Advise and Dissent:
Operation Just Cause and the Bush National Security Team

Eric Kaufman
Undergraduate Honors Program – Class of 2010
Terry Sanford School of Public Policy
Duke University
Professor Bob Korstad (Advisor)
Professor Ken Rogerson
Key Abbreviations and Acronyms

APDNSA – Assistant to the President and Deputy National Security Advisor

APNSA – Assistant to the President and National Security Advisor (same as NSA)

CIA – Central Intelligence Agency

DEA – Drug Enforcement Agency

DOD – Department of Defense

JCS – Joint Chiefs of Staff

NSA – National Security Advisor

NSD – National Security Directive

NSC – National Security Council

PDF – Panamanian Defense Force

PNG – Panamanian National Guard

POTUS – President of the United States

SECDEF – Secretary of Defense

SOUTHCOM – U.S. Southern Command, one of ten Combatant Commands worldwide, is responsible for Central and South America

VPOTUS – Vice President of the United States
**Introduction**

The National Security Council is the hub of decision-making during a crisis. While the secretary of defense, a civilian, is the de jure head of the Defense Department, the national security advisor and Joint Chiefs of Staff wield a great deal of influence. Together, they are the president’s most important advisors on issues related to the military. The importance of their advice is especially critical in a national security crisis, when the president must make difficult decisions with potentially catastrophic consequences under severe time constraints.

The advice of the defense secretary will not always concur with that of the Joint Chiefs. The Cuban Missile Crisis is a well-known example of when the defense secretary (Robert McNamara) opposed the advice given to President John F. Kennedy by some the Joint Chiefs. How does the president make a sound decision when the advice from his top military advisors conflicts? Secretary McNamara was an experienced civil servant who understood the high stakes of the Cold War. At the same time, the Joint Chiefs were the nation’s finest officers, having risen through meritocracy to the top. Kennedy sided with his defense secretary, but is this always the case? When disagreements have occurred between the national security advisor, the defense secretary, and the ranking military officers, how have presidents reconciled the differences of opinion to make a decision?

While experts have extensively studied the Cuban Missile Crisis, little has been studied about decision-making behind the invasion of Panama. Presidential advisory systems play an intricate role in framing issues and options to the president, which ultimately affect policy choices. While academics have written about presidential advisory systems in general, little attention is paid to specific policy areas, especially
defense policy. A single decision in defense policymaking can affect millions of people, necessitating greater understanding of how the president receives advice and makes decisions. The most recent administration to have documents declassified is that of President George H.W. Bush.

**Research Questions**

**General:** What type of tensions, if any, existed amongst the president’s senior staff? Why did these tensions arise? How were they resolved? How did these tensions affect policy decisions?

**Case Specific:** Who were Bush’s closest advisors? How did President Bush justify the invasion of Panama and who advised to do so? Was there dissention in the decision to invade Panama? If so, who disagreed and how did the president reconcile differing viewpoints?

**Abstract Specific:** How do the national security advisor and secretary of defense formulate advice to the president? Historically, is there a pattern of disagreement between the national security advisor, defense secretary, and top military officers? Does the national security advisor complicate the relationship between the president and the military advisors from the Defense Department? Does the personal relationship between the president and certain advisors affect their influence on his decision-making?

**Presidential Advisory Theories and National Security**

As the most powerful person in the world, the President of the United States must make extremely difficult and complex decisions. To make his job easier, the president surrounds himself with experts in the fields of economics, national security, and other key international and domestic issues. Each advisor has a different relationship with the
president, some going back for decades. This is important – it can influence how a
president takes the advice from his advisors and makes decisions.

Preston examines two elements of a president’s personality that affect the way he
interacts with his advisors: presidential sensitivity to context and presidential need for
control and involvement in the policy process (19). He classifies President Bush as a
“navigator”. Accordingly, Bush’s “prior foreign policy experience and expertise
increased his general need for information and sensitivity to context.” Preston posits that
navigators use a vigilant, highly sensitive presidential style. Moreover, a president’s
expertise in foreign policy results in higher sensitivity to external constraints on policy
and a more thorough search for information and advice from relevant outside actors.
Preston also classifies Bush as an “administrator,” meaning that he has a low need and
desire for power and control. As such, administrators maintain an activist presidential
style, and they prefer that decision-making be more decentralized and collegial. Preston
also claims that administrators demand less control over their subordinates, preferring an
informal, less hierarchical advisory system that fosters greater participation.

Presidential decision-making is complex, often varying by president. Scholars
often examine the process by looking at two different aspects: presidential personalities
and formal advisory systems. Study of the president’s personality includes character traits
such as intellectual curiosity, attitudes toward management, and propensity for conflict. A
president’s self-awareness of his strengths and weaknesses can also play an important
role in determining how he governs. Understanding how and why a president acquires
information and advice also influences the process. Snow claims that President Reagan,
unlike his successor, lacked intellectual curiosity and had a disinclination to address the
complexities of policy problems. Moreover, he claims that Reagan’s “9 to 5 management style” required extensive delegation and reliance on subordinates to make decisions (22). Furthermore, the president’s desire to obtain information only through short briefs on essential issues suggests a minimalist cognitive style. While the examination of a president’s personality allows greater understanding of a specific president’s decision-making process, academia also attempts to categorize presidential advisory.

Writers use different names for similar advisory systems, but a few systems are commonly used in scholarly work. To be consistent, I will use Pfiffner and Snow’s terminology for the different systems.

The “neutral broker” or “honest broker” model refers to the presidential advisory system where in any important decision-making situation the advisor presents to the president the most important policy choices in a neutral way (17). The advisor represents the views of the advocates accurately and faithfully. Therefore, the president can act confidently, knowing that the advice does not favor one staffer or another.

Snow’s competitive model is another advisory system that relies on the free and open expression of diverse advice and analysis. Advisors both inside and outside the West Wing openly compete with one another to influence presidential policy-making. This model ensures that as many options as possible reach the president. Accordingly, “in practice, the model is anything but tidy. Multiple channels of communication to and from the president are tolerated, and a good deal of overlap in agency jurisdiction occurs.”

The third presidential advisory system, often used to describe President Eisenhower’s administration, is the formalistic model. In this system, an orderly decision-making process with structured procedures and formal, hierarchical lines of reporting are
essential. The model contrasts with the competitive model in that it discourages explicit competition and conflict among advisors and departments.

The final model of presidential advisory is the *collegial model*, where presidents try to bring together a team of key aides, advisors, and cabinet officers who will truly function as the president's team. Like the competitive model, the collegial approach stresses diversity in opinion and outlook, which creates competition among policy choices. However, group problem solving is also important, and advisors are expected to think of themselves more as members of the president's team – not advocates for their departments or agencies.

The end of Cold War and the events following September 11, 2001 renewed scholarly interest in presidential advisory. Particularly, academics began to look at the president’s decision to use military force.

Garofano examines pre-war presidential decision-making advisory theories. He rejects the concept of *objective control*, which dominated literature for roughly fifty years, as inaccurate and a hindrance to good policy choices (11). Objective control describes the practice of civilian leaders creating policy goals and delegating the methods and execution of wartime duties to the military. Garofano calls for a new approach that more successfully fosters productive and informative debate among presidential advisors given recent national security conditions. He proposes an *open debate* approach, which sets civilian and military leaders as equals and demands high-level discussion that includes non-political entities from many areas of expertise. However, similar to the work on the honest broker model, the open debate model still lacks case study analysis, which would provide clues into its applicability in real-life presidential decisions.
Burke explores the presidential advisory system theory of the “honest or neutral broker” in the context of former National Security Advisor Condoleezza Rice’s role in three critical decisions in President George W. Bush’s first term (1). The events analyzed are: (1) the decisions made following the attacks on September 11 and the decision to invade Afghanistan; (2) discussions that led to the invasion of Iraq; and (3) deliberations regarding the stabilization and rebuilding of postwar Iraq. Burke finds that the role of the honest broker decreased over time. He attributed the role’s decline to organization and management problems in addition to its incompatibility with the president’s support and expectations of the honest broker position. While the case study is helpful, it does not offer any final judgment of the president’s decisions resulting from his relationship with National Security Advisor Rice.

