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Panama: Military Victory, Interagency Failure: A Case Study of Policy Implementation

**A Monograph
by
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Infantry**



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ABSTRACT

PANAMA: MILITARY VICTORY, INTERAGENCY FAILURE: A CASE STUDY IN POLICY IMPLEMENTATION by MAJ Charles Wm. Robinson, USA, 53 pages.

This monograph examines the question of interagency action at the operational level by analyzing the case of Panama from 1987 to 1990. It asks the question: Does the United States have the ability to integrate the actions of Federal Agencies at the operational, or campaign level? The basic criteria used for evaluation of effectiveness are objective focus, unity of effort, and responsiveness. The research considers the theories explaining why large organizations fail to achieve effective implementation. Three basic schools of thought are identified: the Rational Actor theory, the Organizational Theory, the Bureaucratic theory. The monograph shows the applicability of the case and makes the point that there are still problems in integrating agency operations. The case study identifies problems of integration during the two major periods of the Panama crisis. Specifically, the study finds evidence that actions were not successfully integrated because of problems which were explicable under the three theories. The research reaches the conclusion that the United States does not have an effective system for integrating interagency operations.

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Section I. Introduction.

Military planners and liberal academics have reached a consensus without even realizing it. Both believe that greater restrictions should be placed on the use of military intervention to resolve international conflict. As a result, direct military action is seen, in the words of Lieutenant Colonel Walter Wojdakowski, United States Army, as a "last resort."¹ If this is true, the United States government will be required to apply pressure on other nations through other means to resolve its diplomatic crisis. This limitation on the use of military force will require a greater reliance on the application of pressure by other federal agencies. In order to succeed, as in any program for implementing strategy, unity of action will be critical. This raises a distinct question. Does the United States have an effective capability for unified action by federal agencies at the operational level?

What are unified interagency actions at the operational level? A military perspective of unified actions is described by the Joint Staff in ICS Pub 3-0, Doctrine for Unified and Joint Operations:

Within this general category of operation, subordinate commanders of forces conduct either single-Service or joint operations to support the overall unified operation. Unified operations also include those activities conducted by other US Government agencies in support of the commander of the unified command. Unified operations take place in peacetime, conflict, and war. A hierarchy of supportive strategies, integrated and supporting campaign and operation plans, and unity of effort assist in the successful conduct of unified operations and the attainment of strategic goals and objectives.²

In this fashion, unified interagency operations would be the application of the various elements of national power in an interagency campaign under a comprehensive strategy at the regional level.

Whether the drive behind a use of alternative means to achieve strategic ends is motivated by cost-benefits considerations or moral constraints, the bottom line is

measured by whether the actions of all of the participating agencies are effectively integrated towards attaining the goals and objectives established by policy. The concept of unified interagency operations seems simple enough. Interagency means that a multitude of federal agencies are participating in a program, campaign, or operation. The problem is how to establish objectives, coordinate action, and insure unity of effort on a regional or country specific basis. This paper will use these measures of effectiveness to evaluate interagency unified operations.

In his work, On War, Karl von Clausewitz makes a case for the close synchronization of military action with other elements of diplomacy and politics.³ This is where the concept of unified operations at the operational level comes into play.

The idea of an operational level is a generally military concept which deals with translating strategy into action. The operational level is defined by JCS Pub 3-0 as, "The level of war at which the campaigns and major operations are planned, conducted, and sustained to accomplish strategic objectives within theaters or areas of operation."⁴ Along this line, the Department of Defense has implemented measures for improved unity during theater operations. The defense reorganization driven by the Goldwater-Nichols Act, and the subsequent development of Joint Doctrine, have improved the Services' ability to conduct Joint Operations. This concept will be applied to interagency operations which are being developed and implemented to deal with a regional crisis.

Crisis action is a key concept when dealing with regional security issues. In his book, The NSC Staff, Christopher C. Shoemaker states that successful crisis action at the National Security Council level "should integrate all the diverse elements of national power that could be brought to bear in response to a particular crisis event."⁵ Under crisis conditions, the issue of planning quickly becomes a question of implementing policy to achieve objectives.

Through a variety of legislative and executive initiatives begun in the 1970s and 80s the United States has attempted to improve the harmony and forethought of military and

state action. The National Security Council and the National Security Strategy Document are the most dramatic outputs of the system. Despite such initiatives, there is a general perception that the United States has no credible capability for unified interagency operations, particularly in crisis situations.

This perception has been given a solid coverage from various perspectives. In his book, The NSC Staff, Christopher C. Shoemaker concludes, "there is another dimension in which the government in general, and the NSC Staff in particular, do not get passing marks, and that is in crisis planning."⁶ The State Department comes in for criticism as well. Noted regional scholar, Howard J. Wiarda, writing in his book American Foreign Policy Toward Latin America in the 80s and 90s, contends that, "State has its own problems, often immense ones, including elitism, arrogance, lack of analytical skills, inability to conceptualize, and many others."⁷ Dr. Wiarda adds that the politicization of foreign policy has added to the difficulty of developing a decisive approach to foreign policy.⁸ These problems are part of a generally consistent failure of government organizations to respond quickly and effectively.

Several schools of thought attempt to explain these failures. These schools include Organizational Behavior theorist, Bureaucratic Politics theorist, and Rational Actor theorist. Each of these schools offers a unique perspective towards explaining implementation failures. This study will consider the general body of theory in order to identify the causes of such problems.

The government has made adaptations to overcome these problems. Since the reforms of the 1980s the nation's armed forces have demonstrated their improved ability to conduct joint operations. Operation Just Cause, the military actions in Panama, during December 1989, epitomizes the concept of a synchronized, joint application of overwhelming combat power.

However, the combined efforts of the federal agencies prior to Just Cause may not have been as effective as intended. Examinations of the crisis in Panama, made by both

uniformed and civilian observers, point out examples of disunity in the application of national power before the operation. In her book, The Noriega Years, Margaret E. Scranton draws the conclusion that the United States Government continually sent mixed signals throughout the crisis.⁹ Certainly one must ask why Manuel Noriega managed to elude the U.S. attempts to displace him for nearly two years.

Jefferson L. Pressman and Aaron Wildavsky, writing in their classic study of policy execution, Implementation, conclude, "Failure to implement may result either from overestimation of what can be accomplished or from underestimation of ability to implement."¹⁰ There are several studies which address the question of whether non-intervention was impossible from the beginning. This study examines the second cause of failure, underestimated implementation. This paper considers the issue of whether Noriega had to be displaced by military might because the United States Government was incapable of following through with an interagency operation which could have succeeded.

The United States response to the 1987 Panama crisis was conceived as an interagency operation from the beginning of the crisis action planning process. The official record shows that the NSC and various agencies were given an objective of removing Manuel Noriega from power in August 1987. During the crisis period, the State Department, the Department of Defense, the Justice Department, the Treasury Department, and the Commerce Department would be involved in Panama.

The case of Panama will be used to determine if the United States has a system which is capable of unifying the actions of federal agencies. Although there are some systems and procedures for interagency policy planning and review, for liaison, and for deliberate planning, no overarching mechanism exists for interagency crisis action. A lack of a formal system would not mean that the capability does not exist. The performance of the government in attempting interagency crisis response is the proof of the system. Panama, 1986 to 1990, is a case which will answer the question, can the United States Government conduct a unified interagency operational campaign?

Section II. Theoretical Review

There are two perspectives which can be used to analyze a failed program. The more common approach is to assume that the failed course of action was wrong from the beginning. This sort of study, which Professors Efraim Turban and Jack Meredith refer to as analysis of project particulars, assumes that the failure was one of strategic planning.¹¹ Another form of analysis considers the course of action feasible and assumes the failure to implement successfully results from organizational systemic factors. Where the first would assume that the interagency approach to crisis resolution in Panama failed because it was the wrong approach, the latter would question whether the organization actually acted in the fashion necessary to achieve the objective. There are numerous analyses of U.S. Latin American Policy, to include Panama, using the first approach.¹² The second, the organizational approach, has not been applied. This socio-political approach to organizational effectiveness warrants consideration.

There are many characteristics ascribed to effective organizational behavior. There are a multitude of theories which try to explain why organizations fail to behave effectively. Most often one finds these theories applied to middle level management and leadership. The problem becomes more difficult for national security issues as the theories must be applied to analyze the behavior of the entire national security superorganization and the federal government.

It would be simplistic to say the program succeeded or did not succeed because the objectives were not met. It is more important to identify characteristics which assess the quality of the superorganization's performance which can be applied during, rather than after, implementation. This research, in order to have utility, must establish qualitative measures which can be used to examine deviance during operations. Therefore, this study asks if there are characteristics of effectively unified interagency action.

