

# US Marines in 'gunfight'

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in Panama City**

**T**HE US Southern Command in Panama yesterday described a mysterious "fire fight" at a naval depot near the Canal on Tuesday night during which 100 Marines were involved in a two-hour battle which yielded no casualties, no prisoners and no physical evidence of intruders.

It was the second consecutive night when Marines shot at supposed intruders. On Monday a 25-year-old Puerto Rican was shot dead in crossfire. He had arrived with the 1,300 troops sent last week to bolster security around the Canal and send a tough signal to General Noriega.

US military spokesmen said that the intruders could not be identified, but yesterday announced that the alleged raiders had used "professional tactics."

The Panamanian defence forces said the incident betrayed the nervousness of the newly-arrived American troops. They claimed the incident was part of a plan to provoke them to retaliation.

A Southern Command spokesman, Colonel Ron Sconyers, said the Marines had been fired on by people using small arms and that they responded with rifle fire and three high-explosive mortars.