Pfiffner claims that there is widespread agreement among academics that the honest broker model of presidential advisory systems is the most effective way to ensure that the President of the United States receives a thorough delineation of policy choices and their consequences without compromising efficiency. Although his argument is persuasive, research on the application of the other methods described is considerably lacking. A more thorough analysis of recent presidential administrations and their advisory systems will reveal how accurate academics are in describing the decision-making process and how effective these models were in real policy discussions.

Presidential decision-making is often too complex to compartmentalize into theoretical models. While historical case studies reveal which advisory systems may be more successful in achieving sound policy choices, presidents are ultimately their own individuals. Their personalities are a dominating force in the West Wing, and a
president’s desire for cohesion among his top advisors can lead to decision-making on incomplete information. Still, it is clear that a president makes his soundest decisions when receiving as many differing viewpoints as possible in an impartial setting. Readers should be aware, however, that the abundance of historical case studies might yield patterns inconsistent with the behaviors of the current or past administrations. Further case study analysis is needed to either reject or uphold the aforementioned notions in light of the September 11 attacks and the events following it.

Using the context constructed by scholars throughout the twentieth century, I will study the presidential advisory system of George H.W. Bush. I will use a case study of the invasion of Panama. Finally, I will use the studies on presidential advisory systems to examine their applicability to issues of national security and defense, which will assist me in defining the scope of presidential advisory systems in past decision-making.

**Methods of Analysis**

1. *Case Study*

   My method of research is historical document analysis of a national security crisis in Latin America. The case study I plan on using is the invasion of Panama. I chose this case study because most twentieth century administrations prior to Bush have been widely studied. The Presidential Papers of the Bush administration were released within the last few years. The papers of Bill Clinton and George W. Bush have yet to be fully released. Therefore, the Bush administration is a logical presidency to analyze. For consistent comparison and analysis, I will look at the role of the following presidential staff: members of the National Security Council, White House Chief of Staff, and any
advisor with the title, “Special Assistant to the President.” I chose these staffers because they have the most access to the president, especially during a national security situation.

My primary method of analysis will utilize a historical case study to examine decision-making behavior of past presidents. From this, I will create a dataset of the communications regarding national security and defense decisions, noting if there was disagreement among advisors and who influenced the president’s decision.

II. Categories of analysis

In order to organize all the sources gathered, I sorted them based on the following criteria: primary source, theory of presidential advisory systems, role of presidential advisors, and the invasion of Panama. This categorization allows me to both flag the sections of large volumes for the specific passages that are useful to my research in addition to providing an organized way of documenting my findings.

Theories of presidential advisory systems are typically not primary sources. I am looking for commentary about the role/power of the presidency, the cabinet, and the executive branch. Moreover, I am searching for references to “presidential advisory systems,” which is a word often used in academic and political science writing. Some of theories I am looking for include the “neutral/honest broker” approach, the “open debate” model, the competitive model, formalistic model, and collegial model. Although I do not always expect to find direct references to these terms, I will look for ideas and concepts that capture the same spirit of the aforementioned advisory systems.

Unlike theories of presidential advisory, information on the role of specific presidential advisors can be found via primary sources. In particular, I am looking for references to the advisors that were most influential during the Bush administration. The
advisors I am focusing on are the White House Chief of Staff, members of the National Security Council, the NSC deputies’ committee, and White House staff with the title “Special Assistant to the President.” These positions have the most influence over the president. Specifically, I am searching for the information about the men and women in these positions such as how long they have served the president, their personal relationship with the president, their relationship with other senior staff, and what influence they had over the president. Once I find these references, I will focus on observations and opinions in telephone conversation transcripts, meeting notes, interview and roundtable transcripts, and personal memoirs or biographies.

III. Documents used for historical document analysis

My research will consist of books, documents recovered from presidential libraries and the National Archives.

The books used can be further broken down to primary sources, books on theory, and history books. Primary sources come from compilations of declassified government documents, congressional hearing testimony, memoirs, and pieces written by former presidential advisors and journalists. The declassified government documents consist of secret correspondence between White House staff, the president, and certain members of the National Security Council. When combing through the collections dating back to the invasion of Panama, I will pay particular attention to instances where advisors and NSC members disagree with one another and how the discussion plays out when making recommendations to the president. When reading memoirs, I will look for specific references to the decision-making process during the invasion of Panama. Moreover, I will look for references to senior White House staff. Naturally, the works of former
senior advisors to the president (and the president himself) give insight into their specific role and their relationship with other members of the president’s inner circle.

While learning about the interpersonal relationships of key staffers is important in understanding their effects on policy decisions, developing a strong foundational understanding of the role that advisors and staff in a political science/theoretical aspect is essential. Books on theory allow me to put what I find into greater context, revealing nuances that may have gone unnoticed. I will use the history books to learn about the case I am researching. This helps me place everything I read into the greater context of what happened in Panama.

To discover how the president acted in the past, I need to conduct thorough archival research by combing through presidential records and correspondence. The most important component of my research is the information gathered from George H.W. Bush’s Presidential Library and the National Archives. There are tens of millions of pages available, so I will use my findings from other research to narrow the scope of presidential papers I examine. Again, I will only look at documents dating back to the case, searching for the aforementioned references to decisions and senior White House staff. In the event that the documents I desire are redacted for national security purposes, I will keep track of the redaction form, itself, because it still indicates that a communication took place.

*Senior Bush Advisors and their formal functions*

The Assistant to President and Chief of Staff, as the title implies, serves as both an advisor and a manager. He is the highest-ranking official within the Executive Office of the President. With an office adjoining to the Oval Office, the chief of staff is one of
the president’s closest advisors. The chief of staff also manages and oversees the entire White House staff. Therefore, he controls the flow of people and information in and out of the Oval Office. As the president’s “gatekeeper,” the chief of staff is the de facto protector of the president’s interests, often negotiating with Congress on his behalf. Despite these formal roles, the amount of influence he wields varies for each president. John Sununu served as President Bush’s first chief of staff. Jim Baker and Dick Cheney also served in that capacity during previous administrations.

The Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs is the chief advisor to the president on national security issues. This person serves on the National Security Council and chairs it when the president is absent. The national security advisor's office is located in the West Wing. He or she is supported by a staff that produces research, briefings, and intelligence for the NSA to review and present to the National Security Council and the President of the United States. The president chooses his national security advisor, and unlike most appointments, he does not need Senate confirmation. As such, one of his/her key responsibilities is to offer independent advice. The responsibilities and influence of the national security advisor vary from administration to administration. Brent Scowcroft served as President Bush’s national security advisor.

The Assistant to the President and Deputy National Security Advisor is a member of the Executive Office of the President of the United States, serving as deputy to the president's national security advisor. Among other roles, the deputy national security advisor chairs the NSC deputies’ committee. Robert (Bob) Gates worked as Scowcroft’s deputy.
According to the White House website, the primary responsibility of the Vice President of the United States is “to be ready at a moment's notice to assume the Presidency if the president is unable to perform his duties.” This would only occur in one of the following events: the president's death, resignation, temporary incapacitation (i.e. under anesthesia), or if the vice president and a majority of the cabinet feel the president is not able “to discharge the duties of the presidency.” The vice president also serves as President of the United States Senate, but only votes in the case of a tie. Dan Quayle was Bush’s vice president.

The secretary of state is the president's chief foreign policy advisor. The secretary carries out the president's foreign policies through the State Department and the Foreign Service of the United States. James (Jim) Baker served in this capacity.

