

\*FOR A MORE DETAILED BREAK-DOWN, SEE FIG. 11. OPERATIONAL ORGANIZATION OF THE PANAMA DEFENSE FORCES, 1987

ure 10. Organization of the Panama Defense Forces, 1987

disobedience of orders that were supported by constitutional provisions, and personal incapacity.

## **The General Staff**

Article 36 of the 1983 law stated that “The commander in chief of the Defense Forces . . . will have an advisory body comprised of officers with the rank of general, colonel, and lieutenant colonel.” This advisory body was called the General Staff, and its members were appointed by the commander in chief. The primary task assigned to the General Staff was to help the commander in chief with planning in the areas of military operations, training, and administration.

The structure of the General Staff of the FDP was inherited from its predecessor, the National Guard. The General Staff was structured in approximately the same way as a United States Army staff at division level or above. The basic similarity was in the section breakdown, that is, G-1, Personnel; G-2, Intelligence; G-3, Operations; G-4, Logistics; and G-5, Civic Action. There were a chief of staff and two deputy chiefs of staff, who obviously occupied positions of extreme importance within this highly centralized command structure. In June 1987, the position of vice chief of staff was split into two new positions: the deputy chief of staff for ground matters, who served concurrently as G-3, and the deputy chief of staff for aviation matters, who also occupied the G-5 position. The chief of staff, deputy chiefs of staff, and assistant chiefs were all full colonels.

In addition to the General Staff, there were two other structures at the level of the general command. There was a Special General Staff that incorporated the War Matériel Services, Military Health Battalion, Communications Section, General Services, Chaplaincy, and Public Relations. There was also a Personal General Staff supplying advice to the commander in chief on an “as needed” basis. The Personal General Staff included five sections: Economic Affairs, Judicial Affairs, International Affairs, Political Affairs, and National Security Affairs. The Personal General Staff seemed to institutionalize the involvement of the FDP in a wide range of civilian policy matters—an involvement that can be traced back to the days when Torrijos commanded the National Guard. Noriega commented that the new staff structure initiated with passage of the 1983 law furthered the goal of “performing our mission more effectively and realistically in conformance with the geopolitical situation from which Panama cannot escape . . . .” and pointed to “the formation of a new Personal General Staff of the Commander . . . .” This staff functioned in essence as an in-house National Security Council.

## **Military Zones**

Organizational descriptions of the Defense Forces included a structure of four military regions within which the military zones operated (see fig. 11). In 1987, however, these regions existed only on paper. Noriega had referred to the military regions as areas "which constitute the strategic triangles of national security," but their eventual activation was thought to be linked to the further elaboration and expansion of Panama's four combat battalions.

During the 1950s and 1960s, when the National Guard was still primarily a police force, the military zones together with the General Staff were the heart of the institution. Commanders of the ten military zones into which the country was then divided were powerful figures who often served as *de facto* provincial governors. Usually holding the rank of major, they could expect their next assignment to be command of another zone or a position on the General Staff, then largely composed of lieutenant colonels. When the National Guard gave way to the FDP, the zone commanders' role remained significant even though the 1983 law made no specific provision for military zones; it simply stated, "The internal regulations of the Defense Forces . . . can divide the territory . . . into regions, military zones, detachments, districts, or any other form of division suitable for the better exercise of institutional functions . . . ."

In the mid-1980s, zone commanders continued to be regarded as the most powerful individuals in the provinces, surpassing by far the importance of the provincial governors. They controlled political, military, and economic affairs in the zones, and they rather than the governors settled labor disputes and strikes. Within the FDP, the zone commanders, generally holding the rank of major, were also significant. They were personally selected by the FDP commander and were directly responsible to him. Military units headquartered within the zones, including the emergent combat battalions, appeared to be fully integrated into the zones and thus firmly under the control of the zone commanders. The Fifth Military Zone, for example, was the home base of the Peace Battalion, whose commander reported directly to the zone commander.

There were twelve military zones in 1987, the most recent having been created in 1986 in the Comarca de San Blas (see fig. 1). This area had traditionally exercised considerable territorial autonomy as the home of the Cuna Indians (see *Indians*, ch. 2). Their traditional suspicion of the Guard (and their attempt to insulate themselves from Hispanic politico-military influence) was partially overcome in the 1980s, when more Indians entered the military, and as a result of increased encroachment on their territory by

Colombians and settlers from other parts of Panama. Nevertheless, the creation of the Twelfth Military Zone became acceptable to the Cuna only after lengthy FDP lobbying and the granting of various concessions.

