

## **Communications and Military Intervention in Historical Perspective: The United States and Latin America**

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The importance of communications in contemporary warfare is evident in the use of global positioning satellites and laser guided bombs in the 1991 Gulf War and the 2003 United States invasion of Iraq. Frederick Kagan encapsulates the priority given to electrical surveillance and rapid communications in the title of his book: *Finding the Target*. Kagan and other analysts may disagree on specific policy options, but there seems to be a broad consensus that the unimpeded flow of information is essential for military and naval operations.<sup>1</sup> While there are numerous and often voluminous general histories of modern warfare, we find relatively few specialized studies of the use of communications in military and naval operations before 1991.<sup>2</sup> This paper will examine in some depth the 1885 armed incursion by the United States into Panama that was the first intervention to rely on the international telegraph network built by British and U.S. cable companies from the 1860s to the early 1880s. In short, this event marked the first use of modern communications by armed forces intervening in a Latin American nation. We will then place this event in the long history of U.S. armed interventions in Latin America from 1885 to 1989.

The Colombian province of Panama experienced uprisings in April 1885 that threatened the properties of several US corporations. President Grover Cleveland's administration intervened to protect these properties – especially the transisthmian railroad and the international telegraph cable. The telegraph itself played a large role in the intervention. News of the uprisings reached Washington by cable. The telegraph made possible the mobilization and deployment of U.S. forces from several cities along the Atlantic coast and the Gulf of Mexico, and also facilitated continued contact between these forces on the isthmus and Washington. While the Panama intervention has received capable analysis in specialized studies, a close examination of the role of telegraphic communications will add a new dimension to these familiar stories. Furthermore, most textbooks and general studies marginalize or ignore this intervention and its implications for the use of communications in military operations, and emphasize instead more familiar events such as the Spanish American War and General John Pershing's 1916 expedition into Mexico.<sup>3</sup>

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Historians have established at least three major functions or roles for military/naval communications that are of relevance for this study. The first involves basic intelligence or, at least, “news” about the crisis and the potential enemy. The second function concerns the use of the communications network to organize and deploy the forces to the designated region. The third relates to an area frequently the subject of debate among historians and actual participants – the issue of on-the-scene decision making versus centralization of command made possible by electric communications. One area of interest on the modern battlefield – the use of radio-connected or computerized weapons – is of relevance to interventions carried out after the first decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century <sup>4</sup>

An important point to be considered here falls outside the domain of naval/military operations. As early as 1885 the international cable network supplied newspapers in the United States with information on these operations thereby attracting an audience for information about the intervention. An interested public, in turn, created an environment in which elected officials and naval/military officers were sensitive to the discussion of the intervention as a public issue. Panama itself also became an important factor in this international context. The Panamanian rebels had a local following that concerned the Marines and sailors and eventually captured the attention of the press and politicians in the United States and in other countries. This intertwining of Panamanian and United States histories through the international electric communications network and the mass circulation press created a relationship that was to expand over the decades. Armed intervention had a potential for unanticipated, long-term consequences that could originate within the polity and society of the imperial power as well as the environment of the nation or region that was the subject of the intervention. <sup>5</sup>

The primary purpose of this paper is to trace the parallel developments of these two utilizations of electronic communications – by military and civilian officials on one hand and by the press on the other. Transcending and connecting these parallel developments was a tension that grew more overt with time. The organizational benefits and the efficiency that the new technologies (telegraph, radio, and television) gave both the military also the press greater access to the process and consequences of the interventions. Very early in the history of this tension, military and government officials were sensitive to depictions of the interventions in the mass communications networks of the United States and attempted to restrict or somehow control the images (in both words and pictures) to fit their larger policy goals. The press eventually was

critical of some of these policies and presented its version of events through the electronic media.

### **The New Communications System and Crises on the Isthmus**

In the 1880s both government officials and newspaper editors relied on the recently build network of submarine cables that linked Panama with the United States. James Scrymser headed the New York-based cable companies that in 1881 established the connection between Panama City on the Pacific coast of the isthmus and Galveston, Texas and the Western Union system in the United States. Scrymser's Central and South America Telegraph company entered a business dominated by the British. The submerged lines of the West India and Panama Telegraph Company ran from Colón (also called Aspinwall) to Jamaica and then to Cuba and several West Indian islands. A second British firm, Cuba Submarine, had cables running along the south coast of Cuba that connected with Havana and the offices of International Ocean, a subsidiary of Western Union.<sup>6</sup> Scrymser was in direct competition with the British companies. Part of his strategy was to charge lower rates to lure customers from South America who sent messages to the United States and/or Europe. An aggressive entrepreneur, Scrymser enjoyed success in the 1880s in this competition that pitted him against the British "King of Cables" John Pender who owned the two largest companies in South America and the Eastern Telegraph Company with lines that stretched from Western Europe to East Asia.<sup>7</sup>

These cable connections improved communications between Central America and the United States. While the network opened new opportunities for business, it also introduced information about the endemic political instability of the area. As recently as 1878 six German warships had intervened briefly in Nicaragua in response to a disagreement between German residents of that nation and local officials. This intervention created concerns in Washington regarding the German presence in Central America.<sup>8</sup> Regional unrest continued. In March of 1885 Guatemala initiated a brief and ultimately unsuccessful war to unify the five Central American nations.<sup>9</sup> New eruptions of violence took place in Panama a few weeks later and will be discussed in the next section of this paper.<sup>10</sup> The presence of submarine telegraphy on the isthmus made possible the flurry of cables that tied together Colón, Panama City, Washington, New York, and Boston and brought to bear a show of force from the United States Navy. In little

more than three weeks, at least nine warships and approximately 2,000 Marines and armed sailors captured, killed, or dispersed the rebels.<sup>11</sup>

This brief account of the 1885 uprising indicates the proximate cause for the U.S. intervention, but there were long-term factors as well. In spite of the massive French interoceanic canal project headed by Ferdinand de Lesseps, the previously mentioned German naval intervention, the British colonial presence in nearby British Honduras and Jamaica, and the general European expansion in commerce in the region, it was the government in Washington that had a formal obligation with the Colombian government to protect the transit across Panama. In 1846 Colombia and the United States had signed the Bidlack-Mallarino Treaty by which the government in Washington agreed to protect transisthmian transportation. Isolated from the rest of Colombia by the rugged northwestern corner of the Andes Mountains and the swampy lowlands of Darien, Panama had poor communications with Bogota. This centrifugal potential became complicated in the 1880s by the presence of the French canal company. The company's work force numbered 19,243 in October of 1884 while uncounted job-seekers hovered around the construction sites. Living conditions even for the employed canal workers were bad. The company did not provide commissaries or company stores, and local merchants tended to charge exorbitant prices for necessities. The small Panamanian elite, largely white with ties to outside businesses, was concentrated in the ports of Panama City and Colon.<sup>12</sup> The large gap between the wealthy and the poor and the influx of West Indians seeking jobs created an unstable social environment. U.S. Consul Anderson expressed the anxieties and prejudices of the times: "we sleep on the brink of a volcano." He predicted that the social and political disturbances could provide an opening for "vile characters attracted here by the works of the Canal Co."<sup>13</sup>

### **Revolutionary Unrest and U.S. Armed Intervention in Panama**

The months of March and April, 1885 witnessed perhaps the most extensive naval and military utilization of submarine telegraphy in the relatively short history of the communications system to that time. The small city of Colón was one of the busiest ports in the Caribbean. Toward the middle of the day on April 1, 1885, the city of Colón burned to the ground.<sup>14</sup> The conflagration was the outgrowth of civil disorder in Colombia (Panama was a province of this country until 1903). The twists and turns of late 19<sup>th</sup> century Colombian politics are too intricate

for adequate explanation here, but it is necessary to point out that in 1885 the civil war in that country had a deep impact in Panama. Colombian government forces were stretched too thinly across the isthmus, and, therefore, two insurgent leaders exploited their respective opportunities: the previously mentioned Prestán and also General Rafael Aizpuru of the Colombian military. Planning to seize power in Panama by a coup d'état, General Aizpuru staged an uprising and took control of Panama City on the Pacific coast. When the government's already beleaguered forces moved across the isthmus to Panama City, the small revolutionary band led by Pedro Prestán seized Colón. Prestán was a Haitian-born rebel who had become involved in Colombian politics in the state of Panama. His meteoric rise and rapid fall can be summarized in a few sentences. Prestán's loosely organized movement was apparently made up of unemployed immigrants and Panamanians who had hoped to find work on de Lesseps' canal project. For about two weeks Prestán's force grew as it intimidated the port city, and, on March 29, the rebels took six U.S. citizens hostage in an effort to commandeer a cargo ship carrying weapons and ammunition. Foiled in this attempt, Prestán faced Colombian government troops that on the morning of April 1 defeated him in a battle on the outskirts of Colón. In the frustration of defeat, Prestán and his followers set the fire that devastated the city. The blaze destroyed most of the structures in Colón, took the lives of eighteen residents, and left much of the surviving population homeless. In the confusion, the rebel leader escaped.<sup>15</sup>

In spite of early warnings, the magnitude of the crisis caught officials in Washington by surprise. On March 31 the Pacific Mail Steamship Company requested that the U.S. Navy rescue its ship, the *Colón*, from the grasp of Prestán. Secretary of the Navy William C. Whitney responded immediately with telegraphed orders to several U.S. warships including the *Galena* under Commander Theodore Kane, anchored in the port of Colón (not to be confused with the ship of the same name). The U.S. Navy had already begun to mobilize on April 1 when, late in the day, Consul Wright cabled the news of the burning of the port of Colón to Washington. Overnight, Whitney telegraphed the Brooklyn Navy Yard to bring "all available Marines ... in readiness for immediate departure."<sup>16</sup> The *New York Times* and the *New York Tribune* received telegraphed accounts of the conflagration of April 1 and placed them on their front pages on April 2. Fed by the telegraphic wire services, the *Chicago Tribune*, the *San Francisco Examiner*, and the *New Orleans Daily Picayune* featured similar stories on the same day. Aware of the growing public concern, Whitney telegraphed the Pacific Mail Steamship Company that U.S.

