

A Perspective on Operation Urgent Fury.

Grenada

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Military Arts Paper

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I. Introduction

This paper is my perspective on Operation Urgent Fury, the American military action in Grenada which began on October 25, and for all practical purposes, reached its successful conclusion on November 4, 1983. It in no way reflects the official views, opinions, or conclusions of the U.S.

Government, the U.S. Army, or my previous unit, the 82nd Airborne Division, with which I participated in combat operations in Grenada.

Precious little has been written about Grenada, and much of what has been written is of little significant historical value. Official documentation is still largely classified, and what is available from media sources is often distorted or second hand information (the press was not permitted on the island until D+3). No historical references have in fact been published at all which makes any treatment of the Grenada Operation wholly a matter of individual point of view, with a woefully inadequate bibliography of references to back up one's findings. This paper is further limited in that I am not at liberty to discuss some of the information I was exposed to during the planning and conduct of Operation Urgent Fury.

None the less I am confident that I can treat a good deal of information on Grenada as fairly and objectively as possible, drawing on the range of my experiences there. In my position as the S-3 Air of the initial assault brigade of the 82nd Airborne Division, it was my job to develop the original air deployment plan of the Division's lead elements. Upon execution of the plan, I participated in ground operations both at brigade and small unit levels.

Given this background, I feel my observations on the planning, coordination and conduct of the action may produce several valuable lessons that could prove useful should our units be called upon again to deploy in similar circumstances.

II. Historical and Background Data

Nestled in the remote eastern corner of the beautiful Carribean Sea, the island of Grenada, last of the Windward Island chain, basks in the endless rays of the tropical sun. Roughly oval in shape, the island is of volcanic origin and sports the balmy climate characteristic of much of the Carribean, with periodic showers during the dry season (January to May), daily downpours during the rainy season, and an occasional hurricane to break the monotony. Although temperatures rarely vary from an 80° (F) average, a blistering sun beats almost directly down upon the land year round. The rich volcanic soil yields extremely lush vegetation consisting of shrubs, fruits, ferns and towards the interior, dense woods. Except around its coastal periphery, Grenada is dominated by a spiney range of heavily vegetated mountains that run north to south across the island, with spurs reaching outwards towards each of the sides, east and west. From the island's highest point, Mt. St. Catherine (2,756 ft.) through Grand Etang, a 1,740 ft. high extinct volcano, down to the very coast itself, the terrain is typified by extremely steep slopes and inhibitingly dense vegetation.

Only 120 square miles in size, Grenada, which includes the tiny island of Corriacou a short distance to the north, has a population of about 104,000 people dispersed in the small villages that dot the island, mostly in the hilly southern portion. Grenadians are a most congenial people. English is the predominant language, although French Patois is still spoken in places. Most Grenadians are black and of the Catholic faith, but a small number of whites can be found. There is a small Anglican religious minority as well. The Grenadian economy is mostly agricultural and features the export of exotic

fruits and spices. The island's commercial airport at Pearls, on the eastern side, has a 1,500 meter airstrip that can support small aircraft. St. George's on the southwestern side is the island's capital, and features a deep water port and a population of about 8,600.¹

Grenada was first discovered in 1498 by Christopher Columbus who named it Concepcion. It was granted to the British in 1627 and was later bought by the French who, when settling the island, attempted to exterminate the local carib population. Grenada changed hands several times during the 17th and 18th centuries, and the year 1838 saw the emancipation of slaves on the island and its rise to prominence as the headquarters of British territories in the Windward Isles. On February 7, 1974, Grenada was granted her independence and by 1976 had established self rule with a small British style government led by Prime Minister elect Sir Eric Gairy. Grenada remained part of the British Commonwealth and the position of Governor General, the ceremonial head of state appointed by the Queen of England, was retained to symbolize the close ties between Grenada and her former sovereign.

By the late 1970's, however, those ties began to strain. Gairy's administration, although highly anti-communist, was also highly oppressive and corrupt. His major opposition was the "The New Jewel Movement," a marxist party led by a highly charismatic and popular figure named Maurice Bishop. Bishop was particularly critical of the Gairy regime's misuse of government funds and lack of concern over pressing social and economic problems. Stressing nationalism and the need for reform, Bishop's party gained more and more support from the population as well as from communist Cuba and the Soviet Union, who were keeping a close eye on the

developing political situation on the island. Events came to a head on March 13, 1979, during a bloodless coup in which Bishop seized power while Gairy was typically out of the country.² Moscow and Havana were quick to capitalize on these events. Within 3 days a Cuban ship full of Soviet weapons and materiel steamed into St. George's Harbor.

As communist influence steadily increased on Grenada, relations with the U.S. and other western democracies quickly deteriorated. In November, 1979, Bishop announced that with Cuban aid, Grenada would begin construction on a 10,000 ft. runway of a new "international airport" at Point Salines, on the island's southwest corner. Soon after construction began, Bishop's deputy, Bernard Coard, journeyed to Moscow to sign a treaty with the Russians that would allow them use of the airstrip by long range military aircraft.³ Other arrangements were made for financial aid to build a relay station for Soviet communications satellites. The number of Cuban "advisors" on the island continued to grow and so did the alarm of Grenada's Caribbean neighbors. Both Jamaican Prime Minister Edward Seaga and Tom Adams, Prime Minister of Barbados, expressed their concern to President Ronald Reagan during an April, 1982, conference.

Yet as relations with the U.S. chilled, so did Grenada's tourist trade, a major source of the island's financial intake. U.S. financial aid was also cut off further weakening the economy, and Bishop began to express concern over the sway of Cuban and Soviet influence, which it was beginning to seem, had something more than Grenada's social and economic well being in mind. By now, several hundred Cuban "technical experts" were on the island as well as an assortment of Russians, North Koreans, East Germans, Lybians and Bulgarians.