## Ground Forces

Panama's Ground Forces, officially the Ground Forces for Defense and National Security (Fuerzas Terrestres de Defensa y Seguridad Nacional), constituted a critical element within the FDP in the late 1980s. Their primary mission appeared to be to develop the capability to defend the canal after the year 2000. However, these forces had developed historically in response to other needs. Before the 1931 coup d'état that removed President Florencio H. Arosemena, the United States had frequently intervened militarily to oversee elections and quell riots (see *United States Intervention and Strained Relations*, ch. 1). The United States' decision not to use troops in 1931 to prevent the coup precipitated a change in the Panamanian military. It was now clearly up to the national police to guarantee internal security through the formation of a troop contingent.

Proposals were made to create a militarily trained police reserve unit of battalion strength to respond quickly to serious disorders, but political fears and budgetary limitations prevented action on the proposals. Renewed efforts through the years met with the same lack of success. The 1959 amphibious landing of Panamanian dissidents demonstrated that the National Guard, which was still primarily a police organization, lacked the training and the capability to repulse even a small-scale attack. Plans were then made to create a Public Order Company (Compañía de Orden Público) that could serve as a field force as well as a police reserve.

A police detachment stationed at Panamá Viejo (Old Panama, a suburb of Panama City) was used as a cadre in forming the new Public Order Company, which was to quell public disturbances and rebellions; to assist on special occasions, such as sporting events, parades, and ceremonies; to maintain order during natural disasters; to accomplish rescues in the jungles and mountains and at sea; to furnish raiding parties for police actions; and to act by virtue of its existence as a deterrent to social disorder. Many of the company's original personnel were sent for special training to United States Army schools in the Canal Zone.

The Public Order Company was the precursor of the eight infantry companies (*compañías de infantería*) that in the late 1980s constituted the major portion of Panama's Ground Forces. These companies had been established individually as necessary to perform a wide variety of tasks in addition to those mentioned above.

