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LETTER DATED 20 DECEMBER 1989 FROM THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE  
OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA TO THE UNITED NATIONS ADDRESSED  
TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL

In accordance with Article 51 of the Charter of the United Nations, I wish, on behalf of my Government, to report that United States forces have exercised their inherent right of self-defence under international law by taking action in Panama in response to armed attacks by forces under the direction of Manuel Noriega. As President Bush stated this morning, this United States action is designed to protect American lives and our obligations to defend the integrity of the Panama Canal treaties.

The United States undertook this action after consultation with the democratically-elected leaders of Panama - President Endara and Vice Presidents Arias Calderon and Ford - who have been sworn in and have assumed their rightful positions. They welcome and support our actions and have stated their intention to institute a democratic Government immediately. The United States has recognized and will restore normal relations with that Government.

The United States has exhausted every available diplomatic means to resolve peacefully disputes with Mr. Noriega, who has rejected all such efforts. Action by the United States was taken after Mr. Noriega, after assuming the role of "Head of Government" of Panama, declared on 15 December that a state of war existed with the United States, and following brutal attacks by forces of Mr. Noriega on lawfully present American personnel, murdering one American and injuring and threatening others.

United States forces will use only the force necessary to assure the safety of Americans and the integrity of the Panama Canal treaties. All feasible measures have been taken to minimize the risk of civilian damage or casualties.

I ask that you circulate the text of this letter as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) Thomas R. PICKERING

