washington administration, on the other hand, silently accumulated these successive harassment reports and started to file them with great care as the strongest moral and legal justification for the approaching massive military intervention in the international public eye.

One of the biggest breaking points behind this tension strategy is actually the failed coup attempt that took place in October of the same year and created a deep regret in the foreign policy of the United States. A group of dissident Panama Defense Forces officers led by Major Moises Giroldi came very close to overthrowing the regime by capturing Noriega in



his own headquarters, but the coup was suppressed in a bloody way because the American army hesitated to provide active military support to this attempt. Noriega issued the bill for this uprising, from which he barely escaped at the last moment, in an extremely brutal way; Giroldi and the officers with him were brutally executed after going through inhuman tortures in the event known as the "Albrook Massacre". This failed coup attempt and the subsequent massacre created almost a political earthquake in Washington, and President George H. W. Bush's administration was accused of weakness and "missing a golden opportunity to overthrow Noriega". This hesitation in October completely

changed the mindset of American decision makers; the Pentagon and the White House definitively concluded that Noriega had consolidated his power too much to be overthrown by an internal military coup anymore and that a direct American military intervention was inevitable. Therefore, starting from October, the American army had already put the invasion plans on the table, prepared the operation orders, and simply started waiting for that final spark, that perfect moment of self defense, which could explain this massive operation to both the domestic public and the United Nations.

That expected final and irreversible break happened in mid December with that disastrous chain of diplomatic and military mistakes that prepared Noriega's own end. On December 15, 1989, the puppet National Assembly under Noriega's absolute control not only approved a resolution declaring him the "Maximum Leader" (Lider Maximo) of the country, but also announced to the world public that Panama was officially in a state of war due to the endless hostile actions of the United States. This declaration of war was coded as a clear "target the Americans" order given to the paramilitary groups and the military on the streets, going far beyond diplomatic rhetoric. Just one day after this provocative declaration, on the night of December 16, a vehicle carrying four American officers in civilian clothes mistakenly entered

a military checkpoint near the PDF headquarters (La Comandancia) in El Chorrillo, one of the most dangerous neighborhoods of Panama City, and this ignited the fuse of that expected disaster. In the brawl that broke out when heavily armed Panamanian soldiers and angry civilian gangs surrounding the vehicle tried to force the officers out of the vehicle, the officers tried to quickly drive away from the scene, which resulted in PDF troops opening heavy fire on the vehicle. Under this intense fire, American Marine First Lieutenant Robert Paz lost his life, and the other officers in the vehicle miraculously managed to escape with injuries. The death of First Lieutenant Paz meant that the psychological war that had been going on for months was sealed with the first official American blood.

However, the horror experienced that night was not limited to the shooting of First Lieutenant Paz. An American Navy officer and his wife, who witnessed the conflict and were approaching the checkpoint at that time, were dragged out of their vehicle by Panamanian forces and detained. The hours this couple spent at the PDF police station took the dimension of the crisis out of an ordinary conflict and turned it into an international human rights scandal. While the American officer was brutally beaten, his wife was threatened with sexual assault by Panamanian soldiers and subjected to severe psychological torture. When the details of these two events reached Washington, the strategic patience that had been going on for months in the White House evaporated instantly. The declaration of war, the execution of an unarmed American officer in the middle of the street, and the detention of an American citizen with his wife and threatening her with sexual assault put the strongest *casus belli* (cause for war) imaginable in front of President Bush to use the right of self defense in international law (United Nations Charter Article 51). Now there was not just a drug trafficker or a corrupt dictator, but a profile of a "rogue state" that directly targeted the lives and honor of American citizens, disregarded regional peace, and was impossible to control. The order to start "Operation Just Cause" for the United States army was given exactly within twenty four hours after these events, by hiding behind an unshakable legal justification like directly ensuring the life safety of American citizens. This is the biggest diplomatic dilemma that the delegates should focus on in crisis management and in the committee: How proportional and legitimate can it be accepted in international law for a state to erase all the political and military infrastructure of that sovereign state from the map with twenty seven thousand soldiers by citing the violence its citizens abroad are subjected to?

## **6. Military, Economic, and Diplomatic Dimensions**

### **6.1. Military Anatomy of the Operation and Tactical Moves**

"Operation Just Cause", which the United States army launched around 01:00 midnight on December 20, 1989, went down in history as one of the most perfect and destructive laboratory examples of the "overwhelming force" doctrine and simultaneous decapitation strategy in modern military history. Containing the largest airborne operation carried out since the Second World War, this operation was designed with the logic of a total conventional war

rather than a simple police raid or a limited special forces operation. The Pentagon's main military goal was not to gradually weaken the Panama Defense Forces (PDF). Instead, it was to completely paralyze the enemy's command and control mechanism in the first hours of the operation with a single and massive shockwave where land, air, and sea elements were used in tremendous synchronization. For this purpose, in addition to the 13,000 American soldiers already stationed in the Canal Zone, a fully equipped reinforcement force of 14,000 personnel



(82nd Airborne Division, Army Rangers, Marines, and Navy SEAL teams) taking off from the United States mainland was dropped directly into the conflict zones. Exceeding 27,000 in total, the American military personnel descended upon the Panama Defense Forces, which consisted of a combat force of only a few thousand people and lacked heavy weapons and air defense systems, with an incredible

asymmetric power. This massive buildup clearly announced to the international public that the real purpose of the military intervention was not just to catch Noriega, but also to wipe the country's entire military and institutional infrastructure off the map.

The tactical moves of the operation were planned with fine engineering upon hitting the strategic points of Panama simultaneously and completely closing Noriega's escape routes. One of the most striking and symbolic moves of the operation was the first use of F-117 Nighthawk stealth aircraft in an active combat zone, as a first in military aviation history. This stealth bombardment carried out against the PDF military base in Rio Hato was done with massive stun bombs dropped right next to the barracks in order to psychologically collapse and stun the enemy elements. Simultaneously, Navy SEAL teams infiltrated Paitilla Airport and blew up the private jet Noriega could use in a possible escape, while Ranger units captured Torrijos-Tocumen International Airport through an airborne drop and instantly cut off all the country's air connections with the outside world.

However, the bloodiest and tactically most controversial leg of the operation was the heavy bombardment and ground attack organized against the Panama Defense Forces Headquarters (La Comandancia), which was located right in the heart of El Chorrillo, one of the densest and poorest neighborhoods of Panama City in terms of civilian population. This headquarters raid, which American AC-130 gunships and attack



helicopters kept under fire for hours without distinguishing civilian settlements, provided a tactical success in destroying the brain of the PDF. However, it turned into a massive

humanitarian disaster that resulted in the wooden houses of the neighborhood catching fire and caused thousands of civilians to die, get injured, or become homeless. While evaluating the results of this tactical map in the committee sessions, delegates have to deeply question how an operation launched with the claim of a "pinpoint strike" turned an entire civilian neighborhood to ashes and how this disproportionate use of force can be considered a war crime in the context of the international law of war and the Geneva Conventions.

## **6.2. US Southern Command and Regional Military Buildup**

The most fundamental feature that distinguishes the logistical and strategic anatomy of the military intervention carried out by the United States against Panama from other historical invasions is that the attacking army launched an offensive not from across the borders, but directly from the heart of the occupied country, almost from the inside out. At the center of this unprecedented tactical advantage lies the United States Southern Command, which has functioned as the command center for all American military and intelligence operations in Latin America since the Second World War and has its headquarters in Quarry Heights, Panama. The Washington administration, which turned the Canal Zone into a massive military garrison over the years, increased its military presence in the region silently but at a tremendous speed with a series of military deployment operations known by code names like "Nimrod Dancer" and "Blade Jewel", which it implemented starting from the middle of nineteen eighty nine when the crisis began to escalate. In addition to the thirteen thousand permanent military personnel that the Southern Command already kept in the region, armored units, special operations teams, and advanced communication elements transported by air from the United States mainland were placed in American bases in the Canal Zone under the helpless gazes of the Panama Defense Forces. This buildup did not just remain as an element of psychological deterrence against the Noriega regime; it also allowed the Pentagon to establish that massive springboard needed to flawlessly execute the total invasion plan waiting on its desk, right inside the target months before the operation started.

On that critical night when the operation started, the command level of the Southern Command and the strategic distribution of the military buildup in the region were designed with a lethality that would mathematically reduce the probability of the Panama Defense Forces showing any organized resistance to zero. Instead of dealing with traditional invasion difficulties like establishing a cross border logistics chain, making a naval landing, or holding a beachhead, American troops went directly on the offensive within minutes by leaving their own bases located just a few kilometers away from their targets. For example, massive facilities like Howard Air Base and Albrook Air Force Station were used as logistics centers for the safe landing of transport planes coming from America, and they also became the instant take off points for attack helicopters that would hit the key points of Panama City. Thanks to this immense regional buildup of the Southern Command spreading over the years, the American army completely eliminated the time and space constraints in classical military

doctrines by completing the tasks of paralyzing communication networks, holding bridges, and destroying critical military targets in just hours. While evaluating the concepts of self defense and aggression that will be discussed in this committee, delegates must very carefully analyze the place in international law of a country using the bases allocated to it for protecting international trade as a massive Trojan horse to destroy the sovereignty of the same country and disband its army, and the dangerous precedent this will create for future treaties.