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forces would open the transit from Panama (City) to Colón in the “shortest possible time” and, in the same telegram, requested one of the company’s steamships for a contingent of U.S. troops.<sup>17</sup>

Over the next few days Navy Department telegrams on Western Union wires to New York, Philadelphia, Boston, Providence, and Portsmouth (New Hampshire) gave orders to mobilize the Navy’s aging contingent of old-style wooden-hulled gunboats mixed with a few new iron and steel vessels to transport more than 2,000 Marines and armed sailors to wrest Panama City and Colón from the two groups of rebels. Commander Bowman McCalla of the Marine Corps assembled his troops in New York, relying on the telegraph to stay in touch with officials in Washington and also to notify his men of their new mission. The poorly equipped U.S. Navy did not have an adequate number of transport ships, so it turned to private shipping companies. The Pacific Mail Steamship Company did its part by carrying 200 men on its *City Of Pará* and 600 on the *Acapulco*. These and the other ships did not arrive as a modern task force but rather in an irregular stream of war vessels and transports, reaching Panamanian waters between April 7 and April 15. On April 11 U.S. forces reopened rail service between Colón and Panama City.<sup>18</sup> The United States achieved a show of force of the isthmus within ten days, thanks in no small way to the interconnected international telegraph systems run by James Scrymser and John Pender as well the domestic lines of Western Union.

Once ashore, the U.S. forces quickly established control of Colón, but Panama City on the opposite side of the isthmus remained in rebel hands. Commander McCalla’s troops, most of whom arrived on the *Acapulco*, faced the possibility of nasty fighting in the streets of Panama City as they confronted Aizpuru’s forces. The rebel leader began to erect street barricades that would have blocked McCalla’s access to the CSA telegraph office. Faced with the loss of quick communication with Washington and Colón, McCalla decided to establish military occupation of the city. He informed the overall field commander Rear Admiral Jouett (who was on the other side of the isthmus in Colón) by telegram of his decision to move his troops into Panama City and received his commander’s approval, also by telegram. In addition, McCalla used the local telegraph lines to communicate his requests for additional troops and equipment. The Marines and blue jackets completed the operation on the afternoon of April 24 without incident.<sup>19</sup>

Officials in Washington were frustrated at times by the limitations of telegraphic communications with their troops on the isthmus, however, the subsequent dispute between McCalla in Panama City and Secretary of the Navy Whitney in Washington indicated that there

were some periods when centralized command was in place. Promptly informing his superiors of his occupation of Panama City, McCalla received through the lines that he had secured from Aizpuru's control a telegraphed rebuke from Secretary Whitney who deplored the commander's presence in Panama City (including the CSA telegraph office) as "interference" in local affairs. Officials in Washington were concerned about maintaining good relations with Bogotá. Questions regarding U.S. military actions in Panama were the subject of debate in Washington and New York for several days. Scrymser's CSA registered its approval of the presence of U.S. troops by offering to send personal messages of Marines and sailors to families back home free of charge.<sup>20</sup>

These expressions of corporate generosity quickly turned to cries of anguish when, on the night of April 25, McCalla, under pressure from Washington, withdrew his occupation force from Panama City. With a crucial station on his cable line to South America apparently left unprotected, Scrymser sounded an alarm in telegrams to U.S. Secretary of State Bayard and Secretary of the Navy Whitney:

The town is in the hands of the rebels... The consequences cannot be foreseen. I have telegraphed as follows to the superintendent of the (Central and South America Telegraph) company in Panama: "Demand in writing from the American Consul or commandant of the United States forces protection to our property and men. At present the United States have by treaty all the rights and obligations that Colombia has, and must be held responsible for damage done to American property or for the failure to keep open communications."<sup>21</sup>

McCalla moved his force away from the telegraph station and the center of Panama City, but encamped in and around the nearby railway station. Scrymser did not realize that the US military presence continued to dominate Panama City. Meanwhile, McCalla and Aizpuru began negotiations, and, when Colombian government troops arrived on the isthmus on April 28, the crisis came to a close much to the relief of government officials in Washington and corporate leaders—particularly Scrymser – in New York.<sup>22</sup>

### **Military Intervention, the Press, and the U.S. Public**

The Panamanian intervention brought attention to international telegraph cables as convenient and essential tools for naval and military operations, but this same episode also revealed another potential role for modern communications. Much like Scrymser, Commodore John G. Walker, head of the Navy's Bureau of Navigation, sensed the importance of the press

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and U.S. public opinion. Walker, who hoped to establish a larger role for the Navy in similar situations in the future, was quite explicit in his confidential note to McCalla:

It is of considerable importance in sending off such an expedition as that which you are to command to the isthmus that we should keep the country with us in the matter and for that reason you, with such officers to assist you as you think most judicious, should keep the Department informed of what occurs, how things are progressing and how they look to you, explain the political situation, go into the whole subject of the isthmus troubles as far as you can, and do not spare the telegraph in sending us information. We want to have everything of any importance in the way of information that it may be given out to the press, and the people kept in accord with the Department. Of course we must also avoid any appearance of overdoing the thing or trying to make capital.<sup>23</sup>

Walker's concerns revealed an awareness of what would later be called "public relations." The Navy Department wanted to maintain the support of the public without "overdoing the thing." Walker sought a fine balance: favorable coverage in the press but no heavy-handed propaganda. His instructions to McCalla also indicated an awareness of the possibility that newspapers in the United States may present information critical of the intervention. With only two lines of telegraphic communication open between Washington and Panama, (CSA via Mexican Telegraph along the western end of the Gulf of Mexico and West India and Panama and Western Union's linkage from Cuba to Florida), a few hostile commentaries from journalists at the scene of action might have a telling effect in the United States.<sup>24</sup> Instead the press coverage was supportive and often patriotic. The *Chicago Tribune* and *San Francisco Examiner* carried identical accounts of McCalla's occupation of Panama City (both datelined April 24 from that city): "At half past 2 o'clock this afternoon the United States forces appeared on the scene as if by magic, three taps on the drum being the signal by which they started. Three columns entered the city, and had full possession in about ten minutes, knocking down the barricades as they passed through the streets to the call of the bugle. The Columbian (sic.) guards withdrew into the cuartels. This splendid coup de main has undoubtedly prevented another disaster similar to that of Colon."<sup>25</sup> The *New Orleans Daily Picayune* also praised the operation and editorialized against the withdrawal of McCalla's forces.<sup>26</sup>

One reporter, Irving King of the *New York Tribune*, accompanied U.S. forces and colored his coverage in favorable, even jingoistic terms. However, King also noticed signs of hostility towards the marines and sailors, and he found continued support for Presta□n: "Many of the natives here are sympathizers with the rebel Presta□n, or of the remnants of his gang, and are not particularly well disposed toward the 'Gringos' as they call the Americans. It is not safe to

go about the city at night unarmed, as all the natives carry revolvers, and many of them would count it a holy and patriotic thing to kill one of the Americanos.”<sup>27</sup>

The execution of Pedro Prestán on August 18, 1885 was the last event in this Panamanian drama. He escaped Panama before the arrival of the U.S. Navy in force and continued his rebellious exploits until captured in Barranquilla by the Colombian military in late July. Transferred to Colón for military trial, Prestán’s conviction by the court for setting the city ablaze led to the most severe sentence. His death by hanging was witnessed by a large, restive crowd. Prestán’s exploits made him a notorious brigand to some and, to others in Panama’s diverse society, a heroic character – “a young mulatto with sharp features and a keen look.”<sup>28</sup> Even his death was the subject of dispute. There is no doubt that his public execution was a spectacular event, but the accounts vary as to the methods involved. According to the version provided by a young U.S. naval officer, Robert Coontz, Prestán was hanged by a noose attached to a telegraph cable that “was stretched between two telegraph poles across the railroad tracks.” He stood atop a railroad car that, on orders of the executioner, moved out from under his feet and left him dangling from the noose attached to the telegraph cable.<sup>29</sup> This version of Prestán’s demise contained a symbolic element. His fate was sealed by the strategic and economic importance of the rail lines that crossed the isthmus and the telegraph cables that brought U.S. forces to bear so quickly to the scene. The fate of many local or regional rebellions in previously isolated areas were doomed by the arrival of modern transportation facilities and communications technology. These areas had become parts of the new international economy. Corporate leaders and government officials saw intervention as a means to protect these installations of modernity from threats of disorder and destruction.

