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This month marks the 25th anniversary of the U.S.-led invasion of Panama. On December 20, 1989, President George H.W. Bush launched Operation Just Cause to execute an arrest warrant against Panamanian leader Manuel Noriega, once a close U.S. ally, on charges of drug trafficking. During the attack, the United States unleashed a force of 24,000 troops equipped with highly sophisticated weaponry and aircraft against a country with an army smaller than the New York City Police Department. We discuss the Panama invasion and how it served as a template for future U.S. military interventions with three guests: We are joined by Humberto Brown, a former Panamanian diplomat, and Greg Grandin, a professor of Latin American history at New York University and author of "The Empire of Necessity: Slavery, Freedom, and Deception in the New World." His new article for TomDispatch is "The War to Start All Wars: The 25th Anniversary of the Forgotten Invasion of Panama." We also speak with Col. Lawrence Wilkerson, former chief of staff to Secretary of State Colin Powell.

**AMY GOODMAN:** This is *Democracy Now!*, [democracynow.org](#), *The War and Peace Report*. I'm Amy Goodman, with Aaron Maté.

**AARON MATÉ:** This month marks the 25th anniversary of the U.S.-led invasion of Panama. Early in the morning of December 20th, 1989, President George H.W. Bush launched Operation Just Cause, sending tens of thousands of troops and hundreds of aircraft into Panama to execute an arrest warrant against its leader, Manuel Noriega, on charges of drug trafficking. General Noriega was once a close ally to Washington and on the CI  
A payroll. But after 1986, his relationship with Washington took a turn for the worse. During the attack, the U.S. unleashed a force of 24,000 troops, equipped with highly sophisticated weaponry and aircraft, against a country with an army smaller than the New York City Police Department.

The war was chronicled in the 1992 documentary, *The Panama Deception*, produced and directed by Barbara Trent.  
*The Panama Deception*

was banned in Panama, but it won an Oscar here for Best Documentary.

**PRESIDENT GEORGE H.W. BUSH:** One year ago, the people of Panama lived in fear under the thumb of a dictator. Today, democracy is restored. Panama is free.

**JOSÉ DE JESÚS MARTÍNEZ:** We are to say we invaded Panama because Noriega. I don't know how Americans can be so stupid to believe this. I mean, how can you be so stupid?

**MICHAEL PARENTI:** The performance of the mainstream news media in the coverage of Panama has been just about total collaboration with the administration. Not a critical perspective. Not a second thought.

**PETE WILLIAMS:** Our regret is that we were not able to use the media pool more effectively.

**REP. CHARLES RANGEL:** You would think, from the video clips that we had seen, that this whole thing was just a Mardi Gras, that the people in Panama were just jumping up and down with glee.

**VALERIE VAN ISLER:** They focused on Noriega, to the exclusion of what was happening to the Panamanian people, to the exclusion of the bodies in the street, to the exclusion of the number dead.

**REP. CHARLES RANGEL:** The truth of the matter is that we don't even know how many Panamanians we have killed.

**PETER KORNBLUH:** Panama is another example of destroying a country to save it. And the United States has exercised a might-makes-right doctrine among smaller countries of the Third World, to invade these countries, get what we want, and leave the people that live there to kind of rot.

**ROBERT KNIGHT:** The invasion sets the stage for the wars of the 21st century.

**AMY GOODMAN:** That last voice, Robert Knight, the late Robert Knight, a well-known host at WBAI, Pacifica Radio, in New York. That was part of the trailer for the Academy Award-winning 1992 documentary, *The Panama Deception*.

We're joined now by three guests: Humberto Brown, former Panamanian diplomat; Greg Grandin, professor of Latin American history at New York University, his most recent book, *The Empire of Necessity: Slavery, Freedom, and Deception in the New World*, his most recent [article](#) for *TomDispatch*, "The War to Start All Wars: The 25th Anniversary of the Forgotten Invasion of Panama"; and still with us in Washington, D.C., retired Colonel Lawrence Wilkerson, special assistant to the Joint Chiefs of Staff, which was chaired by General Colin Powell at the time of the invasion.

Greg Grandin, let's start with you. Why the 25th anniversary? What do you have to say, going back 25 years ago, is the most important thing to understand about what happened?

