

TASK FORCE 2/325
OPERATION URGENT FURY

Captain Michael J. Maraccini
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On the morning of October 25, 1983, Operation Urgent Fury began as armed forces of the United States of America invaded the island nation of Grenada in the southern Caribbean Sea. A communist backed coup had taken control of the government and threatened the lives of American students on the islands, as well as U.S. interests in the Caribbean area. The operation was the largest joint land, air, and sea effort since the end of the Vietnam War.¹ Units from the Army, Navy, Air Force, and Marines participated in the invasion. Among these units was the 2/325th Infantry Battalion (Airborne) of the United States Army's 82nd Airborne Division. It was the readiness, swift action, and tactical decisiveness on the part of the 2/325th that was to aid in ~~in~~ freeing the American students from the island and restoring the government to civilian democratic control.

Grenada's movement towards communism had its beginning on March 13, 1979 when Maurice Bishop and his followers, the New Jewel Movement (NJM), assumed control of Grenada and established the People's Revolutionary Government (PRG). This takeover occurred while the Prime Minister, Sir Eric Gairy, was visiting the United Nations in New York.² Prior to Bishop's coup, Soviet and Cuban influence in Grenada had been minimal. Bishop and his deputy, Bernard Coard, had decided on their own to adopt the principles of Marxism and Leninism for the NJM and had made requests for Soviet and Cuban assistance.

The assistance began with arms shipments and military advisors from Cuba (shortly after the coup, ^{Mis. Mod.}) followed by the establishment of an embassy at Fort Lucas. Soviet supplies were shipped through Cuba, with some shipments being split between Nicaragua and Grenada.³ The Soviets also established an embassy near Salines. With the help of this foreign aid and the military advisors, the commander of the Grenadian Army, General Hudson Austin, began to build a strong regular army and militia called the People's Revolutionary Army (PRA).

In December 1979, Cuban engineers with Soviet equipment began construction of a large airport near Port Salines. This construction was looked at as a means to bolster the sagging tourist trade in Grenada. American suspicions were confirmed, however, when Bishop later announced that the airport would be for Soviet and Cuban military use.⁴ This facility in Grenada, combined with bases in Cuba and Nicaragua, would form a "triangular base complex". From this base of operations, the Soviet and Cuban Air Force and Navy could control the entire Caribbean area, which supplies the United States with 56% of its imported oil.⁵

As construction on the airport proceeded, trouble began brewing within the PRG. In the fall of 1982, Bishop decided to prohibit the Cuban ambassador from attending any more of his cabinet meetings.⁶ He also expressed an interest in establishing better relations with the United States. (This disturbed the Soviets and Cubans, along with Bishop's Deputy Coard, and General Austin who were hard-line Marxists.) On October 13, 1983, Bishop and other government officials were placed under arrest. On October 18, the Soviet Ambassador, Gennadiy Sazhenev, ordered them executed.⁷ General

Austin dissolved the civil government and took control of the island.

U.S. Ambassador Milan Bish of Barbados attempted to arrange for the release of the American medical students from the island, but these efforts eventually failed. Their safety was in jeopardy as the unrest mounted. On October 21, the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) requested assistance from the United States in an intervention to restore order on Grenada.⁸ The planning for Operation Urgent Fury had begun.

To begin their estimate of the situation, American planners had to take into account the factors of the mission; enemy, terrain, troops, and time available. The American mission in Grenada was threefold. First, and most important, was the rescue of the American medical students on the island. The next two objectives were interrelated, ~~these being~~ the restoration of a democratic government in Grenada~~x~~ and a desire to rid the island of communist influence.⁹

The enemy forces on the island were a large question mark as information on them was scarce. The United States expected to encounter up to 3000 Grenadian troops, half of them regular army and half ~~being~~ militia.¹⁰ The Grenadian regulars, also known as the People's Revolutionary Army (PRA), had been trained by the Cubans and Soviets and were expected to offer tough resistance. The People's Revolutionary Militia (PRM), on the other hand, were not as well trained. ~~Most~~ of them had been in favor of the Bishop Government~~x~~ and were alienated by Austin's coup. Some of the militia had indicated that they would not fight the Americans for General Austin.¹¹

The Cuban contingent on the island was estimated at 750

The first, and perhaps most decisive action that the 2/325th engaged in^P was the attack on the Calliste Military Compound north of the Point Salines runway. As the 2/325th and the Rangers expanded their hold on the runway, they began taking prisoners. Bravo Company of the 2/325th and a Ranger platoon engaged in a small fire fight with Cubans in the southern end of the Calliste Compound. Eighty Cubans surrendered^X and reported there were twenty-five more Cubans in the compound who would not surrender.²¹ At 2000 hrs. that night, all elements of Task Force 2/325 were in place around the airfield, and the relief of the Ranger Battalion was complete.²² (See Map A)