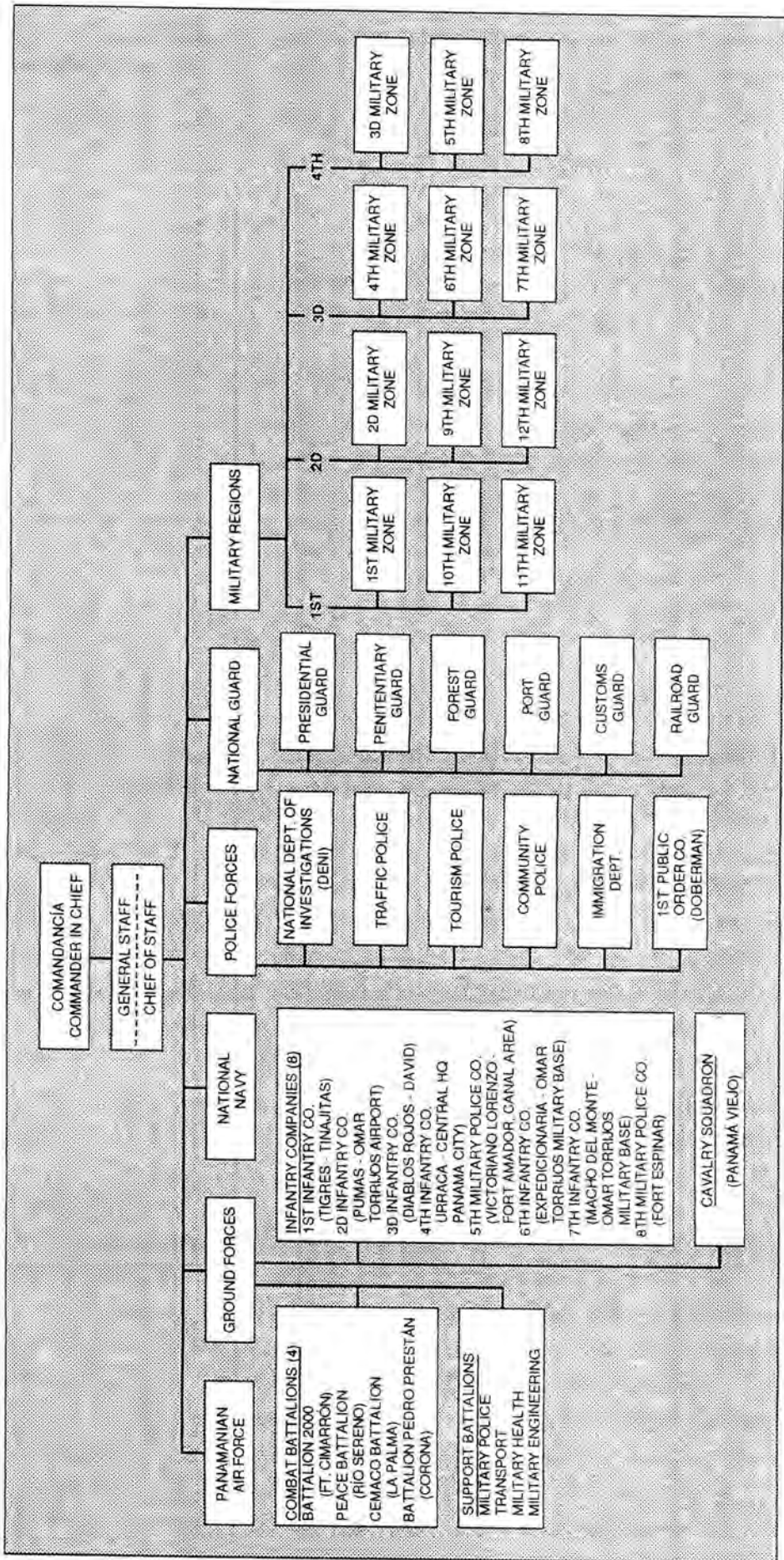


Figure 11. Operational Organization of the Panama Defense Forces, 1987

The eight infantry companies, sometimes referred to as combat companies (*compañías de combate*) or rifle companies (*compañías de fusileros*), were generally patterned on the standard infantry rifle company of the United States Army, although the Panamanians did not have the wide range of equipment available to their United States counterparts. The infantry companies were usually commanded by captains who had lieutenants as executive officers and platoon leaders. Squads were led by sergeants. Directly subordinate to the office of the commander (*comandancia*), the infantry companies were deployed at the discretion of the commander in chief. Although they had on occasion been used as quick-reaction, antiriot forces, the establishment of a special unit within the Police Forces (the First Public Order Company—Doberman) had preempted their use for such purposes. The strength of the infantry companies was estimated to average 200 personnel each. As of the mid-1980s, the FDP had sixteen V-150 and twelve to thirteen V-300 armored personnel carriers.

Infantry units were traditionally garrisoned within a thirty-kilometer radius of Panama City, with the exception of one rifle company at David and two at Omar Torrijos Military Base (formerly Río Hato). This deployment changed, however, with the creation of new combat battalions. In the late 1980s, the First Infantry Company, an airmobile company called the Tigres, was stationed at Tinajitas. The Second Infantry Company (Pumas) guarded General Omar Torrijos International Airport (more commonly known as Tocumen International Airport). The Third Infantry Company (Diablos Rojos) was located in David, the capital of Chiriquí Province, near the Costa Rican border. The Fourth Infantry Company (Urraca) was stationed at the Central Headquarters in Panama City to protect the General Staff and *comandancia*. The Fifth Military Police Company (Victoriano Lorenzo) was headquartered at Fort Amador in the canal area. The Sixth Infantry Company (Expedicionaria) and Seventh Infantry company (Macho del Monte) were headquartered at Omar Torrijos Military Base; these two companies, which controlled some of the country's light armored vehicles, once in essence represented Torrijos's private army. Finally, the Eighth Military Police Company was stationed at Fort Espinar on the Atlantic side of the isthmus.

Another component of the Ground Forces was the Cavalry Squadron (Escuadrón de Caballería), stationed at Panamá Viejo. Although primarily a ceremonial unit, it was called upon to perform crowd-control duties when situations warranted. Cavalrymen assumed routine police duties when not employed in their mounted roles. The Cavalry Squadron has a long and colorful history. A

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mounted unit in the national police force dates back to the early days of the republic, when a frontier atmosphere prevailed and mounted troopers pursued cattle rustlers and other bandits. Through the years the unit underwent various reorganizations and changes in deployment, eventually leaving its rural posts for Panama City. Despite its name, the mounted unit in the mid-1980s bore little organizational resemblance to the old-time, battalion-sized cavalry squadron. The unit was actually similar to an infantry company in that the squadron commander was a captain, his executive officer was a lieutenant, and the platoons and squads were led by lieutenants and sergeants, respectively.