The secretary of defense is one of the principal defense policy advisors to the president and is responsible for “the formulation of general defense policy and policy related to all matters of direct concern to the Department of Defense, and for the execution of approved policy.” The secretary exercises authority, direction, and control over the Department of Defense. Moreover, he is a member of the president's cabinet and of the National Security Council. Although Bush initially nominated Senator John Tower (R-TX) for the job, he was unable to secure Senate confirmation. Richard (Dick) Cheney was Bush’s next choice, earning swift Senate approval.

The Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff is one of the principal military advisors to the president, the NSC, and the secretary of defense. The Joint Chiefs of Staff is led by the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and its membership is comprised of the chairman, the vice chairman, the Chief of Staff of the U.S. Army, the Chief of Naval
Operations, the Chief of Staff of the U.S. Air Force, and the Commandant of the Marine Corps. The Joint Chiefs of Staff constitute the immediate military staff of the secretary of defense and operate under the authority of the chairman. Colin Powell was chairman of the Joint Chiefs during the invasion of Panama and its preceding events.

**Significance**

If answered sufficiently, the questions I seek to answer will reveal how President Bush made decisions on issues of national security and defense and who affected his decisions. With this understanding, the public can place controversial decisions, such as the invasion of Iraq, into greater context of the dynamics of presidential advisory. Furthermore, this research can assist presidents and their senior staff in addressing conflicts among advisors, especially those within the NSC. If the findings are appropriately used, decision-making will be more thorough, un-biased, and thoughtful, hopefully yielding better outcomes on matters that affect millions of lives.

**Operation Just Cause – the Narrative**

**U.S.-Panama Relations – A Historical Context**

Historians note that the relationship between the United States and Panama began in 1903 when President Theodore Roosevelt ordered the U.S. Navy to take up positions off the Panamanian coast in support of the November revolt to gain independence from Columbia. The U.S. recognized the successful junta as the official government of Panama days later. As compensation for the American government’s support, the two countries signed Hay-Bunau-Varilla Treaty, which gave the U.S. the right to construct, use, and defend a canal across Panama (25). Furthermore, Panama granted the U.S. a strip of land ten miles wide along the length of the canal route. Effectively, the U.S. would now
occupy and control the Canal Zone, which bisected Panama and allowed ships to travel from the Atlantic Ocean to the Pacific Ocean without having to go around the entire continent of South America. In 1904, a provision in the Panamanian constitution gave the U.S. the right to intervene in Panama in order to guarantee its sovereignty, and when necessary, restore order. The Roosevelt Corollary to the Monroe Doctrine was at work – Panama became a de-facto U.S. protectorate.

Upon its completion, the Panama Canal became of vital importance to U.S. strategy in the region. For the people of Panama, the canal had its drawbacks. Although the economic benefits of the new waterway spawned the emergence of a middle class and civil service, it also filled the coffers of elite oligarchs. Moreover, thousands of U.S. troops and citizens lived in Panama and were exempt from local jurisdiction. As a result, nationalist movements gained popularity and resentment lingered. These sentiments fostered the ascendancy of Harmodio and Arnulfo Arias, who caustically criticized the Panamanian oligarchy and its acceptance of the U.S. occupiers, to political power. In 1932, the election of Harmodio Arias to the presidency paved the way for the Hull-Alfaro Treaty in 1936, which officially ended Panama’s status as a protectorate. His brother’s election to the same post three times, starting in 1940, illustrates the popularity of the “panameñismo” movement (25).

Panamanian nationalists periodically demonstrated in the streets against the U.S. presence and the Canal Zone. The most violent riot took place in 1964 over flying the Panamanian flag at an American high school. The violence lasted for three days, resulting in over 24 deaths and hundreds of injuries. Although the government used the riot to push
for redrafting the canal treaties, the event also deepened societal divisions among the poor and the oligarchy. Arnulfo Arias used this social discontent to rise to the presidency in 1968. However, his third term, like his previous stints, was short lived – the Panama National Guard deposed Arias after five months when he tried to remove two senior officers. Colonel Omar Torrijos, the PNG commander, took control of the government. He became a general, and in 1972, a Panamanian constitutional assembly made him head-of-state and “Maximum Leader of the Panamanian Revolution,” giving him expansive civil and military power (25).

On September 7, 1977, President Jimmy Carter and Omar Torrijos signed the Torrijos-Carter Treaties, setting in motion the process of handing the Panama Canal over to Panamanian control. The first treaty gave Panama immediate jurisdiction over territory in the Canal Zone, but allowed the U.S. manage and oversee the canal’s operation until December 31, 1999, when the U.S. agreed to end its military presence. The second treaty committed both parties to keeping the canal neutral in addition to laying out further details of the U.S. withdrawal (7). The treaties were controversial in the U.S., only passing in the Senate by one vote. By October 1, 1979, the Canal Zone was officially repealed, with Panama controlling 64 percent of the territory, the independent Panama Canal Commission (PCC) 18 percent, and the remainder under U.S. control (25). Torrijos’ reign ended when he died in a plane crash on July 31, 1981. Lt. Col. Manuel Noriega, his loyal chief of military intelligence, succeeded Torrijos as commander of the PNG. Two years later, Noriega, now a general, created the PDF, the umbrella organization for the army, the navy, the air force, and the PNG, thereby centralizing his control over the military (and thus the country).
Although Noriega’s governing tactics were far less democratic than the U.S. desired, the general believed his relationship with Washington was strong enough that they would overlook the matter. During his rule, Noriega gave the U.S. military a great deal of autonomy in its activities within Panama and allowed the U.S. to operate several intelligence-gathering facilities. Noriega also provided the U.S. with intelligence on Latin American insurgencies and on Cuban activities in the area. Relations with General Manuel Noriega began in 1952 when he was recruited by U.S. military intelligence. He served as a U.S. intelligence asset and was on the Central Intelligence Agency’s (CIA) payroll until the early 1980s (7).

During the mid 1960s, Noriega participated in intelligence training courses led by U.S. military in the Canal Zone and at Fort Bragg, NC. Some conspirators claim that Noriega’s relationship with George H.W. Bush began in the 1970s, when Bush was Director of the CIA, but evidence of this has not surfaced. General Noriega received $100,000 each year for his work, which included sabotaging the forces of the socialist government in Nicaragua, the Sandinistas, and the Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front guerilla revolutionaries in El Salvador. Although he worked with the DEA during the Reagan administration to restrict illegal drug shipments, he was involved in the trade, himself, often turning in subordinates and competitors as “demonstrations” of his cooperation. Moreover, U.S. intelligence knew that Noriega provided Cuba with information on its operations. Despite these finding, DOD, State, the CIA, and DEA overlooked them – Noriega was an important asset in Latin America, especially during the ensuing conflict in Nicaragua (25).
Relations with the U.S. began to sour in 1986, when the press began to report on the brutalities of Noriega’s regime, his ties to drug trafficking, and allegations that he murdered an outspoken political opponent. In the spring of 1986, the U.S. began two investigations on Noriega. On February 4, 1988, two federal grand juries indicted Noriega on charges of drug trafficking. Reagan subsequently sent reinforcements to Panama, which intensified the situation. The U.S. wanted Noriega to step down from power, but its efforts were unsuccessful.

In March 1989, Noriega’s forces resisted an attempted coup. During the national elections in May of 1989, an alliance of opposition parties to Noriega’s regime counted results from the country’s election precincts before they were sent to the district centers. Their tally showed their candidate, Guillermo Endara, defeating Carlos Duque, the candidate of the pro-Noriega coalition, by margin of nearly 3-to-1. The following day, a band of Noriega loyalists physically beat Endara. General Noriega declared the election null and void – maintaining power by force and making him unpopular among the populace. In addition to its claim to victory, the regime insisted that the U.S.-backed opposition parties caused the election irregularities (25). President Bush called on Noriega to honor the will of the Panamanian people and allow Endara to take office, but he refused.

