

# Operational Art during Operation Just Cause

A Monograph

by

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## Abstract

Operational Art during Operation Just Cause, by MAJ Michael P. Wallace, US Army, 47 pages.

During Operation Just Cause, the United States conducted a large scale limited contingency operation against the Panamanian Defense Force. Operation Just Cause began at 0100 hours on 20 December 1989. It caught the civilized world completely by surprise. LTG Carl Stiner, XVIII Airborne Corps (XVIII ABC) and JTF South Commander, led a massive joint task force that included elements from the 7th Infantry Division, 82nd Airborne Division, 5th Mechanized Division, 6th Marine Expeditionary Battalion, Joint Special Operations Forces, and the 193rd Light Infantry Brigade. The policy objectives were to restore democracy and remove Manuel Noriega. Most historical studies of this operation focus on the unprecedented lead time, prepositioning, and force ratio overmatch as explanations for the overwhelming success of Operation Just Cause. This monograph fills a gap by focusing on JTF planning and execution through the lens of operational art.

This study conducts a structured, focused comparison of Operation Just Cause posing seven research questions generated from the theory of operational art. These questions focus on testing four research hypotheses to determine if JTF plans were flexible, accounted for operational tempo, extended operational reach, and mitigated operational risk as an indicators that JTF South employed operational art.

The empirical evidence examined supports this monograph's thesis that Operation Just Cause successfully achieved the aims of US foreign policy because JTF South employed the theory of operational art during planning and execution. JTF South planning ensured that plans were flexible, maintained a higher operational tempo in relation to the enemy, extended operational reach, and mitigated operational risk throughout the planning and execution of Operation Just Cause.

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## Acronyms

ABN	Airborne
BDE	Brigade
BN	Battalion
C/3-75	Charlie Company 3rd Battalion 75th Ranger Regiment
COMJTFSO	Commander Joint Task Force South
CRE	Combat Readiness Exercise
EDRE	Emergency Deployment Readiness Exercise
GCC	Geographic Combatant Command
LSCO	Large-scale combat operations
NSD	National Security Directive
JCS	Joint Chiefs of Staff
JTF	Joint Task Force
MAC	Military Airlift Command
OOTW	Operations Other Than War
OPORD	Operations Order
OPLAN	Operations Plan
PDF	Panamanian Defense Force
POTUS	President of the United States
ROE	Rules of Engagement
SECDEF	Secretary of Defense
SOUTHCOM	Southern Command
TCP	Theater Campaign Plan
TRANSCOM	United States Transportation Command
USCINCSO	United States Commander in Chief South
USSOCOM	United States Special Operations Command

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## Introduction

A CBS poll conducted soon after the installation of President Endara showed that nine out of ten Panamanians favored the US intervention. President George Bush had been vindicated in a bold political decision. Generals Thurman and Stiner and all the troops under them had achieved a victory for democracy with minimal bloodshed. The American people supported the action and were again proud of their armed forces. We had a success under our belt.

—Colin Powell, *My American Journey*

The Hay-Bunau-Varilla Treaty in 1903 committed the United States to building a canal in Panama connecting the Atlantic and Pacific oceans. Completed in 1914, the Panama Canal led to a US controlled Canal Zone, which placed the tiny nation in a pivotal role in US strategic and commercial endeavors. Manuel Antonio Noriega rose to power amidst a maelstrom of controversy regarding the death of his predecessor, electoral fraud, and murder of his opposition leader in 1985. On 5 February 1988, US Federal Grand Juries in Miami and Tampa, Florida indicted Noriega and most of his senior Panamanian Defense Force (PDF) officials on thirteen counts of racketeering and narcotics trafficking.<sup>1</sup> The indictment triggered the Bush Administration's transition to a tougher policy aimed at removing Noriega, which culminated with one of the most celebrated and understudied military interventions in US history.<sup>2</sup>

Scholars dismissed the relatively small-scale contingencies common in the 1990s as secondary and residual, because limited contingency operations did not fit the large-scale combat operations paradigm prevalent in the US military.<sup>3</sup> Operation Just Cause's proximity to the Persian Gulf War distracted the military academic community from critical analysis of the invasion of Panama. Jennifer Taw attributed success during Operation Just Cause to the 26,000 US Forces arrayed against the 15,000-man security force that constituted the PDF. Her assertion

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<sup>1</sup> Ronald H. Cole, *Operation Just Cause: The Planning and Execution of Joint Operations in Panama February 1988-January 1990* (Washington, DC: Joint History Office of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, 1995), 5.

<sup>2</sup> Colin Powell and Joseph E. Persico, *My American Journey* (New York: The Random House Ballantine Publishing Group, 1995), 416.

<sup>3</sup> Lawrence Freedman, *Strategy: A History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 221.

that prepositioned forces, knowledge of the operating environment, and unprecedented lead time explains the overwhelming operational success of Operation Just Cause is generally accepted.<sup>4</sup> This study parts with paradigmatic analysis of Operation Just Cause. This study is a structured, focused comparison that aims to determine if Joint Task Force (JTF) South planners employed the theory of operational art during Operation Just Cause. This study argues that Operation Just Cause successfully achieved the aims of US foreign policy because JTF planners employed the theory of operational art during planning and execution.

There is a pervasive generality among military planners that politicians rarely define political objectives, thus there is no foundation for military planning. A review and analysis of US military history, strategy, and associated political objectives is beyond the scope of this monograph. Strategy is an emergent phenomena due to the dynamic nature of the global security environment. Emergent strategy does not absolve military planners of the responsibility to recognize policy transitions early and preemptively develop nested military options.<sup>5</sup>

Strategy is the art of combining preparations for war and deciding issues associated with the employment of the armed forces and all resources in a country's pursuit of the ultimate war aim, thus it is possible to discern a role for operational art.<sup>6</sup> Sound operational art should mediate and balance mental interaction between strategic and tactical reasoning.<sup>7</sup> Operational artist's employ military forces to attain strategic goals in a directed theater operations through the design,

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<sup>4</sup> Jennifer M. Taw, *Operation Just Cause: Lessons for Operations Other Than War* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 1996), vii.

<sup>5</sup> Henry Mintzberg, *The Rise and Fall of Strategic Planning* (New York: The Free Press, 1994), 24.

<sup>6</sup> Aleksandr A. Svechin, *Strategy*, trans. Kent Lee (Minneapolis, MN: East View Publications INC, 1991), 69.

<sup>7</sup> Huba Wass de Czege, "Thinking and Acting Like an Early Explorer: Operational Art is Not a Level of War," *Small Wars Journal* (March 14, 2011), accessed November 11, 2018, <https://smallwarsjournal.com/blog/journal/docs-temp/710-deczege.pdf>.

organization, and conduct of campaigns and major operations.<sup>8</sup> This study seeks to determine if JTF South's employment of operational art influenced the outcome of Operation Just Cause.

This study aims to provide future military planners with empirical evidence that connects employment of operational art with operational success. Military planners must recognize transitions in US foreign policy then adapt contingency planning to the policy environment. The scope and scale of Operation Just Cause does not fit the current US Army focus on large-scale combat operations (LSCO), but there is ample evidence demonstrating how employment of operational art contributed to operational success.

Explaining several key terms will enhance the reader's understanding of this study. The literature review will explore operational art in depth. The literature provides a theoretical foundation that explains how the researcher will view case study evidence. Flexibility, operational tempo, operational reach, and operational risk are interrelated elements of the theory of operational art that the literature review will address in detail. A JTF is a joint force constituted and designated by senior Department of Defense (DOD) officials to accomplish a mission with specific or limited objectives.<sup>9</sup> The DOD referred to a Combatant Commanders as a Commander in Chief (CINC) of their area of responsibility at the time Operation Just Cause occurred.<sup>10</sup> The Commander of Southern Command in this study is the Commander in Chief of US Southern Command (USCINCSO). Lastly, this study references a litany of contingency plans, which are the branch plans to the overarching Theater Campaign Plans (TCP) for Geographic Combatant Commands (GCC).

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<sup>8</sup> Richard M. Swain, "Filling the Void: The Operational Art and the US Army," in *Operational Art: Developments in the Theories of War*, ed. B.J.C. McKercher and Michael Hennessy (Westport, CT: Praeger Publishing, 1996), 165.

<sup>9</sup> US Department of Defense, *Joint Staff Publication (JP) 3-0, Joint Operations* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2017).

<sup>10</sup> Cole, *Operation Just Cause*, 7.

This study tests the following hypotheses to evaluate JTF South's employment of operational art. If JTF South's plan was flexible, then the options available to the commander were able to mitigate all threats from the enemy, which is evidence that they employed operational art. If JTF South maintained a higher operational tempo in relation to the enemy and the enemy could not address all of the threats posed to them, then there is evidence that they employed operational art. If JTF South was able to extend their operational reach without culminating, then there is evidence that they employed operational art. If JTF South was able to mitigate operational risk, then there is evidence that they employed operational art.

This study poses the following research questions to structure the collection of case study evidence. What was the strategic and operational context of Operation Just Cause? What were the stated political and military objectives? What were the strategic and operational assumptions? Once the commander and staff recognized the strategic and operational context, how did they develop the operational approach? Did the commander drive the operations process or did the operations process drive the commander? What military options were available to the commander? How did the commander and staff anticipate, learn, and adapt to the operational environment? How did the outcome of the battles, operations, and campaigns influence military and political objectives? Did JTF planners develop branches and sequels to facilitate adjustments to the operational approach?

Operation Just Cause is relatively recent military history, so access to primary source documents is limited by classification barriers. The extensive media coverage and attention paid to the Persian Gulf War limited published academic literature addressing operational planning during the invasion of Panama. Lastly, the XVIII Airborne Corps Command Historian is currently reorganizing the Corps' historical archives, which restricted access to documents that could deepen contextual understanding.

Despite limitations, this study is necessarily scoped to JTF South's planning and execution. This study will begin with directed revisions of contingency plans regarding Panama

and concludes with the transition to Operation Promote Liberty. This timeframe provides sufficient evidence to determine JTF South's employment of operational art.

This study makes two major assumptions. First, Dr. Robert K. Wright's, XVIII Airborne Corps Historian, structured interviews immediately following Operation Just Cause constitute primary source evidence. Second, the recently declassified joint staff history study of the planning and execution of Operation Just Cause limits subjectivity in evidence collection because the researcher had access to and analyzed classified primary source documents currently unavailable for this study.