### **6.3. Resistance and Collapse of the Panama Defense Forces**

The Panama Defense Forces, designed by Manuel Noriega as a massive internal security and oppression apparatus by gathering all civilian and military institutions of the country under a single roof, failed to show any structural resistance required of a conventional army in the face of the American invasion that started on the night of December 20, 1989. Although it consisted of about sixteen thousand personnel, a large part of this force was made up of police officers, customs guards, and administrative personnel who lacked heavy weapons, armored units, and modern air defense systems. When the fully equipped and simultaneous attack of the twenty seven thousand strong American army started, the command and control mechanism of the Panama Defense Forces evaporated literally in minutes. In the first hours of the invasion, American stealth planes and attack helicopters hitting the headquarters and communication relays directly cut off all communication of the Panamanian troops on the ground with the center. The even more dire dimension of the matter is that the "Maximum Leader" Manuel Noriega, who called on his army to fight to the death, abandoned his own soldiers to their fate and hid underground using civilian vehicles the moment the first bombs started falling, giving no operational orders to his troops. Caught leaderless, without communication, and unprepared, the regular army units, rather than fighting an organized front war against the massive asymmetry of American firepower, chose to leave their barracks and either surrender or blend in with the public by wearing civilian clothes. This sudden and shameful collapse of the regular army allowed the military phase of the invasion to be completed in an even shorter time than the Pentagon planned, but it also opened the doors wide to the security vacuum that triggered the real chaos.

Despite the institutional collapse of the regular army, the main reason why the clashes on the ground did not completely end and the invasion turned into a bloody urban war is the asymmetric resistance shown by the paramilitary civilian militias directly loyal to Noriega, namely the Dignity Battalions, and some fanatic lower ranking officers. Especially in the poor neighborhoods of the capital Panama City, in areas like El Chorrillo and San Miguelito, these paramilitary groups conducted a serious urban guerrilla war by applying irregular warfare tactics with submachine guns and improvised explosives against American armored vehicles. This irregular resistance, progressing with sniper fire, street barricades, and hit and run tactics, dragged the American army into that dark and dangerous spiral of residential area conflicts,

causing civilian casualties to reach astronomical proportions. However,



since this paramilitary resistance also lacked a central plan and logistical support, it was completely crushed and destroyed under the overwhelming fire superiority of the American army within a few days. With the Panama Defense Forces and all its affiliated police force wiped off the map, state authority in the country dropped to zero; major settlements like the capital Panama City and Colon surrendered to one of the biggest waves of looting history has ever seen. In these mass looting events that started right after the invasion and lasted for days, the American army's inadequacy to maintain order or its deliberate non intervention led to hundreds of millions of dollars of economic damage and social hysteria. One of the biggest dilemmas the delegates will face at the crisis desk is how they will manage this massive environment of anarchy created by disbanding the entire security apparatus of a whole country in the name of overthrowing a dictator, and with what legal authority they will ensure the life and property safety of the civilian population until a police force is built from scratch.

#### **6.4. The Nuncio Crisis and Psychological Warfare Operations**

Manuel Noriega, the biggest military target of the American invasion that started on the night of December 20, 1989, vanishing into thin air after the army of tens of thousands he commanded collapsed in minutes, created a massive operational black hole in the Pentagon's perfect invasion plan. While the world's most advanced army was turning a whole country upside down with 27,000 fully equipped soldiers, stealth planes, and hundreds of attack helicopters, the wanted dictator managed to escape American intelligence for days. However, Noriega's escape adventure turned into one of the most absurd and tense diplomatic crises history has ever seen when he put on one of the most untouchable, strictest, and hardest to breach armors of international law on the eve of December 24, 1989. The moment the dictator felt the breath of American special forces on his neck, he knocked on the door of the Apostolic Nunciature, meaning the Vatican Embassy, in Panama City and requested political asylum. This move by Noriega made the United States army, which had won an absolute victory on the military field, crash full speed into that insurmountable legal wall of the 1961 Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations. Even though American tanks and elite Delta Force units instantly surrounded the embassy building, since embassy grounds are directly considered Vatican's sovereign territory according to international law, soldiers breaking the door and entering would literally mean organizing an armed attack against yet another independent state, and on top of that, the spiritual center of the whole Catholic world. This diplomatic dilemma legally paralyzed President George H. W. Bush's administration, which risked wiping a whole country off the map to capture Noriega, against a man hiding behind the iron bars of a small building, and took the crisis to a brand new dimension where nerves clashed instead of weapons.

Upon military brute force remaining helpless against the Vienna Convention, the American army put "Operation Nifty Package" into effect, which is one of the weirdest, most controversial, and most exhausting psychological warfare operations of modern military history, to force Noriega to leave the embassy with his own consent. The surroundings of the embassy building were equipped with massive military speakers, and heavy metal and hard

rock music broadcasts were played non stop 24 hours a day for days at a deafening volume. This psychological bombardment, where songs like The Clash's "I Fought the Law", Van Halen's "Panama", and Guns N' Roses's "Welcome to the Jungle" were practically turned into torture devices, was officially presented as if it was done to prevent journalists from listening to the diplomatic negotiations inside the embassy



with laser microphones. However, the real purpose was to collapse the nervous system of Noriega, who was trapped inside, and the Vatican diplomats hosting him. The engine noises of American helicopters flying low right above the embassy and the seismic shakes created by armored vehicles constantly revving their engines around the building were also added to this sound terror, where sleeping, thinking healthily, and even talking to each other became impossible. Even though this music broadcast stopped a few days later after causing a diplomatic condemnation when the Vatican complained directly to President Bush, the American siege outside managed to build a massive prison wall in the dictator's mind.

However, the real striking and dark face of the crisis is hidden in that genius and ruthless psychological pressure strategy conducted alone by Vatican Ambassador Monsignor



Jose Sebastian Laboa against Noriega inside, rather than the American noise outside. Laboa, who could not throw this unwanted guest out the door due to diplomacy rules after he took refuge in his embassy, turned all the possibilities in his hands into weapons to force him to surrender on his own feet. As a first job, he locked Noriega in the smallest and most isolated room of the building, which did not have air conditioning and where it was hard to even breathe in Panama's suffocating heat. While air conditioners

were working in the rest of the building, the dictator was left to drown in his own sweat. Laboa completely cut off Noriega's television and radio access and only made him watch the footage of tens of thousands of angry Panamanian civilians gathering outside and waiting for an opportunity to lynch him. He injected a massive fear of death into the dictator by constantly reminding him of that famous historical end of the Italian fascist leader Benito Mussolini, who was killed by being hung by his feet by his own people. Laboa also relayed his fake phone calls with Spain, Cuba, and other Latin American countries to Noriega, slapping it in his face repeatedly that no state in the world would give him the right of political asylum, and that the Vatican did not have an intention to protect him either.

But that final checkmate move of Laboa that completely broke Noriega's resistance was the threat of turning international law against the dictator. The ambassador openly told Noriega that if he did not surrender, he would officially move the Nunciature to a Catholic high school in Panama City, lock the door of the current building, and cancel its diplomatic immunity status. This meant the following: The moment the Vatican flag was taken down, the building

would turn into an ordinary structure, and the Delta Force teams and the angry crowd waiting outside would be able to dive in without hitting any legal obstacles. Manuel Noriega's nervous system, completely cornered, isolated, and filled with the fear of death by the deafening blockade of the American army from the outside and these claustrophobic and sneaky isolation tactics of Monsignor Laboa from the inside, could not hold on any longer. On January 3, 1990, the dictator, wearing his full military uniform to protect the last crumb of honor left in his hand, walked out of the embassy door with his own will and surrendered to the American Drug Enforcement Administration agents waiting for him. For the committee delegates, this crisis has the quality of a unique case analysis showing how massive military forces can pierce through that legal armor with psychological warfare, asymmetric siege, mass manipulation, and cleverly constructed bilateral diplomacy tactics, even if they cannot overcome the diplomatic barriers of international law.

## **6.5. Impact of Economic Sanctions and the Collapse of the Panamanian Economy**

Long before the American bombs that fell from the sky on the night of December 20, 1989, physically destroyed Panama's military and political infrastructure, the people of the country had actually become the victims of a silent, sneaky, and much more destructive asymmetric war started by the Washington administration, which was a total economic strangulation strategy. After Manuel Noriega's relations with the United States broke down irreparably from 1987 onwards and the dictator got out of the control of American intelligence, the Ronald Reagan administration put one of the heaviest economic sanction packages in modern diplomatic history into effect in order to collapse the regime from the inside without using military force. With the activation of the International Emergency Economic Powers Act (IEEPA) in early 1988, an unprecedented financial blockade was started against Panama. In this context, all Panamanian state funds in United States banks were frozen, American companies and citizens were strictly forbidden from paying taxes or fees to the Panamanian government, and as the most vital blow, the millions of dollars of canal transit fees that the Panama Canal Commission was supposed to pay to the regime were suspended and kept in escrow accounts. This situation was literally an economic death warrant for a small Caribbean country whose economy relied almost 70% on the service sector, international banking, and canal revenues.