In October 1989, Noriega thwarted a second coup attempt led by Major Moisés Giroldi. Significant public pressure mounted on President Bush, who resisted calls to interfere in Panama. The president declared that the U.S. would not negotiate with a known drug-trafficker and denied having previous knowledge of Noriega’s involvement
with the drug trade prior to his future indictment. The Bush administration alleged that Noriega’s forces had shot and killed an unarmed American serviceman, wounded another, arrested and brutally beat a third American officer and then harshly interrogated his wife, threatening her with sexual abuse. The U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations Security Council, Thomas R. Pickering, claimed these incidents were sufficient grounds for invasion as an act of self-defense within Article 51 of the UN charter (20).

Key decisions – a timeline

- October 3, 1989: Noriega survives coup d’état and executes plotters.
- December 15, 1989: PDF forces kill a U.S. Marine Corps lieutenant at a PDF roadblock and then arrest and assault a U.S. Navy lieutenant and his wife who witnessed the attack.
- December 17, 1989: President Bush authorizes Operation Just Cause to remove Noriega from power and to destroy the PDF.
- January 3, 1990: Noriega surrenders to U.S. forces.

Leadership Style and Advisory System of President George H.W. Bush

The experienced career of President Bush had a predictable and significant impact on his decision-making process. Before his ascension to the presidency, George Bush held several government positions: Vice President of the United States, Director of
Central Intelligence, UN Ambassador, U.S. Ambassador to China, and a member of the House of Representatives. As such, President Bush is widely considered a foreign policy expert. Moreover, Bush’s years of service as President Reagan’s number one and his close friendship with Reagan’s former chief of staff, James Baker, exposed him to presidential management, thereby shaping the way he organized his presidency (15).

Although many of President Bush’s senior appointments were longtime friends and political associates, the Washington establishment held them all in high regard. The competence held by Bush’s appointees and the trust amongst them provided the cabinet and senior staff with greater freedom to direct and control policy decisions (15). The president’s foreign policy team, which included National Security Advisor Brent Scowcroft, Defense Secretary Dick Cheney, Secretary of State Jim Baker, and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Colin Powell, were a cohesive group of individuals with a history of experience working together in previous administrations. The collegiality that characterized the White House - cabinet relationship added a great deal of stability to the president’s foreign policy and national security advisory system. With many friends and close associates on his cabinet and staff, President Bush, unlike his predecessor, wanted to be included in policy debates. Although the president’s chief of staff, John Sununu, attempted to control access to the president, he was not able to stand between Bush and his friends within the administration (15).

*The Scowcroft Model of the NSC*

As one of his first appointments as president-elect, Bush named Brent Scowcroft to be the new national security advisor. It was a well-received choice: not only had Scowcroft served as the national security advisor to President Ford, he also led the
investigation of Reagan’s NSC and was well versed in its failures. As such, Scowcroft went to work immediately on building an NSC that served the president more effectively. The “Scowcroft Model” of the NSC had three levels. The first level was the principals’ committee, which was chaired by the national security advisor. The group served as a forum to bring all the department and agency heads together in a productive and cooperative manner (2). Looking back on his time in the Bush White House, Scowcroft believe that the principals’ committee had “special merit because the principals were able to agree frequently. . . . What it did was save a lot of the president’s time.” (2)

The second level was the deputies’ committee, which was comprised of the deputies of the principals. Scowcroft’s deputy, Bob Gates, chaired it. The deputies’ committee met more often than the principals’ committee did, sometimes every day. Its main goal was to narrow down policy options to be sent up the chain of command to the president’s senior national security team. Moreover, the committee served to fill the gap between policy development, which often took place at the middle level of government, and decision-making, which took place at the top level of government (2). The deputies’ committee was successful at this because the deputies retained the trust of both their superiors and subordinates. The third level was comprised of six regional Policy Coordinating Committees (PCCs) and four functional area PCCs, which developed and analyzed policies (5).

Before the model’s implementation, Scowcroft sent his proposed NSC reform to Jim Baker, the president’s nominee for secretary of state, and Texas Republican Senator John Tower, Bush’s first pick for defense secretary. Baker was skeptical of the new NSC model at first, but Scowcroft persuaded him to go along with the plan. Moreover, Baker
did not object to Scowcroft chairing the principals’ committee when the president was absent. In a phone interview with John Burke, Scowcroft recalls that even though “I was junior to them all, there wasn’t that kind of problem. It worked beautifully.” (2)

The Bush National Security Council: the Gang of Eight

In the aftermath of the Iran-Contra scandal, President Bush’s NSC was the first to be newly formed after the Tower Commission. To manage his NSC, the president appointed Brent Scowcroft, a former national security advisor and member of Reagan’s independent NSC review board, to be his national security advisor. As a result, the Bush’s NSA was more influential than Reagan’s NSA (15).

President Bush relied on an inner circle of senior advisors and NSC members for policy-making. The group, often referred to as the “gang of eight,” included President Bush, Vice President Dan Quayle, Chief of Staff John Sununu, APNSA Brent Scowcroft, Deputy APDNSA Robert Gates, Secretary of State James Baker, Defense Secretary Dick Cheney, and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Colin Powell. The group often met informally in the Oval Office – an environment that allowed advisors to discuss policy decisions openly and honestly (19).

The revitalized institutional strength of Bush’s NSC is evident in his reliance on the principals’ committee and deputies’ committee to make most policy decisions and implement them (15). Still, General Scowcroft believed that “While we continued to hold formal NSC meetings, an informal group became the rule rather than the exception for practical decision-making.” In both settings, Scowcroft served as President Bush’s “honest broker.” In other words, he played the role of “mediator, soother, and the occasional” damage controller (19).
Collegiality is a word often used by Bush insiders to characterize both the formal and informal interactions amongst senior staff and cabinet officials. One former NSC staffer quipped that when “talking about cabinet-level people who get together and talk and deal with each other as adults, with a president who is presiding - this is the one time in the four [administrations I worked in where] I observed that it worked.” (10) Some attribute this environment to previous experiences working together. For example, Defense Secretary Cheney worked with President Bush, Secretary Baker, and General Scowcroft during the Ford administration. Their “experience, which tended to be a happy one, made them able to start in a way that many teams are unable to.” (10)

The non-competitive, friendly nature of the NSC trickled down to the deputies and lower ranking officials. One former official noted that, “The work-to-bullshit ratio was better in this administration than any other I've ever seen, and less of your calories went into the bureaucratic game in this administration.” (10) Moreover, many former staffers claim that most of the “real” work was done informally. As a result, personal agendas and egos did not affect the group’s working relationship. This existed at both lower and senior levels.

The president was not absent from these gatherings. When President Bush learned that senior advisors were meeting down the hall without him, he told General Scowcroft that he wanted to be involved in discussions. Therefore, meetings of senior advisors usually included the president. The times when the president was not in attendance, Scowcroft would immediately report the outcomes to him.

When issues did arise amongst Baker and other advisors, the secretary of state was prepared to go the president. Brent Scowcroft knew this and wanted to avoid it. The
NSC was also characterized by a lack of stark ideological disagreements, which mitigated potential conflicts from the beginning. General Scowcroft was reserved not only about operations but also about pushing policy. He had views and subtly introduced them, but he did not view the NSC as a platform from which to advocate one’s opinion. He made this clear to others and expected them to act accordingly. Members could “nudge” policies and introduce ideas, but nothing further. As a result, the NSC was not threatening to anybody. Senior advisors and cabinet officials around the periphery were not threatened by each other (10).