This study proceeds in five sections. Section two presents a review of relevant literature and operationalizes variables. Section three explains the structured, focused comparison methodology. Section four is the case study, which collates evidence found during research presented as answers to the research questions. Section five presents findings and analysis based on the empirical evidence collected to determine the validity of the research hypotheses. Section six concludes the study, makes recommendations for future research, and discusses implications for future practitioners of operational art.

## Literature Review

This section is the literature review. The literature review is subdivided into the theoretical, conceptual, and empirical sections. The theoretical section explains the theoretical lens and defines operational art. The conceptual section defines selected elements of operational art to operationalize case study variables. The empirical section integrates this study with current academic literature on the invasion of Panama.

There has always been an intermediate link between strategy and tactics, but a distinct concept that provided a systematic and deliberate method for campaign planning and major operations emerged in the nineteenth century. Broadly defined, operational art encompasses the area between strategy and tactics spanning the theory and practice of planning and conducting campaigns and major operations aimed at accomplishing strategic and operational objectives in a

given theater of operations.<sup>11</sup> In the wake of Napoleon, operational art emerged as a theoretical framework jointly formed by Clausewitz and Jomini that explained the phenomenal success of the French combat method.<sup>12</sup>

Operational art evolved through various interpretations depending on geographic location, geostrategic changes, historical analysis of past campaigns, and anticipation of future conflicts. The complete theoretical evolution of operational art is beyond the scope of this monograph. This section sets a theoretical foundation for determining employment of operational art. The study combines Napoleon's foundation, Russian evolution, American refinement, and current scholarship to define operational art. Operational art is an iterative and deliberate cognitive process that enables a commander and staff to synchronize subordinate units in time, space, and purpose to conduct a range of military activities that gain and maintain a strategic advantage.

Napoleon's legacy is a litany of interpretations ranging from worshipers to detractors with increased risk coinciding with polarization.<sup>13</sup> Martin Creveld, a clear worshiper, asserts that Napoleon's corps system, imperial headquarters, and directed telescope that linked the two formed the system that enabled Napoleon's operational art. The system amplified Napoleon's genius and energy to conduct operations on an unprecedented scale in an explosion of speed, range, and flexibility that compensated for the lack of information available to commanders at the time.<sup>14</sup> Napoleon's clear contribution to operational art was the foundation on which his successors built the contemporary understanding. He was the first to take the accomplishments of his predecessors and combine them with the capabilities furnished by the French Revolution to

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<sup>11</sup> Martin Creveld, "Napoleon and the Dawn of Operational Warfare," in *The Evolution of Operational Art*, ed. by Martin V. Creveld and John A. Olsen (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 9-34.

<sup>12</sup> Freedman, *Strategy*, 81.

<sup>13</sup> David G. Chandler, *The Campaigns of Napoleon* (New York: Macmillan Company, 1966), 3.

<sup>14</sup> Creveld, "Napoleon and the Dawn of Operational Warfare," 3.

organize large scale combat.<sup>15</sup> Emulating Napoleon's organization of large scale combat contributed to the development of the operational level of war and eventually operational art.

The Soviet theory of operational art emerged out of a cauldron of war and revolution during the transition from tsarist Russia to Bolshevik Russia. In 1922, Aleksandr A. Svechin first defined Soviet operational art as a critical linkage between tactics and strategy. Svechin believed tactics solved immediate problems, strategy pursued goals defined by policy, and operational art governed intellectual creativity that linked tactical actions into a campaign to achieve strategic goals. He correctly interpreted Clausewitz and asserted that no amount of operational proficiency could overcome strategic miscalculation regarding the nature of war.<sup>16</sup> Despite Stalin's purge, Svechin's foundation galvanized a candid, introspective, and substantive discourse that transformed operational art in the Red Army. Georgii Isserson and Marshal Mikhail Tukhachevsky established the Soviet Deep Operations Theory of Annihilation based on Svechin's theoretical underpinning of operational art.<sup>17</sup>

Isserson and Tukhachevsky understood that despite rapid development of industrial means to enhance operational maneuver, continuous fronts could still force stalemates in future conflicts. In future war, to gain decisive effects, enveloping maneuvers had to transform into equitably distributed strikes against the entire depth of the enemy's disposition. Past Soviet endeavors failed because operational artists never integrated operational depth into planning and execution.<sup>18</sup> Isserson proposed a solution to the contentious debate between interior and exterior

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<sup>15</sup> Michael A. Bonura, *Under the Shadow of Napoleon: French Influence on the American War of War from 1812 to the Outbreak of WWII* (New York: New York University Press, 2012), 16.

<sup>16</sup> Jacob W. Kipp, "The Tsarist and Soviet Operational Art: 1853-1991," in *The Evolution of Operational Art*, ed. by Martin V. Creveland and John A. Olsen (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 64-95.

<sup>17</sup> Charles E. Thompson, "Miracle of the Vistula: The Red Army's Failure and the Birth of the Deep Operations Theory of Annihilation" (Monograph, School of Advanced Military Studies, May 2017), 61.

<sup>18</sup> Georgii S. Isserson, "The Evolution of Operational Art," trans. Bruce W. Menning (Fort Leavenworth, KS: SAMS Theoretical Special Edition, 2005), 45-46.

lines. Napoleon launched countless attacks from a single point that destroyed adversaries through successful exploitation of the central position. Attacks on exterior lines became a standard form of maneuver during the age of linear strategy. Isserson's evolution in Soviet operational art combined two types of operational maneuver previously regarded as operational polarities to achieve decisive effects. An attack echelon, operating on exterior lines attacks on a broad front. Simultaneously, a breakthrough echelon operating on interior lines penetrates to deliver a decisive blow to the depth of the enemy position.<sup>19</sup> Marshal Georgy Zhukov adapted Soviet deep operations theory during his prepared defense at Kursk, which dispelled the myth of the Blitzkrieg by finally seizing operational initiative from the Wehrmacht. Zhukov further refined Soviet deep theory during Operation Bagration, characterized as the most successful employment of Soviet operational art.<sup>20</sup> The complete history of Soviet operational art is beyond the scope of this monograph, but understanding the theoretical underpinning of the Soviet victory on the Eastern Front frames Soviet influence on subsequent US Army doctrine.

The Grand Alliance that defeated the Nazi *Wehrmacht* in World War II dissipated during the reconstruction of Europe, which led to the Cold War. During The Cold War, US Army leadership identified the Soviet Union as the only threat with an asymmetric military advantage based on Soviet modernization efforts completed during the Vietnam War.<sup>21</sup> General Don Starry became the Commander of the new US Army Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC) in 1973 and led the US Army through a period of intellectual growth between 1974 and 1986 aimed at defending Europe from the Soviets. This revolution in military affairs culminated in 1986 with the revised publication of the FM 100-5 *Operations*. The new doctrine, commonly known as air land battle, became the operational planning bible for the military planners that served on the JTF

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<sup>19</sup> Richard W. Harrison, *Architect of Soviet Victory in World War II: The life and theories of G. S. Isserson* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company Inc. Publishers, 2010), 114.

<sup>20</sup> Kipp, "The Tsarist and Soviet Operational Art: 1853-1991," 90.

<sup>21</sup> Swain, *Filling the Void: The Operational Art and the U.S. Army*, 147-172.



South Staff. The manual defined operational art as the employment of military forces to attain strategic goals in a theater of war or theater of operations, through the design, organization, and conduct of campaigns and major operations.<sup>22</sup> Operational art filled a significant void in US military thought and provided a concept to relate tactical actions to strategic outcomes.<sup>23</sup>

The definition of operational art in FM 100-5 places the term in context for JTF South planners, but it is inadequate for contemporary understanding. The purpose of military strategy is to link military means with political aims in pursuit of a continuing advantage.<sup>24</sup> In pursuit of contemporary relevance, this study defines operational art as an iterative and deliberate cognitive process that enables a commander and staff to synchronize subordinate units in time, space, and purpose to conduct a range of military activities that gain and maintain a relative advantage.

The conceptual section operationalizes the variables used in the case study. This section explains how flexibility, operational tempo, and operational reach are interrelated elements of operational art. These elements of operational art enable a commander and staff to account for operational risk when developing and adapting an operational approach to achieve a position of relative advantage. These elements of operational art elucidate whether JTF South's actions during the planning and execution of Operation Just Cause are consistent with the theory of operational art.

Clausewitz's statement that "everything in war is simple, but the simplest thing is difficult" highlights the importance of flexibility in an operational approach.<sup>25</sup> He identified danger, exertion, uncertainty, and chance as the four elements of the climate of friction in war.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> US Department of the Army, *Field Manual (FM) 100-5, Operations* (Washington, DC: Headquarters, Department of the Army, 1986)

<sup>23</sup> Swain, *Filling the Void*, 149.

<sup>24</sup> Everett C. Dolman, *Pure Strategy: Power and Principle in the Space and Information Age* (New York: Routledge Taylor and Francis Group, 2005), 14.

<sup>25</sup> Carl von Clausewitz, *On War* ed. and trans. Michael Howard and Peter Paret (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984), 104.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

Operational risk accounts for these elements, which this study defines as the ability of a commander and staff to accept exposure to potential threats or conditions that if acted upon could prevent the unit from achieving their purpose.<sup>27</sup> Based on operational risk, operational artists not only adjust for unforeseen change, they construct and adapt operational approaches that manipulate, account for, and advance change. Since the operational approach anticipates change, there is no surprise when it occurs.<sup>28</sup> This approach facilitates the commander and staff's ability to adapt their operational approach with more frequency in relation to their adversary to gain and maintain a position of relative advantage. Joint Force Commanders (JFC) and their staffs develop branches and sequels to build flexibility into plans and preserve freedom of action in rapidly changing operational environments.<sup>29</sup> Thus, if JTF South's plan was flexible then JTF planners developed branches and sequels that mitigated all threats posed by the PDF.

George Washington recognized the importance of controlling the operational tempo and rhythm of a campaign during the American Revolution. General Washington manipulated his operational tempo during the New Jersey campaign and kept the British Commanders off balance.<sup>30</sup> Temporal considerations pervade all decision making in war. Military history provides countless examples of commanders and their staffs achieving a position of advantage through the manipulation of time.<sup>31</sup> Ulysses S. Grant, Commander of the Army of Tennessee, demonstrated clearly during the Vicksburg campaign that temporal characteristics could be exploited through careful planning, innovative logistics, fast marching, and a rapid decision

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<sup>27</sup> Jon W. Meredith, "Operational Risk and the American Way of Warfare" (Monograph, School of Advanced Military Studies, May 2011), 5.