The theoretical characteristics of effectiveness for organizations range from generally accepted principles to rigorous scientific theories. The United States Army includes three organizational characteristics in its Principles of War. These principles, delineated in FM 100-5, Operations, are objective, unity of command, and economy of force.¹³ Professor Kenyon B. De Greene, writing in The Adaptive Organization, concludes that the key organizational trait is adaptability based on anticipation and effective crisis management.¹⁴ Paul M. Bons, an associate professor at the United States Military Academy, writing in Leadership in Organizations, refers to these characteristics as competencies. He includes grouped skill, administrative competence, and internalization of organizational goals as some of the key attributes of effective organizations.¹⁵ For implementation, these requirements can be summed up in three characteristics: objective focus, unity of effort, and responsiveness.

Objective focus is the ability of the organization to direct its efforts towards a common aim or overarching goal. From a military perspective, FM 100-5 states that one should "direct every military operation toward a clearly defined, decisive, and attainable objective."¹⁶ Professors Turbin and Meradith note that the point of implementation is the attainment of goals.¹⁷ Professors Fremont Kast and James Rosenzweig of the University of Washington describe a classic hierarchy of goals:

In the organization, the relationship between means and ends is hierarchical. Goals established at one level require certain means for their accomplishment. These means then become the subgoals for the next level, and more specific operational objectives are developed as we move down the hierarchy.¹⁸

To measure this attribute, the study must determine if the individual agencies understand, accept, and pursue a common overarching superordinate policy objective.

At one extreme, objective focus results in total goal acceptance. Arnold and Feldman refer to this as "internalization."¹⁹ On the other extreme, implementation is inhibited when individuals and groups have goal mismatch or competition in the hierarchy.

According to Jeffrey McNally, an Associate Professor at the United States Military Academy:

It is a fact of modern organizational life that organizations simultaneously pursue many different goals, and various work groups within the organization are tasked to pursue those goals and objectives.²⁰

In many cases, and for a variety of causes, subordinates misunderstand or reject what the hierarchy expects of them. Even if subordinates understand what is expected, a variety of factors may cause them to reject the objectives either emotionally or intellectually.

Ultimately misunderstanding, rejection, or mismanagement may result in a failure to actively or accurately pursue the endstate envisioned by the superior. An effective objective focus will be characterized by acceptance of objectives, subordination of internal agendas to the hierarchical priorities, and active pursuit of the objectives.

Objective focus relates to the internalization of higher objectives established by the superorganization. Sometimes sub-groups in the organization accept the objectives yet are unable to work together in pursuit of that common purpose. A second component of this analysis asks if the agencies coordinate actions to complement one another. From a different perspective, this means avoiding intergroup conflicts which would inhibit effectiveness.

The importance of achieving unity of effort is an ideal which is difficult to achieve. The authors of FM 100-5 recognize the importance of unity of effort, writing, "Seek unity of effort towards every objective."²¹ The manual recognizes the difficulty involved:

However, in operations other than war, this may be more difficult to attain. In such operations, other government agencies will often have the lead. Commanders may answer to a civilian chief, such as an ambassador, or may themselves employ the resources of a civilian agency. Command arrangements may often be only loosely defined, causing commanders to seek an atmosphere of cooperation rather than command authority to achieve objectives by unity of effort.²²

Ideally, unified operations are characterized by mutual support, recognition and acceptance of the priority of other agencies' activities, and open, active exchange of information between agencies.

Unity of effort is not an end unto itself. Kast and Rosenzweig note that groups may exhibit coordinated behavior in dysfunctional directions.²³ McNally notes that acceptance of superordinate objectives works in concert with mutual dependence to create harmony between sub-groups.²⁴ If the goals of crisis action were functional, this would be enough. However, the purpose of the Federal Agencies is to produce.

The importance of producing results is often overlooked by social and political analysts. Professors Pressman and Wildavsky criticize the view that management should focus solely on the process, stating, "the emphasis on consensus, bargaining, and political maneuvering can easily lead (and has in fact, led) to the conception that implementation is its own reward."²⁵ In a crisis, the product is successful crisis resolution. This requires competency.

Competency in a crisis situation can be summed up in the concept of responsiveness. Effectiveness demands that the agencies be able to bring about unified actions in an appropriate and timely fashion. Mayer Nudell and Norman Antokol, in their *Handbook for Effective Emergency and Crisis Management*, identify two key components of this ability to move beyond planning into correct response. These are "defining and controlling crisis response" and "harnessing the environment."²⁶ Although they recognize the difficulty of this requirement, they do not see it as impossible.

De Greene notes that an organizational inability to adapt to the turbulent environment of crisis results in incidents of "hysteresis, a lag in the behavioral response due to inertia in the system," and "divergence, which represents behavior starting with nearly identical conditions, which evolves into very different final states."²⁷ One of the common criticisms of program implementation is that actions are often a case of too little, too late. It is generally accepted that, left to their own devices, complex organizations, particularly

bureaucracies, are sluggish actors. In a crisis environment, the superorganization may prove incapable of responding with the right combination of actions in a timely fashion, even when agencies accept superordinate goals, exchange information, coordinate plans, and maintain liaison. The test of responsiveness is whether appropriate ways and means are applied at the correct time and place rather than disjointedly and belatedly.

If the characteristics of objective focus, unity of effort, and responsiveness are so easily identified, one must ask why these characteristics are often unattainable. The body of literature in organization theory identifies several obstacles to successful implementation which can be used to determine why agencies fail to perform effectively during unified operations.

Questions of government failure to execute policies and programs effectively are not new. The explosion of the federal governments' bureaucracy has been paralleled by a growth in the analysis of organizational effectiveness. These basic theories developed from economics, sociology, and psychology in the 1960s and 1970s. These theories have been proven by case study so often that they seem axiomatic. If the analysis criteria offer measures of effectiveness, these theories of bureaucratic dynamics serve as means for analyzing the causes of implementation ineffectiveness.

The organizational effectiveness theories can be divided into three rough schools: Organization Theory, Bureaucracy Theory, and Rational Actor Theories. Organization Theory examines the human factors which influence performance. This is often referred to as group dynamics. Bureaucracy Theory, which is sometimes referred to as a type of Political Theory, analyzes the nature of the modern, complex, functional organization. This theory takes the approach that organizations take on a life of their own and behave as complex political organisms. The final theory, the Rational Actor approach, holds the premise that implementation problems are a result of poor comprehension, incomplete planning, and inefficient organization. This theory seeks to solve the implementation problem through a systematic approach to planning, directing and controlling

implementation. For the purpose of this study, each theory will be used to identify possible obstacles to implementation which are, in turn, useful for identifying causes of problems in actual performance.

Of the three theories, Organization Theory is the most well known. Organizational Theory, with its behaviorist bent, attributes the performance of organizations to the psychodynamics of organizations. This school of study, according to Professors Arnold and Feldman, sees organizations as social entities which use specialization and coordination to achieve a common goal.²⁸ This form of analysis looks at the individual relationship to a group, or Humanistic approach, the group relationship to the organization, or group dynamics, and the nature of the overall organization, or macro analysis.²⁹ Each perspective offers explanations for failure to achieve effective performance.

The Humanistic approach seeks to determine what motivates the individual to perform activities in support of the group. Professors Kast and Rosenzweig identify the major obstacles to motivation as incompatibility of objectives and lack of individual and group reciprocation.³⁰ To Paul Bons, the relationship of the individual to the group is a dynamic process which incorporates needs, values, stress, and socialization.³¹ The outcome of this theory is that an individual may exhibit aberrant behavior if the group's objectives and social behavior are incompatible with personal expectations and needs.

This interaction of individual with group social needs is seen as one of the classic sources of group failure. This sub-school of theory sees the social factors as exerting overpowering influence on the rational capability. The great prophet of Social Theory may be Graham T. Allison, author of landmark studies of decision making during the Kennedy Administration. Dr. Allison's theory recognizes that the influence of the need for social acceptance in the primary group and preconceived values attached to possible solutions may override conflict of ideas in the group decision making process. Dr. Allison's work has inspired the acceptance of the "groupthink" concept.

This need for some conflict leads to the study of group dynamics and intergroup relationships. The obstacles to effective implementation identifiable at this level are related to intergroup conflicts. To a certain extent, conflict between groups tends to balance the negative attributes of primary group dynamics. According to Professors Kast and Rosenzweig, a certain amount of conflict prevents subordination of the superobjective to the goal of consensus.³² However, unless properly managed, group conflict results in dysfunction of the superorganization, particularly in the area of unity of effort.