Undoubtedly, the Bush administration was unique. The president was engaged, more consistently and systematically than his predecessor was, and he wanted a collegial style. Furthermore, homogenous presidential personnel reflected what the president wanted in terms of style – the manner, the acrimony, the degree of collegiality. John Sununu’s personality was such that he would want to be participatory in almost every single policy debate, even the ones where he lacked expertise. Therefore, he was often not welcomed at meetings between Scowcroft, Baker, and Cheney (10). Presidents “calibrate” the people around them with respect to where they think they are going to make their greatest contribution. John Sununu’s best fit was not in the realm of foreign policy. Scowcroft worked hard to be inclusive with Sununu. At that time, the Bush administration was the only administration that had a secretary of state and a secretary of defense, both of whom had been White House chiefs of staff (10). Consequently, Sununu was in a difficult position.

The system worked because of Brent Scowcroft, who brought strength to the heart of the NSC. He believed that it was possible to be effective with a strong center, to be
able to hold meetings and make things happen without any one of the principals, or their bureaucracies, or their immediate staffs feeling threatened by it (10). Scowcroft first served in a management capacity to legitimize his role. Many believe he did this very well. At the same time, he was also willing to push his own views if he thought the group consensus was wrong or if no one voiced what he viewed as the correct approach. He cautiously gave his opinion, making sure that he was not persuasive enough to render him a non-neutral honest broker. President Bush and his top advisors shared remarkable respect, affection, and regard for Brent Scowcroft. They did not view him as just a “dispenser of due process” (10). They viewed him as someone who had ideas, who actively exercised quality control of decisions, who added to the discussion when it seemed appropriate. His coworkers viewed him as a model that other national security advisors should follow.

Robert Gates helped make the Scowcroft system work because his strengths complemented some of Scowcroft’s weaknesses. Gates had the “capacity to process paper at a high level of quality control.” (10) This complemented Scowcroft in many ways, because he was almost at the level of the president in terms of the breadth of vision he had to have and the things that were reaching him. In several respects, he “bore the burden of decision.” (10)

Despite the effectiveness of the NSC, the president’s closest, and therefore most influential, advisors were General Scowcroft and Secretary Baker. As Bush’s presidential campaign manager and close friend from the Reagan administration, Baker’s influence is predictable and expected. As such, Baker was very comfortable with his relationship with Bush and did not exhibit some of the paranoia that affected previous secretaries of state.
(10). The same cannot be said for General Scowcroft, who had not developed a strong relationship with the president. Still, former NSC staffers maintain that Scowcroft was “very secure” in his relationship with President Bush. In fact, some say their relationship “if anything, [was] even closer than Baker's to the point that there were times at which I thought Bush and Scowcroft were almost like two dimensions of one person.” (10) The two co-wrote Bush’s memoirs, something never done before. In his book, All the best, George Bush, the former president recalls, “When I became President, Brent was my first and only choice to head the NSC. He handled that job with total dedication and skill. [He is] one of my closest friends and today my closest advisor on all things.” (3) Experts and former national security advisors alike largely view Scowcroft as the archetypical national security advisor.

The Giroldi Affair

On October 2, 1989, SOUTHCOM commanders received word that a planned coup attempt was set to take place the next day in Panama City led by PDF Major Moisés Giroldi Vera. In the early hours of that morning, the commanding officer in the region, Gen. Max Thurman phoned Colin Powell, the newly sworn in Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (21). Giroldi wanted the U.S. to support his efforts and block three main roads to the PDF headquarters, La Comandancia. Thurman and Powell believed that there was insufficient information to commit to Giroldi. After hanging up with Thurman, Powell phoned Defense Secretary Cheney and communicated his opinion. Cheney agreed and placed a call to Brent Scowcroft, who concurred and took the briefing along with the unanimous recommendation to President Bush (18).
At 9:00 AM, the president convened a meeting with his advisors in the Oval Office. After thirty minutes, the president stopped the meeting and dismissed everyone but his senior advisors. Discussion continued, and the president was not convinced to support the coup attempt fully (25). It was Powell’s first national security situation and meeting with Bush’s national security team since assuming his new position. He “was surprised that crucial deliberations were taking place with no preparation or follow-up planned. The Oval Office debate was a free-swinging affair.” He goes on to describe John Sununu, the chief of staff, as “the freest swinger of all” who “did not suffer fools gladly, or smart folks either, for that matter. He cut people off in mid-sentence and pursued his pet tangents.” (18) During the entirety of the debate, the president sat quietly and listened. Bush wanted to remove Noriega.

The next day, shortly before 8:00 AM, Gen. Cisneros, Commander of the U.S. Army South, received word of disturbances within the Comandancia, but he was still unsure the coup began. At 9:40 AM, Bob Gates met with the president to brief him on the developments. Scowcroft, Baker, and Sununu joined a few minutes later, but it was a hurried meeting due to the arrival of the Mexican president. Cheney was absent – he was giving his Soviet counterpart a tour of the Gettysburg battlefield. Around noon, President Bush reconvened a meeting with his senior advisors in the Oval Office for 40 minutes to continue discussion. They continued deliberations at 1:45 PM, but reports from the ground did little to convince the president to support the coup. The coup ended later that day, and Giroldi was subsequently executed (25).

The press criticized the administration for not doing more to support the coup attempt. Even fellow Republicans questioned the White House’s decision. Still, the
president and his team stood by the decision. Although tense, the situation in Panama remained stable until December.

*Operation Just Cause – Removing Noriega*

On Saturday December 16, Marine First Lieutenant Robert Paz drove with three other officers to have dinner in Panama City. They got lost and found themselves at a PDF checkpoint near the Comandancia. Upon noticing the arrival of the Marine officers, AK-47 bearing PDF soldiers began shouting threats and attempted to drag them out of their vehicle. The Marines decided to drive away, prompting one of the PDF soldiers to open fire on the car. Shots hit the vehicle, with one round striking and killing Lt. Paz. Navy Lieutenant Adam Curtis and his wife, Bonnie, were also stopped at the checkpoint and witnessed the shooting. They were promptly taken into custody by the PDF. Soldiers brutally beat Lt. Curtis, and they threatened and harassed his wife. Hours later, they were released (21).

The White House received word of the incident late that evening. President Bush called in his senior advisors at 3:30 PM the next afternoon. The meeting took place in the White House residence and was attended by Dick Cheney, Jim Baker, Brent Scowcroft, Bob Gates, and Marline Fitzwater, the Press Secretary. Chief of Staff John Sununu was not present. Pensively sitting back in his chair and donning his “Merry Christmas” socks, the president looked on as his national security team debated how to react (21).

General Powell laid out the Pentagon’s plans, first titled Operation Blue Spoon, to invade Panama and remove Noriega from power. Scowcroft jumped in, saying, “There are going to be casualties. People are going to die.” This annoyed Powell, who describes Scowcroft’s manner as having “an irritating edge that took some getting used to, but his
intelligence was obvious and his intent admirable. He wanted to leave the president with no comfortable illusions.” Bush nodded his head and debate continued (18).

Secretary Baker believed that the United States was obligated to intervene, and therefore, he thought the military should interfere to depose Noriega. Scowcroft broke in again: “Suppose we go through all this and we don’t nab Noriega? That makes me nervous.” Powell admitted that it was possible, further stating that it would be particularly difficult to find him if he escaped into the jungle. Scowcroft asked again about casualties – he wanted numbers. Powell could not provide specific numbers, but he reiterated that in addition to significant damage to the area, the invasion would leave both military and civilian casualties. Then the president chimed in and pushed Powell on numbers again. Powell responded, “Mr. President, I can’t be more specific.” Discussions continued until the president got up from his chair. He had made his decision: “Okay let’s do it.” D-Day was set for the early morning of December 20 (18). In his address to the nation, President Bush cited four reasons as his administration’s justification for invading Panama:

1. **Protect Americans in Panama** - In addition to the events of December 16, Bush claimed Noriega threatened the lives of all 35,000 Americans residing in Panama. Given that Noriega declared a state of war against the U.S., the administration needed to protect its citizens.