The role of communications in the Panamanian intervention was essential, and, on first reading, the US government handled the new medium well. On the first two points emphasized in this study – obtaining basic intelligence and the organization and deployment of forces – diplomatic and military officials made good use of the telegraph. Without the undersea cable network and land-based lines, the response time would have been much longer, perhaps two or three weeks longer if communications had been delivered by ocean-going steamer and railroad.

The third point of emphasis – the centralization of command through electric communication – emerged as a controversial issue when Commander McCalla took, evacuated, and then retook Panama City. Secretary of the Navy Whitney and Secretary of State Bayard were

looking at the diplomacy of the intervention and wanted to avoid trouble with the ostensibly friendly Colombian government. McCalla was concerned about public order in Panama City and the maintenance of communication with Washington. When he complied with orders to pull back from Panama City, there followed an outburst of protest from James Scrymser, the *New Orleans Daily Picayune*, and several prominent politicians.<sup>30</sup>

International telegraphy seemed to reinforce existing power structures. Prestán's dramatic execution symbolized that point. Beneath the surface, however, knowledgeable people (especially reporter King, entrepreneur Scrymser, and commanders McCalla and Walker) began to entertain doubts. The realization began to take hold that the new communications system could bring a controversial, potentially disruptive event to the attention of effusive public commentators, ambitious politicians, and the amorphous, mercurial body of public opinion in an arena that previously had been the domain of a handful of diplomats, heads of state, naval/military commanders, and corporate magnates who worked in accord with decades-old traditions. In 1885 most newspapers had little or no access to correspondents with first-hand experience in covering crises from distant locations such as Panama. Over the next two decades, however, roving reporters such as Nellie Bly, Richard Harding Davis, and Sylvester Scovel would claim a popular readership for their reportage on Mexico, Venezuela, and Cuba. Under these circumstances, Walker's admonition about "keeping the country with us" was not the issue so much as keeping up with the jingoistic mood of the press and the public. Newspaper readers and politicians expected prompt reports on victorious action. The cable network fed information to the nation's newspapers at a speed that often matched communiqués from admirals, generals, and diplomats directly engaged in the crisis.<sup>31</sup> An interventionist foreign policy could, in spite of short-term success, bring about unintended results. Even the patriotic Irving King of the *New York Tribune* sensed the unexpected consequences of the intervention when he reported on the Panamanian expressions of "public hatred" directed against the United States.<sup>32</sup> The 1885 intervention in Panama revealed the pattern that was to emerge on a larger scale during the next century. The international communications system and its connections with the popular media had the potential to shift perceptions in directions unwanted by military and naval commanders, political leaders, and corporate executives.

### **Armed Intervention and Controversy, 1898-1934**

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Historian Peter Smith has identified thirty U.S. military interventions in the Caribbean Basin and Mexico from 1898 to 1934.<sup>33</sup> The first of these, the Spanish American War, was one of the high points of U.S. jingoism. The cable system supported reporters from major metropolitan newspapers whose stories supplied front-page coverage of the war from New York to San Francisco. Richard Harding Davis, Stephen Crane, and Sylvester Scovel were among the dozens of reporters on the scene. These front-line journalists often rode in small dispatch boats from Cuba to Florida, Haiti, or Jamaica to send their stories in code through the submarine cables and land telegraph system to New York. Excited by this form of dramatic reportage, William Randolph Hearst, the owner of the *New York Journal*, went to Cuba to cover the conflict in person. Famous rough-rider Theodore Roosevelt cultivated his friendship with Davis to ensure front page attention for his exploits.<sup>34</sup>

News of the Cuban revolt against Spanish rule (1895-98) had been featured in the U.S. press for three years, and both diplomats and military leaders exploited their own sources of information to follow this conflict closely. President William McKinley's White House had a "War Room" with telegraphic and telephonic connections to government departments including the Office of Naval Intelligence and the Army's Signal Corps. The U.S. armed forces also depended on submarine cables to order Captain George Dewey's successful attack on the Spanish Navy in the Philippines and to locate and destroy Admiral Pascual Cervera's fleet off Santiago, Cuba.<sup>35</sup>

Press and public enthusiasm for armed interventions began to wane in the 1910s and 1920s at the same time the military communications technology underwent extensive improvement. The development of radio and eventually radar had a large impact on the deployment of warships and the coordination of troopships and cargo vessels. Reconnaissance airplanes used radio telegraphy to communicate with ground troops. The U.S. Army employed these new technologies on a tactical level as well as for purposes of centralized command and control. These improvements in communications that supported interventions occurred at the same time that the press adopted new technologies to expand its coverage of international events. By the 1920s the telegraph had greater capacity to carry messages over long distances and, at the same time, costs diminished. The new technology of radio combined with existing telegraph lines to offer better service. At the same time transportation by ship and rail became more reliable, making possible the rapid movement of both people and mail. The multiplication of the

means of moving messages opened opportunities for critical reporters to convey their views of interventions to newspapers and newsmagazines. Wire services such as the Associated Press carried some of their accounts.<sup>36</sup>

Reporters and editors also underwent a change in their views of military interventions. Commander Walker's concern expressed in 1885 to "keep the country with us" became a significant issue. The press developed a critical perspective absent from the coverage of the Panama episode and the Spanish American War. U.S. incursions into Mexico in 1914 and 1916 to attempt to impose stability on that nation elicited expressions of doubt and even outright disagreement. By the 1920s interventions -- and even potential interventions -- were points of national debate. While the administration of President Calvin Coolidge threatened another armed incursion into Mexico, writer Ernest Gruening authored a series of articles for *The Nation* based on his observations in that country. Gruening defended the Mexican government and helped to undermine the case for military action. Gruening, Carleton Beals (a freelance journalist), and Frank Tannenbaum (a scholar at New York's Columbia University) led a group of writers who visited Mexico frequently in the 1920s and documented the implementations of land reform, labor organization, and public education. They saw these trends as justifications for their stand against U.S. armed intervention. A January 26, 1927 anti-interventionist editorial appeared in *The Nation* under the headline "No, Mr. Coolidge, No!"<sup>37</sup>

The United States did send the Marines into Nicaragua in this period, and that decision encountered a hailstorm of criticism. In spite of improvements in the technology of weaponry and communications by the 1920s, the U.S. intervention in Nicaragua was neither decisive nor quick. Instead, it dragged on for several years in contrast to McCalla's rapid incursion into and withdrawal from Panama in 1885. As with the Cuban unrest of the 1890s, information on the instability in Nicaragua reached Washington through both government channels and the press, but, with Nicaragua, the press was often adversarial. Carleton Beals located and interviewed the rebel leader Augusto Sandino while the U.S. Marines were engaged in combat against the Nicaraguan guerrilla. This U.S. intervention involved extensive use of aircraft. Marine pilots used radio communications in the movement of personnel and cargo in the rugged jungle terrain of Nicaragua. Marine fighter and bomber pilots also experimented with radio. Beals's interview with Sandino took place shortly after a bombing and strafing raid at Chipote in northern Nicaragua near the Honduran border. In their efforts to corner the elusive Sandino, the Marines

used the local telegraph lines along with their own radios. Beals also used the telegraph. He sent his account of the interview to *The Nation's* offices in New York via telegram, adding a sense of immediacy to his report from Nicaragua on the intervention from a rebel perspective.<sup>38</sup>

Nicaragua's neighbor Costa Rica became a center of anti-interventionist activity in the 1920s. Costa Rican Joaquín García Monge devoted many pages in his periodical, *El Reportorio Americano*, to expressions of opposition to the United States's actions in Nicaragua. Contributing anti-interventionists included Chilean poet Gabriela Mistral, Argentine intellectual Alfredo Palacios, and Peruvian political leader Víctor Raúl Haya de la Torre. Many of the anti-interventionists associated with *El Reportorio Americano* sent telegrams protesting the U.S. presence in Nicaragua to Senator William Borah, a prominent critic of the Coolidge administration. Anti-interventionism became a cause célèbre among many Latin American commentators from Argentina to Mexico.<sup>39</sup>