Professors Arnold and Feldman identify the causes of intergroup conflict as problems of coordination and problems of reward.³³ The problems of coordination are seen as resulting from task interdependence, task ambiguity, and differences in work orientation.³⁴ The second, task ambiguity is particularly applicable to an examination of intergroup dynamics in a crisis situation. According to McNally, task ambiguity leads to a situation in which:

it is likely that the two groups will have quite different perspectives on this situation. Unless closely coordinated, these groups may clash as they seek to accomplish this ambiguous work assignment. To further complicate this situation, it is unlikely that existing structures in the organization are present to resolve such an intergroup conflict.³⁵

Crisis, which by its nature is out of the ordinary and fraught with uncertainty, has great potential for situations of ambiguity. The other sources of conflict exist over the life-cycle of the organization.

The idea that organizations have a life cycle, which springs from an organistic view, bridges the gap between organization theory and bureaucracy theory. Bureaucracy theory takes the approach that these organizations are like large, political organisms. Originally, the organistic approach was applied to governments organized as bureaus. Now this concept is considered applicable to most large, hierarchic organizations. Professor Michel Crozier identifies three aspects of large, bureaucratic organizations: hierarchical organization with a dependence on functionalism, rationalization of collective activities,

and high levels of inertia due to ponderousness, routine, and procedure.³⁶ The organicistic approach takes the view that the organization, and its members, act out of desires for self-preservation and growth as much as from objectivity. This creates a complex of power allocation and sharing within the bureaucratic organization. Under Bureaucratic Theory, competing and hidden agendas, such as interagency competition, interfere with the ability of the executive agencies to achieve objectives.

According to Professors Turban and Meredith, "The most insidious and detrimental, but best camouflaged, politics are typically played at the upper levels of management."³⁷ They add, "politics, due to established managers' natural resistance to change, may be the greatest force opposing the implementation of any [new] project."³⁸ Returning to the nature of the complex organization in crisis situations, this creates obstacles to both adaption and cooperation. These obstacles are exaggerated if competing priorities and task ambiguity are prevalent.

This line of reasoning, which complements Organizational Theory, emphasizes that individual cases of bureaucratic implementation can never be viewed in isolation. Jeffery L. Pressman and Aaron Wildavsky took this view in their book, Implementation. They wrote, "Once innumerable programs are in operation, the stream of transactions among people who are simultaneously involved in them may evidence neither clear beginning nor end but an ebb and flow."³⁹ Subgroups in large organizations have difficulty maintaining crisis focus over the long term. As a crisis extends in time, the probability that the bureaucracy will lose sight of the fact that it is a crisis and move on to new issues increases. This adds up to institutional inability to adapt to new objectives in a crisis situation. To Professor De Greene, inadaptability, which is inherent in bureaucracy, creates a potential for crisis to become catastrophe.

Professor De Greene identifies four major obstacles to adaption: discounting issues that are removed in time and space, linearity of thinking, overreliance on technological and unilateral solutions, and underappreciation for the momentum of faulty practice.⁴⁰

Professors Kast and Rosenzweig would add sunk cost, misunderstanding, and desire for equilibrium.⁴ This all results in a propensity for sub-groups, agencies in the case of the government, to stick to current operations, resist new objectives and priorities, and compete with other groups for dominance. Bureaucracy Theory concludes that, left to their own devices, complex organizations are uncooperative and unresponsive. The fruit of this is that intergroup operations are difficult to plan, organize and coordinate, much less implement.

Although poor planning, organization, and coordination are not the sole causes of implementation failure, it is certainly a contributing factor. Analysis of the decision making process from a reasonability perspective is called Rational Actor Theory. The rational actor model is described by Graham T. Allison as, "The attempt to explain international events by recounting the aims and calculations of nations or governments."⁴ In its modern form, Rational Actor Theory assumes that aberrant behavior can be managed out of the system. This recent application of the rational actor model is referred to as Management Science or Operations Science. While almost all of the social sciences have practitioners of the systems approach, this particular method addresses obstacles to management based on analysis of the decision making process. According to Professors Turbin and Meredith, all of management, including organizing, and controlling, is viewed as decision making.⁴ Professors Davis, McKeown, and Rakes, in the text, Management Science, emphasize the criticality of rigorous application of the problem-solving process.⁴ Whereas the old axiom would say, "People don't plan to fail, they fail to plan," Management Science would add that they often fail to plan properly. Management Science sees the greatest obstacle to managing change as failure to anticipate and plan. Although modern Management Scientists, such as Professors Turbin and Meredith might recognize the organizational and bureaucratic obstacles to anticipation and planning, the solution they seek is more rigorous discipline in the system. Recognizing the limitations of the rational actor, scientific approach, the lack of a system which imposes some measure

of reason on crisis management shows organizational incompetency and is in itself an obstacle to responsive implementation.

Implementation is the test of any decision. It is also the path on which obstacles to effectiveness are encountered. If effective implementation has the three characteristics of objective focus, unity of effort, and responsiveness, failure to achieve these characteristics has its roots in three sources: organizational dysfunction, bureaucratic resistance, and managerial incompetence. These obstacles blend with the measures of effectiveness in a cause and effect relationship. A loss of objective focus is indicated by deviant action such as pursuing other objectives. Lack of unity of effort is demonstrated by non-support of other groups. Lack of responsiveness is evidenced by poor decision making and unadaptability. Poor decision making is identifiable by failures to anticipate change and plan solutions. Unadaptability is found in resistance to adopting new lines of action. These indicators will be used to classify the behavior of agencies and participants in the case study. This classification will allow assessment of the effectiveness of unified action.

Section III. Justification

The Panamanian Crisis, 1987 to 1990, is an interesting study in foreign policy implementation. To be useful, the case must be more than interesting, it must be relevant, accessible, and have applicability. An overview of the challenges facing the United States today will show the interagency approach to crisis response has relevance. Second, the questions to be answered and lessons to be learned are still applicable under the current system of National Security management. Third, there are sufficient information resources to allow a thorough investigation of the case. These factors will allow this study to assess the capability of the United States to effectively conduct a unified interagency operation.

Panama is still quite relevant for the purpose of studying the application of national power in a conflict without resorting to direct military intervention. Specifically, in 1987 the United States realized that Manuel Noriega's control of Panama was incompatible with U.S. national security interests. On the other hand, for most of that time, the U.S. did not want to go to war over Panama. The result was a low-intensity conflict conducted by means other than open warfare. The potential for similar conflicts, and similar United States government approaches to conflict resolution, remains.

International conflict did not disappear with the Cold War. Panama was not a Cold War conflict. Rather, it was a conflict over the issues of democracy, counter-narcotics, and the safety of United States citizens and innocent Panamanian citizens. These types of issues will insure such conflict recurs. Now, as then, there are many antagonistic, undemocratic regimes the U.S. would like to replace without the direct intervention of military forces. The American people's reluctance to intervene militarily has been demonstrated by the caution and confusion surrounding more recent cases such as Bosnia-Herzegovina and Somalia.⁴ Despite the efforts of its government, the United States continues to become involved in Low Intensity Conflict and Operations other than War. With these concepts in mind, one can legitimately conclude that the attempt to avoid the

use of direct force by using an interagency program in Panama is the shape of things to come.

This reluctance to take a military interventionist approach seems to be continuing. The unwillingness to risk military confrontation in Haiti during 1993 is one obvious example. The 1994 crisis with North Korea over nuclear weapons inspections is another. The concept will probably be tried again. Lieutenant Colonel Wojdakowski envisions the limitations on military force creating a significant need for an integrated application of the various elements of power in response to Low Intensity Conflict.⁴ Panama is such an example of an attempt to remove a government through coercion without military action.

The United States Government attempted to use four elements of power to depose Manuel Noriega: Economic Pressure; Diplomacy; Political Pressure; and Military Intimidation. This concept of integrated action has become a generally accepted goal for Low Intensity Conflict (LIC) and Operations Other than War (OOTW). Dr. Gabriel Marcella and General Fred Woerner see this lesson in the Low Intensity Conflicts of the 1980s, concluding, "An effective LIC strategy requires the fusion of all the instruments of power- political, economic, informational, intelligence, and military - to win."⁵

Christopher C. Shoemaker, writing in The NSC Staff: Counseling the Council, notes, "Under virtually any definition, national security now requires a thorough integration of all the elements of power the United States can bring to bear."⁶ Professor Howard J.

Wiarda, in American Foreign Policy Toward Latin America in the 80s and 90s, concludes:

We must be prepared to deal, conceptually and in a policy sense, with various mixed civil-military forms. Many scholars of Latin America find the usual distinction between civilian and military spheres not very useful.⁷

Integrated application of the elements of national power is seen as key. Ideally, the need for unified action should be demonstrated as clearly as it is perceived.