The Cuban hold on the Calliste Compound was a major concern of Task Force 2/325. It was key terrain, high ground from which the Cubans could bring direct fire to bear on 2/325's positions^X and the Point Salines Airfield. The decision was made to attack at first light on the morning of October 26.²³

The plan called for Alpha Company to provide a base of supporting fire from high ground to the south of the compound. Bravo Company would move into a position on the western flank and prepare to conduct a ground attack. B/2-505 would be in reserve and prepared to conduct a supporting attack on the Frecuente Military Depot to the east. (See Map B) Disaster struck, though, in the early morning hours of October 26. CPT Ritz, the Bravo Company Commander, had gone forward on the western flank to recon positions for first platoon with Lt Seagar, the platoon leader^X and SSG Guin, a squad leader. While on the recon, they accidentally stumbled across a Cuban outpost. The Cubans opened fire, and CPT Ritz was killed. SSG Guin lay wounded, shot through the chest. LT Seagar returned fire, then withdrew down the hill.

Hearing all of the commotion in that direction, LTC Hamilton, located behind Alpha Company, tried to contact CPT Ritz over the radio. LT Bowen, another platoon leader in Bravo Company, informed LTC Hamilton of the situation.²⁴ CPT Ritz had not taken a radio with him on the recon. LTC Hamilton put LT Bowen in charge of Bravo Company. He told him to try and link up with CPT Ritz and continue to prepare for the attack.²⁵

The attack began with Alpha Company providing a base of fire into the compound from the south. Bravo Company had moved closer to the compound, taking several wounded. LTC Hamilton directed the 82nd Airborne Division Artillery's fire on the compound and coordinated close air strikes by Navy A-7s.²⁶ The fire from both sides was extremely accurate. The Cubans moved from building to building after each pass of the A-7s, with several being killed each time. At one point in the battle, the remaining Cubans regrouped in the headquarters building of the compound. The Cuban flag flew from the top of the building, and this made it an easy target for the soldiers and the aircraft. The A-7s made one more pass. White flags were extended from the windows of the headquarters building, and all firing ceased. The Cubans had surrendered. *several what?*

The recon and medical platoons immediately moved into the compound to secure it and treat U.S. and Cuban wounded. The Cubans had ~~taken~~ sixteen killed in action, twenty-nine wounded in action, and eighty-nine were prisoners of war. Task Force 2/325 had two soldiers KIA and ten WIA.²⁷ CPT Ritz's body and SSG Guin, still alive thanks to Cuban medical aid, were recovered. 1LT Mike Okita, the S-3 Air for 2/325, was placed in command of Bravo Company. The Calliste Compound had turned out to be the Cuban tactical operations

center on the island. Weapons, medical supplies, and key maps, along with military information, were recovered.

After consolidation and reorganization in and around the Calliste Compound, Task Force 2/325 prepared for follow-on operations. The attack to the east was continued in the early afternoon of October 26. B/2-505 executed its attack on the Frequente Military Depot. Bravo Company moved to the northeast to secure the radio station near Grand Anse Beach. Alpha Company supported the high ground in the middle.

As B/2-505 moved towards Frequente, the supply depot appeared as if it were empty. This suspicion was confirmed when only one Grenadian soldier surrendered.²⁸ The building was full of weapons, ammunition, and equipment.

As B/2-505 consolidated its position around Frequente, the recon platoon, ^{Pronoun} who had moved forward with them, received a mission to recover the bodies of four Rangers who had been killed in an ambush near a drive-in theater just down the road from Frequente.²⁹ On their way to recover the bodies, they engaged and destroyed a BTR-60 near the drive-in. On their way back to Frequente after locating the bodies, they were ambushed from a ridge line approximately 200 meters away.³⁰ The M-60 machine gunners on the six recon jeeps returned fire, and the platoon fought its way through the ambush back to Frequente.