**GREG GRANDIN:** That the invasion of Panama took place a month after the fall of the Berlin Wall, and it really set the terms for future interventions in a number of ways. One, it was unilateral. It was done without the sanction of the United Nations, without the sanction of the Organization of American States, which was a fairly risky thing for the United States. It didn't

occur often, even during the Cold War. Two, it was a violation of national sovereignty, which of course the United States did often during the Cold War, but it was a violation—the terms of the violation changed. It was done in the name of democracy. It was argued—it was overtly argued that national sovereignty was subordinated to democracy, or the United States' right to adjudicate the quality of democracy. And three, it was a preview to the first Gulf War. It was a massive coordination of awesome force that was done spectacularly for public consumption. It was about putting the Vietnam syndrome to rest.

**AMY GOODMAN:** Talk about the effects, Humberto Brown—you were a Panamanian diplomat at the time—the effects of the U.S. invasion. The Pentagon said hundreds of people died; Panamanians said something like 3,000 people died in this attack. How long did it last?

**HUMBERTO BROWN:** Well, Amy, just in the first hour, we had had 200 and—about close to 400 bombs were dropped after midnight, devastating poor neighborhoods—El Chorrillo, Marañón, Caledonia. So it was devastating, because, one, the majority of the people who suffered consequences of it were poor people in the urban areas. And the elite, who was complicit to this, were—their neighborhoods were protected. They were safe. Some of them was removed from their homes and were placed in the Canal Zone. So it was two different approaches. One was intimidation and literally expressing no concern for the poor, in a way. So we think it was very devastating.

And it's interesting that at 25 years, this is the first time one of the presidents are talking about the need to answer the question about how many people died, how many people disappeared. And on Saturday, the new president, President Varela, said that he wanted to create a special commission to investigate what happened during the invasion, how many people died, because they're attempting to get a national reconciliation. The debate—there's always a debate in Panama, if we'd celebrate this as a day of mourning. The president calls it a day of reflection, and there's a sector that call it a day of liberation. So we still have a conflicting view of the impact of this invasion in Panama.

**AARON MATÉ:** And, Colonel Wilkerson in Washington, you were an aide to Colin Powell during this time. What's your understanding of why this attack took place?

**COL. LAWRENCE WILKERSON:** Well, my understanding was the understanding that the press reported. It was everything from attacks on or threatened attacks on our officers and men and women in the military in Panama to drug trafficking and extensive contacts with drug

gangs that had grown much larger than the contacts with the CIA had ever contemplated and so forth.

But I've got to say that in what I teach, you could learn a lot about U.S. operations in its own hemisphere. This was an operation, not so unique, as one of the speakers just suggested. Go back and look at Marine General Smedley Butler, in his testimony to the then Armed Forces Committee in the Congress, where he essentially compared himself to Al Capone, and he said, "Al Capone operated on one continent, I operated on two. I was a criminal for American commercial interest." We have invaded someone or interjected our military force into someone's territory in the Caribbean about 35 times since 1850. This is our hemisphere. The Monroe Doctrine is still operational. And we seem to think that we can interfere in anyone's country at any time. 2002, we tried to foment a coup in Caracas to overthrow Hugo Chávez.

**GREG GRANDIN:** I agree completely. The Cold War, though, did force the United States to operate under the legitimacy of multilateralism, and that's what gets swept away with Panama, with the invasion of Panama. And it does set the terms for future invasions. But I agree completely.

**AMY GOODMAN:** Greg Grandin, Noriega, his role and why the U.S. wanted him so badly, for years having worked with him, CIA asset, then took him and imprisoned him?

**GREG GRANDIN:** Well, in some ways, the Panama invasion is a capstone to Iran-Contra, to the 1980s, to the involvement of the United States in Nicaragua. Noriega was a key player in that, a shadowy player. I actually don't know—I mean, I'm a born and raised Catholic, but the mysteries of the national security state doesn't—you know, by far outstrips the mysteries of the trinity. I don't know—Noriega played both sides. He passed information on to Cuba at the same time he brokered deals with the Contras. He was an intermediary with the cartels in Colombia. All of this is the deep politics behind Iran-Contra. And Hersh, Seymour Hersh, published an article, I think in 1986, before actually Iran-Contra broke, in *The New York Times*, outlining Noriega's involvement in drug running and drug trafficking. And that really was the turning of the tide in terms of the U.S.'s involvement with Noriega.

