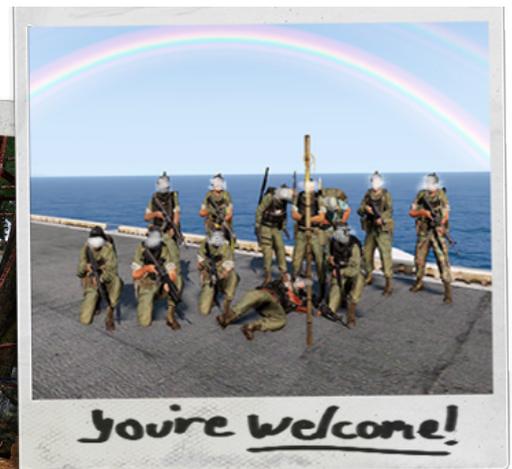


# Operation Sunday

**Operation Sunday** was a United States-led military operation conducted from November 27 to December 3, 1988, against the People's Republic of Sahrani (PRS) alliance forces occupying Costa Rica. The operation involved the largest U.S. amphibious assault since the Korean War and marked the first direct NATO involvement in Caribbean operations during the Cold War.



## Battle Information

Operation Sunday
<b>Part of:</b> Cold War, Central American Crisis
<b>Date:</b> November 27 – December 3, 1988
<b>Location:</b> Costa Rica, Caribbean
<b>Result:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Decisive Allied victory</li><li>• PRS withdrawal from Costa Rica</li><li>• Noriega extradition agreement</li><li>• 10-year PRS expansion moratorium</li></ul>

## Belligerents

United States & Allies	People's Republic of Sahrani
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<p><b>United States Marines:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 22nd Marine Expeditionary Unit <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ 89th Joint Task Force</li> <li>◦ 2nd Battalion, 6th Marines</li> <li>◦ 3rd Battalion, 6th Marines</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p><b>USSOCOM:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CIA "Goliath" Detachment</li> <li>• SEAL Team 8</li> </ul> <p><b>United Kingdom:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• HMS Invincible Task Group <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ 42 Commando Royal Marines</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p><b>PRS Forces:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2nd "Augusto Sandino" Division <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ 3rd "Marea Roja" Marine Battalion</li> <li>◦ 83rd "Morazán" Liberation Battalion</li> <li>◦ 18th Air Assault Battalion</li> <li>◦ Others</li> </ul> </li> <li>• 214th "Caribe" Coastal Defense Detachment</li> <li>• 42nd "Che Guevara" Separate Battalion</li> </ul> <p><b>Cuban Forces:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 26th International Brigade</li> </ul> <p><b>Soviet Forces:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 455th Technical Support Detachment (V-PVO)</li> <li>• 906th Separate Air Assault Battalion (VDV)</li> </ul>
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## Casualties

Allied	PRS/Soviet
<p><b>United States:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 47 killed</li> <li>• 178 wounded</li> </ul> <p><b>United Kingdom:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2 killed</li> <li>• 7 wounded</li> </ul> <p><b>Total:</b> 49 killed, 185 wounded</p>	<p><b>PRS:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1,340 killed</li> <li>• 2,180 wounded</li> <li>• 450 captured</li> <li>•</li> </ul> <p><b>Cuban:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 19 killed</li> <li>• 12 wounded</li> <li>• 8 captured</li> </ul> <p><b>Soviet:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 87 killed</li> <li>• 156 wounded</li> <li>• 23 captured</li> </ul> <p><b>Total:</b> 1,446 killed, 2,348 wounded, 481 captured</p>

## Background

The People's Republic of Sahrani alliance emerged in August 1984 following the Sahrani Accords, signed by Cuba, Nicaragua, and Guatemala as a defensive response to increased U.S. pressure in Central America. The alliance expanded to include El Salvador (1985), Dominica (1985), Suriname (1986), Guyana (1986), and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines (1987). The November 1988 accession of Panama under Manuel Noriega created an immediate crisis due to the alliance's control over Canal Zone approaches.

On November 24, 1988, PRS forces launched a coordinated invasion of Costa Rica, rapidly overwhelming the small Costa Rican Civil Guard and securing key population centers within 48 hours. The invasion followed Panama's controversial accession to the alliance three days earlier, which President Reagan had declared an "unacceptable threat to hemispheric security."

## Operation Phases

### Phase One: Initial Assault (November 27, 0600-1800)

The operation commenced with simultaneous amphibious landings by A Company at Sussundenga and B Company island-hopping operations targeting Mefunvo and Moya Islands. Intelligence failures immediately became apparent when B Company encountered significantly stronger resistance than assessed, including a T-55 main battle tank on Moya Island that pre-assault reconnaissance had completely missed.

A Company's coastal assault proceeded with minimal resistance, securing the Sussundenga beachhead within 45 minutes. The advance north along MSR 1 toward Chimoio encountered light resistance from PRS security positions conducting disciplined withdrawal. Chimoio was secured following coordinated assault operations, with no civilian casualties despite urban combat conditions.

The capture of Bakaho achieved strategic significance by securing intact fuel depot infrastructure totaling approximately 50,000 liters. A Company established initial positions before tactical withdrawal upon relief by C Company elements.

Naval facility elimination at Fernao Veloso Bay achieved complete success, with PRS forces caught unprepared. Only two of four Zhuk-class patrol boats were manned during the assault, with remaining vessels abandoned at dockside. Eight PRS naval personnel and one boat captain were captured.

### Phase Two: Personnel Recovery and IADS Elimination (November 27-28)

Following the loss of seven Marines during C Company contact operations, A Company conducted combined personnel recovery operations with CIA Goliath elements under enemy fire. All seven missing Marines were successfully recovered, though casualties included two KIA and five WIA evacuated in stable condition.