In an effort to improve matters, Bishop made a surprise move by journeying to Washington to attempt to thaw out U.S. - Grenada relations. This was followed by more talk of closer diplomatic ties with the U.S., much to the dismay of both Havana and some of the more "hard core" Marxist fundamentalists in the New Jewel Movement.⁴ Two of these, Coard, the deputy Prime Minister, and General Hudson Austin, the Defense Minister, possibly with the encouragement of Cuba, secretly planned the overthrow of Bishop. They acted on October 13, 1983, placing Bishop and several of his supporters under house arrest and announcing the formation of a 16 man ruling revolutionary council. This transition was anything but smooth and the situation quickly became chaotic, for the council had not counted on Bishop's popularity with the people. On October 19, Bishop's supporters, several thousand strong, stormed his residence and carried him to a rally on Market Square in St. George's. Bishop then led them on a march to Ft. Rupert, the Grenadian Army's Headquarters, with the aim of forcing the military back into line. Violence broke out upon their arrival as Army troops fired directly into the crowd, killing 12 and wounding scores of others. The Revolutionary Council then promptly executed Bishop and several of his supporters. They imposed martial law on the island, closed the airport, and deported all foreign journalists.

Without any real government control, sporadic rioting and looting began to break out and the situation led Grenada's neighbors to call an emergency meeting of the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (O.E.C.S.), on Friday, October 21. Fearful of Cuba's covert actions and the further spread of revolution, they denounced the regime in Grenada, and urgently requested that the U.S. intervene.

In Washington, the week's events had caused no small alarm. Over the weekend of October 22 and 23, President Ronald Reagan conferred on the developing situation with top cabinet and military advisors. Key in everyone's mind was the disposition of the approximately 1,000 U.S. citizens on Grenada, of which over 600 were students at the St. George's School of Medicine. Fearing a replay of the Iran hostage crisis, and with the situation on the island worsening daily, the decision to send U.S. military forces to Grenada was made by the President on Sunday evening, October 23. A Joint Task Force was then organized to accomplish the rescue of the American nationals on Grenada and to restore order there.⁵

III. Planning

One of the primary considerations in planning Operation Urgent Fury (the codeword for the rescue mission), was secrecy. As a result, the extremely limited number of individuals involved in planning restricted the range of experience that could be drawn upon to orchestrate the resources of an Airborne Division. It was not long before more key personnel, especially logistical experts, were called in to assist in the troop leading procedures. Our METT-T analysis yielded the following information:

Mission

The 82nd Airborne Division's mission, as it finally evolved, was, on order, to conduct a parachute assault on Grenada, attack to destroy resisting enemy forces there, restore order, and secure and evacuate the U.S. nationals on the island. Several mission essential tasks were stated or implied by this.

1. Successful operations on Grenada hinged on the seizure of the Point Salines Airstrip to allow for a rapid logistical build up, and for immediate transportation by air of the endangered American Nationals. Most of these were centered in and around the Point Salines area at the St. George's School of Medicine, which had campuses at both True Blue and Grand Anse Beach. The Pearls Airstrip across the island could not support C141B Starlifters from its limited runway, but it was C130 capable. At 15 miles straitline distance from the school, with steep mountains in between and limited transportation assets early in the operation, the movement of students to Pearls was not considered a viable option.

2. Along with these considerations were the principle locations of known Cuban military positions, almost all of which were centered between Salines and St. George's. Any attempt to restore order on Grenada counted on knocking out the Cuban defenders quickly and efficiently. Point Salines was again the best place to begin operations to achieve these aims.

3. Restoration of order further depended upon how quickly the Grenadian people could be disarmed, pacified and returned to a normal democratic ruling process. To do this, military action would have to be aligned along specific rules of engagement which would minimize civilian casualties, property damage and the disruptive influence of military operations on the local economy.

4. The overall accomplishment of the mission was 100% dependent upon effective and timely coordination between the joint services involved in the rescue operation. Although the 82nd Airborne Division had enjoyed a history of excellent liason with the U.S. Air Force, the experience of working with the U.S. Navy and the Marines was another matter. Every effort would have to be made to compensate for this.

Enemy

Just how much resistance we could expect on Grenada was not known. It was generally believed that we would be facing a light infantry threat of up to 500 Cuban troops backed by as many as 1,000 soldiers of the Grenadian People's Revolutionary Army (PRA), armed with an assortment of arms from the Soviet Union or other communist countries. Several BTR-60 Armored Personnel Carriers were known to be on the island, but no tanks were expected to be found there. Of particular interest though,

was the half dozen or so ZSU 23-2s centered chiefly on the high ground around St. George's, and on the hills overlooking the Pt. Salines Airstrip. With a rate of fire of 2,000 rounds per minute, these 23mm towed anti-aircraft guns would figure prominently in the air deployment plan.

The state of training of the average PRA soldier was not believed to be very good, a fact that would later be borne out during the fighting. Of the Cuban force, however over 100 were thought to be first class troops and probably veterans of Cuba's "advisory activities" in Angola. The rest of the Cubans were thought to be engineers sent in specifically to assist in the construction of the Salines Airstrip and of unknown fighting ability. The ability of the enemy to employ chemicals was considered extremely doubtful, and as far as was known, Grenada had no Air Force at all assuring total U.S. air superiority over the island to support ground operations.

Terrain and Weather

An analysis of the terrain and weather on Grenada was also a major factor in planning the operation. The mountainous regions of the island would inhibit the use of motorized vehicles. This difficult terrain, combined with the effects of the hot tropical sun, would make dismounted movement punishing to bearers of a military pack. Grenada's narrow roads were known to be largely unimproved, which was a factor to consider if any armored units were to be employed. Our logistical planners allowed for large quantities of potable water and medical supplies for the treatment of heat injuries.