<sup>28</sup> Dolman, *Pure Strategy*, 131.

<sup>29</sup> US Department of Defense, *Joint Staff Publication (JP) 5-0, Joint Planning* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2017), 140.

<sup>30</sup> David H. Fischer, *Washington's Crossing* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 372.

<sup>31</sup> Robert R. Leonhart, *Fighting by the Minutes: Time and the Art of War* (Westport, CT: Praeger Publishing, 1994), 5.

cycle.<sup>32</sup> The commander determines the operational tempo based on the perception and anticipation of the frequency of the operations. Frequency in warfare is the pace of events, which Moltke successfully manipulated in the Franco-Prussian War to compensate for a technical disadvantage.<sup>33</sup> JFCs and their staffs must conduct operations at a tempo that optimizes friendly capabilities and inhibits those of their adversary to dominate action, remain unpredictable, and operate faster than the enemy's capacity to react.<sup>34</sup> Thus, if JTF South maintained a higher operational tempo that presented more threats than the PDF could address then there is evidence that they employed operational art.

Clausewitz described the culminating point of victory as a keystone for planning that occurs when the attacker has progressed beyond a point where they can mitigate reductions in combat power resulting from battles.<sup>35</sup> Defender's employ opposing operational activities aimed at causing an aggressor to stop short of their intended objective. When an aggressor can no longer conduct movement toward an objective, they have culminated.<sup>36</sup> The culminating point is a point in time and or space at which the operation can no longer maintain momentum.<sup>37</sup> Grant mitigated culmination during the Vicksburg campaign, when he conducted an operational pause in early May, 1863. He sacrificed operational tempo to build-up combat power, supplies, and transportation assets which extended his operational reach. The decision enabled the relentless march that enveloped Vicksburg faster than the Confederates could react.<sup>38</sup> Joint doctrine defines Operational reach as the distance and duration across which a joint force can successfully employ

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<sup>32</sup> Brooks D. Simpson, *Ulysses S. Grant* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2000), 214.

<sup>33</sup> Leonhart, *Fighting by the Minutes: Time and the Art of War*, 101.

<sup>34</sup> US Joint Staff, *(JP) 5-0*, (2017), 139.

<sup>35</sup> Clausewitz, *On War*, 566.

<sup>36</sup> Leonhart, *Fighting by the Minutes: Time and the Art of War*, 121.

<sup>37</sup> US Joint Staff, *(JP) 5-0*, (2017), 25.

<sup>38</sup> Simpson, *Ulysses S. Grant*, 192-197.

military capabilities.<sup>39</sup> Thus, if JTF South was able to extend their operational reach and mitigate culmination then there is evidence that they employed operational art.

This section demonstrated how flexibility, operational tempo, and operational reach are interrelated elements of operational art that impact operational risk when JFCs develop and adapt their operational approach to achieve a position of relative advantage. This section explained how these variables are operationalized to evaluate case study evidence. The elements of operational art selected for this study are not superior to others. This section simply aims to operationalize variables used to evaluate case study evidence.

The scope, scale, and media coverage of the Persian Gulf War overshadowed the invasion of Panama. As a result, literature available on Operation Just Cause is extremely limited. Current academic literature generally argues that unprecedented forewarning, detailed planning, successful prepositioning, and detailed rehearsals explain JTF South's success. This study aims to fill a gap by posing research questions derived from the theory of operational art to collate empirical evidence from recently de-classified sources and primary source interviews to determine JTF employment of operational art.

Cody Phillips argued that the invasion of Panama represented a bold new era in American military force projection.<sup>40</sup> Ronald H. Cole analyzed JTF planning to make the case that the reforms imposed by the Goldwater-Nichols Defense Reorganization Act of 1986 contributed to the overwhelming success in Panama.<sup>41</sup> Rebecca Grant examined the US policy process regarding Panama and asserted that the invasion resulted from the coup attempt that galvanized Washington and led directly to accelerated planning efforts to depose Noriega.<sup>42</sup> Edward

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<sup>39</sup> US Joint Staff, *(JP) 5-0*, (2017), 25.

<sup>40</sup> Cody R. Phillips, *Operation Just Cause: Incursion into Panama* (Washington, DC: US Army Center for Military History, 1991), 49.

<sup>41</sup> Cole, *Operation Just Cause*, 72-74.

<sup>42</sup> Rebecca Grant, *Operation Just Cause and the U.S. Policy Process* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 1991), 1.

Flanagan provided a detailed operational summary of Operation Just Cause, but the book's focus is telling the story more than providing analysis and implications for practitioners.<sup>43</sup>

Timothy Bloechl wrote the only monograph available from the School of Advanced Military Studies on the invasion of Panama. Bloechl's thesis asserted that the invasion of Panama was an excellent application of operational art because planners understood existing doctrine and used operational art to develop a highly effective operational plan that attained strategic goals. His study utilized operational art as a lens, but relied solely on doctrine instead of theory to define operational art. Additionally, he conducted his study when Operation Just Cause was still recent military history and lacked access to a recently de-classified study on JTF South planning.<sup>44</sup> This study aims to fill a gap in the legacy of Operation Just Cause, because it uses specific theoretical elements of operational art, addressed above, to determine if employment of operational art enabled the unprecedented preparation, detailed planning, and rehearsals emphasized in the research done to date.

The literature review covered the theoretical, conceptual, and empirical elements of this study. The theoretical section explained how this study combines Napoleon's foundation, Russian evolution, American refinement, and current scholarship on the theory of operational art to define operational art as an iterative and deliberate cognitive process that enables a commander and staff to synchronize subordinate units in time, space, and purpose to conduct a range of military activities that gain and maintain a relative advantage. The conceptual section demonstrated how flexibility, operational tempo, and operational reach are interrelated elements of an operational approach that enable a commander and staff to account for operational risk when developing and adapting an operational approach. The empirical section asserted that this study is different and aims to fill a gap in the scholarship regarding Operation Just Cause, because

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<sup>43</sup> Edward M. Flanagan, *Battle for Panama* (New York: Brassey's Inc, 1993).

<sup>44</sup> Timothy D. Bloechl, "Operation Just Cause: An Application of Operational Art?" (Monograph, School of Advanced Military Studies, May 1993), 3-20.

it uses questions derived from theory to collate empirical evidence and evaluate previously untested hypotheses. The next section is the methodology section, which will explain case selection, instrumentation, data collection, and data analysis employed in case study research.

## Methodology

The primary goal of this study is to test research hypotheses that evaluate the employment of operational art. This study employs a single case study method despite criticism from the social science community. Some social scientists characterize single case studies as relatively high risk due to the potential for indeterminacy based on multiple possible explanations that can lead to incorrect inferences. However, single case studies, like this one, are better suited for the evaluation and development of theory, because they enable a researcher to test multiple observations from a single case study.<sup>45</sup> This study is a structured, focused comparison that examines JTF level planning and execution during Operation Just Cause. This section will introduce the case study and expound upon the data analysis method employed during research.

The method and logic of a structured, focused comparison is relatively simple in social science. Alexander George and Andrew Bennett assert that the structure is posing research questions to a case study that guide and standardize data collection, thereby enabling a systematic comparison and accumulation of the findings. The researcher then focuses the comparison by dealing with only specific aspects of a historical case study.<sup>46</sup> This monograph will pose research questions derived from the theory of operational art to determine if JTF South employed operational art. Understanding how JTF South constructed and adapted their operational approach in concert with transitions in US foreign policy is relevant to the contemporary Joint Force. Regardless of the size of the operation, future military planners must know how to prepare and present military options nested within the emergent strategy and policy framework.

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<sup>45</sup> Alexander L. George and Andrew Bennett, *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2005), 33-34.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., chapter 3.

The monograph will focus on JTF level planning and execution from directed revisions to the operation plans (OPLAN) through the transition to Operation Promote Liberty. Social scientists designed the structured, focused comparison to analyze historical experience in ways that yield useful knowledge from a specific case study. Despite limited academic writing and declassification barriers there is still plenty of available empirical evidence to determine JTF South's employment of operational art. Early recognition of a US foreign policy transition and military planning synchronized with emergent national strategy contributed to the overwhelming success of Operation Just Cause. This study aims to determine the role operational art played in JTF South's success.

The structured, focused comparison guides and standardizes data collection in this study. George and Bennet developed the method to provide a systematic comparison and accumulation of findings by posing research questions of a case study.<sup>47</sup> Instead of comparing the findings to another case study, this study will provide deeper analysis of JTF planner actions and present empirical evidence to answer research questions derived from the theory of operational art.

This study poses seven research questions to guide the collection of evidence. The questions are broken into three groups, strategic recognition, development of the operational approach, and adjustment of the operational approach. The first question of the strategic recognition group is what was the strategic and operational context of Operation Just Cause? The researcher expects to find that there was a US foreign policy transition early in the Bush Administration that required JTF South to build operational readiness rapidly for an armed intervention in Panama. The next question is what were the stated political and military objectives? The researcher expects to find that the military objectives were to remove Manuel Noriega from power and restore democracy in Panama. The final question of this group is what were the strategic and operational assumptions? The researcher expects to find that strategically,

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<sup>47</sup> George and Bennett, *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences*, chapter 3.

the JTF assumed that the PDF had to be neutralized to restore democracy. Operationally, the JTF assumed they had an asymmetric advantage to operate at night.

The next group of research questions is the development of the operational approach group. The first question is once JTF South recognized the strategic and operational context, how did they develop the operational approach? The researcher expects to find that JTF South developed their operational approach as a reaction to the transition of US foreign policy. The next question is did the commander drive the operations process or did the operations process drive the commander? The researcher expects to find that JTF South's commander drove the operations process to satisfy the demands of the Bush Administration. The final question of this group is what military options were available to the commander? The researcher expects to find that the geopolitical situation necessarily limited military options.

The adjustment of the operational approach group is the final group of research questions. The first question is, how did the commander and staff anticipate, learn, and adapt to the operational environment? The researcher expects to find that JTF South's parallel planning and rehearsals generated the situational awareness required to adapt to the operational environment. The next question is how did the outcome of the battles, operations, and campaigns influence military and political objectives? The researcher expects to find that the outcome of the battles, operations, and campaigns had little impact on military or political objectives. The final question of the adjustment of the operational approach group is did JTF planners develop branches and sequels to facilitate adjustments to the operational approach? The researcher expects to find that JTF South adjusted their operational approach.