It was actually under the Reagan administration that the federal judiciary issued some warrants

for drug trafficking and racketeering for Noriega. And if you—actually, Brent Scowcroft, who was the national security adviser for George H.W. Bush, has a very interesting interview, where he says, "You know, Noriega wasn't really high on our agenda." You know, what happened was that the Bush administration was kind of pushed by domestic politics, particularly to its bumbling of an October coup in Panama that it didn't handle very well, and it took a lot of criticism. And you go back and you actually look at the press, and the press was baiting the Bush administration for not dealing with this, for not being—for not supporting the coup plotters against Noriega. And in some ways, it's an interesting kind of trajectory, a kind of fumbling into the invasion.

**AMY GOODMAN:** I wanted to ask Lawrence Wilkerson, Colonel Lawrence Wilkerson, a question. There's a book written by Christopher O'Sullivan called *Colin Powell: American Power and Intervention from Vietnam to Iraq*

. And he writes, "Powell was aware that Noriega had been on the CIA

payroll for a quarter century. He had witnessed Noriega being feted as a savior of the Contras by Weinberger at the Pentagon. Support for Noriega had been so staunch that for a time the Reagan administration impeded investigations into allegations of his drug trafficking. The U.S. Drug Enforcement Agency had even awarded him with a commendation for his contributions to the 'war on drugs.' Powell observed that the Reagan and Bush administrations should have known that 'you could not buy Manuel Noriega, but you could rent him.'" Then O'Sullivan writes, "With the Cold War ending and the obsessive fear about Nicaragua dissipating, Noriega's usefulness to Washington evaporated. He also took the fateful step of endorsing the Contadora Peace Process for Central America." Your comments on this?

**COL. LAWRENCE WILKERSON:** I think that's—it's summary, to be sure, but it's a pretty good summary of some of the things that happened. And Powell was deputy national security adviser and then national security adviser in the last year of the Reagan second administration, so he was up close and personal watching these things. There's more to it. Some of it's still classified. But U.S. machinations in that region of the world, from El Salvador to Honduras today, where we supported the heinous overthrow of the leader of Honduras and installed our man, so to speak, is well known to anyone inside the community. As I said before, this is how we deal with our hemisphere.

**AARON MATÉ:** Humberto Brown, on that issue of the U.S. role in the hemisphere, the U.S. has a long history with Panama, going decades back, long aligning itself with the light-skinned European elite. Can you talk about this history, this background to the Panama invasion?

**HUMBERTO BROWN:** Sure. Well, from an internal process of Panama itself, right, not U.S.-only foreign policy, but I think that invasion represented a move of the U.S. to make sure that when the Panama Canal was returned to Panama, that the government in power was the elite that they was accustomed to relate to. If you see who became the government installed by the U.S., was the former oligarchy and their representative. So, it wasn't only that Noriega no longer served the U.S. interests, but the internal conflict in Panama over governance, control of the resources. There was a lot of concern that the Panamanian—if Panama Canal got transferred to Panama and you still have the military in power, that that will give them an advantage over resources, because they would have the control of the resources that you made from just administrating the canal. So it also was to shift the correlation of forces within Panama.

I also think that it's very important when we discuss Panama, I think it's the same problem we face today. When we discuss 9/11, we talk about the victims, and we all understand what it means to feel vulnerable and be innocent, but pay the price for the life and the people who disappear and get killed. In Panama, we still have no answers of how many people were killed. We still have families that don't have any answers of where their family disappeared to. And now that's the big question in Panama, I think. The U.S. occupation in Panama is a long history. From 1903, when they supported the oligarchy to become an independent country, to their intervention in every internal conflict in Panama, the U.S. was the force. For a long time in the history of Panama, the first 40 years, Panama policemen was never a force that could handle the internal process. They depended on the U.S. 14 military bases. And the U.S. defines politics and internal process of Panama. So, yes, you have the consolidation of what have been historical. The U.S. determined politics and all internal process in Panama and supported a small elite that are loyal to the U.S.

**AARON MATÉ:** You mentioned 9/11. In Panama, is the invasion regarded or marked in the same way that 9/11 is here?

**HUMBERTO BROWN:** Oh, definitely. For the majority of people in Panama, it's one of the most—what is it—traumatic experiences we have ever lived, because we're a Catholic country. To bomb a country when people are in the process of celebrating Christmas, bomb them at midnight, is something that is—I mean, it violates every basic international law, from the Geneva Convention or any agreement [inaudible] about protecting civilian in time of war.

**AMY GOODMAN:** I want to turn to President George H.W. Bush's announcement of the Panama invasion, which he made on December 20th, 1989.