Troops

Immediately available to the operation planners was seven airborne infantry battalions, an airborne armor battalion with M551 Sheridan

Armored Reconnaissance Vehicles mounted with 152mm main guns, the Division's Air Cavalry Battalion, Combat Aviation Battalion, and the complete array of the 82nd Airborne Division's combat support and combat service support assets. Other rapid deployment force units that could be incorporated into the air deployment package if needed were considered. These included a battery of 155mm howitzers from the XVIII Airborne Corps Artillery and a medium lift helicopter with CH-47 Chinooks.

Time and Space

The amount of time needed to prepare and conduct operations on Grenada was also a key factor. The Division's alert, marshalling and deployment standards were based on an 18 hour sequence that was heavily rehearsed through the exercise of numerous readiness alerts. The "on order" nature of our mission would necessitate a condensed version of this sequence.

Also important was the consideration of space. Pt. Salines, bordered on three sides by the Caribbean Sea, was a tight fit for anything larger than one battalion in a tactical configuration. Protection of the force while bottled up there, and a rapid push to St. George's, would be imperative.

As planning continued, several courses of action were considered, but always the options available centered around the need for the Pt. Salines Airstrip. Finally, it was decided that a two battalion force from the Division's Ready Brigade (DRB) would be used to make the initial assault. Key leaders from the Division Ready Force One Battalion (DRF1), the 2nd Battalion (Airborne) 325th Infantry (2-325), and the DRF 2 Battalion, the 3-325, were brought in on the planning.

My job at this time was the orchestration of a marshalling and an air

deployment plan for these initial assault units. As I planned, I considered the following factors:

1. 12 C141B Aircraft would be available within 8 hours of notification for the personnel airdrop. Immediately following, 8 C141Bs would be available to airlift the vehicles and equipment of the assault echelon.

2. Pope Air Force Base adjacent to Ft. Bragg, departure airfield for countless Division exercises, was more than adequate for our needs.

3. The U.S. Airbase at Barbados was stocked with adequate material handling equipment (MHE) for airland operations and would serve well as a forward operating base. As the Pt. Salines Airstrip was believed to contain craters and obstacles hastily erected by the Cubans, we would airdrop personnel to secure the airstrip and reduce the obstacles there. Meanwhile, I would accompany the assault echelon vehicles to Barbados, and along with the Battalion S-3 Air personnel, remarshal and load plan the vehicles and equipment on C130s for assault airland on Grenada. This type of air movement required only 1,000 meters of airstrip in the objective area, and it was believed at least that much of the Salines Airstrip could be salvaged.

4. The condensed 18 hour sequence we were forced to operate under necessitated a hard look at streamlining our marshalling plan to minimize the amount of time it would take to get our vehicles and equipment loaded on the aircraft. Personnel can of course be air deployed much more quickly, so getting the troops airborne was not considered a problem.

As the plan was refined, I finalized the Priority Vehicle List (PVL) of the initial assault echelon. Squeezing every available inch of space left us room for the 60 vehicles and pieces of equipment selected for the

deployment , based on the Division and Brigade Commander's guidance. These included the Division, Brigade, and the Batallion's command and control vehicles, reconnaissance and mortar vehicles, field medical ambulances and field artillery assets. Also included were elements of the Brigade's Forward Area Support Team (FAST), essential to set up an Arrival Airfield Contol Group completre with MHE and to provide for our immediate logistical needs. Particularly useful during this time was the load planning computer programs of our automated data system which could load plan in seconds what would normally have taken us hours manually.

We continued to refine our plans and make preparations under the utmost secrecy until our notification orders came. At 2100 hours on Monday, October 24, the alert marshalling order was recieved, and the proceedures to recall all Division personnel for Operation Urgent Fury were immediately initiated.

IV. Deployment

The first few hours of the 82nd's alert sequence proceeded according to plan. From Ft. Bragg's Loading Area Control Center (LACC) adjacent to Pope Air Force Base, we received a constant flow of intelligence updates. The 1st and 2nd Battalions of the 75th Infantry (Ranger) we learned, were in on the operation too, and would conduct a low level airborne assault to seize Pt. Salines and immediately pinpoint and collect the American medical students located at True Blue Campus. Meanwhile, Marines from the 22nd Marine Amphibious Unit (MAU), recently diverted enroute to Lebanon where they were to rotate with the 24th MAU in Beirut, would land on the Eastern side of the island to seize Pearls Airport. Once the Rangers were in control, we would then airland instead of jump (apparently the airstrip was not in as bad a shape as we originally thought). We would then receive the battle handover, and drive to link up with the Marines pushing inland.

As more and more participants now realized that this alert was no mere recall muster, marshalling procedures began moving at breakneck speed. The basic load of ammunition and C-ration meals were issued, as were 2 quart canteens, mosquito netting and other tropical combat necessities from the Post's contingency stocks. There was no time for hand receipts, much to the mortification of Corps and Division support personnel, and by dawn our troops began moving towards "Green Ramp," the aircraft loading area at Pope Air Force Base.

Enroute we received some alarming news. The Rangers had parachuted into stiff resistance and a full scale battle for control of the

airstrip was in progress. Faced with the need to provide immediate reinforcements, our delivery means changed again, back to a parachute assault. Our support personnel reacted with speed and efficiency and by 1000 hours, the first C141, with the Division Commander and his Assault Command Post (CP) aboard, lifted off. Within 30 minutes, all 12 aircraft had departed loaded with pallets of T-10 type parachutes and reserves for an inflight parachute rig.