2. **Defend human rights and democracy in Panama** – Noriega and the PDF were suspected in multiple homicides of political rivals and were often accused of torturing and abusing those they (illegally) detained.
3. **Root out drug trafficking** – Aside from the outside warrant for Noriega’s arrest on drug charges, Panama had become the epicenter for drug money laundering and a key transfer point for trafficking to the United States.

4. **Protect the Torrijos-Carter Treaties** – Many believed that Noriega threatened the neutrality of the Panama Canal and that the U.S. had the right under the treaties to take actions to protect the Panama Canal. (4)

Although these were the president’s official reasons for authorizing Operation Just Cause, many within the media and academia claim that domestic politics were the primary reasons. They believe that a desire to silence the criticism of Bush’s foreign policy following the failed coup attempt motivated the administration’s actions. Nevertheless, there is no evidence to prove this.

On the morning Operation Blue Spoon (which was renamed Just Cause), Cheney and Powell set up a command post in the Pentagon. Scowcroft remained with the president at the White House and received hourly updates from Cheney on a secure line. To Powell, the chain of command was clear: the White House spoke with Cheney, Cheney talked to Powell, Powell to Thurman, and Thurman to General Carl Stiner. Operation Just Cause commenced and troops moved in. Hours into the invasion, Powell received a call from Brent Scowcroft. The press was asking questions about the still intact main radio tower in Panama City because it was broadcasting pro-Noriega propaganda recordings. Powell told the national security advisor that there were no troops in the area near the radio tower. In addition, Powell argued, “We did not want to take down the tower anyway, because President Endara would need it in a day or so.” (18)
Scowcroft refused – the pressure from the press was too great – the tower had to be taken out. The order was sent through the chain of command and the radio tower was destroyed. Although top brass executed the order, they felt it was a pointless mission and an example of “management from the sidelines.” (18)

Back at the Pentagon, Powell received another phone call from Brent Scowcroft. Several correspondents were trapped in the Panama City Marriott Hotel. Scowcroft wanted to have troops rescue them, but Powell disagreed. “They’re in no danger,” he argued, “I’ve checked the situation. They’re safe in the basement of the hotel. The fighting will soon sweep past them.” (18) Scowcroft seemed satisfied. However, he called again minutes later. Network executives and bureau chiefs placed a great deal of pressure on the White House to rescue their reporters. Scowcroft pushed, again, for a rescue effort. Likewise, Powell pushed back: “We shouldn’t do anything,” further adding, “We’ve got a perfectly competent commander on the ground. He’s got a plan and it’s working.” (18) The chairman further told Scowcroft that more than 35,000 other Americans also remained in Panama – it was equally important to protect them all. The phone call ended, but minutes later, Cheney phoned Powell. The White House wanted a rescue mission, no discussions. Powell acquiesced, but told Cheney that he “did not want to pass along any more such orders.” Cheney called Scowcroft and “asked him not to issue any more orders from the sidelines.” (18) The military successfully carried out the rescue, despite a few injuries and the death of a foreign journalist.

Although Scowcroft’s insistence on casualty estimates and his orders to take out the radio tower and rescue the journalists irritated the military establishment, the disagreements point to the importance of placing decision-making within the context of
the current political climate. The administration was strongly criticized for not supporting the October coup attempt. It made Bush look weak, especially to those who viewed him as the successor and torchbearer of Reagan’s legacy. Allowing Noriega propaganda to continue to broadcast by not destroying the enemy’s central means of communication could be seen as a sign of weakness and poor strategy. With this in mind, Scowcroft ordered the military to rescue the reporters to prevent the invasion from being labeled a half-hearted effort. After all, the people trapped in the Marriott were the ones reporting on the invasion.

Operation Just Cause proceeded and successfully eliminated PDF forces, securing approaches to Panama City. Noriega was on the run, and on December 24, sought refuge in the Papal Nunciatura in Panama City. The military defeated the PDF and re-installed the democratically elected President Endara, but they had not captured Noriega. The president insisted that he be detained and brought to the U.S. to face trial. Although Noriega was protected inside the Papal Nunciatura, the military camped outside the building, blasting rock-and-roll music, a genre Noriega was rumored to have strongly disliked. Finally, on January 3, 1990, General Manuel Noriega surrendered to U.S. forces. (21)

**Conclusions**

*Brent Scowcroft: the most influential advisor during Operation Just Cause*

President Bush said it himself: Brent Scowcroft was his closest advisor. His importance in the administration was two-pronged. The first is his success in serving as an honest broker, and the second, corroborating the conclusions of many aforementioned scholars, is the impact of the Scowcroft model on the NSC’s ability to assess issues
effectively. While this is consistent with the claims that he was a significant player before, during, and after Operation Just Cause, both the testimony of others present during the incident and the redacted paper trail suggest he was the most influential advisor.

Three instances, in particular, hint at Scowcroft’s role during Operation Just Cause. The first is his persistence in trying to get casualty estimates from Powell. He asked the chairman twice, to Powell’s annoyance, and reiterated the point that people would die to the president. Minutes later, President Bush began pushing Powell on casualty numbers. The second instance was the White House’s insistence, to the Pentagon’s chagrin, that the military take out the radio tower in Panama City. The third example is the decision to rescue the trapped correspondents from the Panama City Marriott. If the decision had been left to Powell or Cheney, according to Powell’s recollection, neither the destruction of the tower nor the rescue mission would have been ordered. Despite the fact that the Cheney outranked Scowcroft, the national security advisor succeeded in his efforts.

A further piece of evidence implying Scowcroft was the most influential advisor the invasion of Panama is through the plethora of redacted White House and NSC communications on Panama. The George H.W. Bush Presidential Library keeps record of every document and communication during the forty-first president’s administration, but some records are withheld for national security purposes. In place of the actual memo or transcript, the library uses a redaction form, which includes information such as date, parties involved, and the subject. Between March 1989 and April 1991, there were 69 redacted communications on Panama. Brent Scowcroft was one of the parties involved in
54 of them, which represents more than 78 percent of all redacted Panama records (See Table Three). Although many meetings took place informally and were not recorded, Table Two illustrates that Scowcroft was involved in all the documented communications taking place the days before and after Operation Just Cause’s execution.

**Personal Relationships Matter**

As evidenced by the fact that Scowcroft, Baker, and Cheney served as the core advisors to President Bush and that they also worked with him in the past, an advisors relationship with the president affects his or her influence in the decision making process. This supports Nelson’s claim that relationships affect White House operations and presidential advisory. In one of his memoirs, President Bush dedicated the first few pages to brief descriptions about some of his advisors (3):

- Regarding Jim Baker: “Jim was perhaps my closest friend and confident during my political days. I trusted him completely. His appointment as secretary of state was the first I announced after being elected President. My doubles partner in tennis, my friend of close to forty years, Jim has served our country with great distinction and honor.”

- Regarding Lawrence Eagleburger: “A seasoned Foreign Service Officer, Larry served as Jim Baker's number two at the State Department, then followed Jim as Secretary of State. He was very close to Brent Scowcroft, my national security adviser, which made for smooth relations between the National Security Council (NSC) and State.”

- Regarding Robert Gates: “Bob was number two at the NSC until I named him director of Central Intelligence in 1991. Knowledgeable on world affairs and a man of highest integrity, Bob is now the interim dean of the George Bush School of Government and Public Service at Texas A&M University.”