The unique structure of Panama's economy, meaning its use of the US Dollar (in equal status with the Balboa) as the actual and legal currency, took these sanctions out of being an ordinary trade embargo and turned them into completely draining the blood in the country's veins. In Panama, which does not have a central bank printing press and where the cash cycle in its economy directly depends on the physical dollar flow coming from the United States, the financial system was literally paralyzed when Washington turned off the cash taps. By March 1988, banks had to lock their doors due to cash shortages, and the salaries of civil servants, teachers, and even members of the Panama Defense Forces (PDF) became unpayable. In this period when daily trade came to a standstill, imports collapsed, and reaching basic needs

became impossible, the country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) shrank by a massive rate like 20% in just two years, and unemployment rates skyrocketed above 30% according to official numbers. This picture of institutional bankruptcy, where the middle class rapidly became poor and the poor sections were condemned to absolute hunger, clearly showed that the American embargo actually created a massive social trauma that punished the civilian people directly rather than the dictator.

However, instead of experiencing that expected fast collapse, the Noriega regime managed to turn this deep crisis into a survival mechanism in its favor. Calling the sanctions a "Gringo blockade" and an imperialist attack, the dictator built a fake nationalist resistance front by using the misery the people experienced. The regime, which could not pay the salaries of civil servants, tried to distribute state owned coupons as an alternative solution and mint its own coins (known as "Noriega's Macuquinas" among the public) by melting down change. But the real lifeline came from Noriega's dark partnership with drug cartels; the millions of dollars of "narco dollar" cash flowing from Colombian drug lords was used to pay the salaries of loyal soldiers and the Dignity Battalions (Batallones de la Dignidad) and to keep the regime alive on an artificial respirator. By December 1989 when the invasion took place, the Panamanian economy was already a wreckage, and that massive mass looting wave (saqueo) exceeding 1 billion dollars that broke out in the capital after that big security vacuum created by the American army was actually an explosion of the economic hunger, desperation, and social hysteria that the people had accumulated for two and a half years, rather than the absence of the army. The delegates in the committee have to fiercely discuss how they will manage this systemic collapse created by a consciously designed economic war beyond the physical destruction created by the military operation, how they will rebuild the basic institutions of the country with a state treasury that has dropped to zero, and whether this destructive effect of the sanctions on the civilian people can be considered a "humanitarian crisis violation" in international law.



## **6.6. Civilian Casualties, Humanitarian Crisis, and the Extent of Damage**

"Operation Just Cause", which the United States launched with the claim of bringing democracy and human rights to Panama, ironically became the scene of the biggest civilian massacre and an unprecedented humanitarian crisis in the country's modern history. The darkest and most tragic face of this military intervention, which the Pentagon marketed to the public with the doctrine of "pinpoint strike" operations and minimum casualties, emerged in El Chorrillo, one of the poorest and most densely populated neighborhoods of the capital Panama City. The fact that La Comandancia, Manuel Noriega's headquarters, was located right in the

heart of this civilian settlement put the neighborhood right in the center of the ruthless ring of fire of American AC-130 gunships and attack helicopters on the night of December 20, 1989. This historic neighborhood, consisting of adjacent wooden houses dating back to the canal construction period, turned into a massive fireball in seconds with the effect of heavy caliber bullets and stun bombs raining from the sky. This disproportionate force, which the American army applied without making civilian distinctions to break the resistance of the Panama Defense Forces (PDF) elements and paramilitary Dignity Battalions fighting in the streets, turned El Chorrillo completely to ashes towards the morning. This night of terror, where thousands of families were caught in the flames in their sleep and civilians trying to escape died in the crossfire, was engraved in the memories of the surviving Panamanians as "Little Hiroshima" (El Pequeno Hiroshima) and stained the moral legitimacy of the operation forever.

The real toll of civilian deaths that emerged after the operation turned into a deep "war of numbers" and a human rights violation debate between the United States and Panama, which remains unsolved even today. The American Southern Command (SOUTHCOM) officially showed the number of civilians who lost their lives during the operation between 200 and 300, evaluating it within the framework of "collateral damage", and engaged in an effort to minimize the casualties. However, independent human rights organizations, the Catholic Church, and Panama based non governmental organizations proved that the reality on the ground was far beyond these sterile numbers. When those left under the rubble of destroyed buildings, those who died of blood loss before reaching hospitals, and unidentified bodies were taken into account, it was reflected in international reports that civilian deaths were around 1,000 to 3,000, and even 4,000 according to some estimates. The emergence of mass graves (fosas comunes) in spots like the Jardin de Paz cemetery and near old American bases in the immediate following days of the invasion brought the claims to the surface that American soldiers secretly buried civilians without even identifying them, under the excuse of hiding the real death toll and preventing epidemic diseases. Such a clear and systematic



violation of the Geneva Conventions, which orders the protection of civilians in wartime, created a great outcry in the international community; it strengthened the arguments that the concept of "democracy building" to be discussed in the committee was actually a cover used to hide a massive war crime.

Beyond the deaths and physical destruction, the humanitarian crisis and refugee problem created by the invasion evolved into a massive chaos that the collapsed Panamanian state could not handle. Between 15,000 and 20,000 Panamanian civilians, whose homes were destroyed in the bombardment, especially in El Chorrillo, fell into the position of refugees in their own capital in just a few hours. The American army turned the airplane hangars at the Albrook Air Force Station into massive concentration camps to keep this huge army of



homeless people under control. The civilian people, who had to live for months in these hangars surrounded by barbed wire, guarded by armed American soldiers, and where basic hygiene and privacy were zero, felt to their bones both the trauma of losing their homes and that great psychological breakdown of living as the "captives" of the army that bombed them. The paralysis of hospitals in the face of the influx of wounded, the complete breaking of food and medicine supply chains due to looting events

(saqueo) exceeding 1 billion dollars, and the damage to the clean water networks in the country brought Panama City to the brink of an epidemic disease and hunger hell. The delegates at the United Nations Emergency Special Session (UNESS) cannot just stay with writing political condemnation texts. There is a bleeding wound on the table, and the committee has to immediately put into effect that expected harsh and binding "Emergency Action Plan" (Communique) to ensure the safe access of the Red Cross to the region, to establish an independent international investigation commission (Fact Finding Mission) to investigate civilian deaths, to supervise the opening of mass graves, and to open an emergency humanitarian aid corridor for the tens of thousands of refugees behind barbed wire.

## **7. International Law and Sovereignty Debates**

### **7.1. Violation of National Sovereignty or Intervention for Democracy and Human Rights?**

The massive military operation launched by the United States army against Panamanian territory on December 20, 1989, created one of the biggest and most dangerous ruptures in history between the most unshakable rules forming the basis of international law and the "moral" claims of the new American foreign policy transitioning into a unipolar world after the Cold War. Paragraph 4 of Article 2 of the 1945 United Nations Charter, which is considered the constitution of the modern international system, strictly and without exception forbids member states from resorting to the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any state in their international relations. This ban was not just limited to the United Nations. It was also reinforced by Articles 19 and 20 of the Charter of the Organization of American States (OAS), which forms the regional legal framework of the Americas, guaranteeing the principle that no state can intervene in the internal or external affairs of another state for any reason. Looking through the window of traditional international law and the Westphalian understanding of sovereignty, 27,000 fully equipped American soldiers crossing the borders of an independent state, bombing its capital, disbanding its army, and

capturing its head of state to kidnap him to their own country is a clear, indisputable violation of national sovereignty and a crime of aggression that is closed to interpretation. Especially for Latin American countries and the Non-Aligned Movement, this military move symbolizes a bloody return to the region's dark "gunboat diplomacy" years and open American imperialism. They strongly argue that dictatorships or human rights violations in domestic politics can never be used to justify such a destructive foreign invasion.

However, on the other pole of the issue lies the doctrine of "restoring democracy" and "protecting human rights." This was quite new and controversial for its time, and it was put forward by the George H. W. Bush administration to create an international cover for this clear violation of sovereignty and to justify its military power. The United States defined Manuel Noriega not as a legal and legitimate head of state, but as an illegitimate usurper who stole the victory of Guillermo Endara, who was elected by the overwhelming majority of the people in the May 1989 elections, by force of arms, who systematically tortured his own people, and who turned the state into a drug cartel. According to this argument, there was no longer a sovereign "Panamanian state" will left to be violated; the state had fallen captive to an armed gang of thugs. In those critical hours when the invasion began, American officials making Guillermo Endara take the oath at an American military base in Panama, declaring him the "legitimate head of state," and claiming that the operation was carried out with the invitation or consent of the Endara government is the most striking scene of this legal fiction. Arguing that international law should protect not only the borders of states but also the democratic will and fundamental human rights of the people within those borders, the Washington administration marketed "Operation Just Cause" to the world not as an invasion, but as an armed liberation and democracy-building operation carried out on behalf of the Panamanian people.