The new mission assumed by the armed forces in the 1980s—defense of the canal—prompted the creation of four new combat battalions. The need for such battalions was premised on the belief that defense of the canal until the year 2000 and thereafter required the ability to defend not only the immediate environs of the waterway but also the various approaches to it. Fearing that conflicts elsewhere in Central America might spill over into Panama, the nation wanted to protect its borders with Colombia and Costa Rica. Of the four battalions envisioned (Battalion 2000, Peace Battalion, Cemaco Battalion, and Pedro Prestán Battalion), Battalion 2000 was by far the most fully developed by the mid-1980s. It was headquartered at Fort Cimarrón and commanded by a major who had a captain as his chief executive officer. The heart of Battalion 2000's combat potential consisted of an airmobile company, an airborne company, a mechanized company, and an infantry company; the First Rifle Company at Tinajitas provided fire support. The Peace Battalion, commanded by a captain, was headquartered in the town of Río Sereno near the Costa Rican border. In theory, the Cemaco Battalion, also commanded by a captain, was to be headquartered in Darién Province at La Palma near the Colombian border. Nevertheless, as of late 1987 its status was uncertain. It appeared to be only a company-sized element despite its designation as a battalion, and its actual location had not been finalized. When established, the Pedro Prestán Battalion was to be headquartered in Corona. In late 1987, it had not yet taken shape, however.

Also attached to the Ground Forces were a number of battalions supplying support services: the Military Police Battalion (Batallón de Policía Militar), composed of the Fifth and Eighth Military Police Companies; the Military Health Battalion (Batallón de Salud Militar); the Transport Battalion (Batallón de Transporte y Mantenimiento); and the Military Engineering Battalion (Batallón de Ingeniería Militar). The Military Health Battalion was commanded by a captain and the others by majors.

## Panamanian Air Force and National Navy

Before conversion of the National Guard into the FDP, the Panamanian military did not have separate service branches. Even in 1987, the six groups into which the FDP was divided (Ground Forces, Panamanian Air Force, National Navy, Police Forces, National Guard, and Military Zones) were referred to as “entities” (*entidades*) rather than service branches. Prior to 1983, the air force and navy were under the direct jurisdiction of the G-3 (Operations). Although not granted autonomy from the General Staff by the 1983 law, they seemed to have assumed more of a separate identity in the late 1980s.

Establishment of the Panamanian air capability came in 1964, when a Cessna 185 airplane was purchased from the United States. When Torrijos became commander in chief, he began building up the air arm, officially establishing the Panamanian Air Force (*Fuerza Aérea Panameña*) in January 1970, in recognition of not only its military utility but also its political potential. Airplanes and later helicopters allowed Torrijos to tour outlying areas of the country, areas where he could establish a political base that could neutralize the influence of historically powerful urban groups. The first officers to enter the air force were mostly civilian pilots and thus did not really constitute an officer corps as such. Also, there was little opportunity for an independent air force identity to emerge because pilots were regularly rotated to other positions within the National Guard, a practice that still prevailed in the FDP in the late 1980s. The most significant development affecting the air force during the Torrijos years, then, was not the development of an independent service identity, but the rapid growth of the air arm. There were only twenty-three officer pilots in 1969, but by 1978 there were sixty.

Although in 1987 the air force did not have any combat aircraft, there had been a steady buildup in other equipment, particularly helicopters. As of 1987, regular aircraft included three CASA C-212s, one DHC-3 Otter, two DHC-6 Twin Otters, one Short Skyvan, one Islander, one Boeing 727, and two Cessnas. In addition, there were nine Bell and six UH helicopters and one Super Puma. Personnel and airplanes were primarily based at the Tocumen Air Base, which is collocated with Tocumen International Airport near Panama City, and at Albrook Air Force Base in the canal area.