Unfortunately, interagency cooperation is not the recognized norm. Robert Pastor, a contributor to Alternative to Intervention, writes:

U.S. History has not provided a single set of answers to these three basic questions of national security: (1) which interests? (2) who decides on priority? and (3) when and how to respond? Rather, U.S. national security policy is replete with examples of diverse interest, shifting priorities, different decisionmakers, and widely varying responses.²⁹

Dr. Pastor is not alone. Christopher Shoemaker writes:

It is a relatively simple matter, in the absence of an oversight mechanism, for a disgruntled department head to simply ignore a decision by the president, or to establish so many obstacles to its implementation that it is rendered meaningless.³¹

These general observations would support a view that bureaucracy theory can be applied to U.S. foreign relations and national security. This model seems particularly applicable to the relationship between the State Department and the other agencies involved in national security.

Lieutenant General H. J. Hatch, writing in Evolving U.S. Strategy for Latin America and the Caribbean, addresses the issue of a State-DOD split, "one of the legacies of the Cold War." Lieutenant General Hatch notes that, "In the past four decades, the responsibilities between the Departments of State and Defense - and between the corresponding committees in Congress - have evolved into an either-or, peace-war kind of separation."³² Dr. Wiarda points out the elitism and arrogance of the State Department.³³ This creates the potential for conflict in the context of theoretical bureaucratic tendencies.

Bureaucracy is not the sole source of potential conflict in the National Security System. Carnes Lord, a trained political scientist and former member of the National Security Staff, holds the opinion that within the National Security System, "behavior is driven by fundamental pathologies."³⁴ The potential for identifying these pathological sources of intergroup conflict extends beyond the State-Defense problems. The entire security superorganization has developed these vulnerabilities. Since 1972 the White House Staff has been, according to W. Craig Bledsoe, a complex, political organization with all the associated problems.³⁵ In 1986 the Department of Defense had been reorganized under the Goldwater-Nichols reforms for one year and experienced the classic

symptoms of the change and adaption process.⁴⁶ The CIA was heavily committed to the last battles of the self-defining Cold War which were being fought in Latin America and needed to adapt to a new environment. The National Security Council Staff was embroiled in the Iran-Contra affair and the associated struggle between internal factions. The Justice Department had been fighting, and losing, the War on Drugs since 1984. As a result of the 1988 election, the key leadership would turn over as a result of the transition from the Reagan administration to that of President Bush. By 1988, this situation resulted in a governmental superorganization with the potential for the classic internal vulnerabilities which would result in diffusion and inertia.

The national decision making apparatus had other vulnerabilities as well. In Latin America there were competency problems. The United States has consistently been accused of benign neglect towards Latin America. One criticism of government action in this era, and particularly in this region, is that the Cold War drove all decision making. Dr. Wiarda expresses the belief that the Cold War was the only reason the United States had any involvement in Latin America.⁴⁷ Professors Steve Ropp and James Morris state:

Until recently, Central America remained a series of footnotes within the broader narrative of U.S. diplomatic history, rarely arousing the attention of policy makers, and even more rarely capturing the fancy of the North American public. Only during periods of upheaval or overt crisis have Central American events penetrated the public consciousness. In each instance, these events have been perceived as a bothersome irritant within the U.S. sphere of strategic interests.⁴⁸

This neglect sets the condition for faulty decision making as a result of either bias or faulty intelligence. This neglect is compounded by the weakness of the National Security System. Carnes Lord points out that there is no formal system for insuring that crisis response on the interagency level is integrated, although there are forums for communication and coordination.⁴⁹ Christopher Shoemaker identifies the National Security Council's responsibility for integration but points out a weakness at crisis

management.⁶ These views seem to offer a potential for insufficient or incomplete decision making in a crisis situation.

So far, this study has determined that general conditions exist which indicate that the three potential sources of problems were present in 1987. The National Security complex was a bureaucracy in form and function. In particular, the component organizations were undergoing the forms of stress which often lead to inter-group conflict. There were systemic problems, both of focus and organization, which created the potential for inadequate decision making. Much of the bureaucracy had competing objectives and agendas which often reduced responsiveness. Potential for problems is not proof that problems existed; proof requires evidence.

Specific evidence of interagency conflict and unresponsiveness is available. There are numerous sources which will allow an accurate recreation of critical events so that both cause, effect, and quality (in terms of the criteria) can be determined. Journalistic and academic coverage of the major events is available. There is a good deal of coverage of the specific policy decisions which occurred during the Panamanian crisis. In particular, John Dinges, Our Man in Panama, an investigative journalist with considerable Latin American experience, offers insight into events inside Panama. Kevin Buckley's, Panama: The Whole Story and Frederick Kempe's Divorcing the Dictator paint a generally sound panorama of events at the policy level, especially on questions of personal actions. Mary Scranton's The Noriega Years is a more academic evaluation of specific incidents in the crisis, but does not offer an overarching theory for the failure of the interagency operation. Careful cross-reference of these sources will allow the development of a generally accurate picture of significant events during the crisis.

Official reports and records offer a more precise accounting of events and positions. The official reports and records are now quite accessible due to recent declassification of documents related to Operation Just Cause. The United States Army has recently undertaken the challenge of preparing a military history of the Panama crisis

and has developed an accessible paper trail in the files of the Donovan Technical Library at Fort Leavenworth Kansas. These files include routine and special correspondence between the ambassador, the CINC, the Joint Staff, and the State Department.

Additionally, there are afteraction reports from the various agencies available through the Defense Technical Information Center. These records provide the specific evidence to show whether or not events occurred as reporters and witnesses describe.

Eyewitness reports are invaluable in any recreation of events. More importantly, participants often retain or recognize the emotional frame of mind which influenced the actions and decisions they made. Key individuals, and others with knowledge of the key events, were available and proved willing to discuss the issues. The individuals willing to be interviewed included Dr. John Fishel, who served as a policy analyst on General Woerner's staff in Panama and Lieutenant Colonel Katherine Sower who was assigned as the trusted agent to the Deputy Chief of the Joint Staff for Intelligence during the crisis. Additionally, the Donovan collection includes over 150 hours of taped interviews with key individuals. General Woerner, the Commander in Chief, US Southern Command, for most of the crisis, General Thurman, his replacement, and Ambassador Davis have each provided hours of taped commentary on the crisis as part of the Army oral history program. These oral histories are balanced by memoirs, such as the one by George Shultz, Secretary of State to President Reagan. His insights into the inner circle of policy making are especially useful. These eyewitness reports are extremely important for an accurate analysis of the human dimensions of interagency operation.

The availability of sources for both action and opinion provides sufficient resources for the case study to accurately capture the United States interagency actions in Panama. This accuracy is insignificant without applicability today's security planner. Even if interagency operations may become the norm, if Panama was actually not one, a different case would be needed. Likewise, if after Just Cause the problems associated with interagency operations had been identified and fixed, this study would be pointless.

There is compelling evidence of the applicability of the Panama case to the issue of interagency operations. This applicability warrants the deeper investigation of the Panama case. The circumstantial evidence alone has caused several authors to conclude that the United States Government's approach in Panama was ineffective. John Dinges concludes that human factors created a situation in which the United States diplomatic response was mixed.⁴¹ Admiral Crowe, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs from 1985 to 1989, seemed to have greater priorities; the Panama crisis is not mentioned in his memoir.⁴² Margaret Scranton, author of The Noriega Years, concludes that the United States government's attempt to translate the anti-Noriega policy into action was overcome by the nature of the bureaucracy; it was a case of "unity of objectives, disunity over means."⁴³ Frederick Kempe, author of Divorcing the Dictator, calls Panama an intelligence failure; it was a simple case of underestimating the enemy.⁴⁴ This ineffectiveness leads an investigator to ask if Panama was formally intended to be a unified interagency action.

There is solid evidence that the United States Government did intend to remove Noriega by either his forced resignation or a coup. Records of the Joint Staff show that from August of 1987 on, the United States had established the objective of removing Manuel Noriega from his position as defacto ruler Panama and commander of Panamanian police and military forces.⁴⁵ Former Secretary of State George Shultz writes in his memoirs that President Reagan was clearly committed to the removal of Noriega through negotiated measures rather than direct action.⁴⁶ The loyal elements of the Panamanian Defense Forces were clearly identifiable as Noriega's center of gravity. Panamanian opposition had begun to overcome the factionalism of the past and was open to United States involvement. In August of 1987 an Interagency Policy Review Group made a recommendation that the U.S. use economic, political and diplomatic efforts to oust Noriega⁴⁷. The decision to use an interagency approach is easily identifiable.