The real philosophical and legal wreckage sitting on the table of the delegates at the United Nations Emergency Special Session (UNESS) and that will split the committee in two is exactly this contradiction. If the committee finds this unilateral intervention by the United States in the name of "bringing democracy and overthrowing a dictator" justified, or just lightly condemns and glosses over it, a terrifying Pandora's Box will be opened in international law. This situation will lead to the birth of an extremely dangerous global precedent where powerful states can declare the leaders of weak states that conflict with their interests as "anti-democratic" or "human rights violators" and invade them, change their regimes whenever they want, and make this look lawful. On the other hand, if the committee rejects the intervention with absolute language purely to defend sovereign rights, this time it will be turning a blind eye to a ruthless dictator, who suppresses the democratic will of his people with blood, sells his country out to drug lords, and murders civilian dissidents in the middle of the street, hiding behind the immunity armor of international law. In the Communique they will write, delegates are obliged to find that fine and unshakable legal formula that will strike a balance between the strict limits of the "non-intervention" principle and the necessity of protecting universal human rights.

## **7.2. Right to Self-Defense and Legal Justifications Presented by the USA**

The most basic and controversial legal argument the United States used to justify its invasion of Panama within the strict borders of international law is the right of "self-defense" guaranteed to states in Article 51 of the United Nations Charter. While presenting the reasons for the operation that started on the night of December 20, 1989, to the international public, President George H. W. Bush's administration put forward the necessity to protect the life safety of around 35,000 American citizens and military personnel living in the Canal Zone as the first and most urgent reason. The puppet national assembly under Manuel Noriega's control declaring a de facto state of war against the US on December 15, the execution of unarmed American Marine First Lieutenant Robert Paz in the middle of the street the very next day, and the detention of another officer along with his wife, subjecting them to severe torture and sexual assault threats, were accepted by Washington as the "armed attack" element that broke the camel's back and automatically triggered the right of self-defense. The American administration interpreted these state-sponsored terror acts against its own citizens not as ordinary criminal cases, but as a hostile act (*casus belli*) directly made against the sovereignty of the United States and the right to life of its citizens. Therefore, it named the massive military operation it launched not an invasion, but "Operation Just Cause", aiming only to save American lives.

However, the legal defense of the US was not limited only to the life safety of its citizens. A much broader geopolitical ground of legitimacy was also built, based on the spirit and text of the 1977 Torrijos-Carter Treaties. By referring to the second part of the treaty that guarantees the permanent neutrality and safe passage of the Canal, Washington claimed that the security of an international waterway could not be left to the initiative of a corrupt dictator who cooperated with drug cartels and attacked American personnel. According to the US arguments, this environment of chaos provoked by Noriega had turned into a national security crisis directly threatening the Panama Canal remaining open to global trade, and the United States had no choice left but to use its right to intervene arising from the treaty. In addition to this, the fight against international drug trafficking was shown as the third legal pillar of the operation. Delivering the "narco-terrorist" Manuel Noriega, who had an arrest warrant from American courts, to justice was framed as a massive law enforcement operation where a global criminal was captured, rather than overthrowing the leader of a sovereign state. The United States carried its own domestic law beyond international borders (extraterritoriality) and put a brand new and aggressive doctrine on the table where fighting crime is superior to sovereign rights.

This is exactly the main philosophical battlefield where the delegates at the United Nations Emergency Special Session (UNESS) will draw their diplomatic swords most ruthlessly and tear international law to shreds. The right of self-defense requires a state of necessity that is "instant, overwhelming, and leaving no choice of means", and that the military response given must be "proportional", as stated in traditional international law and the famous "Caroline Test". Delegates have to fiercely discuss whether the killing of one American soldier

and the harassments against citizens can be considered a "proportional" self-defense for bombing the capital of that country with 27,000 fully equipped soldiers, disbanding its entire army, leaving thousands of civilians homeless, and completely changing the political regime of the state. Can the right of self-defense turn into a blank check to wipe a country's entire sovereignty infrastructure off the map? Can a state find the right in itself to totally invade the country of a foreign leader to arrest that leader whom it found guilty in its own domestic law? While the pro-American bloc in the committee will shout from the podium that these actions are a necessary defense of law, democracy, and morality, the opposing bloc will enter a fierce struggle to write the heaviest sanction and condemnation clauses into the draft Communiques to prove that these arguments are just cheap legal makeup hiding the unipolar American hegemony and neo-imperialism after the Cold War.

### **7.3. The Problem of Capturing a Leader Using Military Force on Foreign Soil**

"Operation Just Cause", which the United States carried out in Panama in 1989, created a massive and shocking legal anomaly rarely seen in modern history against the principles of sovereign equality and sovereign immunity, which are among the most fundamental principles of international law. The most controversial issue lying at the heart of the crisis is that a state completely threw away diplomatic extradition processes and used its 27,000 strong regular army like a global police force (SWAT team) in order to capture a foreign country leader whom it wanted to try in its own local courts (the cases opened in Miami and Tampa federal courts in Florida in 1988) for drug trafficking and money laundering crimes. In traditional international law and the Westphalian system, the principle of non intervention in the internal affairs of states is essential, and a country's leader, regardless of their de facto or de jure status, is immune from the jurisdiction of another state. However, the Washington administration unilaterally tore up this armor of immunity by taking refuge in the argument that Manuel Noriega was not a legal head of state, but a corrupt dictator who held power by force of arms and a "narco terrorist". In other words, the United States carried its own domestic law beyond international borders (extraterritoriality) and showed the audacity to totally invade an independent state to execute an arrest warrant issued by its own courts. This action is the barest indicator of how military power is transformed into a boundless tool of hegemony under the guise of fighting crime.

This unprecedented "military kidnapping" or "forced apprehension" operation created a deep diplomatic terror and an existential fear in the capitals of not only Panama but all the states of the world. Because if the United States sees in itself the right to bomb and apprehend a foreign leader in his own country on charges of drug trafficking, and then treat him as a prisoner of war (POW) and try him in American courts, this situation will create a terrifying precedent in the international system. The countries of the Global South, Latin American blocs, and the Non Aligned Movement rightfully asked this question: If this action is accepted as legitimate, who and with what international law will prevent any third world leader who contradicts Washington's policies or is declared "guilty" by American courts from being taken from his bed in the middle of the night by American marines tomorrow? The disappearance of

the Soviet Union's balancing power with the end of the Cold War paved the way for the United States to appoint itself as the undisputed gendarme, prosecutor, and executioner of the world; and the invasion of Panama became the first bloody and reckless laboratory experiment of this new "Unipolar World Order". Even though Noriega being caught and locked up in an American prison was celebrated as a great victory in the American public, it became the symbol of how the "Might makes right" principle crushed the rule of law in the international law community.

The delegates taking part in the United Nations Emergency Special Session (UNESS) have to hold the committee's most heated debates exactly on this legal fault line. The committee is stuck between the necessity of fighting transnational crimes and drug cartels on a global scale and the obligation to protect the sovereign rights of independent states. Delegates must decide how they will formulate this unique situation in the Communique they will write. If the committee approves this action of the US, even implicitly, they will have written a new international law with their own hands where international borders only remain on paper and great powers can invade weak states whenever they want for their law enforcement operations. On the other hand, if the committee condemns the operation by saying "sovereignty is absolute" and demands the US to extradite Noriega back to Panama, this time they will face the accusation of taking a criminal who manages billions of dollars of drug traffic, massacres his own people, and escapes international justice under a protection shield. The biggest test of the crisis committee is to find that fine, clever, and binding diplomatic solution that will prevent law from turning into imperialist toys of superpowers while taking it out of being a refuge for dictators.

## **8. Involved Parties and Their Political Approaches**

### **8.1. United States of America**

The United States, as the sole and primary actor responsible for this large-scale operation, implemented significant political measures both before and after the intervention. In addition, in response to public reactions during and after the intervention, the U.S. put forward four main arguments to justify the reasons for the operation.

The first justification for the invasion was defined by the United States as the protection of American citizens and military personnel. The initial turning point leading to this argument was identified as the killing of a U.S. Marine officer by the Panama Defense Forces (PDF) on December 16, 1989, and the physical assault and harassment of another officer and his wife. The then U.S. President George H.W. Bush stated that the lives of approximately 35,000 American citizens living in Panama were under serious threat and that his highest duty as president was to protect these citizens.

The second argument of the United States was presented as the protection of the democratic will of the Panamanian people. The basis of this issue was that in the general elections held on May 7, 1989, when it became clear that the U.S.-backed opposition candidate Guillermo Endara would win by a large margin, Noriega annulled the elections. Through this intervention, it was aimed to end Noriega's dictatorship and to bring the "constitutionally elected" Endara government to power.