The initial loads of parachutes and equipment were lined up in chalk order, having weighed in on the Departure Airfield Control Group Scales, ready for loading as soon as aircraft became available. I coordinated with the Army Ground Liaison Officer at the Command Center and was told to expect to load at any moment. The original plan to bring the vehicles to Barbados, and then transfer them to C130's had not changed. Upon my return to the loading area I received a rude shock. Apparently some over zealous individual, acting on erroneous instructions that our field artillery assets must receive first priority in deployment to the objective area had directed the removal of all our support battery's howitzers and prime movers out of the initial chalks and began reloading them on separate "artillery only " chalks. After a highly emotional display this issue was rectified and the vehicles returned, but it demonstrated a problem that was becoming more and more apparent at Green Ramp, namely, a lack of control. During the first three critical days of Urgent Fury, priorities on just what and who were to be outloaded were directed by numerous individuals who assumed control by virtue of their rank, position or authority. Many personnel with their vehicles and equipment managed to simply "prioritize" themselves into the outload completely unsupervised.

Because of this, the follow on vehicles and equipment of the initial assault brigade, badly wanted for added combat power, logistical support, and command and control on the ground, never reached Grenada. Whether or not they would have made any difference in the course of the battle is a matter of debate. None-the-less, their presence on the island would undoubtedly have been considered more important than the pallet loads of cots for Corps headquarters personnel that began arriving on D+3.

In spite of these issues, our aircraft were ready to load by 1330 on D-Day, and we were on board and enroute to Barbados in short order. While flying south we recieved new instructions. The Rangers had managed to clear the runway of both the Cubans and their obstacles. It was decided to cancel the parachute drop and airland the Division's lead elements directly on Salines Airstrip. Once all 12 personnel aircraft were down, my plane would land at Salines too, followed by the rest of the airland vehicle loads. Unfortunately, the Salines airstrip could only support one C141B at a time, and consequently the delay involved in unloading each aircraft left each subsequent flight circling the airfield awaiting clearance to land. For my plane this meant a five hour flight followed by six hours of circling the island in a holding pattern. During this time the battle to control the airfield was still in progress. All sorts of rumors ran among the men on board my plane as to just what was happening below, and we all began to wonder if we would live to see the sun rise that morning. Fortunately, we did not have long to wait. At 0330 on Wednesday, October 26, our plane touched down on Grenada and taxied to a halt before depositing us on the eastern end of Salines airstrip.

V. Main Battle

As we disembarked from our C141B, we were surprised to find absolutely no activity around Pt. Salines, as if the war had been suspended until sunrise. After linking up the assault echelon vehicles with the battalions on the ground (which were only several hundred meters off the airfield proper), I set out to find the Second Brigade Assault C.P. to begin performing my secondary duties as a Tactical Operations Center (TOC) officer. Fortunately the TOC, located on a small peninsula south of the strip, was easy to find, and I was soon given a complete rundown of the previous afternoon's activities.

Our first two battalions had made it in without casualties, fanned out at the east end of the airstrip, and formed a tight defensive semi-circle. 2-325 was in the north (left) oriented northeast, and 3-325 occupied the southern side oriented east and southeast in front of the True Blue Campus. Link up had been made with the Rangers, and with the hand off of the battle completed, the Rangers had pulled behind our forces and taken up new positions north and south of the airstrip to provide local security and to await further missions.

The Cubans, I learned, had bungled badly. Arrayed in defensive positions on the beaches north of the airfield as far east as Grand Anse, they had expected an invasion by sea and were taken completely by surprise when the Rangers parachuted onto the airstrip itself. The Ranger Battalions had quickly fanned out to secure Pt. Salines and to get the True Blue Campus under control. They had also cleared obstructions from the runway using captured Cuban construction equipment. (Two 82nd

Airborne Division Engineers had accompanied the Rangers on their combat jump to aid them in that task.)

These missions were accomplished in good form, but not without stiff resistance and several casualties. The Cubans at Pt. Salines had made quite a fight of it with everything in their arsenal, including 3 BTR-60 Armored Personnel Carriers, which had tried to push their way onto the airstrip in the late afternoon. These were destroyed by Spectre Gunship fire, the 20mm cannons of A-7 fighters from the carrier USS Independence, and 90mm Recoilless Rifle, Dragon and LAW antitank fires from the Rangers and Paratroopers on the ground. Had the BTR 60s made it over just one more rise onto the hills overlooking the airstrip itself, they could have wrought havoc on the unloading C141B's with their 14.5mm machineguns.

In spite of this resistance we had taken several hundred prisoners. Many other Cubans simply threw off their uniforms and tried to blend in with the civilian population. The prisoners were quickly handed over to a 300 man force of troops from the O.E.C.S. countries: Antigua, St. Lucia, St. Vincent, Dominica, Jamaica, and Barbados. These were brought in by C130's from our Forward Operating Base on Barbados.

Meanwhile to the north, elements of the 22nd MAU, striking by helicopter from the USS Guam, had seized Pearls Airport after a short skirmish. Finding only token resistance there, they then sailed around the island and conducted an amphibious landing north of St. George's at the "Queen's Racetrack," a soccer field on the ocean's side. A sharp fight was ensuing here for control of Richmond Hill Prison and Ft. Frederick, the nerve center of the PRA. Numerous airstrikes had to be called in to reduce the fortifications there.

Hasty plans for the morning's attack were made, and at dawn on Wednesday, October 26, 2-325 and 3-325 crossed the line of departure for movements to contact northeast towards St. George's for a link up with the Marines. Contact was not long in developing. Outside the small town of Frequente, the Cubans put up a desperate fight for control of a major arms and equipment storage depot. The battle raged all day before Frequente fell, and only after concentrated attacks supported by A-7 Aircraft strikes with bombs and 20mm cannon fire. My old company, B Company, 2-325, bore the brunt of it, and as I listened in over the radio I would have given anything to have been there with them. Two good men were lost here, among them my friend CPT Mike Ritz, the Company Commander, who was shot while doing a leader's reconnaissance before the battle.