Panama's navy (officially, the National Navy—*Marina Nacional*) was formed at approximately the same time as the air force (1964). Known at that time as the Department of Marine Operations



(Departamento de Operaciones Marinas), it was a small organization involved primarily in coastal patrol operations under the direction of the G-3. In the late 1980s, the navy was equipped with two large rough-water patrol craft, two utility coastal patrol boats, about five small patrol and harbor craft, and three or four former United States Navy amphibious landing ships. The two large craft were the GC10 *Panquiaco* and the GC11 *Ligia Elena*, both constructed by Vosper Thornycroft in Portsmouth, England, in 1970. Each measured about 30 meters in length and was armed with 2 20mm guns; the manning level called for 23 officers and enlisted men. The 2 utility patrol craft each measured about 19 meters in length, mounted a pair of 12.7mm machineguns, and carried a complement of 10 people. The craft had been transferred to Panama from the United States Coast Guard in the mid-1960s. Two of the smaller coastal patrol craft were twelve-meter boats transferred to Panama from the United States Navy under the Military Assistance Program in the early 1960s. Each mounted a single 12.7mm machinegun and carried a crew of 4 enlisted personnel.

Because of the age and the limited capabilities of many of their naval craft, Panamanian officials sought to purchase more modern vessels that would allow the navy to defend the canal approaches and also enhance its coastal patrol capabilities. In the 1980s Panama took delivery of two swift ships, the MN GC-201 *Comandante Torrijos* and MN GC-202 *Presidente Porras*, which were constructed in the United States.

With this continued increase in the navy's vessels, there has been a concomitant expansion in personnel. In 1983 the navy moved to new headquarters at Fort Amador at the Pacific terminus of the canal. The commanding officer in the mid-1980s was a navy commander.

## **Police Forces**

The Police Forces (Fuerzas de Policía) in the mid-1980s included a number of major units and several smaller ones performing relatively minor functions. Most important was the National Department of Investigations (Departamento Nacional de Investigaciones—DENI), which has historically been viewed by many Panamanians as a kind of secret police. For most of its history, Panama has had organizations similar to the DENI. The undercover police began with the decree-law, issued by President José D. Obaldía in 1909, establishing a ten-man section in the Panama City Police and a five-man section in Colón to engage exclusively in undercover police investigations. In effect, Obaldía created a detective organization supervised by the commander of the National Police.

In 1941, during the presidency of Arnulfo Arias Madrid, the enlarged detective agency became the National Secret Police and was removed from the jurisdiction of the police commander, although it remained under the Ministry of Government and Justice. According to the decree establishing it, the National Secret Police was to be the investigative agency dealing with infractions of the law as well as with conspiracies against the state or against national security.

In May 1960, President Ernesto de la Guardia, with the approval of the cabinet and the Permanent Legislative Commission, issued a decree-law that created the DENI to replace the National Secret Police. The new agency was removed from the Ministry of Government and Justice and placed in the Public Ministry under the direction of the attorney general. DENI powers were carefully delineated in the 1960 law; primarily an investigatory agency, it acquired broader authority that made it the Panamanian counterpart of the United States Federal Bureau of Investigation. Besides investigating crime, DENI was to maintain surveillance on known political extremists and potential subversives. DENI agents were authorized to maintain surveillance of hotels, pensions, and boarding houses in Panamanian cities in order to follow the movements of transients who might be potential violators of the law. The agency was also charged with administering a national identity bureau and with keeping records of all criminals and criminal activities. A fingerprint file was established by recording the prints of each citizen who applied for the national identity card (*cédula*).

DENI became a member of the International Organization of Criminal Police (Interpol). Sometime after the coup d'état of 1968, it was subordinated to the G-2 of the National Guard's General Staff. In the mid-1980s, the DENI was commanded by a major and headquartered in Ancón near Panama City. The overall strength of this organization and location of its agents were not publicized; however, it was generally assumed that Panama City, Colón, and David were its main areas of activity.

The Police Forces also included the Traffic Police (Dirección Nacional de Tránsito Terrestre), which was founded as a separate entity in 1969. Headquartered in Panama City, the Traffic Police regulated and controlled traffic throughout the country. Units were stationed in the cities and suburbs as well as on the back roads and highways, including the Pan-American Highway (see fig. 8). In performing its countrywide duties, the Traffic Police coordinated with other FDP personnel in the posts and stations of eleven of the twelve military zones; coordination was not possible in the Twelfth Military Zone, located in the Comarca de San Blas, because of the lack of

roads. Responsibilities of the Traffic Police included issuing, renewing, and revoking drivers' licenses and vehicle registrations; investigating accidents and infractions of the vehicle laws; inspecting vehicles for safety hazards; and developing training programs for safe driving. In the late 1980s, the force was commanded by a major.