Drug trafficking was another reason for the operation. the U.S. policy of the "war on drugs" was influential in the invasion of Panama. The President of Panama Manuel Noriega had been formally indicted in February 1988 in the U.S to laid the groundwork for addressing prior to the intervention. So the state of Florida on charges of drug trafficking, racketeering, and money laundering. With these groundworks during the intervention in 1989, President George H.W. Bush publicly described Noriega as "an indicted drug trafficker".

The final political reason was described as the protection of the Panama Canal agreements by President George H.W. Bush. So USA politics argued that Noriega's increasingly unstable and aggressive behavior can endanger the secure passage and neutrality of the canal. This intervention was therefore presented as a preventive action against the risk of the canal being sabotaged or closed due to a military conflict.

However, these four arguments were also defined as pretexts by countries that viewed the intervention as a violation of national sovereignty, and various justifications were put forward.

## **8.2. Soviet Union and the Eastern Bloc**

The strongest reaction following Operation Just Cause came from the Soviet Union. Especially in the post-Cold War period, the USSR openly condemned this move by its rival and called on the global public to oppose this action. In addition, the Eastern Bloc, which generally aligned with the Soviet Union, affirmed that this invasion by the United States clearly violated national sovereignty as well as the UN Charter and the general principles of international relations.

Another political approach used by the USSR and the Eastern Bloc in this context was to accuse Washington of acting like a continental authority determining who would be punished and who would be forgiven in the region. Soviet officials argued that this undemocratic stance should be condemned. In general, from the perspective of the Eastern Bloc, this intervention was carried out by the United States to maintain its power in its own region and to send a strong message to countries in the region that shared the communist ideology.

### **8.3. Latin American Countries**

Latin American countries both issued diplomatic condemnations and took concrete measures through international organizations against this regional threat and intervention

Leading these condemnations was the Organization of American States (OAS), which explicitly opposed the U.S. following its deliberations. In these meetings, the intervention was officially condemned by a clear margin of 20 votes against the single vote from the U.S. representative. Despite this public reaction, some circles claimed that certain states within the organization actually supported Noriega's removal from power.

Alongside the collective condemnation, regional countries took various individual actions. Nicaragua, which was conducting its own election campaign at the time, perceived the intervention as a threat and called for an emergency meeting of the United Nations Security Council. It characterized the intervention as an "illegal act of aggression" and demanded that countermeasures be taken.

Furthermore, the U.S. siege and harassment of the Cuban Embassy in the region was brought to the UNSC by Cuba. In the Security Council, Cuba denied that it was hiding Noriega in its regional embassy but stated that it could grant him asylum should such a request be made.

Additionally, following Noriega's eventual death, his close relatives and associates sought refuge in the Peruvian and Libyan embassies in the region.

### **8.4. Panama**

Panama's actions and diplomacy during this process can be divided into three phases:

#### **Before the Invasion**

With the disagreements that emerged after the Cold War, the pressure of the United States on Panama increased. As a result, the Panamanian government found the opportunity to criticize the United States and openly criticized this pressure in the public sphere. Initially, condemnations directed at the public later turned into complaints to the United Nations. Panama openly accused the United States of interfering in its internal affairs and threatening its territorial integrity during the UN sessions held on April 28 and May 7.

In addition, Panama justified the annulment of the May 7, 1989 elections, which the U.S. government cited among the reasons for the invasion, by stating that the United States had openly supported the opposition and interfered in the elections.

One of the measures taken by Noriega as a precaution for war was the “state of war” bill with the United States, approved by Panama’s National Assembly on December 15, 1989. According to this decision, it was declared that Panama would remain in a state of war until the United States ended its aggression and pressure over Panama. At the same time, with this decision, Manuel Noriega was elected as the “highest authority leader and head of government.”

### **Actions During The Invasion**

Manuel Noriega took refuge at the Vatican Embassy (Apostolic Nunciature) in Panama on December 24 and requested diplomatic protection. Noriega’s key supporters and family members also took refuge in the embassies of countries such as Cuba, Nicaragua, Peru, and Libya.

### **Post Invasion Panamanian policy**

Endara nevertheless criticized the invasion to some extent even if the government came to power after the invasion with U.S. support. He demanded compensation from the United States for the damage caused during the invasion. However, this demand was not met by the United States.

## **8.5. European States and Western Allies**

After this major intervention, the European Bloc reacted from different perspectives. Among these reactions, the British government stood out as openly supporting this “just attack.” It considered the justifications presented by the United States to be legitimate. In addition the British government argued that all countries that found the removal of Manuel Noriega necessary should support this intervention.

Alongside the support of the United Kingdom, countries such as France, West Germany, Canada, and Australia stated that the intervention was necessary. But expressed diplomatic regret due to the violent and deadly nature of the operation.

Among European countries, only Spain and Sweden approved the draft resolution opposing the intervention. This draft was voted on in the United Nations General Assembly and described the American intervention as a clear violation of international law and the United Nations Charter while including actions aimed at condemning it. In the General Assembly; approximately 75 members approved this draft, while 20 members opposed it and more than 40 members abstained.

Additionally the Vatican, which granted Noriega the right of asylum in its embassy, refused to hand him over immediately by arguing that there was no extradition agreement between them and the United States. Later on, it attempted to avoid diplomatic conflict.

## **8.6. Stance of the Non-Aligned Movement and Global Reactions**

The reaction of independent organizations characterized the situation as an acceptable intervention. For example, Amnesty International drew attention to the political crimes and human rights violations committed by Noriega, while accepting the invasion. Despite these reactions from some independent organizations as the major press outlets of France and Belgium *Le Monde* and *Le Soir*, described the invasion as a “violent show of force” and criticized the power that caused these deaths.

## **9. Conflicting Policies and Bloc Formations Within the Committee**

### **9.1. Power Struggle Between P5 Countries**

The deep diplomatic fault lines among the 5 permanent members of the United Nations Security Council (P5) are the main reason why the Panama crisis was dragged into irresolution in the international arena and why the Emergency Special Session (UNESS) was convened. In 1989, when the ending pains of the Cold War were experienced, the massive military intervention of 27000 soldiers carried out by the United States against Panama was perceived among the P5 countries not merely as a regional crisis, but as an existential power struggle over who would write the rules of the new world order. While the United States defended this operation in Central America, which it saw as its own backyard, with concepts like self defense, ensuring the life safety of its citizens, and democracy building, these arguments were interpreted by the other members of the Council as a reckless declaration of the unipolar American hegemony after the Cold War.

In this diplomatic war, even though the Western Bloc could not achieve complete unity within itself, it displayed a strategic alignment. The biggest traditional ally, the United Kingdom, found the legal justifications presented by the United States completely legitimate, gave unconditional diplomatic support to the operation, and became a shield for the American veto in the votings at the Council. France, on the other hand, conducted a more cautious and critical diplomacy. Although the Paris administration welcomed the overthrow of Manuel Noriega in principle, it expressed its discomfort with the high spiral of violence involved in the operation, the civilian casualties, and the resolution of the issue with unilateral military brute force by bypassing United Nations mechanisms, in a diplomatic language. However, France carefully avoided entering into a direct and harsh confrontation with the United States in order not to endanger the NATO alliance and the integrity of the West after the Cold War.

On the other hand, the Soviet Union and the People's Republic of China, experiencing the final moments of their global influence, formed an unshakable block against the United States by defining this operation as the barest imperialist aggression of the 20th century and a clear violation of international law. The Soviet Union representatives accused the Washington administration of acting like a gendarme deciding alone who would be punished and who would be forgiven on the continent. They argued that the invasion of an independent state by 27000 American soldiers effectively eliminated paragraph 4 of Article 2 of the United Nations Charter. China emphasized the absoluteness of sovereign rights and the principle of non intervention in internal affairs, stating that this intervention constituted a terrifying precedent for third world countries. The draft resolution presented at the Security Council to condemn the United States and demand the immediate withdrawal of the soldiers was rejected by the triple veto of the United States, the United Kingdom, and France. This situation made it mandatory to bypass the deadlocked Council and carry the crisis directly to the General Assembly and this Emergency Special Session. The biggest test of the delegates in the committee is to overcome these polarized interests of the P5 and create a ground of consensus that will make international law functional again.

## **9.2. Small States' Search for Unity Against Disproportionate Intervention by Great Powers**

The Non Aligned Movement (NAM) and Latin American countries, which form the numerical majority and diplomatic conscience of the United Nations Emergency Special Session (UNESS), perceived this military invasion in 1989 not only as a regional crisis or a simple regime change. They saw it as a massive legal threat directed at their own independence, territorial integrity, and existence. The United States crossing the Panama borders with 27000 fully equipped soldiers created a deep insecurity and existential fear regarding the post Cold War era in the capitals of developing states called the Global South. For this bloc, the political identity of Manuel Noriega or the nature of the accusations are completely secondary. Their main and only focus is the reckless crushing of the principles of sovereign equality and non intervention in internal affairs, which are the main pillars of international law, by a superpower. The most concrete institutional reflection of this concern appeared in the emergency session held by the Organization of American States (OAS) right after the crisis. With a historic decision taken by 20 accepting votes against 1 rejecting vote from the United States, the organization officially condemned the invasion with an overwhelming majority. This diplomatic rebellion of 20 votes became the first official spark of that great search for unity that was also carried to the committee room.