Meanwhile, 3-325 in the south was moving apace with the 2-325 over difficult terrain that was contested by individual and team sized Cuban elements every foot of the way. By the end of the day, the Forward Edge of the Battle Area (FEBA) had been pushed out only 1,500 meters, and we had not yet overrun the Grand Anse Campus. With darkness coming fast, the Task Force Commander, Admiral Metcalf, anxious over the dispositions of the American students at Grand Anse, ordered the Rangers to conduct a raid to retrieve them to the Salines Airstrip where their safety could be assured. This was accomplished after precision airstrikes to soften up the Cubans around the campus. One of the helicopters, after taking several hits, had to force land and transfer its precious cargo to the remaining aircraft. The squad of Rangers on board had to be left behind however, and escaped and evaded from Grand Anse towards our lines where they linked up with 2-325 the following morning.

Thursday, October 27 promised a repeat performance of the type of operations we had seen on the first two days of Urgent Fury. Operating from caves, dugouts and houses, the Cubans and PRA continued to fight desperately. We were forced to search every "nook and cranny" in the Salines area, but by the morning of D+2 we were not alone. Elements of the Division's Third Brigade were now arriving and moving up on our right flank, using the main east to west paved road as a brigade boundary. With these additional forces, we continued our clearing operations.

The Marines were now in control of much of St. George's after several short, sharp fire fights that had been settled in their favor. No doubt the appearance of their M-60 Amphibious Tanks, which were now ashore, helped to persuade numerous PRA soldiers to give up the fight. Our bag of POWs had grown also, and the terminal buildings north of the Salines Airstrip now housed over 500 prisoners. A factor slowing our advance was the almost unbelievable amount of weapons and ammunition that we found on the way towards St. George's. Processing the sheer number of these weapons to the rear, many of which were still packed in creosote, delayed our movement. It was apparent that the entire Salines area had been turned into a major military staging base for the Cubans and the PRA. Important in easing our clearance efforts was the assistance of the Grenadian people who clearly regarded us as an army of liberation. Their help was instrumental in helping us to quickly find many key Cuban and PRA personnel who had disguised themselves as civilians, and large caches of weapons and materiel hidden in cellars, caves and ditches.

Back at the airstrip, a large build up was underway. With the students evacuated to safety off the island, reinforcements and logistical

support was flowing in at a rapid rate, and during the afternoon our Brigade TOC displaced to the hills west of Frequente to get out of the way. Six infantry battalions and numerous service support elements were now packed into an area only 8 to 10 kilometers in size, and more personnel and equipment was arriving by the hour.

Our new TOC, set on commanding terrain, seemed like a good place to be. Late in the afternoon however, we learned it was not. A four man Cuban element, bypassed by the advance on the other side of the Frequente Valley began taking us and the compound under fire. The 30 man detachment guarding the captured compound was more than sufficient to handle this threat. Unfortunately someone decided that a timely A-7 Aircraft strike was needed as well. Screaming down on the Cuban positions, the A-7s bombed and strafed our Brigade TOC location by accident. This mistake cost us 17 casualties and an intense distrust of all U.S. Navy pilots. It also enlightened me as to the reason why the Cubans, who had been subjected to similar treatment over the past three days, were becoming more and more eager to surrender. The four Cubans, held up in a small house, soon became eager too, and they told us that they had been left behind to attempt to hold the Frequente area at all costs until a counterattack could be launched to crush the "invading yanquis."

In spite of this, by Thursday's end, our forces were in control of the Grand Anse area, while Third Brigade units were pushing northeast past Ruth Howard towards the Mt. Hartman Estate. The Rangers also had been called up for one final mission, this time to raid a suspected Cuban command and control center at Calvigny, southeast of St. George's. The stronghold was defended by a squad sized Cuban element which was soon

routed, but not before costing four men killed in action and three helicopters shot down. Following this mission the Rangers were deployed back off the island.

In and around St. George's the Marines were now in undisputed control, and by Friday, October 28, a link up had been established between elements of the 22nd MAU and 2-325 near Ross Point. With this accomplished, all Cuban and PRA resistance on Grenada soon crumbled and the small number of resistors left not killed or taken prisoner faded into the island's steep hilled interior, presumably to organize some sort of guerrilla activity. For all practical purposes the battle for Grenada was now over.

VI. Pacification and Redeployment

With things pretty much in hand on the island by Saturday, October 29, the elements of the Joint Task Force assigned to Operation Urgent Fury had achieved two of their three intended goals: the rescue of American nationals and the destruction of resisting enemy forces. All that remained was to pacify the island, and to restore order and a democratic process to Grenada. The leaders of our Task Force now set themselves to just how that challenge could best be met.

In reality, our forces controlled only a small portion of Grenada, in and around the Pearls, Salines, and St. George's area. Most Grenadians had not yet even seen U.S. troops, particularly in the heavily populated southern coastal region. This area seemed like the likely place to begin winning the people's "hearts and minds." To simplify matters, a battalion task force was organized mounted on sandbagged reinforced 2 1/2 ton trucks, and provided heavy air cover by fighters and attack helicopters with an immediate reaction company on station by helicopters back at Salines Airstrip for support. The idea was for the task force to move the length and width of the southern coast clearing specific points of interest enroute. Christened "Task Force Newman" after the commander of the battalion task force (1-508), the unit was led by the battalion's reconnaissance gun "jeeps" through the numerous small towns as far west as St. David's. Covering about 25 miles in two days, they accomplished their mission without firing a shot. Again numerous weapons caches were found, and again with the willing assistance of the local population who greeted Task Force Newman with smiles and cheers the entire way. The use of the

Marines M-60 tanks was briefly considered as a spearhead for the task force, but this idea was discarded as being unwise due to the narrow and winding nature of the region's roads and the frightening psychological effects of the 53 ton monsters on the Grenadian People. The Marines soon had to be pulled out besides, to relieve the beleaguered 24th MAU in Beruit, which had suffered massive casualties in the terrorist bombing attack there on October 23.