If the decision to use an interagency approach is identifiable, so are the sources of complexity and conflict. The case study will show that the response would require action

from the Department of Defense (including the DIA, the Joint Chiefs, and the Armed Forces in Panama), the Department of Transportation, the Department of Commerce, the Treasury Department, the Department of State, the CIA and the USAID. The Justice department (especially the FBI, ATF, DEA) and two Federal Attorneys Offices would also be involved. Even under the most benign circumstances, this undertaking would require cooperation, coordination, and integration.

The results of the crisis show that the actions of government agencies may not have been unified and therefore the case study should reveal clear problems. The available records show that the need for interagency action was perceived. As a restricted interagency group was formed the President must have tasked the government as a whole to achieve the objectives in Panama. Witnesses to these events, such as Dr. John Fishel, and documentation, such as planning documents, reveal that the Commander In Chief, United States Southern Command, General Fred Woerner attempted to promote a unified, interagency approach to deposing Manuel Noriega in what would now be called an Operation Other Than War (OOTW).⁶ The OOTW failed to achieve the objectives. The case study will show that the interagency approach, though discussed and promoted, never was successfully implemented.

The events, eye witness reports, and records show that the objective defined by the NSC was resisted at various levels within the agencies involved. In particular, the competing objectives can be clearly identified. The evidence will also show that many agencies failed to cooperate and in some cases openly contradicted one another. Finally, the case study reveals that the United States Government was neither able to implement the actions in a timely manner, nor able to respond to opportunities which would have allowed early attainment of the objectives. This later proved to be, in some ways, the straw that broke the back of the interagency approach and drove the need to resort to military intervention.

Ultimately, the policy was changed by resorting to a unilateral military operation to achieve the objectives. Even then, as Fishel, Shultz, and the USAID report show, the reconstruction effort was as uncoordinated as the pre-war attempts to oust Noriega. Unfortunately, the legacy continues.

This legacy of disunity is the most critical issue in the utility of this case study. The policy and doctrine used from 1986 through 1992 has not changed significantly. If the failure of the interagency approach to removing Noriega from power had resulted in significant reforms to the National Security System, this study would be nothing more than a history paper. Although some changes have been made, most notably in the area of military doctrine, significant policy changes have not occurred since Operation Just Cause. This means that any problems are likely to repeat themselves.

Military Doctrine has evolved since 1989. Emerging Joint and Service doctrine recognizes the need for unified interagency action during LIC, just as General Woerner did.⁶⁹ By itself, Military reform will not create interagency effectiveness, for as General George Joulwan, a former Commander in Chief, United States Southern Command emphasizes this in a recent article on LIC:

Command authority over nonmilitary agencies is not extended in times of peace or war. Most often, other US agencies will have the lead in operations other than war and will be supported with US military resources.⁷⁰

Unfortunately, there has been no parallel in the overall doctrine for executing National Security policy to insure that other agencies can and will provide the crucial lead.

Policies and Procedures for the Executive Branch have not been modified. The State department organization does not mesh with that of Defense, much less other agencies. The White House Staff, to include the National Security Council, is still subject to political turmoil. The Congress continues to debate whether the CIA should be reorganized to prevent ongoing operations from influencing estimates. There are still problems with unity of action in interagency operations.

These problems are manifest in more recent interagency operations. The crisis in Somalia is a case in point.⁷¹ When action was taken, the integration of State and Defense efforts was confused at best. The diplomatic and relief efforts in Bosnia-Herzegovina may be another example of unintegrated policy. Early efforts at coercive diplomacy were plagued by inconsistent pronouncements by department directors and military leaders. The interagency counter-narcotics effort is another.⁷² The war on drugs continues to be plagued by an inability to implement effective interagency action.

Interagency operations are becoming more and more the norm. The military is not alone in seeing interagency operations as a potentiality. Regional and strategic analysts see a requirement for OOTW in LIC as a crucial capability. The United States response in Panama was an attempt to use such an operation. The record of this attempt makes it particularly accessible for analysis of an interagency attempt. Panama is a very useful case for studying the National Security System's attempt to put the interagency capability into practice.

The National Security apparatus has not been significantly modified to improve the interagency capability since Operation Just Cause. The potential for dysfunctional interagency integration has not been reduced. More recent attempts to resolve crisis without resorting to warfare have experienced similar difficulties. If these types of operations continue to be demanded from the United States Government, it is crucial that the capability to do so improve. This improvement must be based on the lessons which can be drawn from past experience. This makes the case of Panama particularly relevant for answering whether the United States has an effective interagency operational capability.

Section IV. Case Study

This case study will determine the causes of interagency failure in Panama from 1987 to 1990. The failure occurred as the United States Government attempted to impose its will on another nation without using direct military action. Correlation of the historical data with the theoretical criteria, both chronologically and topically, exposes the causes of this failure. The events can be studied topically in terms of the evaluation criteria, the parties involved, and the theoretical causes of failure. Events are grouped as before the March 1988 coup, the siege period from March 1988 to October 1989, and the intervention period which followed October 1989. The result of this correlation is a clearer understanding of the cause and effect relationship of interagency dynamics to interagency failure.

There are certain key events which occurred in 1987 which created a true crisis for the United States in Panama. The crisis began with the Spadafora murder revelations of Colonel Diaz Herrera, the realization that Noriega might be a major partner in the cocaine industry, the fact that Noriega is facing popular opposition for the first time, and the discovery that Noriega may have been more deeply involved with the Nicaraguan and Cuban communist governments than was acceptable to the United States. Upon realizing these problems, the United States began seeking ways to resolve the crisis. The first and always most critical question became establishment of an objective.

The United States objectives for Panama began to take a dramatic turn in June 1987. Prior to this, the importance of this Central American nation was its utility as a base for other regional activities revolving around the war on drugs, the Cold War, and economics. Manuel Noriega, the virtual dictator of Panama, was seen as an acceptable, though authoritarian, alternative to leftist Omar Torijos. Noriega had seemingly total control over the military and police functions which were consolidated in the Panamanian

Defense Forces (PDF). So long as Noriega supported United States goals in Panama, his rule was acceptable.⁷³

The decline of Noriega's acceptability began on many fronts. The Florida offices of the Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA), the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Fire Arms, and U.S. Attorney's office had been infiltrating and exposing cocaine and weapons transport operations based in that area since 1979.⁷⁴ There was growing evidence that Noriega had crossed the line between political intimidation and murder in 1985.⁷⁵ Noriega's blatant centralization of power in the military and fraud in overturning the 1984 elections had begun to alienate the senior leadership of the PDF. To make matters worse for the administration, all of this had been revealed in a series of articles in the New York Times.⁷⁶ However, as Mary Scranton points out, the U.S. was not ready to change the policy of tolerating Noriega quite yet, and resorted to harsh words.⁷⁷

Harsh words would not make the Panamanian problem go away. The United States Congress began to investigate corruption and abuse in the Noriega regime.⁷⁸ More significantly, in June of 1987 Noriega attempted to complete the ouster of his greatest opponent in the PDF, Colonel Diaz Herrera, the Chief of Staff. Diaz Herrera refused to go quietly. This resulted in the greatest crisis the Panamanian Government had faced since the death of Omar Torijos. The implications for U.S. policy emerge in a JCS summary of the initiation of crisis management at the National Security Council:

EVENT: Col. Diaz Herrera denounces Noriega for '84 election fraud and murder of Hugo Spadafora. Sparks protests; Civil Crusade formed; general strike called.

INTERPRETATION: Noriega's confidence shaken, but still in firm control. Revelations ruin his chance at presidential run in '89.

ASSESSMENT: During the past decade and a half, the reputation of the PDF has repeatedly been tarnished by reports and incidents that reveal the complicity of high-level officers in trafficking.⁷⁹

By July of 1987, the National Security Staff had drawn three conclusions: Noriega no longer enjoyed widespread support, the PDF would consider ousting Noriega to preserve

order and the institution, yet the popular opposition was becoming sufficiently organized to oust Noriega without assistance.³⁰ In this light, the United States began a review of policy towards Panama. Meanwhile, as the situation in Panama continued to deteriorate, the various agencies in Panama continued to operate under the old policies.

The changing U.S. goals in Panama meant no clear objectives were articulated during the reassessment. The State Department proposed stopping aid and investment while the Justice Department raised the possibility of indictments.³¹ Much of the emerging policy was driven by the assumption that Noriega had the full support of the military. This assessment was false.

