

Koster, R.M., and Guillermo Sánchez. *In the Time of the Tyrants: Panama, 1968-1990*. New York: Norton, 1990

Watson, Bruce W., and Peter G. Tsouras, eds. *Operation Just Cause: The U.S. Intervention in Panama*. Boulder, CO: Westview, 1990.

Panama generates passion like no other issue in US foreign policy. No two other countries have had such an intimate historical relationship and few symbols are as deeply rooted in the American historical consciousness as the building of the Panama Canal. The 1987-89 US-Panamanian crisis makes no sense without this context. It was difficult to resolve because it was as much a foreign policy issue as it was domestic. It was a contest for power between a band of military thugs and the nation they literally hijacked, summoning forth all the metaphors of America's engagement with the isthmian nation and Latin America, and combined with a new one — the "drug war."

The origins of the crisis and its denouement in the form of JUST CAUSE is the stuff of the two books under review. Richard Koster and Guillermo Sánchez have written the most compelling and readable work. Their richly detailed effort sheds much light on how the rot of military despotism took root and turned Panama into a grim police state. They weave a thick and fascinating tapestry of the unique transactional political culture of Panama, its colorful leaders, such as the self-destructive, oft-elected and seldom president Arnulfo Arias (who died during the height of the crisis in August 1988), the revolution of 1968 that brought forth Omar Torrijos, the hand that civilians played in foisting militarism upon themselves, the Potemkin village of populism and nationalism that Torrijos erected to win the hearts and minds of American senators and congressmen who had to be persuaded to support the new Panama Canal treaties, and the consolidation of the narco-military thuggocracy under Manuel Antonio Noriega and its violent demise in 1989. Their thesis: Panama was a tropical, peace-loving paradise whose people did not sufficiently value their freedom, and whose inept and corrupt civilian leaders, along with the military assistance naively granted by the United States, delivered it to the dark night of military repression.

Koster and Sánchez speak with awesome eye-witness and participant authority. The first is an American professor of literature at the Florida State University campus in Panama, a distinguished novelist in the style of "magical realism," and a keen observer of Panamanian affairs for thirty years. Sánchez is an equally distinguished Panamanian man of letters and an heroic combatant against the dictatorship through the pages of *La Prensa* daily. Their accounting of the corruption, perversities, brutalities, the drug running, and the intrigues and subintrigues with the international demi-monde and foreign officials is spellbinding. They are biting critical of US policy, but thankful for JUST CAUSE, stating: "So long as the PDF [the Panamanian Defense Forces] obeyed Noriega, the people of Panama were no more able to liberate their country from within than the people of occupied Europe had been forty-

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five years earlier." Despite minor factual inaccuracies, *In the Time of the Tyrants* will stand the test of time as one of the most brilliant renderings of Panama's agony.

The volume edited by Watson and Tsouras is a more conventional analysis of JUST CAUSE by Washington-based military intelligence professionals. Containing a useful chronology and extensive bibliography, it focuses on the background to the crisis, the prelude, operational aspects (forces, intelligence, command, control and communications, air power, logistics, civil affairs, the media) and the aftermath of intervention. The book integrates the efforts of various authors. Chapter quality varies from inconsistent to excellent. The best may be the penetrating essay by Susan G. Horwitz, "Indications and Warning Factors." Horwitz analyzes the series of decisions taken by figures on both the Panamanian and US sides in the 1987-89 period, and concludes that JUST CAUSE was the last resort imposed by Noriega's intransigence and provocations. Not a bad conclusion, given the unclassified evidence summoned. Future research may indicate that JUST CAUSE was the result of a peculiar combination of domestic and international factors that weighed on the presidency in December 1989. The shooting of American Lieutenant Robert Paz and other PDF brutalities on the weekend of December 16 was the final straw. Mark P. Sullivan's "The Future U.S. Role in Panama," is an excellent and sensitive analysis of the challenges ahead for the United States, such as the building of democracy, revitalizing the economy, eliminating drug-trafficking, establishing the new police force, and the future of bilateral defense relations after the treaty mandated departure of US military forces by 31 December 1999. Sullivan reminds us that while JUST CAUSE was a brilliant long-range contingency deployment, rebuilding a nation and knowing when and how to disengage in the post-conflict phase is the greater challenge for American strategy. It may indeed be its Achilles heel.

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Howard, Michael. *British Intelligence in the Second World War. Volume 5. Strategic Deception*. London: HMSO, 1990.

The official history of *British Intelligence in the Second World War* has at last been completed with the publication of Michael Howard's study of strategic deception. Between 1939-45, British authorities demonstrated an unparalleled mastery of this art, which may well have been a necessary cause for the success of operations HUSKY and OVERLORD alike. Michael Howard's study, therefore, will interest students both of deception and the