A USMC VMFP-3 RF-4 was shot down early the morning of the 28th. Aircrew recovery achieved partial success with the pilot recovered by Goliath elements following escape from enemy custody.

However, the Radar Intercept Officer remained missing in action.

Air defense elimination operations achieved priority objectives through coordinated ground assault against SA-3 GOA fixed sites and multiple SA-8 GECKO mobile batteries. The destruction of the SA-3 site with its P-37 BAR LOCK radar eliminated high-altitude air defense threats to friendly aircraft operations. Multiple SA-8 systems were destroyed, removing enemy shoot-and-scoot capability.

Critical enemy leadership elimination included Brigadier General Raúl Menéndez Tomassevich of the Cuban 26th International Brigade, who served as senior air defense advisor, and Colonel Francisco Herrera Campos of the PRS 214th Coastal Defense Detachment.

## Phase Three: Decisive Operations (November 28-29)

CIA Goliath special operations achieved decisive strategic impact through precision elimination of multiple enemy senior staff members, effectively destroying the 3rd "Marea Roja" Marine Battalion command structure. The elimination created cascading effects that disrupted coastal defense coordination completely.

The highest priority mission involved elimination of four CSS-N-2 Silkworm anti-ship missiles positioned near Pungwe Bay. Goliath operations successfully neutralized all identified launch sites, completely eliminating naval threats to USS Nassau and logistics shipping.

89th Joint Task Force operations focused on supply infrastructure destruction and elimination of enemy air assault capability. A major enemy supply dump was located and destroyed, with intelligence estimates indicating 60-70% of enemy ammunition stocks in the western sector were eliminated. The 18th Air Assault Battalion helicopter base was successfully destroyed through coordinated assault operations, eliminating multiple MI-17 and MI-24 helicopters and destroying enemy air assault capability.

The capture of eight personnel initially identified as PRS forces revealed they were actually Russian nationals serving as GRU contract soldiers in PRS special forces, confirming extensive Soviet military involvement exceeding previous assessments.

## The Soviet Confrontation (November 29)

The operation's most dangerous moment occurred when the 89th Joint Task Force, acting on intelligence about an enemy airfield construction site, conducted what they believed was an attack on a PRS facility. The target was actually a concealed VDV airborne company base, resulting in 87 Soviet KIA. President Reagan personally authorized the continuation of the attack after being informed mid-operation that Soviet personnel were present.

Soviet retaliation came 18 hours later when VDV forces ambushed a 2nd Battalion, 6th Marines convoy, resulting in 23 U.S. KIA and 67 WIA. The incident brought the superpowers to the brink of

direct confrontation, with Soviet Mediterranean Fleet units moving to intercept positions and Strategic Rocket Forces placed on heightened alert.

Back-channel negotiations through the Soviet Embassy in Mexico City prevented escalation, with Moscow agreeing to evacuation of remaining Soviet personnel in exchange for guaranteed safe passage and no further targeting of Soviet facilities.

## British Parallel Operations (November 28 - December 2)

HMS Invincible Task Group conducted simultaneous evacuation operations for Commonwealth nationals trapped in PRS territory. PRS authorities systematically obstructed evacuation efforts, implementing what British intelligence characterized as deliberate hostage-taking policies.

42 Commando Royal Marines conducted precision operations to extract 340 British nationals from Costa Rica, Dominica, and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines. The operations achieved complete success with minimal casualties despite PRS attempts to use civilian populations as human shields.

British operations provided valuable intelligence sharing and additional naval gunfire support for U.S. forces, while Royal Navy air defense systems enhanced overall Allied maritime security in the operational area.

## Final Phase: PRS Collapse (November 30 - December 3)

The systematic elimination of enemy capabilities achieved strategic objectives as remaining PRS forces retreated northward with command structure in complete disarray. The 3rd "Marea Roja" Marine Battalion was rendered combat ineffective, the 83rd "Morazán" Liberation Battalion was crippled through supply destruction, and the 18th Air Assault Battalion was eliminated as an effective fighting force.

SEAL Team 8 conducted independent strategic operations against Cuban air assets, destroying multiple MiG-29 Fulcrum fighters, MiG-23 Flogger aircraft, and AN-12 Cub transport aircraft at Cuban airfields. These operations significantly degraded enemy air operations capability.

The approaching 2nd "Augusto Sandino" Division never reached the operational area, as PRS leadership initiated surrender negotiations following the loss of strategic capabilities and the Soviet confrontation's diplomatic ramifications.

## Aftermath and Settlement

# Intelligence Failures and Lessons

Operation Sunday revealed systematic intelligence underestimation of enemy capabilities during initial planning phases. Enemy defensive preparations, heavy weapons deployment, and command structure sophistication consistently exceeded assessment.

The presence of a Soviet VDV company went completely undetected until direct contact, highlighting critical gaps in technical intelligence collection in jungle terrain. The discovery that multiple "PRS" personnel were actually Russian GRU contract soldiers indicated deception operations that intelligence agencies failed to penetrate.

Human intelligence sources, particularly ex-Contra irregular networks, provided superior tactical intelligence compared to technical collection methods. The cooperation of local populations throughout the operation provided crucial intelligence on enemy movements and positions.

## Peace Agreement

PRS leadership agreed to comprehensive settlement terms on December 3, 1988:

- Complete withdrawal from Costa Rica within 30 days
- Extradition of Manuel Noriega to face U.S. drug trafficking charges
- Payment of \$2.8 billion in reparations to Costa Rica
- 10-year moratorium on member expansion
- Reduction of Cuban military advisors throughout alliance territory
- International monitoring of compliance

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