- Regarding Brent Scowcroft: “When I became President, Brent was my first and only choice to head the NSC. He handled that job with total dedication and skill. One of my closest friends and today my closest adviser on all things, he and I coauthored the book *A World Transformed*, which was published by Knopf in 1998.”
Not only does the relationship between an advisor and the president influence decision-making, but the relationship amongst advisors matters as well. During the Reagan administration, Bush served as Vice President, Baker was Reagan’s chief of staff and treasury secretary, and Powell was the national security advisor. Gates served as the Deputy Director of the CIA. Under the Ford Administration, where Bush served as Director of the CIA, Scowcroft was the national security advisor. Another senior Bush advisor, Dick Cheney, was Donald Rumsfeld’s deputy, later succeeding him as Ford’s chief of staff. The various advisory roles and senior government offices held by members of the “gang of eight” suggest that many of them have worked together before. Although disagreements amongst them took place (for example, Cheney and Powell disagreed over Oliver North), the invasion of Panama was “a bonding process for the team.”(16)

The “Honest Broker” Model is most effective with a strong National Security Advisor

The various first-hand accounts of life within the Bush White House suggest that most of the senior level deliberation and decision-making took place during informal gatherings in the Oval Office. Scowcroft claims that the forum allowed for more “no holds barred” discussions. This placed additional importance on the national security advisor to be an effective honest broker to ensure all sides and views receive adequate presidential consideration.

During the discussion on whether to support the October coup attempt, Powell commented on what he perceived to be disorganization amongst the different agencies. Scowcroft agrees, and he implemented corrective measures within the NSC through the
creation of the deputies’ committee. Regarding the failed coup attempt in October 3,

Scowcroft’s views compliment Powell’s observation:

“We had an NSC meeting to analyze the situation, and the participants all had different stories. We were, in effect, operating blindly, because we had no coherent picture. It showed me the necessity of closer coordination within our government, so I set up the deputies’ committee that would meet periodically, once a week or as often as needed, to make sure that everybody in the NSC, all the principals, had the same information. That worked immensely well. It worked, also, with the issue of papers that everybody sends up. We let the deputies' committee look at them first. This worked, for me, very well. Again, it depends on the people involved.” (6)

Brent Scowcroft took the role of an honest broker to heart, and he organized the NSC into a more effective assessor of issues and decisions than previous councils. More importantly, Scowcroft understood that his ability to be an honest broker and the success of his NSC model were not mutually exclusive and independent. He recognized that the way he coordinated and informed his colleagues was a key part of successfully fulfilling his responsibilities (6). Scowcroft fits Snowe and Pfiffner’s notion of an honest broker perfectly.

Unlike the defense secretary or secretary of state, who met with the president once a week or so, Scowcroft saw the president every day, sometimes a dozen times or more. In order for members of the cabinet to feel that their views are being fairly represented to the president, they have to trust the national security advisor to do so. Scowcroft, himself, supports this notion:

“It’s always more exciting to be the adviser, but if you are not the honest broker, you don’t have the confidence of the NSC. If you don’t have their confidence, then the system doesn’t work, because they will go around you to get to the president. . . .So in order for the system to work, you first have to establish yourself in the confidence of your colleagues to convince them you are not going to pull fast ones on them. That means when you are in there with the president alone, which you are more than anybody else, that you will represent them fairly. . . .And after you have done that, then you are free to be an adviser.”(2)
Communication from the top down is also important. If a member of the NSC feels that national security advisor is withholding pertinent information, he or she will attempt to circumvent him/her and try to speak with the president directly. Presidents do not have time for so many one-on-one meetings in addition to their regular schedule. Scowcroft sees this as one of the main reason why “you have to establish yourself as truly an honest broker. That's impossible to do perfectly. But without it, the system - at least my system - breaks down.” Most experts of the U.S. presidency comment that Scowcroft was one of the most effective national security advisors to hold the position. His predecessor, Zbigniew Brzezinski, agrees (6).

*A Chief of Staff not well versed in foreign affairs enabled others to assert themselves*

As scholars note, the chief of staff is often the most important person in the decision making structure at the White House. However, expertise, personalities, and relationships can complicate this. It is no secret that John Sununu was not a foreign policy expert. Still, as Powell and others point out, he often vocalized his opinion. The president did not ignore Sununu, but in a room full of advisors who are experts in national security matters and close friends of the president, he was neither a valuable asset nor a strong influence during the deliberation surrounding the invasion of Panama. His absence at the meeting on the morning of December 17 further speaks to this. Moreover, despite the fact that the chief of staff is largely viewed as the gatekeeper of access to the president, “Sununu was not able to stand between Bush and his close associates within the administration.” (15) Brent Scowcroft, however, did fulfill this task.
### Appendix

Table 1 – Key Players (* Denotes member of the “Gang of Eight”)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Office</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>George H.W. Bush*</td>
<td>President of the United States</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dan Quayle*</td>
<td>Vice President of the United States</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Sununu*</td>
<td>Chief of Staff to the President</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brent Scowcroft*</td>
<td>National Security Advisor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robert Gates*</td>
<td>Deputy National Security Advisor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dick Cheney*</td>
<td>Secretary of Defense</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>James Baker*</td>
<td>Secretary of State</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gen. Colin Powell*</td>
<td>Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gen. Maxwell Thurman</td>
<td>Commanding General, SOUTHCOM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gen. Marc Cisneros</td>
<td>Commanding General, U.S. Army South</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gen. Carl Stiner</td>
<td>Commanding General, XVIII Airborne Corps</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table Two – Excerpt of Bush Presidential Library Redaction Forms regarding Panama

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key Dates</th>
<th>To</th>
<th>From</th>
<th>Subject</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12/16/1989</td>
<td>Scowcroft</td>
<td>Daniel Levin</td>
<td>Declaration of war by Panama</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12/17/1989</td>
<td>Scowcroft and Gates</td>
<td>W. Pryce</td>
<td>Incidents in Panama</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12/20/1989</td>
<td>Bush</td>
<td>Scowcroft</td>
<td>Intel and National Security Briefing (45 minutes)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12/21/1989</td>
<td>Bush</td>
<td>Scowcroft</td>
<td>Panama Letters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12/27/1989</td>
<td>Scowcroft</td>
<td>David Miller</td>
<td>Situation in Panama</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/2/1990</td>
<td>Scowcroft</td>
<td>E. Melby</td>
<td>Baker-Cheney-Scowcroft breakfast</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table Three – Redaction Forms regarding Panama from March 1989 to April 1991

