

## E-10 2<sup>nd</sup> TERM COUNTRY PROFILES

### PANAMA

#### General Information

<i>Official Name:</i>	Republic of Panama
<i>Capital:</i>	Panama City
<i>Population:</i>	3,120,000
<i>Major Languages:</i>	Spanish and English
<i>Major Religions:</i>	Catholic
<i>Regional/Economic Organizational Membership:</i>	WTO, WHO, FTAA, OAS, IEDB, IFCA, ISO, FCA, UNI, UN, and the UNSC, etc.

#### Governmental System

The country of Panama is a Constitutional Democracy consisting of three layers of three branches of government; the executive and legislative, both in which officials are elected for 5-year terms and the judiciary branch in which members are elected by an independent appointed jury. A president presides over the executive branch, and has two vice-presidents. A seventy-two member unicameral Legislative assembly forms the legislative branch. The judicial branch is presided by a supreme court in which there are nine justices. The legislative branch also includes all tribunals and municipal courts. To elect officials, an autonomous Electoral Tribunal oversees voter registration, and the voting process as well as political party activity. It is mandatory for any citizen over the age of eighteen to vote.

#### Foreign Policy

Panama's foreign policy revolves around the existence of the Panama Canal, which is a man made canal that was constructed by the United States in the early 1900's. The United States controlled the canal from its opening in 1914 to 1978, and this secured a close relationship between the US and Panama. Analysts have ventured to say that if it weren't for the canal, Panama would not exist today. The canal enables Panama to have a strong presence in shipping and international trade.

#### Issues Summary

Issue 1: Drugs → The trafficking of illegal drugs has been a major problem in Panama. It is a heavily used cocaine transshipment point, and a capitol for narcotics distribution. The government has been lazy monitoring the trade and shipment of these drugs through the country, and corrupt officials have themselves accepted bribes to allow the marketing of these drugs.

Issue 2: Terrorism → Panama is an active advocate for the prevention of terrorism, because it is a current issue for the country itself. Panama's neighbor, Colombia, has an active revolutionary group who has been crossing over into Panama. Despite the rebel's assurance of no disruption, some U.S. officials are not sure the rebels can be trusted. They fear the rebels might target the

canal for publicity. Damage to the canal could inhibit international trade productivity through Panama. Currently, the US military has troops providing security in the canal area, and it is feared that without them, the canal would be opened up to terrorist attack.

### **Relationship with the United Nations**

Panama is a founding member of the United Nations and remains actively involved. It has been elected to serve five terms on the UN Security Council between the periods 1958-1959, 1972-1973, 1976-1977, 1982-1983 and 2007-2008, and it is also an active participant of several groups within the UN including SICA (Central American Integration System), the Rio Group, the Non-Aligned Movement, and the Group of 77. They are also the current chair of the CTC (Counter-Terrorism Committee) The 1973 Security Council meeting was held in Panama City, Panama, and many of the UN's regional offices are based in Panama including UNICEF (United Nations Children's Fund), WFP (World Food Program), OCHA (UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs), UNAIDS (Joint United Nations Program on HIV/AIDS), GEF (United Nations Global Environment Facility International), ISDR (Strategy for Disaster Reduction), DevoInfo LAC (Regional Information System for Latin America and the Caribbean), and UNDSS (United Nations Safety and Security). Panama participated in Peacekeeping Operations in 1974 with the deployment of 406 military observers to Suez.

### **Relationships with other United Nations Security Council Members**

China: Panama believes Taiwan is the rightful, legitimate government of China and has no diplomatic relations with the People's Republic of China.

Viet Nam: Panama and Viet Nam are currently attempting to build cooperative relations between their legislative bodies.

United States: Panama and the United States have very close ties with one another forged by the building of the Panama Canal. Because of this Panama will usually support the United States' vote on issues

Costa Rica: Though Panama and Costa Rica are geographic neighbors, they have a history of weak relations with one another. The two countries are cordial to one another relationships, but pass up opportunities to strengthen their ties.