The biggest diplomatic fear that small states united around in this crisis is the "Might makes right" principle and military capacity taking the place of international law and the United Nations Charter. If a superpower totally invading a sovereign state with highly vague and open to interpretation excuses like fighting drug trade, protecting its own citizens, or bringing democracy is accepted even implicitly at the committee table, a terrifying precedent

will be born in the international system. Developing countries rightfully defend this thesis: If the United States invading Panama with excuses of narco terrorism or lack of democracy is legitimized, tomorrow there will be no legal or moral obstacle left in front of any small state facing similar accusations in Asia, Africa, or the Middle East being invaded by the army of one of the 5 permanent members of the Security Council (P5). Universal concepts like democracy and human rights being turned into diplomatic weapons used to mask the neo imperialist interventions and military invasions of great powers in the new era is the fiercest objection point of the Non Aligned Movement.

Therefore, the delegations of small and medium sized states at the United Nations Emergency Special Session (UNESS) have to display a rare bloc formation to break the hegemony of the Security Council in the committee's decision making processes and restore the rule of law. The delegates of these countries cannot just settle for reading condemnation texts. They will put up a fierce fight to add the harshest, clearest, and binding sanction clauses to the Communique or Draft Resolution, stating that the non intervention principle cannot be stretched with any excuse, that the jurisdiction of states cannot be carried across borders, and that capturing a foreign leader by using military force is an international crime. For this bloc, the decision to be made in the Panama crisis is actually the guarantee of their own futures and independence as well.

### **9.3. Alignments Over the Impact of the Panama Canal on International Trade**

Beyond the ideological wars and legal sovereignty debates at the United Nations Emergency Special Session (UNESS), the main focus of the pragmatist countries sitting at the committee table and managing the lifebloods of the global economy is the physical and operational security of the Panama Canal. For Japan, the trade giants of Western Europe, and the export driven economies of South America, the heart of the crisis is not Manuel Noriega's dictatorship or the imperialist moves of the United States. Instead, it is the continuous operation of this massive waterway that carries 5 percent of global maritime trade on its own. The state of war declared by the Manuel Noriega regime against the United States on December 15, 1989, and the instability it escalated in the region were seen as a direct threat to the security of global supply chains. For this reason, after the initial shock of the operation passed, some trade centered countries tended to secretly support the arrival of "stability" in the region, even if it was through American power.

But on the other hand, the United States army turning the canal zone into an actual battlefield with 27000 soldiers and endangering its operational security ignited a much bigger debate regarding the spirit and text of the 1977 Torrijos Carter Treaties. The principle of the canal's "permanent neutrality", which is the most fundamental principle of these treaties, was violated by a military invasion by the Washington administration itself, which was obligated to protect it. Delegations that prioritize the security of trade routes are deeply concerned about an international waterway being turned into a tool of blackmail or operation for the political reckonings of superpowers. The question of whether the American intervention would sabotage

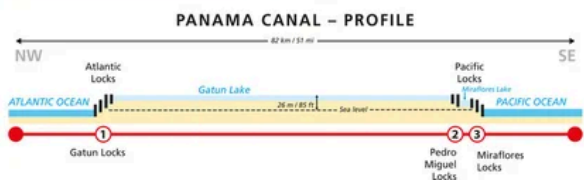
the schedule envisaging the full and final transfer of the canal to Panama on December 31, 1999, constitutes the red line for these countries.

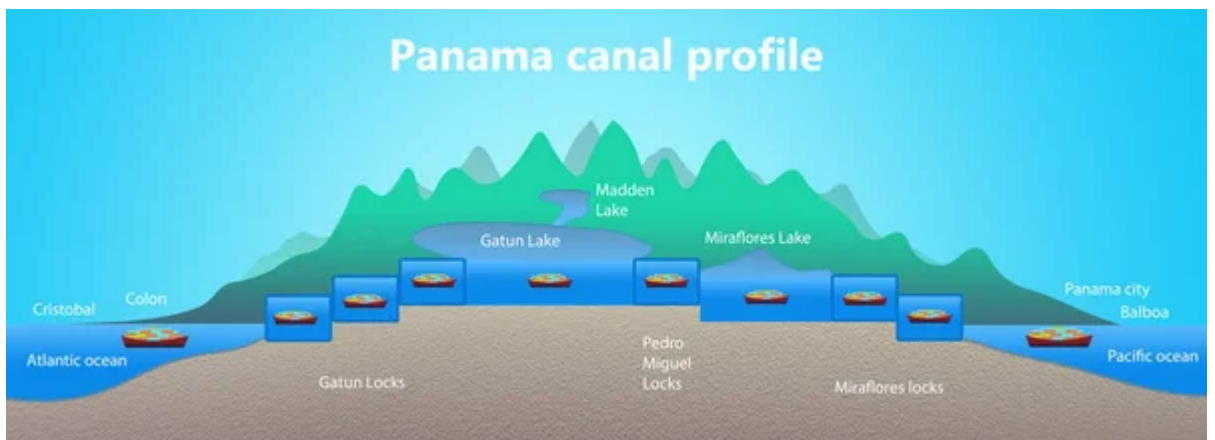
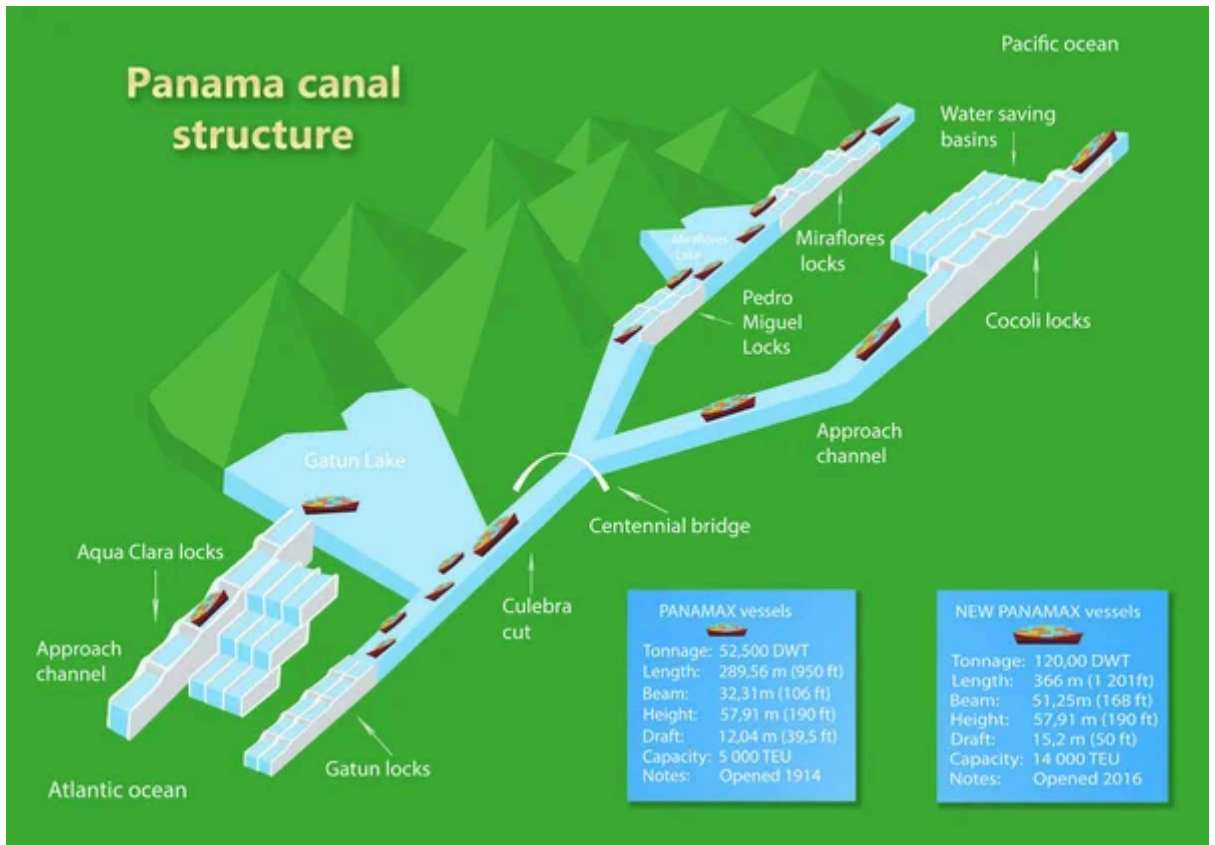
This pragmatist bloc will try to play the role of a balancing element and a bridge builder between the ideological polarizations in the committee (like the vetoes of the P5 countries or the sovereignty rebellion of the Non Aligned Movement). The representatives of these countries will bring technical solution proposals (amendments) to the table to ensure the immediate opening of the canal to civilian maritime traffic at full capacity, to guarantee the 1999 transfer process with an international observer mechanism, and to prevent damage to global supply chains, rather than moral debates centering on civilian casualties or human rights. For them, the success of the Communique lies not in the harshness of the words of condemnation, but in finding that binding and pragmatic formula that will ensure the uninterrupted flow of international trade.