This section restated the purpose of this research, reviewed research questions, and presented expected findings. This single case study uses a structured, focused comparison methodology to determine the validity of hypotheses by answering questions derived from the theory of operational art that collate case study evidence. The expected findings presented were



based on the assumption that the research hypotheses are valid. The next section is the case study, which presents empirical evidence found as answers to the research questions.

## Case Study

After reviewing relevant theory and explaining this structured, focused comparison study of Operation Just Cause, this section will present evidence found during case study research. This section provides an overview of Operation Just Cause and answers the research questions from the methodology section in three groups. The research question groups are strategic recognition, development of the operational approach, and adjustment of the operational approach. The evidence presented in this section will determine the validity of the research hypotheses. A complete history of JTF planning for Operation Just Cause is beyond the scope of this monograph; see the recently declassified Joint History Study for further reading.<sup>48</sup>

Operation Just Cause began at 0100 hours on 20 December 1989. It caught the civilized world completely by surprise. LTG Carl Stiner, XVIII Airborne Corps (XVIII ABC) and JTF South Commander, led a massive joint task force that including elements from the 7th Infantry Division, 82nd Airborne Division, 5th Mechanized Division, 6th Marine Expeditionary Battalion, Joint Special Operations Forces, and the 193rd Light Infantry Brigade. The policy objectives were to restore democracy and remove Noriega. US Southern Command translated those policy objectives into four military objectives. They were to protect US citizens, defend the Panama Canal, restore democracy, and capture Noriega. Operation Just Cause was the first of the three envisioned phases for the invasion of Panama. Phase one, conduct joint forced entry operations to neutralize the PDF, capture Noriega, install a new government, and protect and defend US citizens and key facilities. Phase two, Operation Promote liberty, conduct stability operations to ensure law and order and support the transition to host nation governance. Phase three, Nation-

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<sup>48</sup> Ronald H. Cole, *De-classified Operation Just Cause: Planning and Execution of Joint Operations in Panama* (Washington, DC: Joint History Office, 2002), 7-8.

building, sought to transition responsibility to the Department of State and support Panamanian President Guillermo Endara's new government.<sup>49</sup>

JTF South's plan divided the operational objectives among five subordinate task forces.<sup>50</sup> Task Force Bayonet, 193rd Infantry Brigade, tasked to isolate the Comandancia, Noriega's headquarters, and neutralize the PDF's 5th Company garrisoned there. Task Force Semper Fi, 6th Marine Expeditionary Battalion, tasked to block the western approaches to Panama City and secure the Bridge of the Americas. Task Force Atlantic, 7th Infantry Division, tasked to isolate Colón and neutralize the PDF's 8th Company and Naval Infantry Company, protect Madden Dam, and free political prisoners in Gamboa. Joint Special Operations Task Force, tasked to parachute assault into Rio Hato, neutralize the PDF's 6th and 7th companies, disable PDF patrol craft in Balboa Harbor and a TV tower at Cerro Azul, deny PDF use of Paitilla Airport, conduct raids to capture Noriega and rescue hostages, and support TF Pacific's airfield seizure at Torrijos-Tocumen Airport. Task Force Pacific, 82nd Airborne Division minus, tasked to conduct parachute assault to seize Torrijos-Tocumen Airport followed by air assault raids to seize Fort Cimarron, Tinajitas, and Panama Viejo.<sup>51</sup>

Operation Just Cause officially terminated on 11 January 1990. Twenty-two days after operations began, JTF South accomplished all military objectives and initiated redeployments. The combat engagements around the Canal Zone were short, but PDF resistance in many cases exceeded intelligence estimates. The training and rehearsals conducted prior to the incursion postured JTF South to conduct operations with simultaneity and a relentless operational tempo that overwhelmed the PDF. Despite extraordinary complexity, JTF South successfully synchronized the actions of approximately 26,000 US service members, striking almost two

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<sup>49</sup> Flanagan, *Battle for Panama*, 32-45.

<sup>50</sup> See Appendix 1 for the full JTF South task organization, "Operation Just Cause," US Army Center of Military, last modified June 26, 2011, accessed October 15, 2018, <https://history.army.mil/html/documents/Panama/JC.html>.

<sup>51</sup> Flanagan, *Battle for Panama*, 44.

dozen objectives in the first twenty-four hours causing operational shock in the 15,000 man PDF.<sup>52</sup> Operation Just Cause demonstrated effective joint operations and revealed how the integration of special operations forces (SOF) enhances a joint task force.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> Cody R. Phillips, *CMH Pub No. 70-85-1 Operation Just Cause: The Incursion into Panama* (Washington, DC: US Army Center of Military History, 1990), 3-49.

<sup>53</sup> Flanagan, *Battle for Panama*, 228.

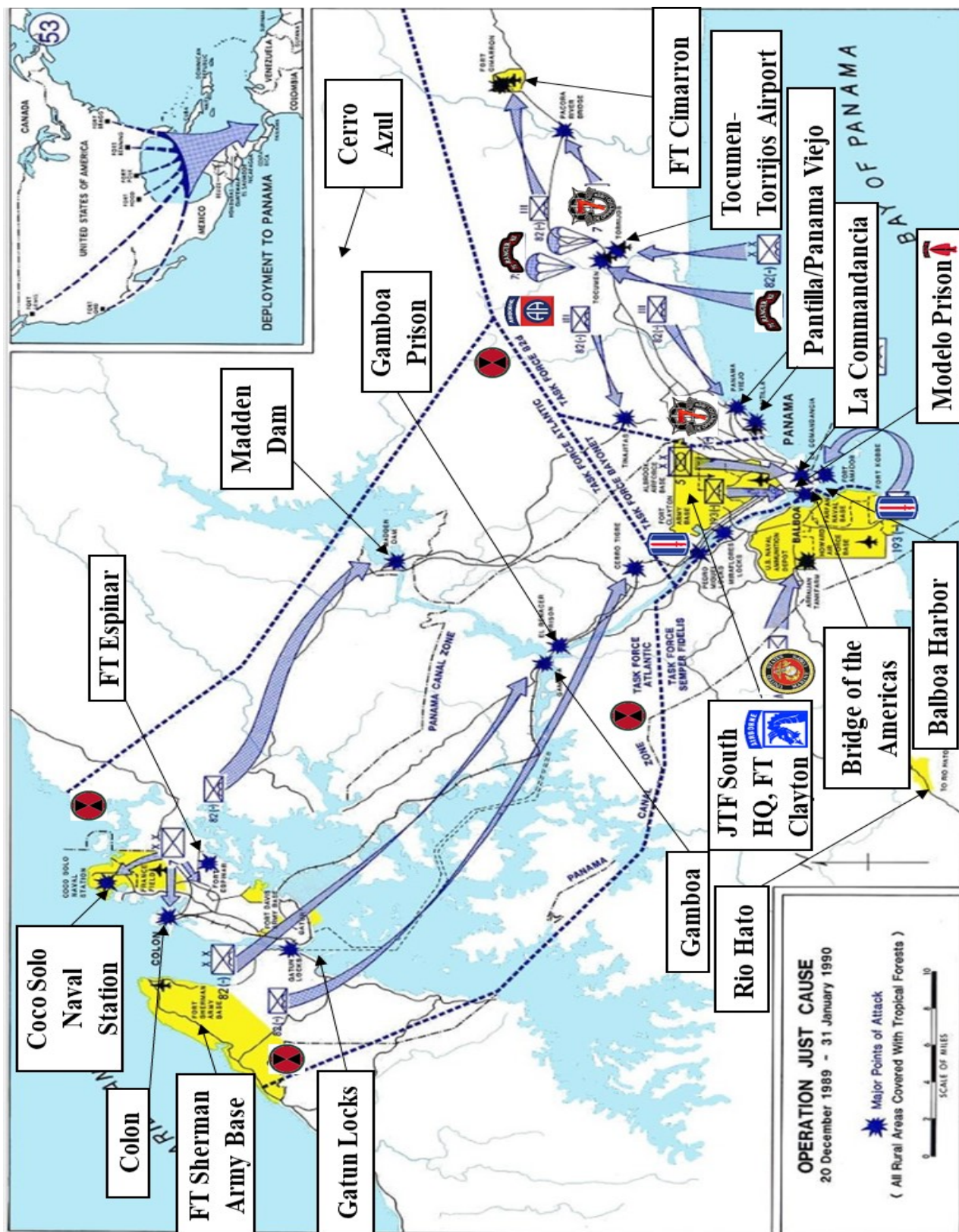


Figure 2. Operational summary sketch of Operation Just Cause. Data from US Army Center of Military History, "Operation Just Cause," last modified June 26, 2011, accessed October 15, 2018, <https://history.army.mil/html/documents/Panama/JC.html>.

The first question from the strategic recognition group is what was the strategic and operational context of Operation Just Cause? The situation in Panama offered an initial foreign policy challenge with domestic implications that publically tested the Bush Administration's new national security team and the remodeled US military. George H.W. Bush's resume as a World War II Veteran, former Ambassador to the United Nations (UN), former Envoy to China, former Director of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), and Ronald Reagan's Vice President inspired confidence, but he ascended to the Presidency amidst an extremely tumultuous period in global politics. Following the Cold War, President Bush dealt with seismic shifts in the international order. Negotiating *Perestroika* with the Soviets, reacting to the Tiananmen Square Massacre in China, sustaining momentum with nuclear disarmament, reintegrating former Soviet Bloc countries, unifying Germany, and maintaining a role for the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) as the Soviet threat dissipated were just some of the ongoing national security challenges as the US-Panama relationship deteriorated.<sup>54</sup>

Early in his Presidency, Bush faced a former CIA asset turned into a dangerous dictator that threatened a vital strategic possession, American lives, the reputation of his Administration, and the legitimacy of the reformed US military. President Bush knew Manuel Noriega from his time at the CIA. During the 1988 Presidential Campaign, Democrats emphasized Noriega's relationship with Bush and involvement with narcotics trafficking. After the US Grand Jury indictments in early 1988, the Bush Administration had to get tougher on Noriega.<sup>55</sup> In the wake of the indictments, the JCS directed US Southern Command to develop options for a potential military intervention. The JCS initial planning guidance emphasized the protection of US lives

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<sup>54</sup> John R. Greene, *The Presidency of George Bush* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2000), 89-101.