### **Armed Intervention and Controversy in a Global Context**

The press continued its skeptical and often oppositional analysis of armed interventions in the 1940s and thereafter (World War II was a major exception).<sup>40</sup> These interventions in Latin America took place on a larger stage. World War II and the Cold War gave them a global context, and new technology added an array of communications devices to the military arsenal. Radar images became more precise and high resolution cameras created detailed photographs to enhance the capabilities of air reconnaissance. By the 1970s and 1980s radar and laser guided bombs and missiles had increased accuracy compared to the World War II generation of weapons. Centralized command and control became even more centralized through computers tied to satellite and fiber optic inputs. Like the military, the press put new technology to work. In the same period television soon replaced radio as the dominant electronic medium for mass communications. By the 1960s television news had a powerful impact on the public, offering visual images and spoken commentary on breaking news events only a day or perhaps a few hours after the events took place. News broadcasts borrowed some of the techniques of movie newsreels until the advent of video tape in the 1970s. Television news was centralized with only two major networks (CBS and NBC) in the 1950s and 1960s (ABC emerged as a third network with a news staff in the 1970s). Reporters often abandoned the supportive, patriotic attitudes typical of World War II to assume a more adversarial role. Many television journalists were

originally print journalists who had matured in (or at least assimilated) the critical attitudes of the 1920s and 1930s. Tensions between the press and government became manifest during this period.<sup>41</sup>

The United States resumed interventionist policies in the 1950s with the threats of social instability and international communism linked in the justifications of those who ordered actions in Guatemala (1954), Cuba (1961), the Dominican Republic (1965), and Grenada (1983).<sup>42</sup> A new actor in the field of interventions was the Central Intelligence Agency which used electronic surveillance and communications to gather information and implement clandestine operations. The second of these interventions is the focus of our attention. In spite of new technology and clever techniques, the 1961 CIA-directed Bay of Pigs invasion failed to dislodge Cuba's Fidel Castro. Instead, the Cubans made better use of communications than the CIA. After a preliminary CIA air raid on April 15, Castro used television to alert the Cuban people about what he termed a "Cuban Pearl Harbor". As the invasion force headed for the beach early in the morning of April 17, local Cuban forces alerted Castro almost immediately. The Cuban premier used electronic communications to coordinate the defeat of the invaders including the destruction of their main communications vessel, the *Rio Escondido*, by the Cuban air force.<sup>43</sup>

This flawed CIA operation encountered widespread criticism in the print and electronic media in the United States and around the world. Part of this storm of criticism resulted from Castro's successful cultivation of his image in the U.S. media in the 1950s. Most leftist and some moderate commentators had examined the early years of Fidel Castro's revolutionary movement with considerable interest. Castro proved to be adroit at exploiting the U.S. media for his own purposes. *New York Times* reporter Herbert L. Matthews traveled to Cuba by airplane and had a prearranged meeting with Castro in his guerrilla camp in the Sierra Maestra. In his three articles in the *Times*, Matthews presented the rebel movement and its leader in positive, even romanticized terms in February of 1957, two years before Castro seized power. CBS News carried a thirty minute documentary in May, 1957 with essentially the same message. After he took power in 1959 Castro, continued to reach US audiences through television and print journalism largely on his own terms. He had a following on college campuses, in coffee houses, and in portions of the mainstream press in spite of the increasingly tense relations between Havana and Washington. The fiasco in the Bay of Pigs only reinforced his media image.<sup>44</sup>

Cuban-United States hostility escalated in 1962 when the Soviet Union became involved. Fearful of another U.S. invasion, Castro and Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev secretly agreed on the placement of nuclear-armed guided missiles in Cuba. When high-resolution surveillance photographs made by U-2 spy planes revealed that Soviet technicians were installing these missiles, President John Kennedy took the initiative. In a dramatic speech televised to the U.S. public on October 22, 1962, the youthful president committed his administration to a non-negotiable demand that the Soviets immediately remove the missiles. Some of Kennedy's top advisors advocated U.S. air raids on the missile sites and even a large scale invasion of Cuba. The president rejected these direct forms of intervention for a naval blockade of the island to prevent to arrival of additional nuclear weapons in Cuba. The U.S. Navy deployed a sixty ship armada accompanied by surveillance aircraft. These ships and planes used state-of-the-art radar and radio systems to track the Soviet vessels. In addition, Kennedy utilized a centralized command system to activate the nation's B-52 bomber force armed with nuclear weapons and began invasion preparations involving several combat divisions. The president's gamble paid off. The Soviet ships carrying nuclear missiles turned back from Cuba.<sup>45</sup>

The missile crisis was not over, however. Kennedy insisted that the Soviets cease work on the missiles already in place. After some indications of Soviet-Cuban intransigence on October 26, Kennedy made another aggressive move. In the words of historian Walter La Feber, "a virtual ultimatum cabled to Moscow demanded that the Soviets immediately stop work on the missiles." Soviet Premier Khrushchev conceded quickly. Like Kennedy on October 22, Khrushchev chose to announce his crucial decision by broadcasting – in this case on the government's radio system.<sup>46</sup>

The role of the press in the Cuban missile crisis was unusual because the crisis itself was unusual. The United States, the Soviet Union, and Cuba seemed to be on a course for nuclear war with all of its dire consequences. Yet the crisis ran its course in less than two weeks. Another exceptional feature was the fact that the broadcast media were central conduits crucial policy statements by the two main protagonists. Kennedy's speech of October 22 reached a live television audience in the United States and quickly spread to a world-wide audience in thirty-seven languages through the facilities of the United States Information Agency. Khrushchev's concession was beamed internationally by Soviet radio. Reporters, editors, and commentators had little time for critical evaluation because the unfolding of the story itself moved so fast and

had such potentially large consequences. Some reporters close to events in Washington such as Scotty Reston of the *New York Times* and Marianne Means of the Hearst newspapers understood the gravity of the situation and saw the importance of giving the Kennedy administration room to maneuver without intrusive press scrutiny. The press and public responses in the United States to Kennedy's decisions were favorable although some analysts – especially diplomatic historian Thomas Paterson – have pointed to the aggressive methods used by the President.<sup>47</sup>

The relative reticence of the media during the missile crisis contrasts with the boisterous debate over President Ronald Reagan's policy in Central America in the 1980s. His administration's propaganda and military campaigns against the Sandinista regime in Nicaragua aroused controversy on an international scale. U.S. government support of the Contras and their raids from Honduras into Nicaragua received extensive coverage in the media. U.S. arms, ammunition, transport aircraft, and communications equipment went to Honduras in support of the Contras. Washington sent similar equipment to El Salvador to help that nation's government combat a leftist insurgency. Christopher Dickey, George Black, and other journalists sent vivid word and photographic images of this intervention to media outlets in the United States. Video tape of the grim scenes of death and destruction appeared nightly on television sets in the United States and in other countries.<sup>48</sup>

The disputes surrounding Reagan's role in Central America diminished in the late 1980s just as the celebrations of the end of the Cold War occupied the front pages of newspapers around the globe. The transient peace in the western hemisphere was shattered, however, by another U.S. invasion of Panama. By the late 1980s the administration of President George H. W. Bush decided to reassert a form of centralized control over the press by means of a "press pool" that resembled the arrangement between the Navy Department and the *New York Tribune's* Irving King in 1885. Bush sent the U.S. military into that isthmian nation in December of 1989 to capture Panama's head-of-state, Manuel Noriega, a notorious drug smuggler. The array of weaponry in this operation was impressive and quickly overwhelmed the Panamanian Defense Force. The intervention was led by two F-117A stealth fighter-bombers that delivered their deadly payloads on targets in Panama. Blackhawk helicopters, C-130 aircraft, and other transport planes moved 13,000 U.S. soldiers to key sites in Panama. Although press access to this operation was severely limited, the story of collateral damage and civilian casualties eventually

reached the public media. Noriega went to prison in the United States, but this destructive operation created international animosity toward Washington.<sup>49</sup>

This 1989 intervention in Panama suggests some comparisons with the events of 1885. Navy Secretary William Whitney chose Irving King to serve as an “embedded reporter” in 1885 and, in a parallel arrangement, Secretary of Defense Dick Cheney selected a group of journalists known as “the media pool” to accompany the troops in December of 1989. In both cases, the resulting reportage was favorable on the outcomes of the interventions. Both of these military expeditions accomplished their respective purposes relatively quickly (about three weeks in 1885 and about two weeks in 1989-90), and the main part of the forces withdrew soon thereafter. And finally, even though both King and the media pool began to take note of unexpected, disquieting consequences of the interventions, proclamations of “mission accomplished” and the redeployment of soldiers and reporters led to the marginalization of this story in the communications media. In the aftermath of the 1989 intervention, accounts of civilian deaths and damage to non-military property continued to accumulate in the pages and web sites of academic and human rights organizations but had little impact in the mainstream media.<sup>50</sup> President Bush and Secretary Cheney showed that, in the short run, they could manage the flow of information in the media in a manner similar to that advocated by Commander Walker in 1885.