The Police Forces also included small police units called the Tourism Police (*Policía de Turismo*) and Community Police (*Policía Comunitaria*), both commanded by lieutenants. The Immigration Department and the First Public Order Company (*Doberman*) first came under the control of the Police Forces in 1983. The Immigration Department was staffed by civilians but was fully integrated into the FDP; its head reported directly to the FDP commander. The First Public Order Company, commanded by a captain, was charged with riot control and was the primary instrument used for this purpose in the 1980s.

### **National Guard**

The last of the six major entities making up the Defense Forces was the National Guard (*Guardia Nacional*). As reconstituted, the National Guard was scarcely a shadow of its former self. As of late 1987, it had neither a commander nor a staff element and functioned primarily as a paper entity encompassing the Presidential Guard (*Guardia Presidencial*), Penitentiary Guard (*Guardia Penitenciaria*), Forest Guard (*Guardia Forestal*), Port Guard (*Guardia Portuaria*), Customs Guard (*Guardia Aduanera*), and Railroad Guard (*Guardia Ferroviaria*). The Presidential Guard was a specially selected unit charged with guarding the president and the presidential palace. The unit, which was quartered on the palace grounds, was believed to be similar to an infantry company in organization; although used as a ceremonial honor guard, its personnel were also trained in the use of weapons and in security techniques. On parade or when mustered to greet foreign dignitaries, the Presidential Guard presented an impressive appearance in tailored white uniforms, white helmets, boots with white laces, and white belts and rifle slings. The Presidential Guard wore a variety of other uniforms as well, including a dark blue uniform with black cap and a solid gray uniform with white helmet and white belt. The unit was commanded by a major or a captain who answered directly to the *comandancia*.

Other small units of the National Guard protected specific areas or facilities. The Port Guard, Railroad Guard, and Forest Guard all were formed to handle functions and responsibilities turned over to Panama by the 1978 treaties. The Forest Guard, for example,

dealt with the increasingly serious problem of deforestation in the basin drained by the canal.

## **Administration and Operations of the Defense Forces**

### **Manpower**

Service in the FDP and its predecessor organizations had been voluntary since Panama gained its independence, but a law provided for conscription if necessary. If there were a perceived threat to national sovereignty, the Defense Forces were charged with managing conscription. Naturalized citizens were exempted from participation in cases where they would have to fight against their country of origin. (As of the mid-1980s, however, no emergency since independence had necessitated activation of the law.)

Government officials reported through the years that there had always been more recruits for the Defense Forces than available spaces. Even the possibility of increased manning levels to meet additional requirements under the Panama Canal treaties did not seem to exhaust the pool of recruits. In the mid-1980s, Panamanians aspiring to military service generally reported to Omar Torrijos Military Base at Río Hato, where they took a series of physical and mental examinations. Those accepted were issued uniforms and received some basic training before being sent to the Military Training Center (Centro de Instrucción Militar—CIM) at Fort Cimarrón. There was no set schedule for basic training courses, but they occurred two to three times each year. All Panamanians who enjoyed “. . . their civilian and political rights, who have not been sentenced for crimes against property, or sanctioned by the judicial branch with a sentence depriving them of freedom for committing a crime against the public administration . . .” could apply for admission to the Defense Forces.

The commander in chief made all promotions and used the following criteria to determine whether a promotion was merited: “(1) Verification of service rendered in the lower rank and proof of seniority, (2) Exhibition of optimal physical condition . . ., (3) Demonstration of a positive moral attitude . . ., and (4) Exhibition of intellectual attitude and competence . . . .” If a member of the Defense Forces were found guilty of insubordination or some other violation of military discipline, the right to promotion could be suspended for up to three years. In October 1985, Noriega promoted the largest number of officers and enlisted personnel ever promoted at one time in the history of the armed forces (some 1,200). This occurred as a result of both the rapid expansion of the Defense Forces and the anticipated need for more senior officers

and enlisted men as the year 2000 approached. Noriega's action further altered the rank structure by creating more high-level officer billets and strengthened his position within the Defense Forces.