<sup>55</sup> Stephen Tanner, *The Wars of The Bushes: A Father and Son as Military Leaders* (Havertown, PA: Casemate Publishers, 2004), 39.

and property, retention of access to the Panama Canal, and actions to bolster any government that might replace Noriega's Regime.<sup>56</sup>

The US military had not yet publically recovered from "Vietnam Syndrome", which perpetuated a lack of confidence in the utility of military options in pursuit of policy objectives.<sup>57</sup> The wounds from Operation Eagle Claw that devastated the Carter Administration during the Iranian Hostage Crisis had not healed, which generated skepticism among policy-makers regarding the feasibility of high risk military operations.<sup>58</sup> General Colin Powell became Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (CJCS) early in President Bush's tenure. He was a Vietnam Veteran and the first full-term appointment to the Chairmanship since the Goldwater-Nichols Defense Reorganization Act of 1986. Powell sought to optimize the Chairman's principle advisor role to restore the confidence of the American People in their military.<sup>59</sup>

Operationally, a transition in US foreign policy coincided with a change in US military leadership. The multifaceted nature of this policy transition produced a command structure conducive for the employment of operational art. The Bush Administration selected senior military leaders with the appropriate leadership style to implement their foreign policy change effectively. Initially, US Southern Command was not prepared for a military intervention. General Frederick Woerner was a Latin America expert, fluent in Spanish, chosen to serve as a liaison with America's Allies in the region. There was a growing perception in the Bush Administration that General Woerner's advice and strategic direction were inconsistent with US foreign policy.<sup>60</sup> On 7 May 1989, the Panamanian People democratically elected the leader of Noriega's opposition party Guillermo Endara, as the President of Panama. On 10 May 1989,

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<sup>56</sup> Cole, *De-classified Operation Just Cause*, 7-8.

<sup>57</sup> Greene, *The Presidency of George Bush*, 102.

<sup>58</sup> James H. Kyle, *The Guts to Try: The Untold Story of the Iran Hostage Rescue Mission by the on Scene Commander* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1995), 1.

<sup>59</sup> Greene, *The Presidency of George Bush*, 101-102.

<sup>60</sup> Tanner, *The Wars of The Bushes*, 40-41.

Noriega annulled the results of the election citing foreign interference. Noriega's blatant disregard for domestic law, aggressive rhetoric toward the US, and the potential impact to US national security escalated domestic and international pressure on the Bush Administration to act.<sup>61</sup>

President Bush ordered the execution of Operation Nimrod Dancer, which surged US military force posture by 1,900 combat troops. Elements of the 7th Infantry Division (Light), II Marine Expeditionary Force, and 5th Infantry Division (Mechanized) deployed rapidly to deter further aggression and safeguard American lives and property in the Canal Zone.<sup>62</sup> The Bush Administration's change in foreign policy required US Southern Command to shift from assurance to deterrence. The new strategy required military leadership that could build operational readiness rapidly to deter or if necessary defeat the PDF. The Bush Administration identified General Maxwell Thurman as the right leader to operationalize US Southern Command.

General Thurman was serving as Commanding General of US Army Training and Doctrine Command prior to his nomination as USCINCSO. General Thurman developed a reputation across the DOD as a leader with uncommon vigor, aggressiveness, and determination. In General Thurman's first week as USCINCSO, MAJ Moises Girolodi, who was instrumental in suppressing the first coup against Noriega in 1988, proposed to lead one of his own. General Thurman regarded the coup plan as amateurish and advocated strongly for US neutrality in the plot. The Bush Administration agreed and on 3 October 1989, the coup went off as planned and failed. Policy elites in Washington, DC harshly criticized the Bush Administration for their lack of support, but the failed coup actually benefitted military planners. The coup galvanized the

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<sup>61</sup> Cole, *De-classified Operation Just Cause*, 4-5.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid., 8.

planning effort and secured Lieutenant General (LTG) Carl Stiner, XVIII Airborne Corps (ABC) Commander, and his staff as the activated Joint Task Force (JTF) South.<sup>63</sup>

LTG Stiner's unique experience serving in both conventional units and special operations forces (SOF) facilitated unity of command in Panama. On 9 October 1989, General Thurman held a contingency operations planning summit in Panama, which featured the XVIII ABC OPLAN 90-2 as a baseline concept for planning. The significant takeaway from the planning summit was General Thurman's decree that LTG Stiner was the overall commander of all US forces, regardless of service and including SOF. General Thurman wanted unity of command for his warfighter to ensure that JTF South did not repeat mistakes made during operations in Grenada and the Hostage Rescue Mission in Iran.<sup>64</sup>

The next question from the strategic recognition group is what were the stated military and political objectives for Operation Just Cause? On 22 July 1989, President Bush issued National Security Directive (NSD) 17, which initiated a foreign policy transition regarding Panama and called for a program of activities designed to assert US treaty rights to the Panama Canal and keep Noriega's Regime off balance.<sup>65</sup> As the situation deteriorated, the policy objectives simplified and remained to restore democracy and remove Noriega. The JCS translated those two political objectives into four military objectives to protect US citizens, defend the Panama Canal, restore democracy, and capture Noriega. JTF South's military objectives were to protect US lives, key sites and facilities, capture and deliver Noriega to competent authority, neutralize the PDF, and support the establishment of a US recognized government with a restructured PDF. LTG Stiner constantly synchronized JTF South's operational activities with guidance from General Thurman. Colin Powell's continuous unequal

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<sup>63</sup> Flanagan, *Battle for Panama*, 26-33.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid., 33-34.

<sup>65</sup> Cole, *De-classified Operation Just Cause*, 11.



dialogue with the Bush Administration synchronized General Thurman's guidance with emergent US foreign policy.<sup>66</sup>

The final question of the strategic recognition group is what were the strategic and operational assumptions? Strategically, General Powell assumed that a deliberate build-up of combat power over twenty-two days as originally planned would result in protracted fighting, more casualties, and potentially a guerilla war in the Panamanian Jungle.<sup>67</sup> In light of this assumption, Powell instructed General Thurman to use maximum surprise, a unified command structure, minimal collateral damage, and the minimum force necessary to facilitate the restoration of democracy as quickly as possible.<sup>68</sup> LTG Stiner assumed that the election of President Endara demonstrated that the Panamanian People wanted democracy. Based on that assumption, he gave guidance to the JTF Staff to employ psychological operations along with electronic warfare capabilities to control the strategic narrative and sustain the Panamanian People's commitment to democracy. LTG Stiner assumed that target selection would be decisive for the JTF in accomplishing strategic objectives in short order. He assumed his formation had an asymmetric advantage to operate at night. Lastly, LTG Stiner assumed that the fluid situation in Panama would continue to develop rapidly, which compelled him to conduct continuous refinement, build joint shared understanding, preposition equipment and elements of the JTF staff, and relentlessly drive his force to build operational readiness.<sup>69</sup>

The strategic recognition group evidence illuminates how the DOD recognized an emergent transition in US foreign policy regarding Panama. The Bush Administration facilitated

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<sup>66</sup> Flanagan, *Battle for Panama*, 30-40. Unequal Dialogue is the final authority political leaders must have in a democracy to decide on matters of strategy, policy, campaigns, and sometimes even tactics. Eliot A. Cohen, *Supreme Command: Soldiers, Statesmen, and Leadership in Wartime* (New York: Anchor, 2002), 10.

<sup>67</sup> Cole, *De-classified Operation Just Cause*, 12-15.

<sup>68</sup> Flanagan, *Battle for Panama*, 40.

<sup>69</sup> LTG Carl W. Stiner, Commanding General, XVIII Airborne Corps, and Commanding General, Joint Task Force South. Interview by Dr. Robert K. Wright, Jr., Historian, XVIII Airborne Corps. Fort Bragg, North Carolina, 2, 7, and 27 March and 11 June 1990, 4-5.

policy recognition with a change in military leadership. General Powell optimized his principle advisor role to foster the continuous unequal dialogue required to transition military planning in concert with policy. General Thurman capitalized on his understanding of past JTF failures to set the foundation for a JTF command structure conducive for the employment of operational art. Collectively, these actions enabled the uncharacteristic lead time to develop the operational approach.

The first question in the development of the operational approach group is once the JTF recognized the strategic and operational context, how did they develop their operational approach? Pentagon planners identified and activated XVIII ABC as the JTF South headquarters for Operation Just Cause early in the planning process. This decision enabled XVIII ABC's staff to consolidate an amalgamation of disjointed OPLANS, ironically titled Elaborate Maze, into an executable XVIII ABC OPLAN 90-2.<sup>70</sup> In September 1989, LTG Stiner made Panama contingency planning the number one priority for the Corps staff. Major David Huntoon, XVIII ABC lead planner for Panama, used US Southern Command's OPLAN Blue Spoon as a baseline for OPLAN 90-2, but added rapid deployment, simultaneous operations, SOF operations, and overwhelming combat power.<sup>71</sup>

LTG Stiner consolidated MAJ Huntoon's modifications into XVIII ABC OPLAN 90-2, which he brought to a meeting in Washington, DC on 3 November 1989. The JCS unanimously concurred with XVIII ABC OPLAN 90-2. Following JCS approval, LTG Stiner returned to his headquarters and directed refinement of the plan and detailed rehearsals at echelon. Forces located in the Continental United States (CONUS) conducted secret rehearsals based on the scenario, with sanitized names. At Fort Bragg, the 82nd Airborne Division conducted an Emergency Deployment Readiness Exercise (EDRE) into Sicily Drop Zone, which was set up

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<sup>70</sup> Cole, *De-classified Operation Just Cause*, 26.

<sup>71</sup> Flanagan, *Battle for Panama*, 33.

like Torrijos-Tocumen Airport. The Joint Special Operations Command (JSOC) spent nearly \$3,000,000 building replicas of exact targets to ensure surgical precision and relentless operational tempo. Forces already in Panama conducted rehearsals through the medium of Sand Flea exercises. US Southern Command designed Sand Flea exercises to assert US treaty rights to the Panama Canal. The Sand Flea exercises provided repetitions on actual objectives, and got the PDF and Panamanians conditioned to night air assaults and increasingly larger US military operations. Strict security measures for SOF operations and planning contributed to failure during the Iranian Hostage Mission in Iran because it prevented joint force rehearsals.<sup>72</sup> SOF still compartmentalized planning and rehearsals for Operation Just Cause, but LTG Stiner's background and authority at least de-conflicted conventional and SOF operations. Rehearsals informed refinement of the plan and prepositioning of equipment to extend operational reach. JTF South prepositioned a platoon of M551 Sheridan Tanks and six Apache Helicopters a month in advance to support direct fire attacks on heavily defended targets. The JTF planners used rehearsals to conduct the most detailed refinement of XVIII ABC OPLAN 90-2, which were published in JTF South (JTFSO) OPLAN 90-2.<sup>73</sup>

JTFSO OPLAN 90-2 omitted SOF planning, but enumerated targets for the Rangers and the four conventional task forces. Task Force Red, 75th Ranger Regiment, would conduct an assault on Rio Hato to neutralize the 6th and 7th PDF companies that rescued Noriega during the failed 3 October coup. Task Force Atlantic, 7th Infantry Division, would conduct attacks on targets in the Canal Zone from Gamboa to Colon to secure the Atlantic entrance to the canal. Task Force Pacific, 82nd Airborne Division minus, would conduct attacks northeast of Panama City. Task Force Bayonet, 193rd Infantry Brigade, would secure key locations within Panama City based on enhanced situational awareness as a permanently assigned unit. Task Force

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<sup>72</sup> Edward N. Luttwak, *The Logic of War and Peace* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2001), 5.