When the Marines moved out, only six infantry battalions of the 82nd Airborne Division were left to police on the island, and that meant a realigning of forces. While Third Brigade units took charge of Pearls, Pt. Salines and the southern coastal regions of Grenada, the Second Brigade moved to positions in the mountainous center of the island. 3-325 relieved the Marines in St. George's and continued a house to house search that again yielded scores of weapons of every type, including M-16 Rifles and carbines of U.S. manufacture. 2-325 airmobiled to three selected landing zones (L.Z.s) high up in the Grand Etang Reserve in search of any elusive Cuban or PRA hold outs.

In the south, Third Brigade units bagged General Hudson Austin, cowering in his summer residence and trying to ward off capture by holding two East German diplomats hostage. He, like Coard, who was captured by the Marines in the first days of the operation, was whisked away to a brig on board a U.S. naval vessel for his own protection from a vengeful Grenadian population.

As we continued to round up suspected PRA and New Jewel Movement members, chiefly from Areas of Operation Yankee and ~~X-ray~~ Zulu (see inclosure 2), units from the 4th Psychological Operations Battalion

from Ft. Bragg aided our efforts with leaflet drops, radio broadcasts and public announcements that alternately blasted the population with verbal reassurances and music from Wagner's "Ride of The Valkyries." (No doubt, most Grenadians found that as amusing as our troops did.)

During this period, U.S. State Department officials performed yeoman's service in assisting the organization of some form of governmental control and the Governor General, Sir Paul Scoon, recently freed from his imprisonment, was asked to take charge of his country's political affairs. Particularly nervous this entire time were the ambassadors and staffs of the Soviet and Cuban Embassies. These were ordered by the new Grenadian Government to leave the island in short order.

As mopping up operations continued, Third Brigade elements conducted an air assault on Carriacou Island, but returned after finding nothing. It was soon becoming apparent that our mission on Grenada was all but accomplished. With that, our priorities were shifted to removing troop units from the island as soon as possible. After leaving the Third Brigade behind to assure the stability of the new government, Second Brigade closed on Pt. Salines Airfield for redeployment. On November 4, barely 12 days from notification, our transportation arrived to take us back to Ft. Bragg.

Personnel (after going through a U.S. Customs inspection, no less) made the trip on 12 C141B Aircraft, and our vehicles, of which only about 30 from the entire Brigade had made it down on the outload, were loaded on board a naval transport. These closed on Ft. Bragg several days after the main body. On board the aircraft, our morale was high in the knowledge that we had succeeded in our mission, but it recieved an even

higher boost when we were given a tumultuous civilian reception led by the Secretary of the Army back at Green Ramp. Unfortunately, Third Brigade would not make this happy trip for another month. Yet even so, no one could doubt that Operation Urgent Fury had come to a successful conclusion.

VII. Conclusions

Until such time as some comprehensive references on Urgent Fury are published, the final verdict on our action cannot be made. The political implications of our action can be discussed at great length, and probably will be. From a purely military standpoint however, the Grenada rescue mission must be considered a success. The American citizens on Grenada were rescued; the Cuban and PRA forces on the island were decisively defeated; and the island was quickly and effectively restored to a state of order. All of these things were accomplished with a minimum of friendly casualties and without subjecting Grenada to significant damage in terms of economic loss, property destruction, or very many civilian casualties.

Nor is it fair to claim that Urgent Fury was a success solely because of the overwhelming firepower and manpower advantage applied by the U.S. Forces. Statements such as this are naive and show little appreciation for delicacy involved in the conduct of such a venture and even less appreciation for the courage and professionalism displayed by personnel from all branches and services of the U.S. Armed Services who were participants. True, U.S. Forces, once committed, with absolute control of both the air and sea, were never in doubt of defeating the ground forces of the Cubans and the PRA on Grenada. Yet the cost of doing so could very well have been extremely high. Urgent Fury was a high risk operation from the start, and had things gone differently numerous American nationals, especially those at the Grand Anse Campus, as well as a great many Grenadian civilians could have become casualties. Had that been the case, the attempts to rapidly restore order on the island would have failed

miserably, dealing a severe blow to U.S. prestige overseas, not to mention the reaction it would have caused at home.

These things did not happen, and it can be said, as much as for any other reason, that the success of the mission could be attributed to the U.S. Military being given a free hand by America's civilian leadership to do its job, without an over abundance of political restrictions and guidelines. Not only had over 500 American people been rescued from potential disaster, the United States had proven its ability to rapidly and effectively project its power overseas to protect American lives and assure its national security.

Too, Grenada was a severe blow to Soviet and Cuban ambitions in the Western Hemisphere. Massive amounts of weapons, materiel and an invaluable and expensively constructed staging area for the export of "the revolution" had been lost. That has welcome implications for many foreign nations who have come to feel that the U.S. has taken too timid a role lately in protecting its interests overseas.

For the U.S. military, Grenada was something more. It was a chance to prove it could do its job and do it well. Since the American withdrawal from Vietnam, the U.S. Military, and the U.S. Army in particular, has had little to smile about. Upon the conclusion of Operation Urgent Fury, "the smiles on the faces of Americans were the smiles of victory."⁶

VIII. Lessons Learned

The problems that occurred during the planning, deployment and operations of U.S. Forces (specifically the 82nd Airborne Division) during Operation Urgent Fury demand attention to assure that, under similar circumstances, they do not reoccur.