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>To</th>
<th>From</th>
<th>Subject</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3/8/1989</td>
<td>Scowcroft</td>
<td>G.P. Hughes</td>
<td>President's Telephone Call</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3/9/1989</td>
<td>G.P. Hughes</td>
<td>M. Levitsky</td>
<td>President's Telephone Call</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3/13/1989</td>
<td>Gates</td>
<td>W. Pryce</td>
<td>Meeting on Panama</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4/19/1989</td>
<td>Scowcroft</td>
<td>D. Pacelli</td>
<td>Report on Panama</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4/25/1989</td>
<td>Scowcroft</td>
<td>J. Stapleton Roy</td>
<td>Panama Policy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4/28/1989</td>
<td>Scowcroft</td>
<td>Joseph Hagin</td>
<td>Approved Presidential Activity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5/5/1989</td>
<td>Bush</td>
<td>James Baker</td>
<td>Panama: Post Election Plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5/10/1989</td>
<td>Scowcroft</td>
<td>Nicholas Rostow</td>
<td>Panama</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5/11/1989</td>
<td>Scowcroft</td>
<td>Nicholas Rostow</td>
<td>Panama - War Powers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5/11/1989</td>
<td>Scowcroft</td>
<td>Nicholas Rostow</td>
<td>Panama - War Powers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5/12/1989</td>
<td>G.P. Hughes</td>
<td>T.E. Deal and D. Pacelli</td>
<td>Ideas on Policy Towards Panama</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5/12/1989</td>
<td>G.P. Hughes</td>
<td>D. Pacelli</td>
<td>Ideas on Policy Towards Panama</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5/15/1989</td>
<td>Scowcroft</td>
<td>J. Stapleton Roy</td>
<td>Presidential Telephone Call to Jamaican Prime Minister Manley on Panama</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5/15/1989</td>
<td>Scowcroft</td>
<td>J. Stapleton Roy</td>
<td>Panama - Call to President Virgilio Barco</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5/16/1989</td>
<td>Scowcroft</td>
<td>D. Pacelli</td>
<td>Points to be Made for Telephone Calls to Columbian President Barco and Endara of Panama</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Description</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>---------------</td>
<td>---------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5/16/1989</td>
<td>Scowcroft</td>
<td>D. Pacelli</td>
<td>White House Statement on the President's Telephone Call to Guillermo Endara</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5/22/1989</td>
<td>Bush</td>
<td>James Cicconi</td>
<td>Reply letter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6/7/1989</td>
<td>Scowcroft</td>
<td>W. Pryce</td>
<td>Presidential Telephone Call to Guillermo Endara, Opposition Candidate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6/7/1989</td>
<td>Bush</td>
<td>Scowcroft</td>
<td>Telephone Call to Guillermo Endara</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6/17/1989</td>
<td>Scowcroft</td>
<td>J. Stapleton</td>
<td>Roy Panama</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6/19/1989</td>
<td>Scowcroft</td>
<td>J. Stapleton</td>
<td>Roy Telephone Calls</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6/19/1989</td>
<td>Scowcroft</td>
<td>J. Stapleton</td>
<td>Roy Telephone Calls</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6/19/1989</td>
<td>Scowcroft</td>
<td>J. Stapleton</td>
<td>Roy Telephone Calls</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7/11/1989</td>
<td>Bush</td>
<td></td>
<td>State, Treasury, Defense Panama (draft)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aug-89</td>
<td>Bush</td>
<td>Eagleburger</td>
<td>Panama</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9/1/1989</td>
<td>Scowcroft</td>
<td>D. Pacelli</td>
<td>Policy on Use of US Military Shops by Panama Canal Commission Employees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9/27/1989</td>
<td>Scowcroft</td>
<td></td>
<td>Phone Conversation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10/17/1989</td>
<td>Gates</td>
<td>W. Pryce</td>
<td>Notification of NSC Meeting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10/17/1989</td>
<td>Gates</td>
<td>W. Pryce</td>
<td>Notification of NSC Meeting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10/18/1989</td>
<td>Bush</td>
<td>Scowcroft</td>
<td>NSC Meeting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10/18/1989</td>
<td>Scowcroft</td>
<td>W. Pryce</td>
<td>NSC Meeting on Panama</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10/19/1989</td>
<td>Bush</td>
<td>Scowcroft</td>
<td>NSC Meeting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10/19/1989</td>
<td>Bush</td>
<td>Scowcroft</td>
<td>NSC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10/19/1989</td>
<td>Qualye</td>
<td>Scowcroft</td>
<td>NSC Meeting on Panama</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10/23/1989</td>
<td>Scowcroft</td>
<td>W. Pryce</td>
<td>Record Actions of October 19 NSC Meeting on Panama</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10/30/1989</td>
<td>Qualye</td>
<td>Scowcroft</td>
<td>NSC Meeting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10/31/1989</td>
<td>G.P. Hughes</td>
<td>W. Pryce</td>
<td>Letter from Panamanian President Elect Endara</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nov-89</td>
<td>Bush</td>
<td>Scowcroft</td>
<td>Panama</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nov-89</td>
<td>Bush</td>
<td>Scowcroft</td>
<td>Panama</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nov-89</td>
<td>Scowcroft</td>
<td>Bush</td>
<td>Panama</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11/16/1989</td>
<td>Scowcroft</td>
<td>J. Stapleton</td>
<td>Roy Papers on Panama for the Deputies Committee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11/24/1989</td>
<td>Gates</td>
<td>David Miller</td>
<td>Panama</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11/29/1989</td>
<td>Scowcroft</td>
<td>W. Pryce</td>
<td>Prohibiting Panamanian vessels from entering US ports</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11/29/1989</td>
<td>Scowcroft</td>
<td>W. Pryce</td>
<td>Prohibiting Panamanian vessels from entering US ports</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11/29/1989</td>
<td>Scowcroft</td>
<td>W. Pryce</td>
<td>Prohibiting Panamanian vessels from entering US ports</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11/29/1989</td>
<td>Scowcroft</td>
<td>Rice</td>
<td>NSC Meeting on the President's Trip to Malta</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11/30/1989</td>
<td>Bush</td>
<td>Scowcroft</td>
<td>NSC Meeting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12/16/1989</td>
<td>Scowcroft</td>
<td>Daniel Levin</td>
<td>Declaration of war by Panama</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12/17/1989</td>
<td>Scowcroft and Gates</td>
<td>W. Pryce</td>
<td>Incidents in Panama</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12/20/1989</td>
<td>Bush</td>
<td>Scowcroft</td>
<td>Intel and National Security Briefing (45 min)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12/21/1989</td>
<td>Bush</td>
<td>Scowcroft</td>
<td>Panama Letters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12/27/1989</td>
<td>Scowcroft</td>
<td>David Miller</td>
<td>Situation in Panama</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/2/1990</td>
<td>Scowcroft</td>
<td>E. Melby</td>
<td>Baker-Cheney-Scowcroft breakfast</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/9/1990</td>
<td>Scowcroft</td>
<td>Bush</td>
<td>President Reagan's Phone Call</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Name(s)</td>
<td>Event Description</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------</td>
<td>------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/10/1990</td>
<td>G.P. Hughes</td>
<td>Notice of NSC Meeting on Panama</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/16/1990</td>
<td>Bush, Jaime Pieras</td>
<td>Conversation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/16/1990</td>
<td>Bush, Scowcroft</td>
<td>NSC Meeting</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/16/1990</td>
<td>Scowcroft, W. Pryce and E. Melby</td>
<td>NSC Meeting on Panama</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/17/1990</td>
<td>Bush, Scowcroft</td>
<td>NSC Meeting</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/24/1990</td>
<td>Bush, Scowcroft</td>
<td>Narcotics Certification for Panama</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/26/1990</td>
<td>Scowcroft, W. Pryce</td>
<td>The President's Response to Panamanian President Endara's Letter</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/27/1990</td>
<td>Bush, Scowcroft</td>
<td>Your Reply to a Letter from President Endara of Panama</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/12/1990</td>
<td>Bush, Scowcroft</td>
<td>Reply to President Reagan's Phone Call</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/14/1990</td>
<td>Scowcroft, J. Stapleton Roy</td>
<td>Reply to President Endara</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure One – The Scowcroft Model**

```
President Bush and his senior national security team

NSC Principals’ Committee

NSC Deputies’ Committee

Flow of Information

Europe PCC

Latin America PCC

Africa PCC

International Economic Affairs PCC

Intelligence PCC

Flow of Information

Soviet Union PCC

East Asia PCC

Near East and South Asia PCC

Defense PCC

Arms Control PCC
```

**Figure Two – Members of Bush’s National Security Council and Principals’ Committee**
Figure Three – NSC Deputies’ Committee

1. Deputy National Security Advisor
2. Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs
3. Under Secretary of Defense for Policy
4. Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs
5. Deputy Director of CIA
6. Representative of the Attorney General

* = When appropriate

Figure Four – President Bush’s Inner Circle

1. President
2. Vice President
3. National Security Advisor
4. Chief of Staff
5. Secretary of Defense
6. Secretary of State
7. Chairman of the Joint Chiefs
8. Director of the CIA
9. Secretary of the Treasury*
10. Attorney General*

* = When appropriate
Figure Five – Military Chain of Command

President Bush

Brent Scowcroft
National Security Advisor

Dick Cheney
Secretary of Defense

Gen. Powell
Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff

Gen. Thurman
Commanding General, SOUTHCOM

Gen. Stiner
Commanding General, XVIII Airborne Corps

Gen. Cisneros
Commanding General, U.S. Army South

References


