

0 PM-11

ROUTING AND RECORD SHEET



SUBJECT: (Optional)

Monthly Report -- Panama Bureau

FROM:

Chief, Operations Group

EXTENSION

NO.

DATE

May 1988

STAT

TO: (Officer designation, room number, and building)

DATE

OFFICER'S INITIALS

COMMENTS (Number each comment to show from whom to whom. Draw a line across column after each comment.)

RECEIVED

FORWARDED

1.	AC/Ops	21 JUN 1988		<i>[Handwritten initials]</i>	
2.					
3.	C/E&PS		1/2	1	
4.	DD/FBIS	6/22		B	
5.	D/FBIS			R	
6.					
7.	PO/RA	6/28		Om	
8.	SA/CD	6/29		EF	
9.					
10.	C/AS			LS	
11.	C/B&F/AS			<i>[Handwritten initials]</i>	
12.					
13.					
14.	C/AG	5/8		m	<i>[Handwritten initials]</i>
15.	Exec. Reg.				

FBIS-5213-88

3 June 1988

MEMORANDUM FOR: Director, Foreign Broadcast Information Service
THROUGH : Acting Chief, Operations Group
SUBJECT : Monthly Report -- Panama Bureau -- May 1988

I. GENERAL

A. The on-again, off-again negotiations aimed at ousting General Manuel Antonio Noriega broke down at the last minute, catching everyone in Washington -- but few in Panama -- by surprise. The only thing anybody really knew about the situation at month's end was that nobody really knows anything about the situation, including what the next U.S. and Panamanian regime moves will be.

B. Bureau staffers were among embassy personnel whose diplomatic i.d. cards appeared in a 19 May supplement to the government paper CRITICA, which exhorted Panamanians to "Know these Gringos" who are "starving the Panamanians to death." Nothing further was printed until the very end of the month when Bureau Chief [redacted] Deputy Chief [redacted] and Chief Editor [redacted] were identified in Havana PRENSA LATINA dispatches -- subsequently picked up by various other agencies and newspapers -- as the "director" and "assistants" of FBIS, a canal area facility that operates the clandestine opposition Radio Constitucional from its offices near Chiva Chiva. Bureau staffers commented that if these allegations were true, our reception of this radio should be better than it is.

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C. In response to the continued unsettled situation, the embassy requested and received permission to enter "authorized departure" status. Under this status, dependents may request to leave post for the United States with the government paying their way and a daily stipend for 180 days. However, those leaving post under this status may not return until the State Department determines the situation here has improved sufficiently to allow secure living conditions. It is estimated the "all clear" will not be given for many months. It is not clear at this time how many embassy people will take advantage of this option.

II. OPERATIONS

A. Monitorial/Editorial

1. Rumors of an imminent "deal" to remove General Noriega from power led to several days of open speaker watches, as the anticipated announcement kept floating just out of reach. The watches culminated in what amounted to a rousing Noriega victory speech and denunciation of U.S. pressure before a carefully packed Legislative Assembly session.

In response to a State Department Operations Center request, the bureau established a phone patch to the center on 25 May and relayed about 14 hours of Panama City Domestic Service in vain anticipation of an announcement of a deal with General Noriega. The next day the bureau patched Noriega's National Assembly address to the State Operations Center, for which we received praise and thanks.

2. Monitor [] was the first to get a sampling of the opposition clandestine Radio Constitucional. He picked it up on his transistor radio at home and taped it. Broadcasting on the FM band with a very weak signal, Constucional can now be heard at the bureau via a reconfigured TV antenna.

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3. The rest of the bureau's coverage area was also active during May. Events included an extension of the month-old Nicaraguan cease-fire despite another inconclusive round of Sandinist-Contra talks; presidential elections in Ecuador; a failed coup attempt in Guatemala; a Colombian plane hijacking, and several man-made disasters in Mexico.

B. Communications

In response to a DCA requirement, the bureau began encrypting its autodin communications traffic on 6 May.

C. Lateral Services

The bureau provided videotape, audio cassettes, and transcripts of Noriega's 26 May National Assembly speech to U.S. Southern Command's Office of Treaty Affairs and the 470th Military Intelligence Brigade.

D. Technical

After much trial and error, Bureau Engineer [] began using demodulation equipment supplied ESG and a bureau computer to demodulate press agency casts found among TDM signals on the 34.5W Intelsat.

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III. ADMINISTRATION

A. Personnel

1. [redacted] the wife and daughter, respectively, of Chief Editor [redacted], departed PCS on 20 May.

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2. Senior Editor [redacted] arrived PCS on 31 May. His wife and daughter will follow as the situation in Panama permits.

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B. Building and Grounds

Contractor Taller Raulito repaired a broken antenna link in antenna field and reinforced the repaired area with concrete.

IV. VISITS

TO THE BUREAU:

-- Deputy Chief of Mission John Maisto, on May 12, to brief bureau staffers on latest U.S. moves in Panama;

-- General Mark Cisneros, Southern Command J-3, on 13 May, for a briefing and orientation;

-- Colonel Sam O'Neal, U.S. Army South Deputy Chief of Staff for Resource Management, on 4 May, for discussion on possible logistical and documentation support to the bureau.

-- Captain John Chicky, S-2 of the 5/87th Infantry Fort Clayton, to brief security officer on planned patrols near bureau.

FROM THE BUREAU:

-- Chief Editor/Security Officer [redacted] to headquarters, 5/87th to coordinate on planned patrols of bureau grounds.

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-- Deputy Chief [redacted] to headquarters for TDY on 20 and 23 May.

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[redacted]

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Chief, Panama Bureau