In the meantime, Bravo Company ^{SP} and completed its move to the northeast and captured what remained of the radio station near Grand Anse Beach. Most of it had ^{PV} been destroyed by close air support from the Navy A-7s. Bravo Company suffered one soldier wounded in action in the attack.³¹

With the day's action completed, Task Force 2/325 assumed a linear defense from Bravo Company's position near the radio station running south-southeast to B/2-505's position around the Frequente depot. B/2-505 was tied with the 3/325th Infantry Battalion from the 82nd Airborne Division, who were in defensive positions on the right flank. (See Map C)

separate ideas

The operation over the next four days, October 27 through October 30, evolved into a large scale reconnaissance in force. At 0630 on the morning of October 27, Task Force 2/325 moved to secure Grand Anse Beach and to clear the area between Point Salines and the capital of Grenada, St. Georges.³² (See Map D.) Upon moving into Grand Anse, the 2/325 discovered more American medical students at the campus located there, as well as other American and Grenadian civilians requesting evacuation. Using twenty dump trucks captured at the Frequente Depot, Task Force 2/325 began evacuating the civilians back to Point Salines.³³

The reconnaissance continued on October 28. Units of 2/325 searched houses along the beach for weapons, documents, and suspected members of the PRA.³⁴

On the morning of October 29, CPT Jacoby reported that Alpha Company had linked up with the Marines at Ross Point, Task Force 2/325's northern limit of advance.³⁵ The clearing operations continued, with efforts focused on population control and looting by Grenadian citizens. Brigade headquarters called to inform LTC Hamilton that his unit was now in the "pacification" phase of the operation.³⁶

The last threat of any serious military opposition came on October 31, when LTC Hamilton was ordered to conduct an airmobile

assault on the Cuban Unconventional Warfare Camp on Grand Etang, the highest mountain on Grenada.³⁷ Upon conducting the assault, however, the Camp was found to be deserted.

On November 2, hostilities on Grenada were declared officially ended. On the morning of November 4, Task Force 2/325 returned to Fort Bragg.³⁸

Task Force 2/325 played a key role in the success of Operation Urgent Fury. The Calliste Military Compound was the Cuban Army's tactical headquarters on the island. When 2/325 captured the compound, they destroyed the enemy's command and control over its forces. The capture of the Frequente Military Depot struck a further blow. The PRA had kept their major store of weapons and ammunition in the depot. With their leadership and supply lines cut off, it was only a matter of time before the PRA would succumb to the invading forces.

The immediate goals of the United States had been accomplished. The American medical students were safely evacuated from the island. A civilian democratic government, ^{SP} lead by Governor General Sir Paul Scoon, was restored on the island. Finally, Cuban and Soviet influence was erased.

The long term significance of Operation Urgent Fury was not as readily apparent. The Soviets had been seeking to expand their influence in the Caribbean Basin area. Cuba and the situation in Nicaragua were evidence of this. Their presence in Grenada was seen as an attempt to increase their influence in this area. Through their immediate action, the United States showed the Soviets that it would not tolerate this situation. It is hoped that the memory of this incident will also discourage Soviet behavior of

this nature in the future.

The American citizens on the island were in danger of being taken hostage by the militant government of Grenada. Through its quick action, the United States was able to avoid this mishap. It had learned an important lesson. To resolve a situation such as the one in Grenada through quick, decisive military action, is preferable to moving more cautiously. This would have given the PRA time to take the Americans hostage. The PRA would have been in control, and the United States would have been at its mercy.