### **Conclusions**

History is not a policy science, but it does provide case studies that are relevant to contemporary issues. Recent developments in military communications systems are impressive. The 1989 invasion of Panama and Operation Desert Storm filled television screens across the world with images of high-tech weaponry and its destructive capability. Pentagon officials could demonstrate the effects of guided missiles and smart bombs through the use of video tape broadcast via cable and satellite television around the world. The initial phase of the 2003 campaign against Saddam Hussein was also visually impressive in its speed and destructiveness. The case studies cited in this paper, however, remind us that control of the battlefield may not bring a lasting solution favorable to the dominant power. And United States control of the outcome on the battlefield is not a certainty. Fidel Castro’s success in the placement of his image in the U.S. media found reinforcement in his victory at the Bay of Pigs.

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The 1885 Panama episode may seem remote from the twenty-first century. The technology of communications has improved immensely so that the slender stream of information conveyed by dots and dashes seems quaint and, to some, amusing. Some aspects of this event, however, have contemporary relevance. The fate of Pedro Presta□n and the smoldering resentment of a segment of the population of Panama against the presence of the intervening power offer testimony to the unintended consequences of intervention by powerful nations in command of the modern tools of empire. Commander Walker’s concerns about public opinion proved to be prescient. Reporter Irving King’s observations about the hostility of the Panamanian followers of Presta□n toward the soldiers and civilians from the United States constituted a premonition of responses to future interventions. The execution of Presta□n was, to the leaders of the United States and concerned nations in Europe, a symbol of the imposition of order and the protection of property in an unstable land, but to those who identified with the rebel and his movement, the execution offered another powerful symbol – that of arbitrary authority imposed from abroad.

A central point that emerges in the historical evidence cited in this paper is that the reportage on blowback or the unintended negative consequences of these interventions has been evident since 1885. In the tension between military/naval commanders and government leaders on one hand and the press on the other, the short-term advantage has shifted from one side to the other. Innovations in communications technology from submarine telegraphy to radio to television and computers revolutionized the military/naval aspects of armed intervention, but these innovations also contributed the ability of the press to cover armed interventions. The long-term pattern indicates that tension between these two institutions has continued to be a major factor in international affairs. This pattern also reveals that non-technological factors such as policy debates, politics, ideology, and public opinion played important, perhaps decisive roles at crucial junctures. The historical record makes clear that the blowback phenomenon had its impact in the media in spite of government efforts to control the flow of information or to insert its “spin” in the analysis of events. The continued application of the new communications technology ushered in an era in which conflicting views of symbols and of reality would be analyzed and magnified through the expanding media of communication as they helped to bring a diverse constellation of nations into an uncertain and insecure global community.

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### Footnotes

<sup>1</sup> Frederick W. Kagan, *Finding the Target: The Transformation of American Military Policy* (New York: Encounter Books, 2006), Harlan Ullman and James P. Wade, *Shock and Awe: Achieving Rapid Dominance* (Washington, D.C.: National Defense University Press, 1996), Thomas P. M. Barnett, *The Pentagon's New Map: War and Peace in the Twenty-first Century* (New York: Berkeley, 2004), and Paul Thomsen, "The Ascent of Knowledge Based Warfare" in *Beyond Shock and Awe: Warfare in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, (eds.) Eric L. Haney with Brian Thomsen (New York: Berkeley Caliber, 2005), 74-108.

<sup>2</sup> Max Boot, *War Made New: Technology, Warfare, and the Course of History, 1500 to Today* (New York: Gotham Books, 2006) devotes one-third of his text to the post 1990 "rise of the information age" in warfare, but treats innovation in communications in the 1880-1990 period largely as background. Other useful studies include Dennis Showalter, *Railroads and Rifles: Soldiers, Technology, and the Unification of Germany* (Hamden, Conn.: Archon Books, 1975), John Keegan, *Intelligence and War: Knowledge of the Enemy from Napoleon to Al-Qaeda* (New York: Knopf, 2003), Michael A. Palmer, *Command at Sea: Naval Command and Control Since the Sixteenth Century* (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 2005), Thomsen, "Ascent of Knowledge Based Warfare," Peter Hugill, *Global Communications Since 1844: Geopolitics and Technology* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 1999), and Rebecca Robbins Raines, *Getting the Message Through: A Branch History of the U.S. Army Signal Corps* (Washington, D.D.: Center of Military History, U.S. Army, 1996).

<sup>3</sup> On the problems in Panama see Hagan, *American Gunboat Diplomacy*, 160-187, Wickes, "Dress Rehearsal," 581-605, Helen Delpar, "Colombia: Troubled Friendship," in *United States-Latin American Relations, 1850-1903: Establishing a Relationship*, (ed.) Thomas M. Leonard (Tuscaloosa: Univ. of Alabama Press, 1999), 58-60, Stephen J. Randall, *Colombia and the United States: Hegemony and Interdependence* (Athens: Univ. of Georgia Press, 1992), 26-42, E. Taylor Parks, *Colombia and the United States, 1765-1934* (Durham: Duke Univ. Press, 1935), 194-377, David McCullough, *The Path between the Seas: the Creation of the Panama Canal, 1870-1914* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1977), 124-181, Gerstel Mack, *The Land Divided: A History of the Panama Canal and Other Isthmian Projects* (New York: Knopf, 1944, Octagon Reprint, 1974), 281-414, and Maron Simon, *The Panama Affair* (New York: Scribners, 1971), 1-123.

Many highly respected and widely used studies make no mention of the United States 1885 intervention in Panama. For examples see: Benjamin Keen and Keith Haynes, *A History of Latin America* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2004), Walter La Feber, *The American Age: U.S. Policy at Home and Abroad, 1750 to the Present* (New York: Norton, 1994), Kyle Longley, *In the Eagle's Long Shadow: The United States and Latin America* (Wheeling, Illinois: Harlan Davidson, 2002), Walter A. McDougall, *Promised Land, Crusader State: The American Encounter with the World* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1998), Frank Ninkovich, *The United States and Imperialism* (Malden, Mass.: Blackwell, 2001), Peter H. Smith, *Talons of the Eagle: Dynamics of U.S.-Latin American Relations* (New York: Oxford, 1999), and Tony Smith, *The Patterns of Imperialism: The United States, Great Britain, and the Late-Industrializing World Since 1815* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1984).

<sup>4</sup> Especially helpful in the delineation of these functions were Keegan's *Intelligence and War* and Kagan's *Finding the Target*.

<sup>5</sup> There are many studies of the contexts and consequences of US armed interventions in Central America, the Caribbean, and Mexico. The following is a sampling of publications that deal with this theme: Lester Langley, *The Banana Wars: United States Interventions in the Caribbean, 1898-1934* (Chicago: Dorsey Press, 1988), Whitney T. Perkins, *Constraint of Empire: The United States and Caribbean Interventions* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1981), Cole Blaiser, *The Hovering Giant: U.S. Responses to Revolutionary Change in Latin America* (Pittsburgh: Univ. of Pittsburgh Press, 1986, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed.), Alan McPherson, *Yankee No! Anti-Americanism in US-Latin American Relations* (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 2003), Stephen Rabe, *Eisenhower and Latin America: The Foreign Policy of Anticommunism* (Chapel Hill: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1988) and the same author's *The Most Dangerous Area in the World: John F. Kennedy Confronts Communist Revolution in Latin America* (Chapel Hill: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1999). Studies of relations between the United States and individual countries subjected to armed intervention include Michael Conniff, *Panama and the United States: The Forced Alliance* (Athens: Univ. of Georgia Press, 1992), Paul Coe Clark, *The United States and Somoza: A Revisionist Look* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1992), Karl Berman, *Under the Big Stick: Nicaragua and the United States Since 1848* (Boston: South End Press, 1986), Michel Gobat, *Confronting the American Dream: Nicaragua Under US Imperial Rule* (Durham, NC: Duke Univ. Press, 2005), Jules R. Benjamin, *The United States and the*

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*Origins of the Cuban Revolution: An Empire of Liberty in an Age of National Liberation* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1990), Bruce J. Calder, *The Impact of Intervention: The Dominican Republic During the U.S. Occupation of 1916-1924* (Austin: Univ. of Texas Press, 1984), Mary A. Renda, *Taking Haiti: Military Occupation & the Culture of US Imperialism* (Chapel Hill: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 2001), John S. D. Eisenhower, *Intervention! The United States and the Mexican Revolution, 1913-1917* (New York: Norton, 1993) and John M. Hart, *Revolutionary Mexico: The Coming and Process of the Mexican Revolution* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1987).

General works on recent military interventions have stressed their complex origins and unintended consequences within the political and social contexts of both the imperial power and the nation and/or region that experiences the intervention. For examples see Chalmers Johnson, *Blowback: The Costs and Consequences of American Empire* (New York: Henry Holt, 2004) and the same author's *The Sorrows of Empire: Militarism, Secrecy, and the End of the Republic* (New York: Henry Holt, 2004), Andrew Bracevich, *The New American Militarism: How Americans Are Seduced by War* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 2005), and David Rieff, *At the Point of a Gun: Democratic Dreams and Armed Intervention* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2005).