The first difficulty encountered is the poor intelligence picture formed of the situation in Panama. This raises a Rational Actor issue of competence. The intelligence analyst failed to appreciate the duality that was the PDF. Manuel Noriega never had total loyalty from the police side of the organization. The police organization, which made up two thirds of the enlisted manpower and half of the officer corps was much more committed to the gradual democratization which had begun under Omar Torrijos.³² To this group Noriega's emphasis on consolidating power in the hands of the military side of the organization was straying from the path Torrijos had laid. It was this belief which had led to the Diaz Herrera crisis, yet intelligence assessments would consider Noriega in firm control of the Military until the first coup.

The roots of this intelligence failure and the ensuing incongruent behavior by the various participants can be found in the fact that subordinate agencies did not embrace the objectives. The CIA was deeply involved in the Contra battles in Nicaragua and the counter-revolution in El Salvador. The Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff was working towards nuclear disarmament, as was the Secretary of State. In sum, the United States was very busy ending the Cold War.

The implications of this failure are particularly relevant. Admiral William Crowe saw the prevention of accidental nuclear war as his top priority.³³ According to Lieutenant

Colonel Katherine Sower, the concern of both the Joint Staff and the Commander in Chief in Panama was security for the U.S. citizens there until the canal was handed over.²⁴ The Drug Enforcement Agency in Panama was focused on defeating the Columbian Drug Cartels. Because these competing agendas created artificial filters, it was difficult both to clearly articulate a policy, to translate that into unified action, and to do all of this in a responsive manner.

Unity of effort proved particularly difficult to achieve during the period of 1987 to 1988. Probably the greatest example of this was the Miami Attorney's indictment of Manuel Noriega. According to George Shultz, these indictments were seen as a lever to force Noriega to a negotiated abdication.²⁵ If that was the case, then unity was key. This unity was not achieved. Secretary Shultz contends that the February indictment was made "without adequate consultation with the State Department, or, as far as I could learn, with the White House."²⁶ In October of 1987 the Department of Justice had briefed the National Security Policy Review Group that indictments were unlikely, this had lead to debates over a negotiated settlement.²⁷ In February, in the course of seven days, the indictments were literally shoved down the throats of the other agencies. In fact, Military Intelligence predicted that the indictments would "reinforce a siege mentality in the Panamanian General Staff."²⁸ Despite this, the indictments were hastily implemented with little or no coordination.

The indictments issue raises the question as to whether the Government may not have planned to fail, but failed to plan and coordinate. Often, one agency was not informed of what another was doing. Dr. Fishel reports that the Ambassador and CINC were surprised by the announcement of the indictments which they learned by telephone call, after the fact, during their weekly meeting.²⁹ This was particularly problematic as the White House plan hinged on coercing and convincing Panamanian President Delvalle, here to fore seen as a Noriega puppet, to fire the PDF chief. The DEA had internal problems as well.

As every public announcement by a United States Government official serves both a political and diplomatic purpose, the diplomatic effort was marred by mixed signaling. The DEA office in Miami was working closely with the U.S. Attorney's office. Yet when the indictments were announced, the DEA, with many agents who felt Noriega was supporting actions against the Cali' drug cartel, was, according to John Dinges, a source of open complaint in the press.⁹⁰ The Department of Defense fears were also leaked to the press.⁹¹ In this case, both the DEA and DoD were weakening the coercive effect of the State and Justice actions.

The DoD was divided on Panama. General Woerner, the CINC, with a great deal of Panama time, felt that the PDF was full of "fissures" which could be exploited.⁹² This did not agree with the DoD and CIA assessments. The DoD recognized the antagonism of the Noriega clique against the U.S., but felt Noriega's hold was tight on the PDF.⁹³ In this case, General Woerner's conceptual approach seems to have been that promoted by Secretary Shultz. This was to be an overwhelmingly decisive attempt to force Noriega out of power and into exile in Spain.⁹⁴ This overwhelming response would require extreme responsiveness.

There were already economic sanctions in place. On August 27, 1987, the Policy Review Group had decided on a "strategy of ratcheting up pressure to induce Noriega to leave office."⁹⁵ The indictments were seen as a more blunt attempt to resolve the crisis quickly. In conjunction with the indictments, President Devalle had "fired" General Noriega.⁹⁶ This had united the opposition which called, and effectively mobilized, a general strike. According to George Shultz:

The mounting crisis in Panama was deepened by the shortage of cash. Noriega ordered all Panamanian banks closed to prevent remaining funds from being withdrawn. The government of Panama was unable to meet its payrolls. This was the moment for the United States to move decisively. Abrams proposed and I supported vigorous actions designed to exploit Panamanian developments.⁹⁷

Yet, because the Policy Review Group and the National Security Policy Group were behind the power curve on the indictments, other agencies were not able to react quickly. As a result, the effects of the initial economic sanctions were being dissipated as the Noriega regime took steps to work around the fiscal crisis.

The incompleteness of the sanctions was recognized but a policy was not developed until March of 1988.⁹⁸ Likewise, it was only in March that the policy was changed to require State Department approval for meetings with Noriega.⁹⁹ Meanwhile, the United States was unable to exploit the first of two coup attempts brought on by the new policies.

On 10 March 1988 the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs had concluded that "U.S. pressure has only reinforced support in the military for Noriega."¹⁰⁰ Yet, according to Mary Scranton, Colonel Macias, the Chief of Police forces, had been plotting a coup since late February.¹⁰¹ This proved that General Woerner and Secretary Shultz had been correct. Although the United States was both uninvolved and unaware of the Police coup, the United States had taken steps to encourage a PDF coup. On March 29th, in statements by White House Spokesman Marlin Fitzwater and the DoD, the Administration acknowledged their frustration and noted the potential for military intervention as a last resort.¹⁰² The presence of a U.S. Marine Amphibious unit in the canal was noted for emphasis.¹⁰³ The coup dramatically changed the nature of the crisis, yet despite having the initiative, the United States could not respond to the situation and oust Noriega.

The momentum of the March crisis was lost. According to Secretary Shultz:

Through internal argument and inaction, our moment had passed: we had missed our chance to convert into decisive pressure on Noriega the dissatisfaction in Panama over the cash squeeze and the isolation caused by Noriega's indictment in the United States on drug-related charges.¹⁰⁴

Manuel Noriega had weathered his greatest crisis to date. In the main, this was a result of a United States effort which was marked by confused objectives, disunity, and unresponsiveness. The failure to achieve effectiveness up to this point can be attributed to three causes: Bureaucratic inertia caused by the demands of recent and current

operations, inaccurate situational assessment caused by lack of ability, and political infighting.

The inertia of the system was a product of the Cold War and Vietnam. The CIA and the JCS viewed the region through a specific lens. Noriega, with his support for the Contras, was seen as abandoning the leftist policies of Omar Torrijos.¹⁰⁵ Likewise, the DEA had seen Noriega as an ally in the war against narco-terrorism. Ultimately, the greatest obstacle was the inability to reach a consensus and the unwillingness of the administration to intervene in the intergroup conflicts. According to Mary Scranton, the NSC, stung by the Tower Commission inquiry into Iran-Contra, was unwilling to assert itself and overcome bureaucratic infighting between the State Department and the Department of Defense.¹⁰⁶ The infighting was exacerbated by the short fuse requirement the indictments imposed on the system. Working in a reactive mode, the Policy Review Group could not bring about a concerted effort in a comprehensive plan. The confusion and indecision were compounded by a lack of appreciation for Panama. Much of this inability to appreciate Panama was a result of the low esteem placed on Central America in a Cold War environment.¹⁰⁷ In particular, the intelligence staffs could not distinguish between leftism, Torrijostic military nationalism, and Noriega despotism. With the United States Security apparatus unable to make a clear assessment, build a solid plan, and insure unity of action in a responsive manner, Noriega stayed in power.

As a result of the coup and the deployment of additional United States security forces to Panama in March, Noriega was very concerned about U.S. intervention. On 31 March 1988, Major General Loeffke, the commander of U.S. Army forces in Panama, reported that the PDF was in a state of alert.¹⁰⁸ The situation did not improve significantly after the coup. The economic sanctions were implemented piecemeal, by trial and error rather than decisively targeted. In the same message reporting the heightened alert of Panamanian forces, Major General Loeffke also reported that U.S. corporations were making cash payments to the PDF.¹⁰⁹ The diplomatic effort failed to coordinate

international sanctions, with other nations joining in a call to lift the ban.¹¹⁰ After President Reagan imposed economic sanctions under the International Emergency Economic Powers Act, Noriega was able to acquire money through foreign sources.¹¹¹ Simultaneously, Noriega was purging the staff of the PDF. The effectiveness of the sanctions was also mitigated by failures to coordinate action.