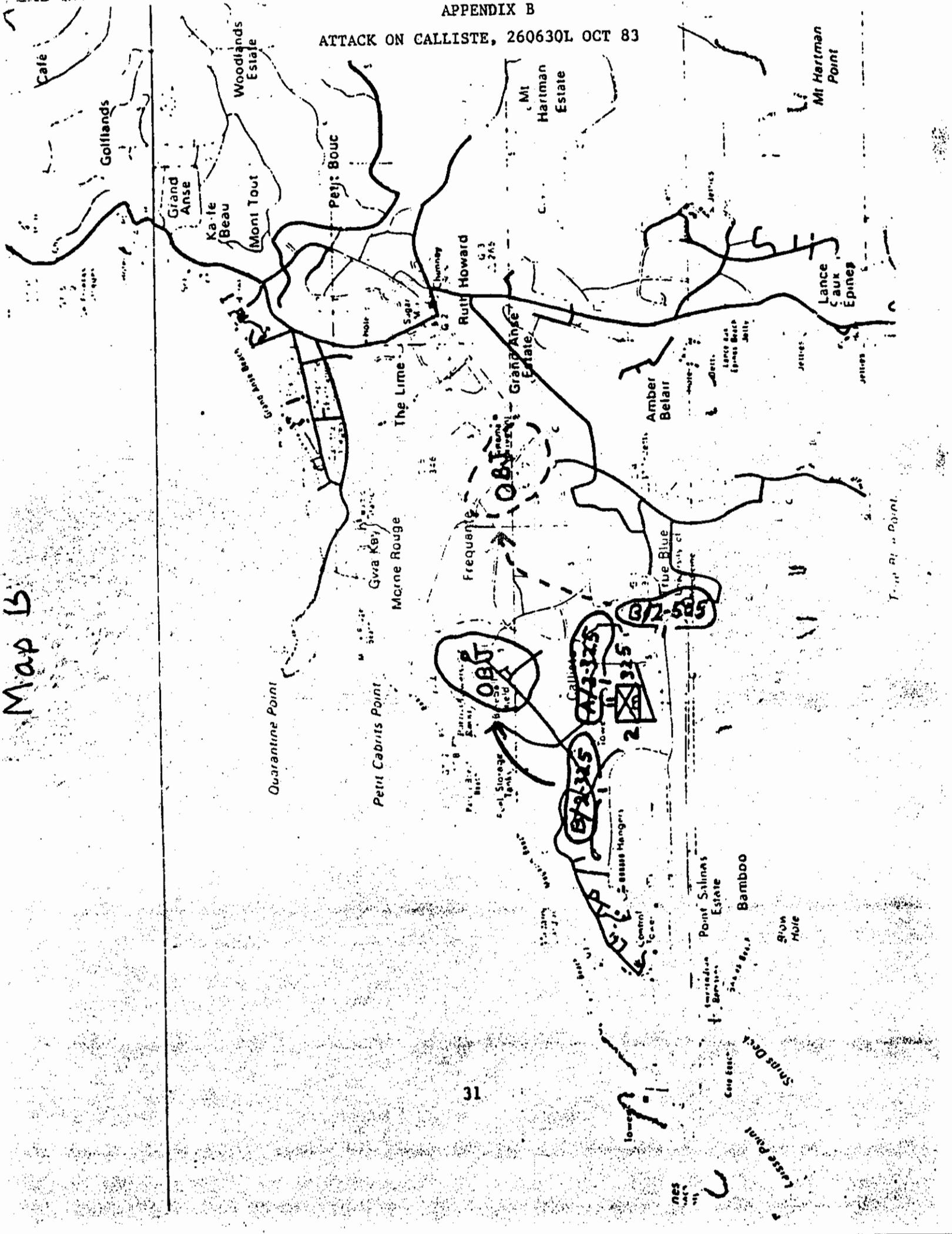
As for LTC Hamilton and Task Force 2/325, they learned the importance of training in peacetime as one would fight in war. Though there were many areas that needed improvement, it was their rigorous training program in the months prior to Urgent Fury that enabled them to perform as well as they did in such uncertain circumstances and on such short notice.

The success bolstered the confidence of the unit and the American military. The United States would not tolerate the Soviet expansion of influence in the Caribbean.

Wider?
In Grenada?
or Iran?

ATTACK ON CALLISTE, 260630L OCT 83

Map 13



FOOTNOTES

1. Author Unknown. "Assault on the Spice Island: The Grenada Campaign." Information provided by Captain Charles Jacoby, Instructor, Department of History, United States Military Academy, West Point, New York, p. 262.
2. Ibid., P. 265.
3. Ibid., p. 266.
4. Ibid., p. 269.
5. Ashby, Timothy. "Grenada: Soviet Stepping Stone." U.S. Naval Institute Proceedings, December 1983, pp. 34-35.
6. Ibid., p.34.
7. Ibid.
8. Unknown/Jacoby, p. 274.
9. Ibid., p. 275.
10. Hogg, Ian V., Jane's Military Review (London, Jane's Publishing Company Limited, 1985), p. 45.
11. Unknown/Jacoby, p. 284.
12. Hogg, p. 45.
13. Unknown/Jacoby, p. 283.
14. Ibid., pp. 285-286.
15. Ibid., p. 286.
16. Hamilton, Jack L., "Operation Urgent Fury: A Battalion Commander's Perspective," Thesis. National War College, 1985 pp. 7-8.
17. Ibid.
18. Stagner, Captain Horace, Personal Interview conducted 24 July 1988.
19. Hamilton, p. 17.
20. Ibid., p. 16.
21. Ibid., p. 17.
22. Ibid.
23. Ibid., p. 18

24. Ibid., p. 19.
25. Ibid.
26. Ibid., pp. 19-20.
27. Ibid., p. 21.
28. Ibid.
29. Ibid., p. 22.
30. Ibid.
31. Ibid.
32. Ibid., pp. 22-23
33. Ibid., p. 23.
34. Ibid., pp. 23-24.
35. Ibid., p. 24.
36. Ibid.
37. Ibid., pp. 24-25.
38. Ibid., p. 25.

** Maps A-D were taken from the thesis of LTC Jack L. Hamilton's thesis, "Operation Urgent Fury: A Battalion Commander's Perspective"

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