<sup>6</sup> West India and Panama Telegraph Company "Annual Reports of Directors," November 23, 1870, 2, November 21, 1871, 1-2, and November 17, 1872, 2, Cable and Wireless Archive, Porthcurno, England (hereinafter CWA) and Jorma Ahvenainen, *The History of the Caribbean Telegraphs before the First World War* (Helsinki: Finnish Academy of Science and Letters, 1996), 27-30.

<sup>7</sup> Brazilian Submarine Telegraph Company, "Reports of the Directors (biannual) for 1874-1879, CWA; *London Times*, April 12, 1875, 8, October 28, 1875, 7, March 31, 1876, 10, and October 6, 1879, 4; Jorma Ahvenainen, *The European Cable Companies in South America before the First World War* (Helsinki: Finnish Academy of Science and Letters, 2004), 127-153, and Daniel Headrick, *The Invisible Weapon: Telecommunications and International Politics, 1851-1945* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1991), 35-40.

<sup>8</sup> David Pletcher, *The Diplomacy of Trade and Investment* (Columbia: Univ. of Missouri Press, 1998), 114-147, 280-298, LaFeber, *The American Age*, 157-191, Thomas Schoonover, *The United States in Central America, 1866 - 1911: Episodes of Social Imperialism and the Imperial Rivalry in the World System* (Durham: Duke Univ. Press, 1991), 1-11, 46-96, and Kyle Longley, *Eagle's Shadow*, 48-130. On the German intervention in Nicaragua see Thomas Schoonover, *Germany in Central America: Competitive Imperialism, 1821-1929* (Tuscaloosa: Univ. of Alabama Press, 1998), 75-76. For additional information on German influence in the Western Hemisphere in this period see Ian Forbes, "German Informal Imperialism in South America before 1914," *Economic History Review*, 31 (August, 1978), 384-398.

Panama had a record of social instability from the 1850s. The California gold rush made the isthmus a busy transit zone, and the consequent intermingling of gold-seekers and Panamanians created tensions that resulted in the "watermelon riot" of 1856 which took the lives of about twenty people and destroyed much of Panama City. In the aftermath, the United States carried out a brief armed intervention. See Mercedes Chen Daley, "The Watermelon Riot: Cultural Encounters in Panama City, April 15, 1856," *Hispanic American Historical Review* 70 (February, 1990), 85-108 and John H. Kemble, *The Panama Route, 1848-1869* (New York: Da Capo, 1972).

<sup>9</sup> *New York Times*, March 18, 1885, 8, Secretary of State Bayard to Henry Hall (telegram) March 16, 1885 in United States Department of State, *Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States, 1885* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1886), 87, *New York Tribune*, April 25, 1885, 1, April 26, 1885, 1, and April 27, 1885, 1. On Barrios and Guatemala's drive for the unification of Central America see Thomas Karnes, *The Failure of Union: Central America, 1824-1960* (Chapel Hill: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1961), 152-63, David McCreery, *Development and the State in Reforma Guatemala* (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University, Center for International Studies, 1983), Ralph Lee Woodward, *Central America: A Nation Divided* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1999), Chapter 6, Jorge Mario García Laguardia, *La Reforma Liberal en Guatemala, vida política y orden constitucional* (Guatemala: Editorial Universitaria de Guatemala, 1985), and Steven Palmer, "Central American Union or Guatemalan Republic? The National Question in Liberal Guatemala, 1871-1885," *The Americas*, vol. 49 (April, 1993), 513-430.

<sup>10</sup> For a brief account of the 1885 intervention, see Ivan Musicant, *The Banana Wars: A History of United States Military Intervention in Latin America from the Spanish-American War to the Invasion of Panama* (N.Y.: Macmillan, 1990), 81-96.

<sup>11</sup> Kenneth Hagan, *American Gunboat Diplomacy and the Old Navy, 1877-1889* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood, 1973), 160-187, and Daniel H. Wicks, "Dress Rehearsal: United States Intervention on the Isthmus of Panama, 1885," *Pacific Historical Review* 49 (1980), 581-605. For a valuable perspective on the U.S. Navy in the 1880s see Wicks, "New Navy and New Empire: The Life and Times of John Grimes Walker" (Univ. of California,

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Berkeley dissertation, 1979), especially pp. 38-207 and 376-428. For the number of U.S. Marines and sailors on shore, see the *New York Tribune*, April 22, 1885, 5.

<sup>12</sup> McCullough, *Path*, 170-174, Mack, *Land Divided*, 342, and Delpar, "Colombia: Troubled Friendship," 70-71.

<sup>13</sup> Anderson quote in Randall, *Colombia and the United States*, 69.

<sup>14</sup> Musicant, *Banana Wars*, 82-96, Hagan, *Gunboat Diplomacy*, 160-187, and McCullough, *Path*, 153-181.

<sup>15</sup> Delpar, "Colombia: Troubled Friendship," 70-74, Musicant, *Banana Wars*, 86-86, and McCullough, *Path*, 175-177. The complexities of Colombian politics and international relations are examined in Gonzalo Espana, *La guerra civil de 1885: Nuñez y la derrota del radicalismo* (Bogotá: El Ancora Editores, 1985), Gustavo Otero Muñoz, *Un hombre y una época: La vida azarosa de Rafael Nuñez* (Bogotá: Editorial ABC, 1951), and Gregorio Selser, *El rapto d Panama: de cómo los Estados Unidos se apropiaron del canal* (Ciudad Universitaria Rodrigo Facio, Costa Rica: Editorial Universitaria Centroamericana, 1977), 48-133.

<sup>16</sup> Paraphrases of the telegram in *New York Tribune*, April 2, 1885, 1. See also the *New York Times*, same date, 1.

<sup>17</sup> *New York Tribune*, April 2, 1885, 1. See also *Chicago Tribune*, April 2, 1885, 2, *San Francisco Examiner*, April 2, 1885, 1, and *New Orleans Daily Picayune*, April 2, 1885, not paginated.

<sup>18</sup> *New York Tribune*, April 3, 1885, 1 and April 7, 1885, 1, *Report of Commander McCalla Upon the Naval Expedition to the Isthmus of Panama* (Washington: US Government Printing Office, 1885), 3-11, and Bowman McCalla, "Memoirs of a Naval Career" (typescript, 1910), Manuscripts Division, Library of Congress, Chapter XIII. See also Paolo E. Coletta, *Bowman Hendry McCalla: A Fighting Sailor* (Washington, D.C.: University Press of America, 1979), 42-44 and Hagan, *Gunboat Diplomacy*, 172-182. Secretary of the Navy William Whitney also relied on the telegraph to continue to send orders to the Brooklyn Navy Yard and other facilities, and to make arrangements with the Pacific Mail Steamship Company to send US marines to Panama via that company's steamships. See Mark D. Hirsch, *William C. Whitney: Modern Warwick* (New York: Dodd, Mead, 1948), 270-72. On the limitations involving the use of the telegraph to transmit detailed commands from Washington to Panama, see Wicks, "Dress Rehearsal," 583.

<sup>19</sup> *Report of Commander McCalla*, 11-16, *New York Times*, April 25, 1885, 1, *New York Tribune*, April 25, 1885, 1, and Hagan, *Gunboat Diplomacy*, 182-187.

<sup>20</sup> *New York Tribune*, April 26, 1885, 1, Wicks, "Dress Rehearsal," 593, Coletta, *McCalla*, 44-46, and Hagan, *Gunboat Diplomacy*, 177.

<sup>21</sup> *New York Tribune*, April 27, 1885, 1. McCalla defended his decision to occupy the CSA cable station and central Panama City in his "Memoirs of a Naval Career," Chapter 13, pp. 12-15.

<sup>22</sup> Whitney to Jouett, April 2, 1885, Jouett to Whitney, April 25, 1885, McCalla's "Notice to the Public (in Panama City), April 24, 1885, all in US Congress, *Use by the United States of Military Force...*, 120-141, and *Report of Commander McCalla*, 12-18. Jouett's telegram to the Navy Department received wide circulation in the US press. See *New York Times*, April 26, 1885, 5, *New York Tribune*, April 26, 1885, 1, and *Chicago Tribune*, April 26, 1885, 9. Hagan, *Gunboat Diplomacy*, 184-187.

<sup>23</sup> Walker to McCalla, April 6, 1885, John G. Walker Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, DC. Partial quote in Hagan, *Gunboat Diplomacy*, 181. See also Wicks, "Dress Rehearsal," 590-592. McCalla expressed his interest in the U.S. press and public reactions to the intervention in his "Memoirs of a Naval Career," Chapter XIII, 15-16.

<sup>24</sup> Wicks, "Dress Rehearsal," 593. The potential for the release of information in the press to cause problems was exemplified by the unexplained publication a terse telegram from Commander Kane of the *Galena*, dated April 2, to the State Department in Washington stating his concern that Colombian authorities would promptly release any of the rebels captured by U.S. forces in the event that he or any other officer turned their prisoners over to local officials. The publication of this telegram caused several hostile exchanges between Colombian and U.S. diplomats. See Hagan, *Gunboat Diplomacy*, 177-178.