1. Intelligence estimates before, during and after the operation were unsatisfactory. This was not due to a lack of intelligence data, but rather to a failure to properly screen the input from our collective sources, and it led U.S. troops, particularly during the pacification phase, to run around on numerous occasions chasing down erroneous reports of enemy activity. By far the worst estimate was the appraisal of the Pt. Salines Airstrip, originally thought to be in a totally decrepid condition. In reality, the strip contained only a small amount of obstacles, which were quickly cleared by the Rangers once on the ground. The seizure and use of Salines Airstrip has already been noted as having been a cornerstone of the whole Urgent Fury plan, and there is no excuse for having such a lack of vital information on it. Other intelligence problems included inaccurate estimates of just how many American nationals, Cubans and PRA forces were on Grenada, factors which significantly affected our plan.

2. Lack of control during our deployment to Grenada has already been mentioned, and this was a major problem. For example, 12 C141B Aircraft were utilized during the vital early hours of the outload to transport a "Radio Free Grenada" transmitting station complete with personnel and equipment, long before much of the Division's vital combat support, or combat service support assets ever arrived in Grenada. Bad control at

Green Ramp caused personnel accountability to be extremely poor, and many commanders could not render accurate personnel status reports until the last days of Urgent Fury.

3. The experience of working with the U.S. Navy, especially as a higher headquarters, was particularly enlightening. Naval command and control runs along different lines of communication than that of the U.S. Army. Much of the Army's communications and electronics equipment on Grenada was not compatible with the Navy's. This problem became particularly acute when Army and Marine units encountered each other near St. George's. Compounding the command and control problem, was the appearance, rather early in the outload, of XVIII Airborne Corps Headquarters personnel. These, not being in the Joint Task Force chain of command, served no real useful purpose on Grenada besides further congesting an already overcrowded objective area.

4. Another valuable lesson was learned from the tragic incident that occurred on D+2 in which the Second Brigade TOC was bombed and strafed during a misdirected airstrike. Every care must be taken to prevent such occurrences when air support is being provided close to friendly positions. Nor should close air support be considered as the solution to every problem on the battlefield. In this instance, a small infantry force easily subdued the Cubans outside the Frequente Compound without a single friendly casualty among their number.

5. The possession of accurate military maps, one of the most essential assets for planning and conducting any operation, was almost completely overlooked during Urgent Fury. At the very first, the only map available to us for planning was a tourist map which was woefully inadequate for

the conduct of a complete map reconnaissance. Reacting quickly, the 63rd Engineer Company's Topographic Section on Ft. Bragg mass produced hundreds of black and white copies of this map with a 1:50,000 grid system arbitrarily superimposed on it. (It was missing, among other features, the Salines Airstrip.) Later on the ground, newer, much more detailed 1:25,000 sized maps reached us. These, unfortunately, had been designed using a different grid numbering system. The result was a great deal of confusion between our forces, most of whom were still using the old map for reference. More than one unit was given a location for a contact point or an objective that, according to their maps, was in the middle of the Carribean Sea.

6. The wear of the new Battle Dress Uniform (BDU) proved highly unsatisfactory during operations in Grenada. Excessively thick and heavy, BDU's caused numerous heat injuries and were found to be highly uncomfortable and unpopular with our soldiers. The Army must field a uniform better suited for a jungle environment in the BDU pattern.

7. Grenada also illustrated the failure of U.S. Army Forces to establish a sound doctrine and a method for the employment of snipers Army-wide. Although the Rangers, Marines, and the armies of many other nations (including the Soviet Union) place high emphasis on sniper training and employment, the U.S. Army does not. In general, snipers, an authorized part of every infantry company and reconnaissance platoon in the Army, are relegated to a role of counter-sniping somewhere on the platoon line. Snipers, equipped with M-21 Sniper Rifles, were employed in Grenada and did produce a few kills, but only after a prodigious expenditure of ammunition and never in the role in which a sniper is supposed to operate.

That is, as part of a highly specialized two man team that operates well forward of the FEBA to gather intelligence, kill key enemy personnel and influence the enemy's deployment, operations and morale. Situations like that in Grenada, are ideally suited for the employment of snipers. This was proven by French Foreign Legion Paratroopers during the 1973 crisis in Zaire, where sniper teams were remarkably effective under similar circumstances. Sniper training and employment doctrine in the U.S. Army should receive more attention.

8. By far the most important lesson to be learned from Operation Urgent Fury was the inadequate amount of time allowed for troop leading procedures by superior commands for their subordinates. This problem was particularly acute during the first three days of the operation. Division Headquarters received their orders and guidance daily around 2200 hours for the next day's operations. After a mad rush to put together some form of a plan, an operations order did not reach Brigade level until after 0100 hours. No less of a mad rush ensued here and battalion commanders, after receiving their orders around 0300 hours, were usually in a position to brief their company commanders by 0500 hours on the day of the expected attack. As a result individual soldiers were moving across their lines of departure with little more guidance than a general sense of direction and a rules of engagement card in their pocket.

It was their initiative and professional behavior, and the excellence of their small unit leaders that allowed them to overcome these numerous problems and accomplish their mission. This, as has been the case so many times before in military history, was the real success story behind Operation Urgent Fury.

Footnotes

1. "Grenada," *Encyclopedia Britannica*, New York: Encyclopedia Britannica, 1969, Vol 10, p. 913.
2. Magnuson, Ed. "D-Day in Grenada," *Time*, November 7, 1983, p. 26.
3. *ibid.* p. 26.
4. *ibid.* p. 27.
5. Issacson, Walter. "Weighing the Proper Role," *Time*, November 7, 1983, p.49.
6. Whitaker, Mark. "The Battle for Grenada," *Newsweek*, November 7, 1983, p. 76.

