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Panama: U.S. Soldiers Under Investigation For Abuses During Invasion

by Deborah Tyroler

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According to the New York Times and Notimex, unidentified Army officials said two US soldiers are under investigation for killing Panamanian prisoners during the December invasion, and that at least one is likely to be charged with homicide. An Army official said inquiries were made into more than 60 cases of possible wrongdoing. The inquiries led to about 20 formal investigations. Most of these cases have been dismissed. The murder allegations against a senior noncommissioned officer in the 82nd Airborne at Fort Bragg, NC, and some other cases were first reported by Army Times, an independent newspaper that published an article about the case on March 19. A third homicide case, which is likely to lead to a charge of negligent homicide, involves a January incident in which a soldier is reported to have accidentally discharged his weapon, shooting a fellow soldier through the heart. Other investigations involved two apparent suicides by US soldiers in Panama in late December and mid-January; accusations that a soldier stole a gold watch from a prisoner, and that a US soldier distributed captured Panamanian weapons to US civilians in Panama so that they could help round up Panamanian soldiers. (Basic data from New York Times, 03/18/90; Notimex, 03/19/90)

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