## **10. Visual Data and Maps**

### **10.1. Strategic Map of the Panama Canal and Its Surroundings**

The canal zone, which lies at the geopolitical heart of the Panama crisis, is a massive engineering marvel that directly affects not only the economic but also the physical integrity of the country. This narrow and strategic waterway connecting the Pacific Ocean and the Atlantic Ocean provides an intercontinental passage by carrying ships 26 meters above sea level with the Gatun, Pedro Miguel, and Miraflores lock systems. As can be clearly seen on the tactical map, the Canal Zone, which has been under the control of the United States since 1903, effectively divides Panamanian territory into two parts and confines the country's capital Panama City and its second largest city Colon directly to the borders of this zone. When delegates examine this map, they will geographically understand why the United States maintained 14 military bases in the region to ensure the security of the canal and why Manuel Noriega's provocative actions were instantly perceived as a "national security threat" for American military logistics. This map shows how the canal, which carries 5 percent of global trade, could create an international deadlock in a possible long term conflict.

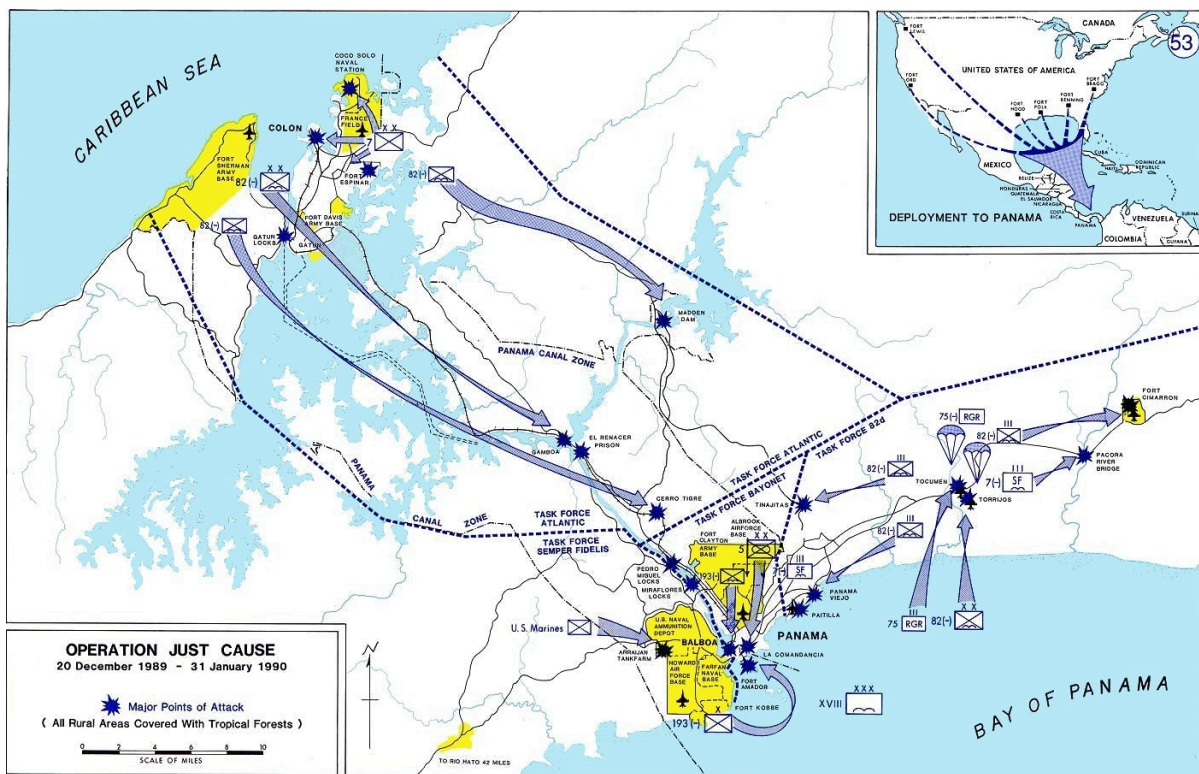


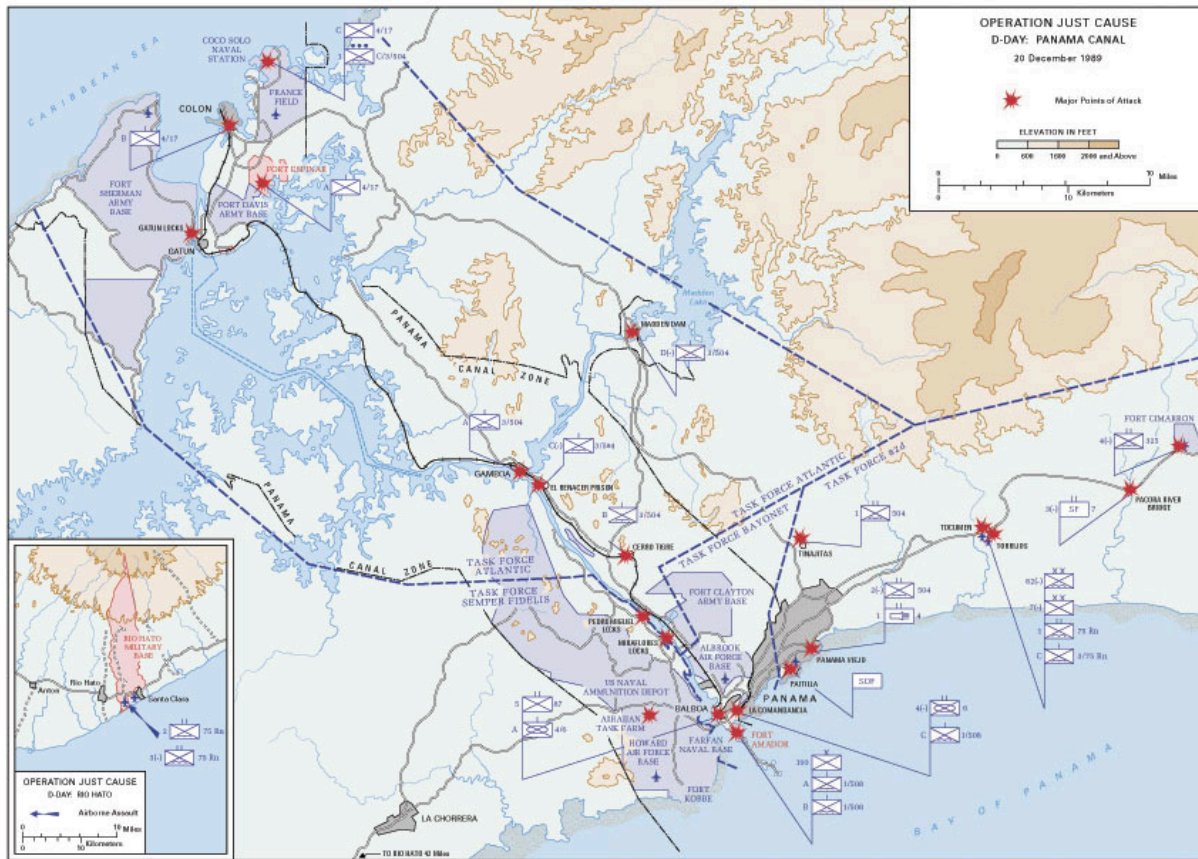


## 10.2. US Troop Landing Points and PDF Headquarters

Understanding the military anatomy of "Operation Just Cause", which was launched on the night of December 20, 1989, will form the basis of the arguments regarding civilian casualties and the disproportionate use of force that will be discussed in the committee. The prepared tactical operation map details how 27000 fully equipped soldiers tied to the American Southern Command (SOUTHCOM) made a simultaneous air and ground landing on the nerve centers of the country. The main target points marked on the map are the Rio Hato Military

Base, which was hit to paralyze the military capacity of the Panama Defense Forces (PDF), the Tocumen International Airport, which was captured to ensure the control of the airspace, and most importantly, La Comandancia, which was Manuel Noriega's command center. The location of La Comandancia on the map reveals the most tragic dimension of the crisis, namely the civilian massacre; because the headquarters is located right in the heart of El Chorrillo, one of the most densely populated and poor civilian neighborhoods of the capital. This map, which proves how the American offensive intertwined with civilian settlements and the geographical inevitability of that massive destruction where more than 1000 civilians lost their lives, presents the committee with visual evidence of how the soldiers were drawn into street clashes.





Map 23

## 11. Timeline

For the delegates at the United Nations Emergency Special Session (UNESS) to correctly analyze this complex crisis that resulted in the invasion of Panama, they must fully master the following chronological sequence of events regarding the roots of the crisis and those final days leading up to the hot conflict.