Statistics were not maintained on the ethnic and racial backgrounds of Defense Forces personnel, but there was no apparent discrimination. In fact, since the National Police and its successor institutions had been among the few bureaucratic organizations in Panama not to discriminate on the basis of race, many black Panamanians found their way into military service. Enlisted personnel historically came mostly from the urban transit area, since the National Police served primarily as policemen in that area. After the creation of new infantry units during the 1960s and 1970s, there has been some indication that recruitment shifted to rural areas. Most officers had traditionally come from the urban lower-middle class, but increasing numbers were drawn from the rural middle and lower classes in the 1950s and 1960s.

Although there had always been a few women in the Panamanian armed forces, their numbers greatly increased in the 1980s. Part of this increase resulted from the creation of the FDP in 1983, when women in bureaucracies such as the Immigration Department were brought under the armed forces. However, it was also a reflection of changing policy and the military five-year plan implemented in the early 1980s. This plan called for the eventual creation of a separate administrative office for the women's component of the armed forces known as the Female Force (*Fuerza Feminina*). As of the mid-1980s, there were 1,824 women on active duty. In 1986 the School for Women's Training (*Escuela de Formación Feminina*) was established with a female captain as its commander. The first graduating class of twenty had received twelve weeks of instruction in a variety of military subjects.

Article 24 of the September 1983 Law 20 on the Defense Forces of the Republic of Panama states that the professional classification of military ranks within the FDP will be as follows: "(1) general of the forces, (2) corps general, (3) division general, (4) brigadier general, (5) colonel, (6) lieutenant colonel, (7) major, (8) captain, (9) lieutenant, (10) second lieutenant, (11) first sergeant, (12) second sergeant, (13) first corporal, (14) second corporal, (15) agent, (16) aid, and (17) orderly. Posts in the military ranks mentioned above will be filled in accordance with institutional needs." The commander in chief is traditionally the only active-duty officer to hold the rank of general. The rank of general came into use in the mid-1960s with Vallarino. Previously, colonel was the highest rank except for Remón's posthumous promotion to general, approved by the National Assembly after his assassination. In the late 1980s,

the FDP's commander, General Noriega, held the four-star general rank (see fig. 12).

The most common uniforms in the mid-1980s were either green fatigue or khaki-colored short-sleeved shirts and trousers. Officers sometimes wore short-sleeved khaki shirts with dark green trousers or various (white or dark green) dress uniforms. Both the fatigue uniforms and khaki uniforms also had long-sleeved versions. Headgear varied, including a variety of helmets or helmet liners, berets of various colors, the stiff-sided visored fatigue cap, and the visored felt garrison caps similar to those worn by United States Army officers. Field-grade officers and the one general officer wore gold braid on their visored caps. Combat boots were the most common footwear, but officers frequently wore low-quarter shoes. Officer rank insignia consisted of gold bars or stars. The noncommissioned officer (NCO) ranks were designated by chevrons similar to those worn by some NCOs in the United States Army. Distinctive unit shoulder patches were worn by all ranks on the right shoulder of their uniforms (see fig. 13). On the left shoulder, all ranks wore the familiar blue, white, and red shield of the FDP showing crossed rifles bisected by an upright saber.

## Training

Until the 1950s, systematic training had been at best sporadic and at worst nonexistent. During the construction of the canal, United States instructors in police methods were frequently hired, but none stayed more than a few months, and the turnover hurt the already inefficient police force. In 1917 Albert R. Lamb was hired as an instructor for the National Police, and within two years he had been promoted to the post of inspector general. Even after a Panamanian was named commander in 1924, Lamb remained as an inspector and continued to exert an important influence on the police. He was credited with having created a relatively efficient force, but discipline, training, and efficiency declined after he left in 1927.

Police officials during the 1930s and 1940s periodically recommended the establishment of a police training center, but lack of funds always prevented action on such recommendations. In 1946 the National Assembly created the Police School (*Escuela de Policía*), but even after that decree and even with Remón as commander, the police had difficulties securing sufficient funds to operate a school. As president, Remón was instrumental in arranging for a Venezuelan military mission to advise and assist in establishing the National Guard School (*Escuela de Formación de Guardias Nacionales*), forerunner of the present-day CIM and the Police Training Academy (*Academia de Capacitación Policial—ACAPOL*).

Under the leadership of General Torrijos, training for both officers and enlisted men improved considerably. In the 1970s, officer training shifted from Central to South America, resulting in a significant upgrading in the quality of professional education received. Although many officers were still promoted from the ranks, the percentage of those with academy training gradually increased. By 1979 some 315 of 700 officers were academy graduates.