**PRESIDENT GEORGE H.W. BUSH:** Last night, I ordered U.S. military forces to Panama. No president takes such action lightly. This morning, I want to tell you what I did and why I did it. For nearly two years, the United States, nations of Latin America and the Caribbean have worked together to resolve the crisis in Panama. The goals of the United States had been to safeguard the lives of Americans, to defend democracy in Panama, to combat drug trafficking and to protect the integrity of the Panama Canal Treaty. Many attempts have been made to resolve this crisis through diplomacy and negotiations. All were rejected by the dictator of Panama, General Manuel Noriega, an indicted drug trafficker.

**AMY GOODMAN:** There you have President George H.W. Bush. And, Greg Grandin, for people who do not remember this or who weren't born—we have many listeners who weren't born at the time of the invasion. You're a professor of Latin American history at New York University. He talked about the indicted drug trafficker, Manuel Noriega. But he was on the payroll of the CIA.

**GREG GRANDIN:** He was on the payroll of the CIA. He was on the payroll of the CIA. He was apparently working with the Cubans. He played—he played multiple roles within Panama that, as you mentioned, the CIA was willing to work with during the height of Iran-Contra. But things turned with the end of the Cold War, and he became inconvenient in some ways.

Going back to Humberto's point, I don't think we should downplay the racism of it—you know, Manuel Noriega coming from El Chorrillo, a neighborhood, a popular barrio, next to the Canal Zone, from migrant workers, most of them from the Caribbean, who helped build the Canal Zone. Noriega represented the lower classes, the dark lower classes. And think about the racism, if we go back and remember the way that it was presented in the press—his belief in witchcraft, his sorcery, right, the—you know, rifling through his underwear drawers. You know, the Marines—

**HUMBERTO BROWN:** *Cara de piña.*

**GREG GRANDIN:** Yeah, I mean, it was pretty intense, the racism.



**AMY GOODMAN:** And he is taken to the United States—

**GREG GRANDIN:** Yes.

**AMY GOODMAN:** —and imprisoned in Atlanta, Georgia?

**GREG GRANDIN:** Yes.

**AMY GOODMAN:** For how long was he imprisoned?

**GREG GRANDIN:** Well, he's still imprisoned. I mean, he's still—he was—you know, in that piece, I used the word "extradited," but it actually wasn't. U.S. actually didn't have an extradition treaty with Panama at the time, somebody corrected me. He was seized illegally and brought back to Florida, and then he was extradited to France. And he was in prison in France for a while, and then he was—now he's back in Panama. He was put on trial in Florida in a federal court in 1992. And what's interesting about that trial is that a number of government witnesses called actually confirmed Noriega's defense. And Noriega's defense was: "I was working for the CIA." And one particular witness confirmed that Noriega helped broker a deal in which a Colombian cartel passed \$10 million on to the Contras. This speaks to other issues having to do with the "Dark Alliance" series of Gary Webb that came out later. So this really kind of—you lift up the—you lift up Noriega, you lift up the Panama invasion, you both see the overt history of U.S. interventions that come later, but you see the deep politics of covert history, the national—the dark national security state that we still don't really—you know, that's still classified in many ways.

**AARON MATÉ:** Well, on that point, Colonel Wilkerson, I wanted to ask you: Do you see the Panama invasion as perhaps the model for the Iraq invasions that would come later on? I mean, here you have a tyrant, his worst crimes committed with U.S. support, then at some point either he disobeys or he misunderstands orders, then all of a sudden he's demonized in the corporate media and his country is invaded.

**COL. LAWRENCE WILKERSON:** My students study covert and overt U.S. operations from 1947 to the present. While we might sit back and wax eloquent about international law and about human rights and so forth, what the world is really about is power. The United States exercises its power clandestinely and overtly quite frequently, since the end of the Cold War more so than during the Cold War. We can argue about the reasons, and there are complex reasons, usually, for invasions like Panama. And we always put the rhetoric, as you played, Amy, George H.W. Bush in this case, up, about liberty and democracy and freedom and so forth, and it is rarely, if ever, about those commodities. What it's about is raw power—economic, financial, sometimes personal power. It's about power. And that's the way it is with great powers, and that's the way it is in the world. We can lament it all day long. It's still there confronting us every day.

**AMY GOODMAN:** But if you were to hold out hope, Colonel Wilkerson, do you think things can change? For example, you're calling for the prosecution of Bush administration officials. Is the reason for that is you think that U.S. policy can change?