<sup>25</sup> *Chicago Tribune*, April 25, 1885, 3 and *San Francisco Examiner*, April 25, 1885, 1.

<sup>26</sup> *New Orleans Daily Picayune*, April 26, 1885 and April 28, 1885, both on editorial page (not paginated).

<sup>27</sup> *New York Tribune*, April 29, 1885, 1. For King's supportive coverage of US forces, see the *New York Tribune*, April 11, 1885, 1 and April 22 through May 2, 1885. Most articles appeared on page 1. Historian Mercedes Chen Daley argues that Presta led an anti-foreign (largely anti-US) movement with an extensive social base of support. See her "The Watermelon Riot," 85-108.

<sup>28</sup> *New York Times*, Sept. 4, 1885, 3, Becerra and Holguin to Bayard, July 31, 1885 and Becerra to Bayard, August 28, 1885 in US Department of State, *Papers Relating...1885*, 279-280.

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<sup>29</sup> Robert Coontz, *From Mississippi to the Sea*, (Philadelphia: Dorrance, 1930), 92. For photographic corroboration of the Coontz version, see McCullough, *Path*, 96. For differing accounts see *New York Times*, September 4, 1885, 3 and *New York Tribune*, Sept. 4, 1885, 1.

<sup>30</sup> Keegan, *Intelligence in War*, 18-25 and Palmer, *Command at Sea*, 210-250

<sup>31</sup> David Paul Nickles, *Under the Wire: How the Telegraph Changed Diplomacy* (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 2003), Arthur Lubow, *The Reporter Who Would Be King: A Biography of Richard Harding Davis* (New York: Scribner's, 1992), Joyce Milton, *The Yellow Kids: Foreign Correspondents in the Heyday of Yellow Journalism* (New York: Harper & Row, 1989), Clarence Brown, *The Correspondents' War: Journalists in the Spanish-American War* (New York: Scribners, 1967). W. Joseph Campbell, *Yellow Journalism: Puncturing Myths, Defining Legacies* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2001), Philip Knightly, *The First Casualty From the Crimea to Vietnam: The War Correspondent as Hero, Propagandist, and Myth Maker* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1975), 55-78, and Thomas Pakenham, *The Boer War* (New York: Random House, 1979), 171-72, 289-91, and 378-85.

<sup>32</sup> Wicks, "Dress Rehearsal," 600 and *New York Tribune*, April 29, 1885, 1..

<sup>33</sup> Smith, *Talons of the Eagle*, 53.

<sup>34</sup> Milton, *Yellow Kids*, W. Joseph Campbell, *Yellow Journalism: Puncturing the Myths, Defining the Legacies* (Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 2001), Brown, *The Correspondents' War*, Joseph E. Wisan, *The Cuban Crisis as Reflected in the New York Press* (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1934, reprinted in New York: Octagon Books, 1977).

<sup>35</sup> Louis A. Peñerez, Jr. *The War of 1898: The United States and Cuba in History and Historiography* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998), G. J. A. O'Toole, *The Spanish War: An American Epic – 1898* (New York: Norton, 1984), David Trask, *The War with Spain in 1898* (Lincoln: Univ. of Nebraska Press, 1918), Antonio Elorza and Elena Hernández Sandoise, *La guerra de Cuba (1895-1898): Historia política de una derrota colonial* (Madrid: Alianza Editorizl, 1998), Ivan Musicant, *Empire by Default: The Spanish-American War and the Dawn of the American Century* (New York: Henry Holt, 1998), Joseph Smith, *The Spanish-American War: Conflict in the Caribbean and the Pacific* (London: Longman, 1994), Emilio Roig de Leuchsenring, *La guerra libertadora cubana de los treinta años, 1868-1898* (Havana: Oficina del Historiador de la Ciudad de Havana, 1952, and the same author's *Cuba y los Estados Unidos, 1805-1898* (Havana: Sociedad Cubana de Estudios Historicos e Internacionales, 1949).

The aftermath of the Spanish-American War and the U.S. acquisition of the Panama Canal Zone (1903) saw a continuation of armed interventions in the circum-Caribbean area. The Venezuelan debt crisis led to an armed blockade executed by the German, British, and Italian navies. This European intervention prompted President Theodore Roosevelt to issue his Corollary to the Monroe Doctrine to discourage similar actions. The Roosevelt Corollary, however, formed a rationalization for the United States intervention in the Dominican Republic in 1904 and other interventions elsewhere in the Caribbean that often combined financial controls with the use of force. These interventions are important in their own right, but they utilized communications technology that, with exception of radio telegraphy, was available in the 1890s and don't figure prominently in this brief essay. An important new trend did emerge in the political and journalistic criticisms of these interventions – a trend that intensified in the later 1910s and the 1920s. Among the many commendable studies of these events are: Nancy Mitchell, *The Danger of Dreams: German and American Imperialism in Latin America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999), Miriam Hood, *Gunboat Diplomacy: Great Power Pressure in Venezuela, 1895-1905* (New York: A.S. Barnes, 1977), G. Pope Atkins and Larman C. Wilson, *The Dominican Republic and the United States: From Imperialism to Transnationalism* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1998), Mary A. Renda, *Taking Haiti: Military Occupation and the Culture of U.S. Imperialism, 1915-1940* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001), Michael Gobat, *Confronting the American Dream: Nicaragua Under U.S. Imperial Rule* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005), David Dent, *The Legacy of the Monroe Doctrine: a Reference Guide to U.S. Involvement in Latin America and the Caribbean* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood, 1999), and Richard Collin, *Theodore Roosevelt's Caribbean: The Panama Canal, the Monroe Doctrine, and the Latin American Context* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1990).

<sup>36</sup> On developments in the military use of communications in this period, see Hugill, *Global Communications*, 139-158, Raines, *Getting the Message Through*, 81-118, 105-254, and Maurer Maurer, *Aviation in the U.S. Army, 1919-1939* (Washington: Office of Air Force History, 1987), 3-188. On improvements in communication and transportation in private businesses, see Ahvenainen, *Caribbean Telegraphs*, 123-195 and *European Cable Companies*, 231-387, Headrick, *Invisible Weapon*, 73-137, Pletcher, *Trade and Investment*, 237-298, J. Fred Rippy, *Latin America and the Industrial Age* (New York: Putnam's, 1947), 30-176, Thomas O'Brien, *The Century of U.S. Capitalism in Latin America* (Albuquerque: Univ. of New Mexico Press, 1999), 25-56, and the articles in Steven

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Topik and Allen Wells (eds.), *The Second Conquest of Latin America: Coffee, Henequen, and Oil, during the Export Boom 1850-1930* (Austin: Univ. of Texas Press, 1998).

<sup>37</sup> Ernest Gruening, "The Man Who Brought Mexico Back," *Colliers* 72 (Sept. 29, 1923), 7, 26-27, "Up in Arms Against Ignorance," *Colliers* 72 (Dec. 1, 1923), 8, 32-33 and a series of articles under the title "Emerging Mexico" in *The Nation* 120 (June 10, 17, and 24, 1925), 649-51, 683-85, 713-15 and 121 (July 1, 1925), 28-32. See also his "The New Era in Mexico," *The Century* 109 (March, 1925) and *Mexico and Its Heritage* (New York: Century, 1928). The anti-interventionist editorial appeared in *The Nation*, 124 (January 26, 1927), 80. For the larger context see Ernest Gruening "Experiencias y comentarios sobre el Me□xico post-revolucionario." Interview with Eugenia Meyer (Me□xico: Instituto Nacional de Antropolog□a y Historia, 1970), Josefina Vasquez and Lorenzo Meyer, *Mexico frente a los Estados Unidos: Un ensayo histórico, 1776-1980* (Mexico City: El Colegio de Me□xico, 1982), Alan Knight, *U.S.-Mexican Relations, 1910-1940: An Interpretation* (San Diego: Center for U.S.-Mexican Studies, University of California, San Diego, 1987), John A. Britton, "In Defense of Revolution: American Journalists in Mexico, 1920-1929," *Journalism History* 5 (Winter, 1978-79), 124-130, 136 and *Revolution and Ideology: Images of the Mexican Revolution in the United States* (Albuquerque: Univ. Press of Kentucky, 1995), 25-76 and Eugenia Meyer, *Conciencia histórica norteamericana sobre la revolución □n de 1910* (Mexico: Instituto Nacional de Antropolog□a e Historia, 1970). For the ideas of President Venustiano Carranza's anti-interventionist supporters see Antonio Manero, *Me□xico y la solidaridad americana: La Doctrina Carranza* (Madrid: Editorial-America, 1918) and Hermila Galindo, *La Doctrina Carranza y el acercamiento indolatino* (Mexico City: no publisher given, 1919). On Pancho Villa's raid into New Mexico and its international repercussions see Friedrich Katz, *The Life and Times of Pancho Villa* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford Univ. Press, 1998), Alberto Calzad□az Barrera, *Porque Villa ataco □ a Columbus: Intriga internacional* (Mexico City: Editores Mexicanos Unidos, 1972), and Ruben Osorio Zun□iga, *Pancho Villa, ese desconocido* (Ciudad Chihuahua: Ediciones del Estado de Chihuahua, 1991).