<sup>73</sup> Stiner, Interview, 7-8.

Semper Fi, 6th Marine Expeditionary Battalion, would secure the Bridge of the Americas and other western approaches to the Panama Canal. JTFSO OPLAN 90-2 constituted a simultaneous encirclement of the PDF.<sup>74</sup>

LTG Stiner demonstrated contextual strategic art with the inclusion of prescriptive guidance on the rules of engagement ensuring commanders at echelon employed the minimum force required to accomplish their objectives. For example, any use of indirect fire weapons, naval gun fire, tube-launched rockets, main tank guns, helicopter gunships, and AC 130 gunships in a populated areas required the approval of a Lieutenant Colonel Ground Commander or higher. The OPLAN revision also contained a detailed public affairs annex that established US Southern Command's Joint Information Office as the chief coordinator and sole releaser of operational news.<sup>75</sup> LTG Stiner's plan set conditions to control the strategic narrative during Operation Just Cause.

The next question in the development of the operational approach group is did the commander drive or get driven by the operations process? General Thurman empowered LTG Stiner, who drove the operations process effectively during planning and execution for Operation Just Cause. As the JTF South staff revised plans, LTG Stiner conducted a helicopter reconnaissance with Colonel (COL) Mike Snell, 193rd Infantry Brigade Commander, permanently assigned to Fort Clayton, Panama. COL Snell possessed a deep contextual understanding of the area of operations. LTG Stiner optimized the aerial reconnaissance to build situational understanding, locate key objectives, and prioritize targets that could dismantle Noriega's backbone in the PDF.<sup>76</sup>

LTG Stiner made repeated trips to Panama throughout the planning effort. His team traveled exclusively at night in unmarked planes and bypassed customs to avoided alarming the

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<sup>74</sup> Cole, *De-classified Operation Just Cause*, 26-30.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid., 26-30.

<sup>76</sup> Flanagan, *Battle for Panama*, 34.

PDF. LTG Stiner exploited the trips to keep planning informed with changes in the operational environment and share issues brought up during rehearsals with prepositioned planners.<sup>77</sup> LTG Stiner's unique experience in SOF and conventional units enabled sound planning insight and strong confident leadership of all forces assigned to JTF South.<sup>78</sup> LTG Stiner credited cross-fertilization between the SOF, light-fighter, and airborne communities as another key factor that contributed to integration and de-confliction. LTG Stiner directed his staff to create a Joint Communications Electronic Operating Instructions (CEOI), which acted like a phonebook for every member of the JTF. The Joint CEOI was another lesson incorporated from operations in Grenada and streamlined communications at echelon. LTG Stiner's involvement in the operations process led to the decision to conduct bombing missions with 2000 pound bombs over 500 pound bombs. The decision seems strategically ignorant, but the 2000 pound bomb's far superior accuracy rate and delayed fuse supported JTF objectives and restraint. Bombing targets in this manner limited collateral damage while achieving the cognitive effect required to suppress the PDF.<sup>79</sup>

Anytime LTG Stiner was not in Panama planning, reconnoitering, and discussing options with subordinate commanders he was traveling to communicate the details of JTF South's plan with adjacent units, supporting units, and force providers across the DOD. He personally visited Scott Air Force Base and the Military Airlift Command (MAC), sent planners to brief US Army Forces Command, and made three trips to the Pentagon to create joint level shared understanding.<sup>80</sup> LTG Stiner directed his plans section to replace prescriptive language in OPLAN Blue Spoon with mission type orders that empowered subordinate echelons to exercise disciplined initiative. JTF planners provided resources for units to accomplish assigned tasks,

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<sup>77</sup> Stiner, Interview, 8-9.

<sup>78</sup> Flanagan, *Battle for Panama*, 36.

<sup>79</sup> Stiner, Interview, 14-15.

<sup>80</sup> Flanagan, *Battle for Panama*, 37.

negotiated tasks in some cases, but ensured that JTF task organization, command support relationships, and purposes were established and understood. Prior to the execution of Operation Just Cause, LTG Stiner brought subordinate commanders together on four separate occasions to go through the plan in detail. LTG Stiner's active role in the operations process created optimism in JTF planners because he cultivated shared understanding from policy makers down to tactical units executing operations in Panama.<sup>81</sup>

The final question in the development of the operational approach group is what military options were available to the commander? President Bush replaced General Thurman's predecessor because his approach was not acceptable given the rapidly deteriorating situation in Panama. The nature of the problem, geography, and escalating situation necessarily limited available military options. In the wake of the 3 October coup, General Powell told General Thurman to create a wider range of military options phased over time that would facilitate a flexible short notice response to another trigger event. General Powell wanted integration of conventional and SOF operations, a range of activities that accounted for varying degrees of PDF resistance, and dismissed General Woerner's original gradual build-up option.<sup>82</sup> He reiterated that JTF South must use overwhelming force against the PDF, which required plenty of manpower and rehearsals to synchronize. Secretary Cheney stressed the need to minimize casualties, mitigate the risk to American Citizens, and prevent protracted counter guerilla operations in the Panamanian Jungle.<sup>83</sup> Strategic guidance and the fluidity of the deteriorating situation in Panama necessarily limited available military options.

JTF South quickly developed two scenarios for employment of assigned forces that incorporated strategic guidance. The first scenario relied on forces already in Panama and SOF

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<sup>81</sup> G-3 Plans Section, XVIII Airborne Corps and Joint Task Force South. Group Interview by Dr. Robert K. Wright, Jr., Historian, XVIII Airborne Corps. Fort Bragg, North Carolina, 30 March 1990, 16-27.

<sup>82</sup> Flanagan, *Battle for Panama*, 47.

<sup>83</sup> Cole, *De-classified Operation Just Cause*, 20.

operations to support opposition to Noriega, rescue hostages, and capture Noriega at H-Hour.<sup>84</sup> Approximately twenty hours later, Rangers from the Continental United States (CONUS) would conduct an airfield seizure of Torrijos-Tocumen international airport. Within forty-eight hours, additional Rangers and a Brigade from the 82nd Airborne Division would seize Tinajitas, Fort Cimarron, and Rio Hato then shift immediately to stability operations. The second scenario called for employment of all forces simultaneously at H-hour. Within twenty hours all conventional task forces would simultaneously protect US citizens, retain US installations, neutralize PDF units, and interdict airfields. SOF would seize key infrastructure, rescue hostages, disrupt PDF command and control, and augment conventional operations. After twenty-eight hours, the JTF would transition to stability operations to consolidate gains in scenario 2. The two options became known as reactive execution and deliberate execution respectively, which provided flexibility in the arrangement of operations but relatively similar schemes of maneuver.<sup>85</sup>

The 3 October coup played a critical role in LTG Stiner's decision in November 1989 to adopt the deliberate execution scenario.<sup>86</sup> The coup demonstrated how the PDF would react in a crisis situation and informed assessments of the PDF loyalty. JTF planners exploited their observations by prioritizing loyal elements of the PDF and favoring simultaneous operations.<sup>87</sup> The coup reframed JTF South's center of gravity analysis and invalidated the assumption that the PDF had to be completely dismantled. Rehearsing simultaneous operations led to readiness enhancement actions. Readiness enhancement actions involved prepositioning equipment to extend operational reach.<sup>88</sup> LTG Stiner's decision assumed operational risk with casualty

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<sup>84</sup> H-Hour is a common military term for the time of day when a military operation will begin.

<sup>85</sup> Cole, *De-classified Operation Just Cause*, 19-20.

<sup>86</sup> Flanagan, *Battle for Panama*, 48.

<sup>87</sup> G-3 Plans Section, Interview, 9-11.

<sup>88</sup> Stiner, Interview, 8.

evacuation and logistics. Prioritizing combat arms personnel initially to simultaneously attack priority targets delayed the establishment of sustainment architecture. JTF planners mitigated the risk with prioritized medical augmentation personnel and equipment from 44th Medical Brigade during air-land operations. Additionally, they incorporated three plane loads, about sixty containerized delivery systems (CDS) airdrop packages, of ammunition, supplies, and Meal Ready to Eat (MRE) boxes. Despite a strategically predictable military response to the situation in Panama, JTF planners employed operational art to generate an operationally unpredictable plan.

By 17 December 1989, JTF South was ready to execute Operation Just Cause. The reputation of the Bush Administration and the legitimacy of the reformed US military depended on the readiness, training, discipline and morale of the assembled joint force.<sup>89</sup>

The final group of questions aims to determine if JTF South effectively adjusted the operational approach during execution. The first question is how did the commander and his staff anticipate, learn, and adapt to the operational environment? JTF South capitalized on joint shared understanding cultivated during planning to seize and retain the initiative during execution. JTF South anticipated the Bush Administration's reaction to a trigger event and implemented their mission command transition plan prior to the executive decision. The early establishment of mission command architecture enabled JTF South to anticipate, learn, and adapt their operational approach.

In mid-December tensions escalated between the US and Panama, when the Panamanian National Assembly passed a resolution that a state of war existed with the United States. The following Saturday night, a PDF check point killed Marine First Lieutenant Robert Paz and wounded two other servicemen after they made a wrong turn.<sup>90</sup> On 17 December 1989, LTG

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<sup>89</sup> Flanagan, *Battle for Panama*, 45.

<sup>90</sup> Cole, *De-classified Operation Just Cause*, 33.