Neither the Policy Review Group nor the National Security Planning group were able to reach a consensus on a post coup program involving action other than economic sanctions.¹¹² According to Secretary Shultz, he and National Security Advisor Colin Powell developed a policy of continued economic sanction, military show of force, and use of the indictment as a lever to force Noriega into exile.¹¹³ Shultz contends that, "after eight weeks of debate within the U.S. Government, we had finally induced Noriega to discuss his departure, and we had a plan for moderate pressure."¹¹⁴ The Ambassador sent word to PDF contacts, "of US desire to work with PDF, but inability to do so while Noriega remains."¹¹⁵ Secretary Shultz expected a military show of force in Panama which would intimidate Noriega and motivate potential coup plotters.¹¹⁶ In this light, Mike Kozak was sent to negotiate Noriega's departure. The negotiations failed to dislodge Noriega, in part because a concerted effort did not take place before the senior coup plotters had been rounded up and subordinate officers needed time to appreciate the situation. Meanwhile, the U.S. policy was being effected by intergroup conflicts.

On one hand, a group of policy makers headed by then Vice-President George Bush, prompted by election concerns, began to openly oppose negotiation with Noriega.¹¹⁷ Elliot Abrams, who had been involved in the Iran-Contra scandal, proposed direct action by the CIA, Special Operating Forces, and Panamanian paramilitary forces.¹¹⁸ the discord between the State and Defense Departments ran very deep.

Admiral Crowe, according to Scranton, opposed using U.S. bases in Panama as a springboard for action because of the risk that other nations would become adverse to U.S. basing. Lieutenant Colonel Sower emphasizes the concern of the Joint Chiefs over

the safety of U.S. personnel and a wish to avoid risking lives in an area where basing rights had already been negotiated away.¹¹⁹ The New York Times, quoting an "Official DoD" source, blamed the split on animosity still felt by the DoD over the State Departments role in the Lebanon disaster of 1982 to 1983.¹²⁰ Mary Scranton points out the personal animosity of many in the DoD for Elliot Abrams, stating, "Once the Iran-Contra scandal broke, Abrams and the activist options he was advocating (the two cannot really be separated) were viewed with misgivings in the Department of Defense."¹²¹ The split between Admiral Crowe and the State Department became public. According to a New York Times story published on April 3rd, "the Reagan Administration was deeply divided over what further steps it should take to force the ouster of Panama's military leader, Manuel Noriega."¹²²

State and Defense were not the only agencies on different wavelengths. Secretary Shultz points out that Secretary of the Treasury James Baker gave a "backgrounder" on April 25th which sent the signal that sanctions would soon be softened and that force would not be used.¹²³ Rather than the military shows of force built around exercising treaty rights in Panama Secretary Shultz expected, internal friction had resulted in pull backs of U.S. forces in the face of Panamanian probes.¹²⁴ With all of these competing goals, Noriega was not confronted by an overwhelming U.S. threat. The negotiations broke down. Confusion seemed to reign, and the situation settled into a protracted state of mutual siege which lasted until the October 1989 coup.

The National Security System was sending mixed signals to the CINC as well. As General Woerner attempted to be more aggressive, the Joint Staff was telling him to avoid conflict.¹²⁵ According to Dr. Fishel, General Woerner was frustrated by the State Departments constant attempts to resort to direct military intervention despite what he saw as contrary to the last clear guidance from the President.¹²⁶ The siege was protracted by the inability for the interagency group and the country team to break the concensual deadlock. According to Bob Woodward, General Woerner and Admiral Crowe thought

of the direct action plans proposed by State as "Looney Tunes."¹²⁷ As a result of this confusion, after a year of siege, a campaign plan to integrate the military and other agencies had not been developed.¹²⁸ So long as President Reagan had been in office, there was little likelihood of direct action.¹²⁹

Much of the failure to achieve the objectives can be attributed to this lack of unity in the interagency response. Much of this disunity may be traced to the weakness of the Reagan White House that resulted from the Iran-Contra scandal. This weakness led to other splits in the National Council and the Cabinet. Secretary Shultz accused James Baker and then Vice-President George Bush of vacillating on the issues of negotiation coupled with military threat.¹³⁰ As noted, this frustration over goals was felt at the operational level as well.

This vacillation changed when George Bush was inaugurated as President. George Bush took steps to overcome the bureaucratic intransigence. In order to achieve objective focus and unity of effort, President Bush was quite willing to make personnel changes. In order to insure this message came across, he stayed personally involved.

President Bush was more inclined to both more aggressive, and if likely, more direct action in Panama. His background as a former CIA director gave him insight into this area. As Vice President he had opposed negotiation with Noriega.¹³¹ Where President Reagan had been under great stress from the military and covert difficulties of his last years in office, President Bush was fresh of an election victory.

Between January of 1989 and October of 1989, the President took steps to increase the pressure on Noriega. After the Panamanian election confrontations in early 1989, the increasing evidence of narco-terrorist and communist block involvement in Panama, and Noriega's open hostility to Americans, the President elevated the issue from the Policy Review Group level to Deputies Committee of the National Security Council itself.¹³² Finally, the President made a personal statement designed to foment a coup.¹³³

This election victory had also brought personality changes to the entire National Security System. In addition to the Cabinet changes, the most significant changes were the replacement of Admiral Crowe and General Woerner with Generals Colin Powell and Maxwell Thurman.¹³⁴ Although these personnel changes set the conditions for military responsiveness, it did not set the conditions for overcoming interagency problems.

When the desired effect occurred in October of 1989 and a group of PDF officers seized Manuel Noriega in his headquarters, the United States was unable to capitalize on the situation and arrest Noriega. Intelligence had shown the general conditions for a coup were ripe.¹³⁵ As Mary Scranton notes, the Justice Department had issued an opinion which would allow the arrest to take place.¹³⁶ Yet when the coup occurred, the opportunity was missed. This unresponsiveness had three causes. First, the interagency team needed to legally arrest Noriega had not been assembled. Second, the CIA advised the CINC that the plotters were unreliable. Third, the CINC, General Thurman, had not been on the ground long enough to ensure that the intelligence was sound and that the plan was in place.

General Thurman took over on September 30th, he received notice of the coup on the first of October, and the coup took place on the night of the second.¹³⁷ General Powell became the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff on the night of the first. Much of the problem in making a decision is attributable to the fact that the chain of command was new. The information received from the CIA interpreted the coup as either leftist or a trap.¹³⁸ This is explained by the nature of the organization, which, as Lieutenant Colonel Sower points out, saw everyone as corrupt in Latin America.¹³⁹ Second, the CIA would not develop the necessary contacts and profiles to support a coup until this coup had failed.¹⁴⁰ There is no evidence of any attempt to form and rehearse an interagency team for the seizure of Noriega until after the coup. As Woodward points out, the coup prompted Thurman to revise his contingency plans.¹⁴¹ Mary Scranton points out that interagency rehearsals and exercises probably took place shortly before the invasion.

The invasion, which occurred in December 1989, was justified by the killing of Lieutenant Robert Paz. As Margaret Scranton points out, the PDF seemed to be coming apart at the seams.¹⁴² Dr. Fishel reports that the PDF was losing control of the situation and another coup seemed to be imminent.¹⁴³ In this environment, direct action seemed the only way to oust Noriega and insure the security of United States citizens. The invasion took place and was an overwhelming military success. However, as both John Fishel and Richard Shultz point out in their studies, the invasion was a unilateral military action.

As a result of the unilateral nature of the invasion, planning was compartmentalized in the Department of Defense. Richard Shultz concludes that the post conflict plan was flawed because of the failure to conduct interagency planning.¹⁴⁴ John Fishel states:

An interagency organization will serve the Ambassador. This assumes that the Ambassador will be the American official in charge of the conduct of U.S. policy in a foreign country even in circumstances where one would expect that the military commander might take that position. This is the lesson of Vietnam, Panama, and other interventions.¹⁴⁵

In order to overcome the impasse of a failed interagency operation, the National Security Council had resorted to anti-bureaucracy, a single agency operation. Although the action proved responsive and was internally unified, the civilian agencies were in the same position as the State Department had been when the indictments were issued in 1988. They were playing catchup.

The difficulty with a single agency plan is the natural tendency towards functionalism. As Dr. Fishel notes, the United States Southern Command staff devoted its attention to the military aspects of the invasion.¹⁴⁶ Because the country team was brought on board late and in a limited fashion, the governmental aspects of restoration were neglected. The system failed to coordinate as a result of the military bureaucracy's functional tendency to compartmentalize. This resulted in an uncoordinated and unresponsive interagency restoration program.