Since the early 1950s, approximately 5,000 Panamanian officers and enlisted men have been trained by the United States. Although some of these students were sent to the United States, the majority attended United States facilities located in the former Canal Zone, including the United States Army School of the Americas, the Inter-American Air Forces Academy at Albrook Air Force Base, and the Small Craft Instruction and Training School at the Naval Support Facility near the Pacific end of the canal. Although in the late 1980s some FDP personnel still received training at United States facilities, their numbers were reduced because the School of the Americas moved to Fort Benning, Georgia, in 1984. Nevertheless, for the majority of Panamanian officers, the command and staff course given at the School of the Americas remained the final rung on the educational ladder.

One of the FDP's most important training facilities was the CIM located near Panama City at Fort Cimarrón. It housed the Airborne School and offered a parachute-rigging course in addition to its responsibility for the basic training of recruits and the refresher training of all military personnel in subjects such as patrolling, first aid, and map reading. Besides providing regular teaching and field training, the facility assisted in the development of new courses of instruction designed to keep the organization abreast of innovations and current methods of military operation. Its commandant, usually a major or captain, was assisted by an executive officer and a staff and faculty consisting of officers and sergeants.

Another Panamanian school, the General Tomás Herrera Military Institute (Instituto Militar General Tomás Herrera), was located at Omar Torrijos Military Base in Río Hato. Established in 1974 on the model of a Peruvian military high school, it offered training for young people who might some day choose to pursue a military career. It also provided the Defense Forces with technically trained personnel proficient in developmental fields such as agronomy. As of 1986, ten classes had been graduated from the institute and many of its students were receiving scholarships to various military academies throughout Latin America.

The José Domingo Espinar Educational Center was an FDP training facility that replaced the United States Army School of the



Source: Based on information from *Defensa*, Panama City, December 1979, 5.

Figure 13. Selected Unit Insignia of the Panama Defense Forces, 1987

Americas. Located near Colón, this center was named after the Panamanian patriot who first declared territorial independence from Colombia. It had a number of different faculties and offered a variety of courses on subjects such as basic criminal investigations, basic intelligence, English language, and radio communications. It also offered a promotion course for future noncommissioned officers. The ACAPOL, which offered basic police training, was housed in this facility. The academy offered a wide variety of courses to



both officers and enlisted personnel and high-level seminars dealing with national problems. The importance of this facility within the educational structure of the Defense Forces was indicated by the fact that its commander in the mid-1980s was a lieutenant colonel.

Other FDP training facilities included the Benjamín Ruíz School for Noncommissioned Officers (Escuela de Suboficiales Benjamín Ruíz), the Command and Special Operations School (Escuela de Comando y Operaciones Especiales), and the Pana-Jungla School (Escuela Pana-Jungla). The School for Noncommissioned Officers was established in 1986 at Omar Torrijos Military Base. It was primarily a training facility designed to identify prospective second lieutenants. Secondary school graduates went through a two-year training program and were awarded the rank of first sergeant. Following two years of "on-the-job training" and additional courses, the best of the group became second lieutenants. The Command and Special Operations School was a facility for training members of the infantry companies in various types of special activities. Graduates were mostly sergeants with more than ten years of military service. The Pana-Jungla School was located in Bocas del Toro Province along the Río Teribe and near the Costa Rican border. Commanded by a major, it offered training in jungle survival skills to both Panamanian soldiers and military personnel from other countries.

### **Foreign Military Assistance**

Ever since the early post-World War II period, Panama has been the recipient of some annual military aid under various programs established by the United States government (see table 19, Appendix A). In a diplomatic message accompanying the Panama Canal treaties, the United States agreed (pending congressional approval) to provide up to US\$50 million in credits under the Foreign Military Sales (FMS) program. The credits were to be spread over the first ten years of the treaty period.

In fact, FMS deliveries to Panama have risen dramatically in the 1980s, from a mere US\$187,000 in fiscal year (FY) 1980 to over US\$12 million in FY 1986. Assistance under the International Military Education and Training Program also has registered a steady increase from US\$270,000 in FY 1980 to US\$575,000 in FY 1985, with a slight drop to US\$507,000 in FY 1986.

In late 1987, however, it remained to be seen whether and under what circumstances Panama would continue to receive United States military aid. The United States suspended all military and economic aid to Panama in the summer of 1987, in response to