**COL. LAWRENCE WILKERSON:** I also said I didn't think there was the political will or the political courage to hold those officials accountable. That's a comment on the state of our democratic federal republic, which is not very democratic these days. And gives me great pain to say it, but I don't see anything changing of a substantial nature until perhaps a profound crisis to us, something much more serious than 9/11, actually confronts us. I happen to think that that crisis is rapidly coming upon us. It's called climate change. And how we deal with that and how we make it through the next generation, as it were, is going to paint our republic in either very draconian terms, collapsing of its own perfidy, or it's going to resurrect it. I hope the latter. I'm optimistic in that regard. I hope the latter.

**AMY GOODMAN:** We have a few more minutes, and though we started by talking about this 25th anniversary of Panama, I wanted to end with Cuba. You, Colonel Wilkerson, have been deeply involved with Cuban politics. You were head of the U.S.-Cuba Policy Initiative at the New America Foundation. Greg Grandin, you're a professor, a historian of Latin America. Humberto Brown, you were a diplomat, a Panamanian diplomat. What is the significance of what is taking place today? Let's start with Colonel Wilkerson.

**COL. LAWRENCE WILKERSON:** I was in Havana, Amy, last week, and I've got to tell you that when President Raúl Castro and President Barack Obama made their announcements, we watched them on television in a room with about 200-250 people, most Cubans, but some Americans, and there was not a dry eye in the house, Cuban or U.S. This is a historic moment. I hope the rhetoric of President Obama is matched by deeds. And I hope eventually we lift the

embargo, because this has been a horrible thing, especially since the end of the Cold War, for the Cuban people. It satisfied people like Ileana Ros-Lehtinen and Bob Menendez in our Congress, who are what I call Batista leftovers, Batista being the original dictator that Castro originally overthrew in '59.

But this is a policy that should have changed a long time ago, long time ago. There are all kinds of ramifications to this change—security, agricultural sales, commercial operations, you name it. But basically this change is for the 11-and-a-half million Cuban people, who are good people, solid people, brilliant people, in some regards, whose culture and art and so forth is the best in the Caribbean, in my mind, and who have been cooperating with us for some time on important issues like counterdrug operations, countercrime in general and so forth. Now we need to get on with it and have much better relations, ultimately normal relations.

**AARON MATÉ:** Greg Grandin, one phrase I was struck by in President Obama's speech is when he was reviewing U.S. policy going back five decades, and he says, "It's always been rooted in the best of intentions," unquote. Can you comment on that?

**GREG GRANDIN:** Well, that's just boilerplate, obviously. It's not. It's been a failed policy. It's been a nefarious policy. It's been—it's rooted in the worst kinds of assumptions that the United States has the power, as Colonel Wilkerson talked about, to act as if the United States is—Latin America is the United States' backyard and to come down hard on any country that begs to differ. I mean, but Obama did say—President Obama did say that it's five decades of failed policy also. And I think that—I think that the change—I think it's rhetorical, to a large degree. A lot of the worst of it is enshrined in law that will have to change, Helms-Burton in particular, signed under Bill Clinton and supported by Bill Clinton. But Obama—

**AMY GOODMAN:** And that said? Helms-Burton said?

**GREG GRANDIN:** Oh, it basically locks in a lot of the provisions of the embargo that are just hard to overturn by presidential decree. But I think Obama, even rhetorically, has nationalized the question. And since JFK, every president has gone down to Miami and pandered to an increasingly small, marginal Batista holdovers, as Colonel Wilkerson said, but it has effect, because you have to—because that margin could win Florida. Obama, rhetorically, has nationalized the question. Now, all of those Batista holdovers have to go to the nation and explain why they want to go back to the old failed policy. So I think, in one—it's quite remarkable, quite deft in domestic politics, at least, in what it changes.

**AMY GOODMAN:** Humberto Brown, your take on what has taken place now in Cuba and where it can go?

**HUMBERTO BROWN:** Well, I agree that this is a significant change, but I think it also reflects that Latin America have changed. Latin America is not the same Latin America. And the only country who vote against stopping the embargo, eliminating the embargo in the U.N. is United States and Israel. The world already have said that they don't agree with the embargo against Cuba. I also think that—we mentioned Hugo Chávez. Hugo Chávez, Lula in Brazil, Correa in Ecuador have shifted this concept that Latin America is just a backyard of the United States, creating a new regional policy. And with that regionalization, both for TeleSUR—there are like four or five different organizations been created that allow Latin Americans to do more work among themselves, both economically and politically, including resolving some of the political issues within our region.