<sup>38</sup> On the Marine campaign and its consequences in Nicaragua see Neill Macaulay, *The Sandino Affair* (Durham: Duke Univ. Press, 1985), Gobat, *Confronting the American Dream*, 203-266, Oscar Rene □ Vargas, *Florencio □ al filo de la espada: El movimiento de Sandino, 1926-1929* (Managua: CEREN, 1995), and Volker Wunderlich, *Sandino: Una biograph□a pol□itica* (Managua: Nueva Nicaragua, 1995). Beals' series of articles appeared under the title "With Sandino in Nicaragua," *The Nation*, 126 (Feb. 22, 29, March 7, 14 and 21, all 1928), 204-06, 232-33, 260-61, 288-89, 314-17. See especially his "Sandino: Bandit or Patriot?" *The Nation*, 126 (March 28, 1928), 340-41. Beals telegrams to the *Nation* dated Feb. 10, 18, and 27 are in the Carleton Beals Collection. Vicente Saenz, *Hispanoamerica contra el colonaje* (Mexico city: Union Democratica Centroamericana, 1949), Collection, Mugar Memorial Library, Boston University. See also John A. Britton, *Carleton Beals: A Radical Journalist in Latin America* (Albuquerque: Univ. of New Mexico Press, 1987), 68-86.

<sup>39</sup> Richard V. Salisbury, *Anti-Imperialism and International Competition in Central America* (Wilmington, Del.: Scholarly Resources, 1989), 99-129. Several Latin American writers contributed to anti-interventionist literature and expanded their positions to include indictments of imperialism. Some examples include Vi □ctor Rau □l Haya de la Torre, *El antimperialismo y el APRA* (Santiago: Ediciones Ercilla, 1936), Vicente Sa □enz, *Norteamericanizaci □n de Centro America* ( San Jose □ de Costa Rica: Talleres de la Opini □n, 1925) and his *Hispano Ame □ □ □rica contra el coloniaje* (Mexico City: Unio □n Democra □tica Centroamericana, 1949), Manuel Ugarte, *El destino de un continente* (Madrid: Editorial Mundo Latino, 1923) translated as *The Destiny of a Continent* (New York: Knopf, 1925) and Norberto Galasso, *Manuel Ugarte y la lucha por la unidad latinoamericana* (Buenos Aires: Ediciones Corregidor, 2001)

<sup>40</sup> The Caribbean Basin and the Gulf of Mexico formed a significant arena of conflict in World War II with German submarines sinking over 400 vessels in 1942. This German armed intervention led to a series of unsuccessful countermeasures from the U.S. Army Air Corps and the U.S. Navy. Both Germany and the United States relied on radio, radar, and sonar. The U.S. press voluntarily practiced the exceptional policy of self censorship on this Western Hemisphere theater of war in order to avoid creating panic in the United States. The sinking of oil tankers and cargo ships received little or no coverage in U.S. newspapers, and the bumbling anti-submarine campaign escaped press criticism. See the following publications: Clay Blair, *Hitler's U-boat War: The Hunters* (New York: Random House, 1996) 493-700, Stetson Conn, Rose C. Engleman, and Byron Fairchild, *United States Army in World War II: The Western Hemisphere, Guarding the United States and Its Outposts* (Washington, D.C.: Office of the Chief of Military History, U.S. Army, 1964), 409-441, and William Hochstuhel, *German U-Boat 156 Brought War to Aruba, February 16, 1942* (Oranjestad, Aruba: Aruba Scholarship Foundation, 2001). For an examination of the German submarine offensive along the coast of the United States see Michael Gannon, *Operation Drumbeat* (New York: Harper and Row, 1993).

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<sup>42</sup> Mark Gilderhus, *The Second Century: U.S.-Latin American Relations Since 1889* (Wilmington, Del.: Scholarly Resources, 2000), Chapters 4-6, Alan McPherson, *Intimate Ties, Bitter Struggles: The United States and Latin America Since 1945* (Washington, D.C.: Potomac Books, 2006), Kyle Longley, *In the Eagle's Shadow: The United States and Latin America* (Wheeling, Illinois: Harlan Davidson, 2002), Chapters 6-8, and Clara Nieto, *Masters of War: Latin America and U.S. Aggression from the Cuban Revolution Through the Clinton Years* (New York: Seven Stories Press, 2003).

<sup>43</sup> Trumbull Higgins, *The Perfect Failure: Kennedy, Eisenhower, and the CIA at the Bay of Pigs* (New York: Norton, 1987), Richard Welch, *Response to Revolution: The United States and the Cuban Revolution* (Chapel Hill: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1985), 64-86, Thomas G. Paterson, "Fixation with Cuba: The Bay of Pigs, Missile Crisis, and the Covert War Against Fidel Castro," in Thomas G. Paterson (ed.) *Kennedy's Quest for Victory: American Foreign Policy, 1961-1963* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1989), 123-138, Lawrence Freedman, *Kennedy's Wars: Berlin, Cuba, Laos, and Vietnam* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 2000), 123-160, Max Frankel, *High Noon in the Cold War: Kennedy, Khrushchev, and the Cuban Missile Crisis* (New York: Ballantine Books, 2004), and Nieto, *Masters of War*, 61-79.

<sup>44</sup> *New York Times*, February 24, 1957, 1, 34, February 25, 1, 11, and February 26, 1957, 13, Anthony DePalma, *The Man Who Invented Fidel: Castro, Cuba, and Herbert L. Matthews of the New York Times* (New York: Public Affairs, 2006), William E. Ratliff (ed.) *The Selling of Fidel Castro: The Media and the Cuban Revolution* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction Books, 1987), Tad Szulc, *Fidel: A Critical Portrait* (New York: Morrow, 1986), 486-491, Welch, *Response to Revolution*, and Thomas G. Paterson, "Fixation with Cuba," 123-138

<sup>45</sup> Paterson, "Fixation with Cuba," 140-145, Gilderhus, *The Second Century*, 178-84, Freedman, *Kennedy's Wars*, 161-245, Robert F. Kennedy, *Thirteen Days: A Memoir of the Cuban Missile Crisis* (New York: Norton, 1971), 25-34, Curtis Utz, *Cordon of Steel: The U.S. Navy and the Cuban Missile Crisis* (Washington: Naval Historical Center, 1993), Mary S. McAuliffe (ed.) *CIA Documents on the Cuban Missile Crises, 1962* (Washington, DC: Central Intelligence Agency, 1992), and "NSA and the Cuban Missile Crisis," [www.nsa.gov/cuba](http://www.nsa.gov/cuba). For the US military's pre-missile crisis contingency planning for an invasion of Cuba see Michael C. Desch, *When the Third World Matters: Latin America and United States Grand Strategy* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993), chapter 4.

<sup>46</sup> LaFeber, *American Age*, 601 and Vladislav Zubok and Constantine Pleshakov, *Inside the Kremlin's Cold War from Stalin to Khrushchev* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1996), 66-67.

<sup>47</sup> Montague Kern, Patricia Levering, and Ralph Levering, *The Kennedy Crises: The Press, the Presidency, and Foreign Policy* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1983), 99-140, Paterson, "Fixation with Cuba," 142-155 and the same author's *Meeting the Communist Threat from Truman to Reagan* (New York: Oxford, 1988), chapter 10 and Stephen Rabe, *The Most Dangerous Area in the World: John K. Kennedy Confronts Communist Revolution in Latin America* (Chapel Hill: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1999).

<sup>48</sup> John Coatsworth, *Central America and the United States: The Clients and the Colossus* (New York: Twayne, 1994), George Black, *The Good Neighbor: How the United States Wrote the History of Central America and the Caribbean* (New York: Pantheon, 1988), Christopher Dickey, *With the Contras: A Reporter in the Wilds of Nicaragua* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1987), Gilderhus, *Second Century*, 222-233 Cynthia Arnon,

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<sup>50</sup> Cole, "The Planning and Execution of Joint Operations," 46-48 and Nieto, *Masters of War*, Chapter IX,. For more on press coverage of the 1989-90 intervention see Marc Cooper, "The Press and the Panama Invasion," *The Nation* 250 (June 18, 1990), 850-54, William Boot (Christopher Hanson), "Wading Around in the Media Pool," *Columbia Journalism Review* 28 (March, 1990), 18-20, Sonia Gutierrez-Villalobos and others, "Press Support for the U.S. Administration During the Panama Invasion: Analyses of Strategic and Tactical Critiques in the Domestic Press," *Journalism Quarterly* 71 (Autumn, 1994), 618-627, and Physicians for Human Rights, "Panama: 'Operation Just Cause' – Human Costs of the U.S. Intervention," December 6, 1990, available on line at [www.physiciansforhumanrights.org](http://www.physiciansforhumanrights.org).

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