Why Send Troops?

Examine the reasons given for the 1989 invasion of Panama.

USH.C.8.3.B "Examine justifications for using United States of America's troops to overthrow the regime of Panama's General Noriega."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline each reason given for sending U.S. troops to Panama, and circle the evidence offered for it. Number any sentence that questions a reason or raises a cost of using force.

The Case for Operation Just Cause

1. On December 20, 1989, U.S. troops entered Panama in Operation Just Cause. President George H. W. Bush said the mission would remove General Manuel Noriega, whose military controlled the government. One stated reason was protecting Americans living and working in Panama. Days earlier, Panama's National Assembly had declared a state of war with the United States. On December 16, members of Panama's Defense Forces shot and killed an unarmed U.S. Marine at a checkpoint. Bush pointed to this violence as evidence that Americans faced danger. A single deadly incident, however, did not show that every American in Panama faced an immediate threat.

2. Bush also argued that force would defend democracy and fight drug trafficking. In May 1989, Panamanian voters chose opposition candidate Guillermo Endara, but Noriega's government annulled the election after the opposition's victory. U.S. officials saw this as proof that Noriega would not yield power through voting. In 1988, U.S. grand juries had indicted Noriega on drug-related charges. An indictment is an accusation, not a conviction, but it gave officials another reason to seek his removal. When the invasion began, Endara was sworn in as president. That outcome supported the democracy goal, though it did not settle whether invasion was necessary.

3. Bush named another aim: protecting the Panama Canal treaties. These agreements provided for the United States to transfer control of the canal to Panama by the end of 1999 while keeping it open to ships of all nations. U.S. leaders feared that Noriega's rule could put treaty obligations at risk. Critics challenged the use of troops to pursue these goals. They argued that invading a sovereign country could kill civilians and violate international law, and that other pressures should continue instead. To judge the justifications, separate the government's stated aims from the evidence for each aim and the costs of military action.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How did the checkpoint killing support Bush's reason for protecting Americans? What limit does the passage place on that evidence?

2. How did the annulled election support the democracy justification? What later event supported the stated goal?

3. How did the drug-related charges help justify removing Noriega? Why were the charges not conclusive proof?

4. How did U.S. leaders use the canal treaties to justify troops? Give one objection critics raised to using troops for that goal.

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write five or six sentences advising whether the passage makes a strong enough case for sending troops. Choose two stated reasons, cite one fact for each, and weigh them against one objection to invasion.

ANSWER KEY

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HIGH SCHOOL · USH.C.8.3.B

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline each reason given for sending U.S. troops to Panama, and circle the evidence offered for it. Number any sentence that questions a reason or raises a cost of using force. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How did the checkpoint killing support Bush's reason for protecting Americans? What limit does the passage place on that evidence?	**The killing showed that Americans could face violence from Panamanian forces, but one incident did not prove that every American there faced an immediate threat.**
2	How did the annulled election support the democracy justification? What later event supported the stated goal?	**Noriega's government annulled an election the opposition won, suggesting voters could not change the government through voting. Endara was sworn in as president when the invasion began.**
3	How did the drug-related charges help justify removing Noriega? Why were the charges not conclusive proof?	**The indictments gave officials a reason to seek Noriega's removal, but an indictment is an accusation, not a conviction.**
4	How did U.S. leaders use the canal treaties to justify troops? Give one objection critics raised to using troops for that goal.	**Leaders feared Noriega's rule could put canal treaty obligations at risk. Critics argued that an invasion could violate international law or kill civilians.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

I would give the most weight to protecting Americans and defending the election result. Panamanian forces had killed an unarmed U.S. Marine, so the concern about violence was not imaginary. Noriega's government had also annulled the election won by Guillermo Endara, denying voters the result they chose. Still, an invasion could kill civilians and violate Panama's sovereignty. On the evidence in the passage, these reasons do not yet outweigh that objection because one killing does not establish a widespread threat, and the passage does not show that other pressures had failed.

Accept different judgments in Part 3 if students use accurate facts for two stated reasons and weigh a specific objection. Distinguish the administration's fears and accusations from facts the passage establishes.