

Chronology

The following outline of events relevant to United States-Panama relations is adapted from a chronology by Jane Franklin with the permission of the author.

1856-1989: On at least 16 occasions, United States intervenes militarily in Panama. From 1903 U.S. troops are permanently stationed there. Majority of invasions, which involve sending additional troops and weaponry, are carried out to suppress insurrections and to retain property United States had seized in Panama.

1903: U.S. show of military force in Panama accelerates its struggle to break away from Colombia. Treaty to build Panama Canal is "negotiated" and signed in United States by French businessman "representing" Panama.

1914: Panama Canal opens. United States takes control of 10-mile-wide zone in middle of country. Segregation imposed in Canal Zone against nonwhites. U.S. employees receive wages twice those of Panamanians.

1958: After popular protest, United States agrees to fly both U.S. and Panamanian flags in Canal Zone.

1959: Panamanians march into Canal Zone to raise Panamanian flag on Independence Day, are turned back by U.S. troops.

1964: Panamanians march into Zone on January 9 after U.S. students raise only U.S. flag. U.S. troops kill more than 20 Panamanian civilians and wound more than 300. Panama breaks diplomatic relations with United States. Relations resume after United States agrees to discuss new treaty.

1968: Col. Omar Torrijos overthrows government of wealthy landowners and becomes head of more nationalist military government. Period of reforms begins with expansion of literacy, education, health, rural development, trade union organization and wage laws. Blacks, Mestizos and Indians are appointed to government positions for first time. General Manuel Antonio Noriega becomes head of armed forces.

1972: Ruling Junta is confirmed by election.

1977: Three treaties known as Torrijos-Carter treaties are signed. Key provisions

include total return of U.S. military bases and Canal Zone to Panama by year 2000; no interference in Panama's internal affairs; and restrictions on U.S. military presence in Panama.

1979: Treaties take effect; 65% of the Zone reverts to Panamanian control.

1980: Ronald Reagan campaigns for President with promise not to give up Canal.

1981: General Torrijos is killed in airplane crash.

1983: General Noriega is named Commander of newly created Panamanian Defense Forces.

1985: Relations between Noriega and United States become hostile after Panama rebuffs demands of Admiral Poindexter, Reagan's National Security Adviser, to collaborate on invasion of Nicaragua.

1986: U.S. government proposes turning over Canal by 1990 if agreement is reached to allow U.S. bases to remain until 2015.

September 24, 1987: U.S. Senate approves resolution demanding that Panama change its government or face a cutoff of U.S. aid.

February 4, 1988: Noriega is indicted by Federal grand juries in Miami and Tampa on drug trafficking.

February 8, 1988: Noriega demands withdrawal of U.S. Southern Command headquartered in Panama.

February 26, 1988: National Assembly (the Congress of Panama) blocks move by President Delvalle to remove General Noriega. Delvalle is removed for violating Panamanian Constitution (similar to impeachment). Washington continues to recognize Delvalle as President after National Assembly names Solís Palma as Acting President.

March 11, 1988: Reagan Administration imposes sanctions, including restrictions on trade and withholding of Canal fees.

April 1988: Reagan Administration increases economic sanctions. U.S. government and private U.S. companies are prohibited from making payments to Panama; \$56 million in Panamanian funds in U.S. banks frozen; United States sends additional 2,000 troops to Panama in violation of 1977 treaties. United States gives \$10 million to Guillermo Endara as presidential candidate. Many more millions are reported to be given covertly. (U.S. election law bars candidates from receiving foreign contributions.)

May 25, 1988: U.S. Secretary of State George Shultz announces talks on deal for Noriega's departure have collapsed.

May 7, 1989: Presidential election takes place. Panamanian government nullifies results on May 10 because of U.S. interference. Bush Administration sends 2,000 more troops to Panama. U.S. military starts staging regular military maneuvers on Panamanian territory in violation of treaties. Over 100 such acts take place. Panama appeals to United Nations for observers and assistance in stopping U.S. military activity.

May 11, 1989: President Bush recalls Ambassador Arthur Davis. Begins sending additional 1,700 soldiers and 165 Marines to Panama.

June 1989: U.S. Justice Department issues opinion that United States can carry out arrests in foreign countries without approval of their governments.

September 12, 1989: Bush Administration again expands sanctions, including withdrawing 1989 sugar quota and adding to list of companies and individuals barred from doing business with U.S. citizens and traveling to United States.

October 3, 1989: Noriega puts down coup attempt supported by U.S. government.

October 17, 1989: Bush Administration supports wider role for CIA in coup attempts, complaining that restraints about possible death of targets is too limiting.

November 1989: U.S. government announces that after January 31, 1990, it will bar vessels registered in Panama from entering U.S. ports. This forces other countries to pressure the Panamanian government, as majority of countries in world use Panamanian registry for commercial vessels.

December 20, 1989: United States invades Panama.