Stiner put JTF South on high alert because of the shooting incident. LTG Stiner immediately requested and received permission to deploy elements of the Corps Assault Command Post (ACP) to Panama.<sup>91</sup>

The Corps ACP deployed under the guise of attending previously scheduled planning conferences and command post exercises (CPX). The Corps ACP established JTF South's Command Post at Fort Clayton, Panama in US Army South's Emergency Operations Center. The JTF South staff integrated seamlessly with US Army South's staff whose Deputy Commanding General became JTF South's Deputy Commander.<sup>92</sup> At 1500 on 18 December 1989, LTG Stiner and his principle staff assumed command and control of JTF South operations. JTF South's early and effective transition plan enhanced command and control of current operations.<sup>93</sup> Prior to H-Hour, JTF South's Joint Tactical Operations Center (JTOC) established communications with the JCS, SOF elements, units in Panama, units in transit from CONUS, and the US Embassy in Panama.<sup>94</sup> JTF South anticipated President Bush's decision, which fostered the organizational momentum to anticipate, learn, and adapt their operational approach during execution.

JTF South's early establishment as a headquarters enabled US Southern Command to get ahead of the transition to stability operations. US Southern Command brought President-elect Guillermo Endara and his Vice Presidents to US Southern Command Headquarters in Quarry Heights. As Operation Just Cause began, a Panamanian Judge swore in the first three future leaders of post-Noriega Panama.<sup>95</sup> JTF South's early assumption of command and control over current operations facilitated US Southern Command's shaping of future operations.

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<sup>91</sup> Flanagan, *Battle for Panama*, 57.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid., 57-59.

<sup>93</sup> Cole, *De-classified Operation Just Cause*, 38.

<sup>94</sup> Flanagan, *Battle for Panama*, 61.

<sup>95</sup> Cole, *De-classified Operation Just Cause*, 46.

The next question is how did the outcomes of battles, operations, and campaigns influence military and political objectives? JTF South's detailed, synchronized, and rehearsed plan achieved overwhelming success that presented an opportunity to consolidate gains and transition rapidly to stability operations. JTF South's simultaneity and operational tempo caused operational shock in the PDF, which JTF South exploited through simultaneous stability operations to restore governance and democracy in Panama.

TF Pacific initiated pre-assault fires with 2000 pound bombs dropped in vicinity of the 6th and 7th PDF Companies barracks. Following the explosions at 0100 on 20 December 1989, 2700 paratroopers conducted the largest airborne operation since World War II. Despite heavy resistance and ten aircraft suffering icing delays at Fort Bragg; Task Force Pacific seized Torrijos-Tocumen Airport by 0730. Simultaneously, Task Force Atlantic assaulted the Colon-Gamboa sector from the Atlantic entrance to the canal midway to Panama City. Task Force Atlantic defeated the 8th PDF Company at Fort Espinar, the Naval Infantry Company at Coco Solo, and freed 64 prisoners from the prison in Gamboa. TF Atlantic secured the electrical distribution center at Cerro Tigre, Fort Davis, Madden Dam, and the Gatun Locks by 1029 on 20 December 1989.<sup>96</sup>

TF Bayonet conducted an attack on *La Comandancia*, the Panamanian Pentagon, at 0015 on 19 December 1989. An intelligence briefing the previous night assessed that Noriega reinforced elements in the Comandancia and established a deliberate defense. TF Bayonet benefitted from the additional fire power that the prepositioned M551 Sheridan Tanks and AH64 Apache Helicopters provided.<sup>97</sup> TF Bayonet encountered heavy resistance and substantial obstacles, which stalled their attack on Noriega's headquarters. Just prior to daylight, TF Bayonet established the outer cordon of the Comandancia. At 1000 on 20 December 1989, JTF

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<sup>96</sup> Cole, *De-classified Operation Just Cause*, 53-54.

<sup>97</sup> Flanagan, *Battle for Panama*, 97-108

South sent a Fragmentary Order (FRAGO) to Charlie Company 3rd Battalion 75th Ranger Regiment (C/3-75) ordering them to reinforce TF Bayonet. C/3-75 initiated their attack at 1550 and by 1700 the Comandancia was finally cleared.<sup>98</sup>

The simultaneous operations culminating with the loss of the Comandancia caused a breakdown in centralized command and control over the PDF. Fighting in Panama City became sporadic as JTF South's task forces engaged remaining pockets of resistance. Despite overwhelming tactical success, the Bush Administration demonstrated consistency with political aims.<sup>99</sup> Tactical success presented an opportunity to simultaneously set conditions for the transition to Operation Promote Liberty. At 0319 on 20 December 1989, General Thurman pointed out that no Civil Affairs units from active or reserve components were available to support JTF South's operational requirements. The Joint Staff deployed nearly 600 active and reserve Civil Affairs troops. General Thurman immediately initiated OPLAN Blind Logic, which became Operation Promote Liberty. Thurman realized that Operation Just Cause largely neutralized the PDF's military and police structure, which could result in a breakdown in law, order, and public safety unless he took immediate action. General Thurman capitalized on tactical success by expediting transitions required to consolidate gains.<sup>100</sup>

The final question in the adjustment of the operational approach group is did JTF planners develop branches and sequels to facilitate adjustments to their operational approach? JTF planners constructed a three phase operation that drove sequel planning and utilized FRAGOs and one identified branch plan to adjust the operational approach. The intervention's three phases were Operation Just Cause to neutralize the PDF and restore democracy, Operation Promote Liberty to stabilize Panama and support post-Noriega governance, and the nation

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<sup>98</sup> Flanagan, *Battle for Panama*, 97-108

<sup>99</sup> Cole, *De-classified Operation Just Cause*, 53-54.

<sup>100</sup> COL Michael G. Snell, Commander, 193rd Infantry Brigade. Interview by Dr. Robert K. Wright, Jr., Historian, XVIII Airborne Corps. Fort Clayton, Panama, 1 January 1990, 10.

building stage led by the Department of State.<sup>101</sup> JTF planners developed one identified branch plan that addressed the threat of a large PDF element escaping the cordon into the Panamanian Jungle, but the threat never materialized.

Early establishment of the JTF South JTOC enabled adjustments to the operational approach through FRAGOs. In 24 days, the JTF issued 41 FRAGOs that adapted the operational approach, issued new guidance about the rules of engagement, summarized results from completed operations, and enabled synchronized operational planning at echelon. The FRAGOs were the primary method to collate all the various staff function inputs, which resynchronized operational activity in a digestible format for subordinate units. Due to the limits of technology FRAGOs were disseminated manually, but they were an effective tool to adapt the operational approach during execution.<sup>102</sup>

This section provided an overview of Operation Just Cause and answered research questions from the methodology section in three groups. The strategic recognition, development of the operational approach, and adjustment of the operation approach groups collated evidence evaluating JTF South's employment of the theory of operational art. The next section will present finding and analysis to determine the validity of research hypotheses.

## Findings and Analysis

The finding and analysis section provides concise answers to the research questions as an amalgamation of case study research. The answers to the research questions inform analytical deductions that infer the validity of research hypotheses. For context, each research questions is reviewed along with the researcher's expected findings. The analysis of findings will determine if each research hypothesis was supported, unsupported, or has a mixed outcome.

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<sup>101</sup> Flanagan, *Battle for Panama*, 40.

<sup>102</sup> Needham, COL (P) Thomas H., Jr., Assistant Chief of Staff, G-3, XVIII Airborne Corps and Assistant Chief of Staff, J-3, Joint Task Force South. Interview by Dr. Robert K. Wright, Jr., Historian, XVIII Airborne Corps. Fort Bragg, North Carolina, 6 March 1990, 13-15.

The research questions were broken into the strategic recognition, development of the operational approach, and adjustment of the operational approach groups. The first question of the strategic recognition group was what was the strategic and operational context of Operation Just Cause? The researcher expected to find that there was a US foreign policy transition early in the Bush Administration that required JTF South to build operational readiness rapidly for an armed intervention in Panama. The empirical evidence found that the situation in Panama offered an initial foreign policy challenge with domestic implications that publically tested the Bush Administration's new national security team and the remolded US military. Operationally, the Bush Administration required US Southern Command to transition rapidly from assurance and outreach to readiness for an armed intervention as the policy framework adjusted based on the situation in Panama.

The next question was what were the stated political and military objectives? The researcher expected to find that the military objectives were to remove Manuel Noriega from power and restore democracy in Panama. The empirical evidence showed that as the situation in Panama deteriorated the policy objectives simplified and remained to restore democracy and remove Noriega. The JCS translated those two policy objectives into four military objectives to protect US citizens, defend the Panama Canal, restore democracy, and capture Noriega.

The final question of this group was what were the strategic and operational assumptions? The researcher expected to find that strategically, the JTF assumed that the PDF had to be dismantled to restore democracy. Operationally, the JTF assumed they had an asymmetric advantage to operate at night. The empirical evidence found that the CJCS assumed that a deliberate build-up of combat power over twenty-two days as originally planned would result in protracted fighting, more casualties, and potentially a guerilla war. General Thurman assumed that the successful democratic election meant he could exploit initial tactical success with an immediate transition to stability operations once Noriega's regime fell.

The next group of research questions is the development of the operational approach group. The first question is once the commander and staff recognized the strategic and operational context, how did they develop the operational approach? The researcher expected to find that JTF South developed their operational approach as a reaction to the transition of US foreign policy. The empirical evidence found that a drastic transition in US foreign policy coincided with a change in US military leadership, which created an environment conducive to employing the theory of operational art throughout planning and execution.

The next question is did the commander drive the operations process or did the operations process drive the commander? The researcher expected to find that JTF South's commander drove the operations process to satisfy the demands of the Bush Administration. The empirical evidence showed that LTG Stiner relentlessly drove the operations process throughout the planning and execution of Operation Just Cause.

The final question of this group is what military options were available to the commander? The researcher expected to find that the geopolitical situation necessarily limited military options. The empirical evidence showed that despite the geopolitical situation, LTG Stiner developed two scenarios for employment of JTF South forces with either a simultaneous or sequential arrangement of operations. Both options were relatively similar, but provided flexibility with operational tempo.

The adjustment of the operational approach group is the final group of research questions. The first question is, how did the commander and staff anticipate, learn, and adapt to the operational environment? The researcher expected to find that JTF South's parallel planning and rehearsals generated the situational awareness required to adapt to the operational environment. The empirical evidence found that early establishment of the mission command architecture enabled JTF South to foster and sustain the organizational momentum to adapt their operational approach.

The next question is how did the outcome of the battles, operations, and campaigns influence military and political objectives? The researcher expected to find that the outcome of the battles, operations, and campaigns had little impact on military or political objectives. The empirical evidence suggested that JTF South's detailed, synchronized, and rehearsed plan achieved overwhelming success that presented an opportunity to consolidate gains and transition to stability operations.