The history of interagency action in Panama is one of unresponsiveness and disunity. The final phase of the Panama crisis saw various agencies demonstrate an inability to focus on objectives, coordinate their actions, and respond to opportunities. The success of December 1989 resulted from a single agency being given sole propriety for an operation. Even then, the handover between agencies was weak. The previous phases, from 1987 to October of 1989, saw an inability to work together, even when a new president took an aggressive role in the management of security. The first phase, from April 1987 to March of 1988, was a clear case of unsuccessful execution resulting from classic, political infighting and intergroup conflict. The human factors associated with change and the nature of the intelligence bureaucracy prevented successful implementation of the policy objectives. The question remains, has the United States developed a system which can overcome these problems?

Section V: Conclusion

The doctrine in use before, during, and after the Panama crisis did not provide the ability to effectively implement foreign policy through unified interagency operations? During each phase of the crisis, the natural tendencies of the superorganization were allowed to overwhelm the ability to function in a unified and responsive fashion, focused on a clear objective. Even when the policy debates over feasibility and suitability are set aside, the implementation was so poor one can conclude that the failure to depose Noriega without an invasion was a result of flawed execution. The post-conflict problems are also a result of poor implementation from a national perspective.

These problems can be explained by the theories examined in section two. The organizational theories can explain the impact of numerous changes in policy and in the chain of command. The bureaucratic theories help explain the difficulties agencies had accepting objectives and coordinating their actions. The rational actor model also explains problems at the lower level. The national security system did not overcome these problems.

From an organizational perspective, the Chairman of the Joint Staff had only recently been officially placed in the chain of communication with the newly empowered CINC. Additionally, the National Security Council, which had previously provided the synchronizing effect, was reeling from the Iran-Contra scandal. On a more personal level, the President, Secretary of State, Vice-President, and Secretary of the Treasury had differing views on the appropriate policy. These human factors were enhanced by the personal animosities pointed out between State and Defense. As a result, when called upon for unified action, the result was open squabble. President Reagan was unwilling, or unable to assert himself and overcome the interagency conflict.

This interagency conflict was exacerbated by the natural inertia of the political bureaucracy. Even after President Bush came into office, the agencies still failed to retain the objective focus. Competing objectives, particularly Admiral Crowe's personal aversion to intervention, the regional DEA's focus on current operations, and the Treasury Departments fear of hurting business, resulted in mixed signals. Failures in communication between agencies, such as Justice during the indictments and Defense during the invasion, created the conditions for uncoordinated and unresponsive implementation. The bureaucratic tendencies also created reasoning problems.

Throughout the conflict, flawed estimates created unresponsiveness and missed opportunities. Much of the explanation for these failures lie in the bureaucracies themselves. The CIA had not adjusted its perspective from the Cold War and could not develop the conditions for responsive support to a coup which would have been acceptable to the United States and the Panamanian people. Regional DEA and CIA estimates were influenced by current operations in the war on drugs and the war against the government of Nicaragua.¹⁴⁷ These problems were further complicated by the fact that the national system for crisis management had not become a system for integration.

All of these problems, organizational, bureaucratic, and rational, are solvable. The question is whether the policies and doctrine have been modified in accordance with the theories and findings so that these problems will be avoided in future contingencies and crisis.

Military doctrine has evolved, to a point. The CINC has the authority under Goldwater-Nichols to synchronize all the military departments and commands in his area. The Chairman of the Joint Staff is in the channel of communication between the CINC and the president, so a united military voice is heard. The Joint Staff has published doctrine to implement this system. In particular, the joint doctrine, particularly JCS Pub. 3-0, includes the concept of integrating operations into a unified command. The CINC does not have the authority to integrate other agencies.

This is not true at the interagency level. National policy implementation still is highly subject to politics and personalities. Recommendations for policy action by national and regional leaders and advisors is integrated by the policy review group. However, as in the case of the Reagan administration, it is up to the president to force interagency action. Below the Secretary and Director level, there is no system for integrating action outside of interagency coordinating committees in the capital region. There is no State Department equivalent of the CINC who can oversee operations of the other agencies on a regional basis insure coordination.

Integration in the field is done through the country team. The problems of integration in Panama in the Just Cause post conflict operation show that the country team can be isolated in many instances from the more regionally focused and security conscious CINC. State and Defense have traditional animosities which must also be overcome. The government needs a system along the line of that in the military in order to insure maintenance of objectives, coordination action, and responsiveness to a fluid situation.

The committee system does not foster this. As Pressman and Wildavsky point out, "If we relax the assumption that a common purpose is involved, however, and admit the possibility (indeed, the likelihood) of conflict over goals, then coordination becomes another term for coercion."¹⁴

President Bush was only able to make the system responsive by changing the personnel and circumventing the bureaucracy. Even then, the system could not react quickly enough and accurately enough to respond to the October 1989 coup.

A regional integration system would establish a lead agency to act as the coordinating authority for crisis management and implementation. The lead must have coercive authority to force integration of plans and actions. Only through regional integration will the objectives be harmonized, the coordination result in unity of action, and the system respond to unfolding events. Currently, the system does not do this and the United States cannot adequately guarantee that interagency operations will be unified.

Endnotes

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- ²The Joint Staff, ICS Pub 3-0, Doctrine for Unified and Joint Operations (Washington, D.C.: The Joint Chiefs of Staff, 1990), p. I-11.
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- ⁴Ibid, p. xiii.
- ⁵Christopher C. Shoemaker, The NSC Staff. Counseling the Council (Boulder: Westview Press, 1991), p. 38.
- ⁶Ibid.
- ⁷Howard J. Wiarda, American Foreign Policy Toward Latin America in the 80s and 90s: Issues and Controversies from Reagan to Bush (New York: New York University Press, 1992), p. 31.
- ⁸Ibid, p. 58.
- ⁹Margaret E. Scranton, The Noriega Years: U.S. - Panama Relations, 1981 - 1990 (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, Inc., 1991), p. 41-43.
- ¹⁰Jeffery L. Pressman and Aaron Wildavsky, Implementation: How Great Expectations in Washington are Dashed in Oakland; or Why It's Amazing That Federal Programs Work at All. Berkeley (University of California Press, 2nd ed., 1979), p. 136.
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- ¹²For example, see Rebecca L. Grant, "Operation Just Cause and the U.S. Policy Process" (Santa Monica: RAND, 1992).
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- ¹⁴Kenyon B. De Green, The Adaptive Organization (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1982), p. 343.
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- 28 Arnold and Feldman, p. 8.
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- 30 Kast and Rosenzweig, p. 168.
- 31 Paul M. Bons, "Socializing Individuals into Groups," in Leadership in Organizations, Howard T. Prince II, senior editor (Garden City Park: Avery Publishing Group Inc., 1988), p. 160 - 162.
- 32 Kast and Rosenzweig, p. 318 - 319.
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- 35 McNally, p. 196.
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- 39 Pressman and Wildavsky, p. 99.
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- ⁴⁵Refusal in the case of Bosnia-Hercegovina, regret in the case of Somolia.
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- ⁴⁷Gabriel Marcella and Fred Woerner, "Mutaul Imperatives for Change in Hemespheric Strategic Policy: Issures for the 1990s," in Evolving U.S. Strategy for Latin America and the Caribbian.
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- ⁵⁰Robert A. Pastor, "U.S. National Security and Latin American Revolutions: Imprised," in Alternative to Intervention: A New U.S.-Latin American Security Relationship, Richard J. Bloomfield and Gregory F. Treverton, , editors (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, Inc., 1990), p. 59.
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- ⁶⁰Shomaker, p. 38.
- ⁶¹John Dinges, Our Man in Panama (New York: Random House, 1990), p. 229.
- ⁶²William J. Crowe, with David Chanoff, The Line of Fire (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1993), p.
- ⁶³Scranton, p. 46.

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- ⁶⁵J3, Joint Operations Division, The Joint Staff, "Panamanian Chronology, 6 June 1987 to 18 December 1989" (Copy on file with Combat Studies Institute, Donovan Technical Library, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, undated), p. 3.
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- ⁶⁸Interview with Dr. John Fishel, conducted by the author, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, 10 March 1994. Cooperated by message traffic.
- ⁶⁹For example, JCS Pub 3-0 Doctrine for Unified and Joint Operations, pp. I-11, JCS Pub 3-07, Doctrine for Joint Operations in Low Intensity Conflict, pp. I-10 - I-24, and FM 100-5, Operations, pp. 13-0 - 13-8.
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- ⁷⁹JCS Chronology, p. 1.
- ⁸⁰Ibid.
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- ⁸²John Fishel, interview by author.
- ⁸³Crowe, pp. 252 - 255.
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- 130 Shultz, pp. 1062 - 1063.
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- 132 JCS Chronology, p. 11.
- 133 See, for example, Scranton, p. 164 - 168.
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- 138 Scranton, p. 186 - 187. See also, Woodward, pp. 123 - 125.
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