I also think it's significant that when we talk about the U.S. arresting Noriega, that it comes off like the U.S. role has been to protect citizens from dictators. Every dictator that served the U.S., that was overthrown by their people, was protected by the U.S. Stroessner was taken to Brazil after he was overthrown. He was the most longest in power.

**AMY GOODMAN:** In Paraguay.

**HUMBERTO BROWN:** Yeah, in Paraguay. Somoza was taken to Paraguay when Stroessner was there. I mean—

**AMY GOODMAN:** From Nicaragua.

**HUMBERTO BROWN:** —every dictator that served them, they protect them. They don't arrest them. They don't bring them to the U.S. and get them tried.

I think what is significant in Panama, if I end with something, is the Panamanian people are

asking—demanding accountability. We're asking the Southern Command to say where those mass graves are located, where are the bodies of these people. We're asking the government that participated, the Christian Democrats, who are responsible for government, the administrative government, and justice. And we have documentation by people who worked in the morgue, the—how the U.S. and these government eliminated all the lists that were created in the morgue after the first two days, and already they had more than 800 names of bodies of the people who work in that morgue. So, we are asking for answers, accountability, and that there will be now healing in Panama. That's why they created a committee, assume they're looking at national healing. But until those questions are answered, Panama will continue to be a country where you have a divisive—a division between those who feel that they were traumatized and others who still benefit and are complicit of our resources only used for the interests of certain transnationals from the United States.

**AARON MATÉ:** Talking about Latin America's evolution, we were talking on the show today about CIA torture. The only continent in the world where not a single country played a role in the torture program was South America.

**HUMBERTO BROWN:** Mm-hmm, interesting. And meanwhile, that the main center for training in torture for the U.S military and Latin American military used to be in Panama, right?

**AMY GOODMAN:** And then moved to Fort Benning.

**HUMBERTO BROWN:** The School of Americas was in Panama for many years. And I, growing up in Panama, always remembered that, that we have all these different military sectors who train and use U.S. CIA manuals to train. So, for us, it's not a surprise the issue of training for torture. Our whole experience, as students, as university activists, we lived the experience of seeing our military train to disappear us.

**GREG GRANDIN:** And according to Marcy Wheeler, those infamous manuals, which were supposed to—ordered to be destroyed, apparently Cheney kept a copy for his personal files after he left the secretary of defense office.

**AMY GOODMAN:** And finally, Colonel Wilkerson, your comment on this point? In the Senate intelligence report, clearly the only continent not involved with the killings—with the

CIA

torture, Latin America, and what that means for a changing continent to the south of us?

**COL. LAWRENCE WILKERSON:** Well, I agree with the comments that have just been made. I think Latin America is a very different place now. I think we've seen leadership after leadership throughout the hemisphere that's changed and become more independent, and clearly wants to be more independent of what has been created by the United States in almost all of them—the rich, elite oligarchy. The most heinous case of all was Chile and putting Pinochet in place for the years that he ruled Chile, Nixon and Kissinger, of course, having brought about changes in the election process through propaganda and money and influence, and then, finally, participating, I think, in the coup that overthrew Salvador Allende, and actually got General René Schneider assassinated before that. So, we have a really, really bad reputation in Latin America.

But they are becoming free of us. Mercosur, the new economic conglomerate, other things—the Summit of the Americas in April is going to see Cuba and the United States together and the other Latin American countries. And I think the United States, President Obama, is going to find a very different Latin America than in the past, a Latin America that wants to be autonomous, independent, stand up on its own, not necessarily denied trade with the United States, but have it on a very different basis, a far more equitable basis, a Latin America that's grown up and knows the giant to the north, *El Coloso del Norte*, quite well now.

**AMY GOODMAN:** We're going to leave it there. We want to thank Colonel Lawrence Wilkerson, served as chief of staff to Secretary of State Colin Powell 2002 to '05, helped prepare Powell's speech at the U.N. claiming Iraq had weapons of mass destruction, which he has since renounced, now a professor of government and public policy at the College of William & Mary. Humberto Brown, also with us, former Panamanian diplomat, researcher at SUNY

Downstate Medical Center. And Greg Grandin, professor of Latin American history at New York University. We'll link to his latest

[piece](#)

at

*TomDispatch*

, "The War to Start All Wars: The 25th Anniversary of the Forgotten Invasion of Panama." I'm Amy Goodman, with Aaron Maté. Thanks so much for joining us.