The final question of the adjustment of the operational approach group is did JTF planners develop branches and sequels to facilitate adjustments to the operational approach? The researcher expected to find that JTF South adjusted their operational approach. The empirical evidence showed that JTF planners cultivated a three-phased intervention that drove sequel planning and they utilized FRAGOs and one identified branch plan to make unanticipated adjustments to the operational approach. The next section will collectively analyze these findings to determine the validity of research hypotheses.

The first research hypothesis is if JTF South's plan was flexible, then the options available to the commander were able to mitigate all threats from the enemy, which means there is evidence that they employed operational art. This hypothesis had a mixed outcome after analysis of the empirical evidence. JTF South's plan was flexible because it presented multiple dilemmas for the PDF and the JTF could manipulate the operational tempo through sequential or simultaneous arrangement of operations. Due to the nature of the problem, geography of Panama, and US foreign policy framework JTF developed two scenarios with relatively similar schemes of maneuver.

The second research hypothesis is if JTF South maintained a higher operational tempo in relation to the enemy and the enemy could not address all threats posed to them, then there is evidence that they employed operational art. The empirical evidence overwhelmingly supported this hypothesis. JTF South's simultaneity and operational tempo completely overwhelmed the PDF. JTF South simultaneous attacks on two dozen targets in the first twenty-four hours created

an opportunity to consolidate gains and set conditions for an immediate transition to stability operations.

The third research hypothesis was if JTF South was able to extend their operational reach without culminating, then there is evidence that they employed operational art. The empirical evidence supported a mixed outcome for this hypothesis. JTF South's parallel planning, rehearsals, training, and readiness enhancement activities did extend their operational reach. The hypothesis is a mixed outcome because the duration of the operation did not stress JTF South to the point of culmination. JTF planners adopted an operational tempo that exceeded their capacity to deploy sustainment architecture. JTF planners mitigated the operational risk through expeditionary sustainment operations, prepositioning, and prioritized sustainment assets during air-land operations.

The final research hypothesis was if JTF South was able to mitigate operational risk, then there is evidence that they employed operational art. The empirical evidence overwhelmingly supported this hypothesis. JTF South benefited from a clearly established chain of command from the Goldwater-Nichols Act. General Thurman unified command of all JTF forces under LTG Stiner as the JTF Commander, which facilitated his ability to mitigate operational risk at echelon. Colin Powell optimized his principle advisor role created by the new legislation to cultivate a continuous unequal dialogue with the Bush Administration. The continuous unequal policy dialogue for the duration of Operation Just Cause built trust, shared risk, and fostered collaborative risk mitigation.

This section reviewed the research questions, expected findings, findings, and analysis of research hypotheses to determine if JTF South planners employed the theory of operational art. The empirical evidence analyzed supports the assertion that Operation Just Cause successfully achieved the aims of US foreign policy because JTF South employed the theory of operational art during planning and execution. The next section will conclude the study and suggest potential avenues for future research based on the analysis presented in this section.



## Conclusion

This study analyzed empirical evidence to determine if JTF South employed operational art during Operation Just Cause. This analysis fills a gap because it provides insight as to how operational art keeps military operations calibrated with policy. The limited literature on Operation Just Cause missed an opportunity to teach future planners how to recognize emergent policy and synchronize military activity within a policy framework. The empirical data supported the thesis that Operation Just Cause successfully achieved the aims of US foreign policy because JTF South employed the theory of operational art during planning and execution. JTF South remained synchronized with US foreign policy and ensured plans were flexible, sustained a higher operational tempo relative to their adversary, extended operational reach, shared and mitigated operational risk from policy maker to war fighter.

This study used a structured, focused comparison methodology to evaluate the employment of operational art. Seven theory informed research questions collected relevant primary and secondary source data for objective analysis. The research questions structured data that covered actions from the political to the operational level of war. The findings validated each of the four hypotheses to varying degrees.

JTF South's plan was flexible because it presented multiple dilemmas that overwhelmed the PDF. The operational tempo was easily adjusted through the arrangement of operations. LTG Stiner's decision for simultaneous operations facilitated a relentless operational tempo that paralyzed the PDF. JTF South exploited parallel planning, rehearsals, prepositioning, and existing basing to extend operational reach. Through a continuous unequal dialogue with policy makers JTF South shared and mitigated operational risk at echelon. The researcher selected these elements of operational art based on theoretical research of operational art. Theoretical research supported an operational experience bias that most commanders use flexibility, operational tempo, operational reach, and operational risk to evaluate courses of action in planning.

Operation Just Cause was not flawless. Future research should address disconnects between US Southern Command and JTF South regarding detailed stability operations planning. XVIII ABC's apparent cultural aversion to stability operations during Operation Just Cause warrants additional research as the US Army further develops consolidation of gains doctrine. Additionally, declassification of primary source documents in the XVIII ABC intelligence section's storage area could deepen future operational understanding. Operation Just Cause demands further study and analysis as military history that demonstrates how future generations can wield US military power in a judicious manner to accomplish policy aims.

This study generated a variety of implications for future practitioners of operational art. The Bush Administration clearly established what James Dubik called a Decision-Execution Regime that identified proper aims, structured strategies and policies oriented on those aims, and created a coordinative body able to make timely decisions and adapt to friction.<sup>103</sup> Future military planners should continue to exploit existing OPLANS as a mechanism to generate readiness. As situations deteriorate, updating deployment data, coordinating access, conducting rehearsals, and identifying gaps must become routine in planning. Access, basing, and overflight are critical elements of success for future operations. Strong relationships with allies and partners that enable the build-up of combat power are the bedrock of US power projection. Training exercises, similar to the Sand Fleas Series in Panama, provide unique venues to exploit access for deterrence, prepositioning, interoperability, reconnaissance, and conditioning adversaries to view operational activity with complacency.

Unity of command under an empowered JTF commander paid dividends throughout the planning and execution of Operation Just Cause. Cross fertilization between SOF, light infantry, and airborne formations yielded standardized operating procedures and shared consciousness.

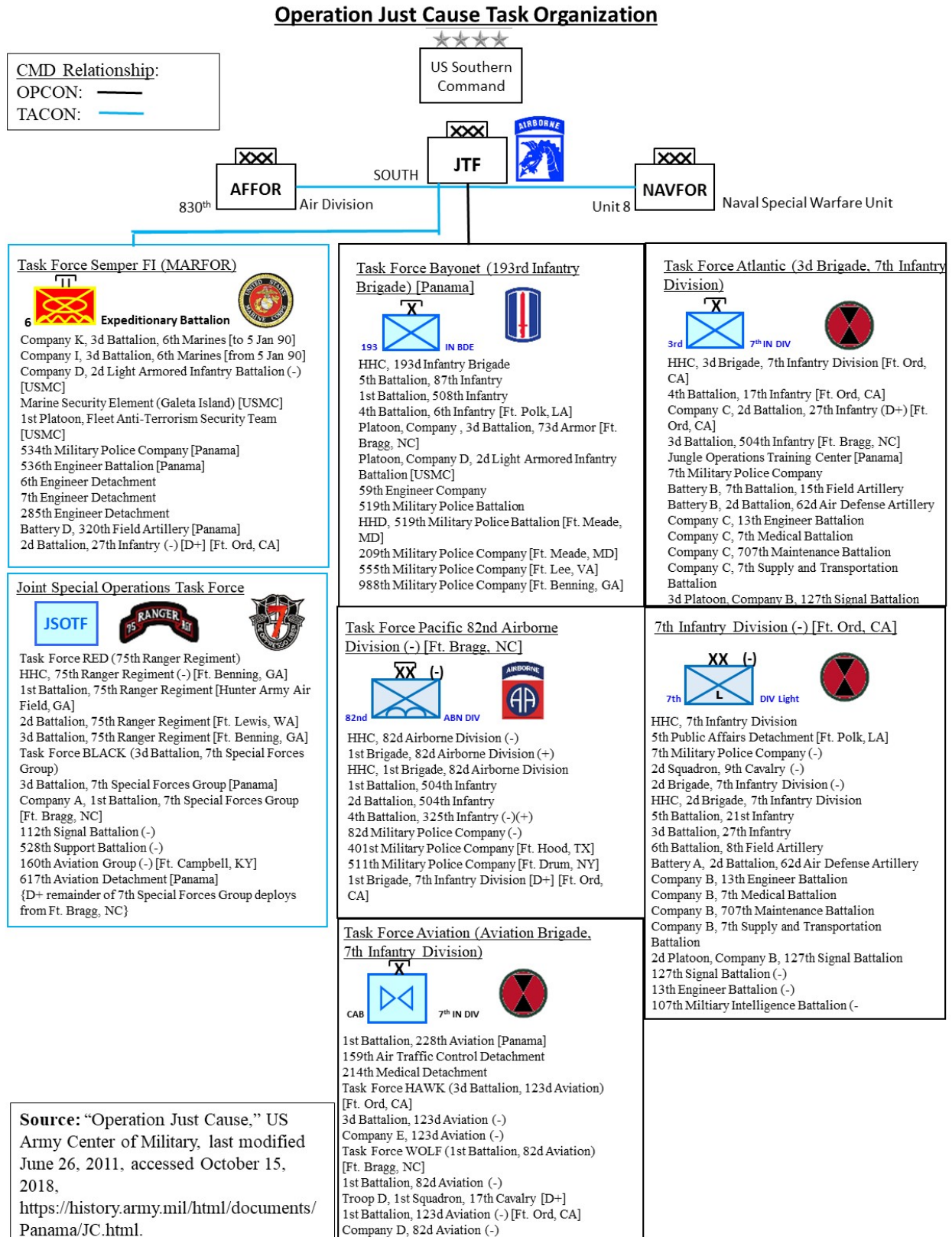
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<sup>103</sup> James M. Dubik, *Just War Reconsidered: Strategy, Ethics, and Theory* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2016), 113.

The continuous unequal dialogue throughout execution cultivated shared understanding and dynamic decision making at echelon. Transparent planning and communication at routine intervals shared and mitigated operational risk. LTG Stiner's decision to preemptively initiate his mission command transition plan prior to an executive decision provided the organizational momentum to jump start the operations process and account for friction during assembly.

Operation Just Cause is an excellent case study because it demonstrates how employment of operational art increases the probability of successful military operations. Prior to an executive decision future military planners must identify indicators that facilitate recognition, communicate indicators and plans with transparency to inform political decisions, while setting conditions to increase the speed of assembly.

## Appendix A: JTF South Task Organization



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