

By: Davis of Harris

H.R. No. 66

R E S O L U T I O N

1 WHEREAS, December 20, 2009, marks the 20th anniversary of the
2 launch of Operation Just Cause in Panama, and the members of the
3 401st Military Police Company, 720th Military Police Battalion, who
4 served in that campaign are most deserving of special tribute; and

5 WHEREAS, The 401st deployed to Panama in August 1989 to begin
6 a four-month rotation; while there, its duties included conducting
7 jungle patrols and Quick Reaction Force Operations, manning
8 security posts, providing law enforcement, and mounting heavily
9 armed defensive perimeters around the Southern Command
10 headquarters and the American high school in Panama City; and

11 WHEREAS, Conditions in Panama in 1989 were tense, and they
12 became increasingly stressed over the course of the company's
13 deployment; in May 1989, the National Assembly, under the influence
14 of General Manuel Noriega, annulled the result of that month's
15 presidential election; the following October, a coup attempt
16 against the government failed and its participants were executed;
17 to maintain his power, General Noriega relied more and more on a
18 paramilitary force whose lawlessness threatened the lives of U.S.
19 military personnel and foreign nationals; and

20 WHEREAS, Shortly before the 401st was due to return to Fort
21 Hood, President George H. W. Bush decided to remove General Noriega
22 by force; Operation Just Cause was set to begin in the early morning
23 hours of December 20, 1989, with the seizure of strategic
24 installations; before action commenced, the 401st moved out, fully

1 combat loaded, tasked with securing key highways, roads, and
2 facilities and with neutralizing Panamanian Defense Force patrols
3 in its area of operations; and

4 WHEREAS, On the first day of Just Cause, the 401st achieved
5 all of its objectives, including the taking of two locks on the
6 Panama Canal and the capture of one of two bridges over the canal on
7 the Pacific side; the seizure of that bridge was crucial to the
8 movement of U.S. mechanized infantry units that were charged with
9 assaulting targets in Panama City; and

10 WHEREAS, Probably the first military police company to
11 experience hostile fire during Just Cause, the 401st was also the
12 only MP unit to suffer the death of one of its members; Private
13 First Class Scott L. Roth, a machine gunner with the First Platoon,
14 was killed on December 20 during a firefight with a PDF patrol; and

15 WHEREAS, During the next several weeks, the company conducted
16 house-to-house searches, patrolled with repatriated Panamanian
17 police officers, assisted with the establishment of several police
18 stations, provided convoy escorts and security at Tocumen and
19 Torrijos airports, and escorted both prisoners and numerous
20 visiting VIPs; and

21 WHEREAS, The primary objectives of Just Cause were quickly
22 achieved; Guillermo Endara, whose electoral victory had been
23 annulled the previous spring, was inaugurated as president at a
24 U.S. military base immediately before the commencement of the
25 American invasion, and General Noriega surrendered on January 3,
26 1990; three days later, the 401st returned to Fort Hood; and

27 WHEREAS, Collectively, the members of this company were

1 awarded three Purple Hearts, one of them posthumously, together
2 with two Bronze Stars and several Army Commendation Medals; for its
3 overall actions, the company received the Valorous Unit Award; and

4 WHEREAS, The members of the 401st MP Company played an
5 instrumental role in restoring democratic governance in the
6 Republic of Panama, and all who served during that operation can
7 take pride in a job well done; now, therefore, be it

8 RESOLVED, That the House of Representatives of the 81st Texas
9 Legislature, 1st Called Session, hereby recognize December 20,
10 2009, as a Day of Remembrance in honor of the members of the 401st
11 Military Police Company who took part in Operation Just Cause and
12 extend to those courageous individuals sincere appreciation for
13 their service and sacrifice in this country's behalf; and, be it
14 further

15 RESOLVED, That an official copy of this resolution be
16 prepared for the 401st Military Police Company as an expression of
17 high regard by the Texas House of Representatives.