### 11.1. Evolution of US-Panama Relations

TIME	EVENT
1903	Panama declaring its independence from Colombia with the military and diplomatic support of the United States. With the Hay-Bunau-Varilla Treaty signed right after, the sovereignty privilege of the 16-kilometer strip (Canal Zone) where the canal would be built was transferred to the United States

	"forever".
1914	The Panama Canal, a massive American engineering project, officially opening to global maritime traffic, and the United States permanently settling in the region by establishing its military bases.
January 9, 1964	American soldiers opening fire on Panamanian students who reacted to only the American flag flying in the Canal Zone and wanted to hang the Panamanian flag too. More than 20 civilians losing their lives in this event, which went down in history as "Martyrs' Day" (Día de los Mártires), and the temporary breaking of diplomatic relations between the two countries.
September 7, 1977	The signing of the historic Torrijos-Carter Treaties between US President Jimmy Carter and Panama's nationalist leader General Omar Torrijos, which envisaged the complete transfer of the sovereignty of the canal and the Canal Zone to Panama on December 31, 1999.
July 31, 1981	General Omar Torrijos losing his life in a suspicious plane crash, and the beginning of a political vacuum in Panama.
1983	Military intelligence chief Manuel Noriega, who had dark ties with the CIA going back many years, taking over the Panama Defense Forces (PDF) and rising to the position of the country's de facto dictator.
February 1988	Federal courts in the United States' state of Florida (Miami and Tampa) officially indicting Manuel Noriega on charges of drug trafficking and money laundering. The US starting massive economic sanctions against Panama.

## 11.2. Day-by-Day Development of the 1989 Crisis

TIME	EVENT
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<p>May 7, 1989</p>	<p>In the general elections held in Panama, even though the US backed opposition candidate Guillermo Endara won the elections with an overwhelming ratio like 3 to 1, Manuel Noriega canceling the election results and unleashing the paramilitary "Dignity Battalions" (Batallones de la Dignidad) on the opponents.</p>
<p>October 3, 1989</p>	<p>The military coup attempt organized against Noriega under the leadership of Major Moises Giroldi failing because the American Southern Command (SOUTHCOM) did not provide the expected support. Noriega having the coup plotting officers brutally executed (Albrook Massacre).</p>
<p>December 15, 1989:</p>	<p>The National Assembly (Asamblea Nacional) under Noriega's control declaring Noriega the "Maximum Leader" and approving the decision that officially declared the country in a "state of war" against the United States.</p>
<p>December 16, 1989</p>	<p>December 16, 1989: American Marine First Lieutenant Robert Paz in civilian clothes being killed as a result of fire opened at a PDF checkpoint in Panama City. Right after that, another American officer being detained together with his wife and exposed to violence and harassment.</p>
<p>December 20, 1989</p>	<p>The United States army starting "Operation Just Cause" with 27000 fully equipped soldiers, F 117 stealth planes, and attack helicopters around 01:00 am. At the same hours, Guillermo Endara taking the oath at an American military base and taking over the presidency.</p>
<p>December 24, 1989</p>	<p>Manuel Noriega, whose regular army collapsed and who hid from American intelligence for days, taking refuge in the Vatican Embassy (Apostolic Nunciature) in Panama City to use the diplomatic immunity armor. The American army surrounding the building and starting that famous psychological war (Operation Nifty Package) it conducted with heavy rock music.</p>

December 29, 1989	The United Nations General Assembly accepting the historic resolution numbered 44/240, which condemned the US intervention as a clear violation of international law, with 75 accepting, 20 rejecting, and 40 abstaining votes.
January 3, 1990	Manuel Noriega, whose nerves collapsed after days of heavy psychological isolation, the pressure of the lynching crowd outside, and the diplomatic blackmail applied by the Vatican Ambassador from the inside, walking out of the embassy in his full military uniform and surrendering to the American Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) agents with his own consent.

## 12.Key Objectives For The Summit

- 1. Establishment of an Immediate Ceasefire and a Non-Conflict Environment** The most urgent focus of this summit is to halt the active combat on the ground. While drafting the Communiqué, delegates must not settle for a superficial "call for a ceasefire," but clearly define the conditions, boundaries, and supervision mechanisms of the ceasefire. The declaration must explicitly explain, leaving no room for doubt, which international institutions or peacekeeping forces will step in in the event of a possible ceasefire violation.
- 2. Opening Humanitarian Corridors and Civilian Security** The evacuation of civilians trapped in crisis zones and the delivery of uninterrupted humanitarian aid to the region are among the primary duties of the committee. Discussions must focus on how to ensure the security of international aid organizations. While drafting the final declaration, delegates must chart the logistical routes of the humanitarian corridors and strictly include the diplomatic sanctions to be applied if the aid is obstructed in the document.
- 3. Management of Economic Sanctions and Embargoes** One of the greatest pressure tools to be used in resolving the crisis is economic sanctions. The committee must analyze the effects of existing embargoes and outline the framework for new sanction packages. During the Communiqué preparation process, delegates must embed the fine-tuning into the document that ensures sanctions target the authorities escalating the crisis, rather than directly targeting civilians. Which sectors will be under the scope of the embargo and which countries will supervise the sanctions must be clearly written in the declaration.

- 4. Prevention of Border Violations and Permanent Security Mechanisms** A permanent border security strategy must be established so that the crisis does not flare up again after an immediate ceasefire is achieved. The borders of buffer zones or demilitarized zones must be discussed. Delegates are obliged to detail in the declaration which international actors will protect these security zones and what the confidence-building measures between the parties will be.
- 5. International Law Violations and Accountability** International law and human rights violations experienced during the crisis process cannot be ignored. The committee must bring to the agenda the establishment of independent investigation commissions or the authorization of existing international mechanisms to investigate these violations. While drafting the Communiqué, delegates must pay great attention to integrating legal and binding clauses into the document aimed not only at the military resolution of the crisis but also at the trial of criminals and the establishment of justice.
- 6. Disarmament of Non-State Actors and Armed Groups** The presence of proxy forces and armed non-state actors on the ground, which are the main dynamics of modern crises, must be brought to a definitive resolution. While creating the text of the Communiqué, delegates must decide on how to cut off the external funding and ammunition supplies of these groups. The document must clearly state through which international mechanisms the disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) processes of the said groups will be conducted, and the possible diplomatic consequences for the states supporting these groups.
- 7. Post-Crisis Reconstruction and Economic Development Funds** Just as much as halting the active combat, the reconstruction of destroyed infrastructure, healthcare systems, and civilian living areas is among the long-term priorities of the summit. The committee must determine how the international funds to finance the post-crisis recovery process will be collected, by which consortiums they will be managed, and how they will be distributed fairly. While writing the final declaration, delegates must establish a transparent mechanism for the supervision of development projects and absolutely integrate the steps towards restoring economic stability into the document.
- 8. Cybersecurity Violations and Prevention of Disinformation** State-sponsored cyberattacks and mass disinformation campaigns, which form the digital front of the crisis, are a focal point that the committee cannot ignore. The summit must develop emergency security protocols that will eliminate cyber threats directed at critical civilian infrastructure (energy, communication, hospitals). Delegates must embed a cyber action plan that will prevent perception operations manipulating the international public during the crisis process into the clauses of the Communiqué and outline the framework of sanctions to be applied against cyber violations.

## 13. Bibliography and Further Reading

### 13.1. Visual/audio contents

- [▶ American Colonialism | 1989 US Invasion of Panama \(part 1\)](#)
- [▶ Rumble in The Jungle | 1989 US Invasion of Panama \(part 2\)](#)
- [▶ Finding Noriega | 1989 US Invasion of Panama \(part 3\)](#)
- [▶ Manuel Noriega and the 1989 U.S. invasion of Panama | 60 Minutes Full Episodes](#)
- [▶ 27,000 US Troops Storm Panama In One Night! - The Invasion of 1989](#)
- [▶ 1989 US Invasion of Panama News Footage - Reporting the Fall of Manuel Nori...](#)
- [▶ Amerika'nın Panama'yı İşgali \(1989\) : Geçerli Neden Harekatı](#)
- [▶ Maduro'nun Öncesi: Panama'nın İşgali ve Noriega'nın Sonu / Emrah Safa Gürkan...](#)
- [https://nsarchive2.gwu.edu/nsa/DOCUMENT/DOC-PIC/950206\\_4.gif](https://nsarchive2.gwu.edu/nsa/DOCUMENT/DOC-PIC/950206_4.gif)
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### 13.2. Textual content

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- <https://phr.org/wp-content/uploads/1991/10/Operation-Just-Cause-The-Human-Cost-of-Military-Action-in-Panama.pdf>
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- <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/music/what-to-listen-to/panamas-military-dictator-manuel-noriega-defeated-rocknroll/>
- <https://www.nytimes.com/1973/09/23/archives/panama-praised-for-drug-curbs-training-course-for-agents.html>