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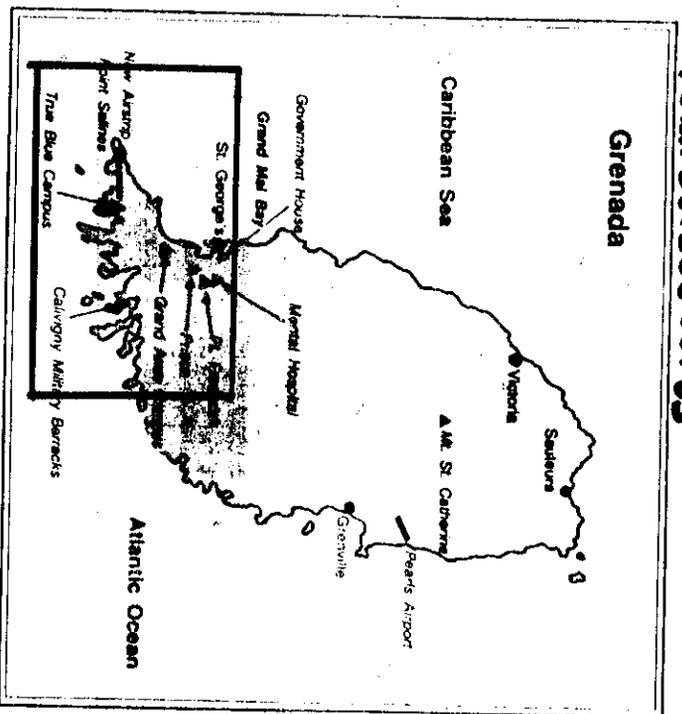
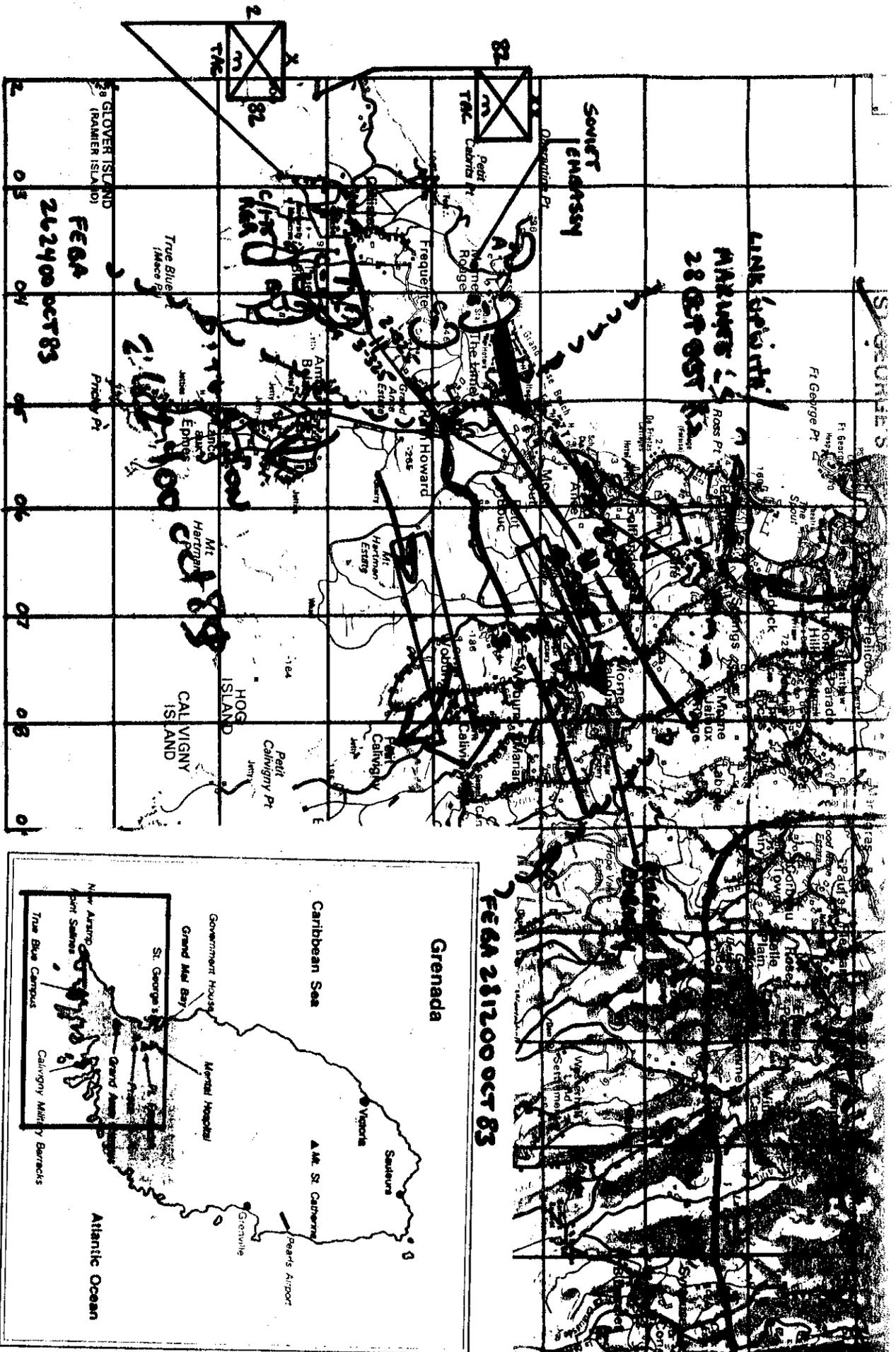
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SCALE 1:50,000

HEIGHTS IN FEET



Inlosure 1



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XVIII
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Topo

NOTICE: Main map projection has an arbitrary grid system designed for training. It may be used as a UTM type

61°45'W

