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Emperors In The Jungle: The Hidden History Of The U.S. In Panama (American Encounters/Global Interactions)



Synopsis

Emperors in the Jungle is an exposé of key episodes in the military involvement of the United States in Panama. Investigative journalism at its best, this book reveals how U.S. ideas about taming tropical jungles and people, combined with commercial and military objectives, shaped more than a century of intervention and environmental engineering in a small, strategically located nation. Whether uncovering the U.S. Army's decades-long program of chemical weapons tests in Panama or recounting the invasion in December 1989 which was the U.S. military's twentieth intervention in Panama since 1856, John Lindsay-Poland vividly portrays the extent and costs of U.S. involvement. Analyzing new evidence gathered through interviews, archival research, and Freedom of Information Act requests, Lindsay-Poland discloses the hidden history of U.S.-Panama relations, including the human and environmental toll of the massive canal building project from 1904 to 1914. In stunning detail he describes secret chemical weapons tests of toxins including nerve agent and Agent Orange as well as plans developed in the 1960s to use nuclear blasts to create a second canal in Panama. He chronicles sustained efforts by Panamanians and international environmental groups to hold the United States responsible for the disposal of the tens of thousands of explosives it left undetonated on the land it turned over to Panama in 1999. In the context of a relationship increasingly driven by the U.S. antidrug campaigns, Lindsay-Poland reports on the myriad issues that surrounded Panama's takeover of the canal in accordance with the 1977 Panama Canal Treaty, and he assesses the future prospects for the Panamanian people, land, and canal area. Bringing to light historical legacies unknown to most U.S. citizens or even to many Panamanians, Emperors in the Jungle is a major contribution toward a new, more open relationship between Panama and the United States.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

“John Lindsay-Poland’s book *Emperors in the Jungle* should be read by all Americans who do not understand why the U.S. has a serious image problem overseas and how the Department of Defense weakens U.S. policy. My experience is that the U.S. military becomes arrogant, hypocritical and unwilling to comply with treaty commitments when there is a budgetary cost involved, even if it means like in Panama, leaving behind threats to human life, health and safety.”

— Fernando Manfredo Jr., former Panama Canal Treaty negotiator and co-Chairman of the Panama-U.S. Working Group for the removal of the hazards in the U.S. military ranges in Panama.

[John Lindsay-Poland] tells us of ill-known truths and badly understood realities and thus helps prevent useless hatreds between two peoples who share so much common history. Panamanians must aspire to be universal if we want to survive as a people and as a nation in a globalized world, but we can only achieve that if we are authentic. On that path toward ourselves, John Lindsay-Poland has been and will be a welcome friend.”

— Guillermo Castro, Panamanian sociologist, from the afterword

Emperors in the Jungle stands out as a most valuable contribution to understandings of the complex relationship between the United States and a tiny neighbor. It is one of the best available examples of Thucydides’s dictum that large nations do what they want, and small nations accept what they must, yet at the same time a reminder that small nations are not without power.

— after all is said and done, Panama now owns its canal.

— Lars Schoultz, author of *Beneath the United States: A History of U.S. Policy toward Latin America*

— John Lindsay-Poland has dedicated himself to issues of human rights and justice for Panamanians. His tireless efforts continue to motivate people and shed needed light on the truths he discovers. *Emperors in the Jungle* is a timeless look at the real dimensions of U.S. foreign policy.

— Barbara Trent, director of the Academy Award-winning documentary, *The Panama Deception*

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"Emperors in the Jungle" by John Lindsay-Poland, co-director of the Fellowship of Reconciliation Task Force on Latin America and the Caribbean, is a "must read" for Americans to understand what has indeed been "the hidden history of the U.S. in Panama."After the Spanish-American War, 1898, when with the acquisition of the Philippines, the United States became a Pacific power and before we had an armada in every body of water on earth, it became imperative that our navy be able to travel quickly between our interests across the Atlantic Ocean and our new interests in lands across the Pacific. The answer was a canal across the Isthmus of Panama. The story of U.S. manipulation and conquest of that land is splendidly told by Lindsay-Poland in "Emperors in the Jungle."As the granddaughter of one of those Americans who, escaping poverty in Ohio, helped build that canal, and the daughter of a woman born in a construction town flooded in the creation of Gatun Lake as part of that canal, as a patriot of Panama as well as of the United States, I was heartened to read an account of the history between these two countries as accurate and balanced as Lindsay-Poland's. I quarrel with only a couple small inaccuracies, for instance that Americans in Panama did not share with Panamanians the loss of certain consumer goods during World War II. As a child, I remember my mother and her sisters struggling to draw a line on the back of their calves to simulate the seam of silk stockings which were not available; and my dad's drinking rum for the duration as Scotch, too, had disappeared. While Lindsay-Poland accurately cites four reasons for the US invasion of Panama in 1989, I wonder whether Noriega's role in fostering the peace initiative of Contadora during the US wars in Central America might not have played a role. And when the news came out that the Stealth Bomber was used for the first time in combat during the invasion, I was reminded of Guernica and the bombing of that small town in Spain by Germans testing their bombers prior to World War II. According to my friends in Panama, the U.S. had the option of backing a coup to be rid of Noriega. We chose invasion instead. Interestingly, the two poorest neighborhoods in Panama City, Chorillo and San Miguelito, were badly damaged while richer areas, like Paitilla, escaped unscathed.

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Certain countries are testing grounds, very disturbing info. People need to wake up and look beyond

what the media tells us.

Just as advertized

This was a very interesting book about the USA's involvement in the shaping of Panama of today. Some of the chapters make you shake your head in disbelief!

Delivered earlier than advertised.Great condition.Have not read the book yet to add more comments.

It was exactly what I was looking for and in great condition! I enjoyed learning from the book and gaining a new perspective on the subject.

I thought I was reasonably well informed about U.S. history in Panama. While reading EMPERORS IN THE JUNGLE, I realized how many major events I hadn't known about. Among them are these:* The U.S. military intervened 20 times since 1856.* The U.S. wrote the one-sided 1903 canal treaty and basically imposed it on Panama.* The leading cause of death in building the canal was due to pneumonia and TB because of poor working and living conditions for the West Indian workforce.* The U.S. invasion in 1989 was the most violent event since Panama became independent in 1903.* The U.S. decided to invade and remove Noriega in 1989 even as we supported far more brutal generals in El Salvador and Guatemala.* The U.S. conducted extensive testing of chemical weapons in Panama.* The U.S. conducted a 14-year investigation (1956-1970) of using 250 nuclear weapons to excavate a new sea-level canal.* When the U.S. departed at the end of 1999, it left behind more than 800,000 acres adjacent to growing communities contaminated with tens of thousands of explosives, despite the fact that the 1977 canal treaty obligated the U.S. to first remove all threats to life, health and safety.John Lindsay-Poland obviously knows his subject well, especially his first-hand knowledge about negotiations in the 1990s to clean up the shooting ranges, which contained many generations of unexploded ordinance.In short, this book is an unsettling eye-opener for Americans who have heretofor settled for the heroic U.S. version of the canal construction and who didn't understand it when President Carter agreed to turn the Canal and the Canal Zone over to Panama. Some other reviewers take umbrage with a version of history where the US role has not always been heroic. In this case, it's better to recognize that history is not the sanitized version we were taught in school and wish it were.

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