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“Pleased to be assisted even by the Devil Himself”: Recollection, Reprieve, and the U.S. Intervention of Grenada, 1983

“Oh God! Oh God! They have turned their guns on the People!,” screamed progressive Prime Minister Maurice Bishop, deposed leader of the Grenadian Revolution. On October 19, 1983, under the direction of Marxist-Leninist ideologues like Deputy Prime Minister Bernard Coard and General Hudson Austin, soldiers used automatic weapons and armored cars to disperse civilian crowds who “freed” Bishop from house arrest and congregated on Fort Rupert.¹ Though some civilians were armed, it is not clear who fired the shot. “Drunk on ideology,” as some Grenadians observed, the coup’s instigator’s nonetheless killed scores in the process. “There were those who saw Maurice as not being able to go beyond democratic socialism,” one islander commented. To some he was not “hard enough” to lead the country.² When ordered to face the fort’s wall, Bishop refused, “They shot my father in his back; if they are going to shoot me, I want to look at my executioners in the eyes.”³ Hard-liners, “fanatically committed to the Leninist canon,” executed Bishop and murdered his Cabinet and civilian followers in cold blood. “Revolutionary had killed revolutionary [and] with that action the Grenadian revolution had aborted itself.”⁴ Grenadians fled and hid from the carnage and chaos. “I could hear some shots from the fort... The busmen weren’t taking any chances. They left a lot of people behind,” said an observer.⁵ Locals then witnessed a flare explode in the sky, signaling that orders were carried out. Soldiers dumped Bishop and his supporters, riddled with machine gun bullets, into a makeshift grave pit and burned their bodies over night.⁶ “Bishop was killed on his most popular day,” one islander remarked.⁷ Another reflected, “Maurice was an exceptional person. He inspired the nation.”⁸

Grenada, a small Eastern Caribbean nation with roughly 100,000 people, has experienced a history of turmoil and instability. In addition to the long struggle against various forms of colonialism and a delusional domestic despot⁹, the island entangled itself during the late Cold

¹ Beverley A. Steele, *Grenada: A History of its People* (Oxford: Macmillan, 2003), p. 409.

² Terrence Marrayshow, interview by author, tape recording, 20 June 2009, St. George’s, Grenada.

³ Steele, *Grenada*, p. 409

⁴ Hugh O’Shaughnessy, *Grenada: An Eyewitness Account of the U.S. Invasion and the Caribbean History That Provoked It* (New York: Dodd, Mead, and Hamilton, 1984), p. 2-3

⁵ Paul Scoon, interview by author, tape recording, 18 June 2009, St. George’s, Grenada.

⁶ Steele, *Grenada*, p. 409

⁷ Marrayshow, interview by author.

⁸ Peter David, interview by author, tape recording, 23 June 2009, St. George’s, Grenada,

⁹ Sir Eric Gairy led Grenada for over two decades, gradually increasing his authoritarianism. Tony Thorndike writes, “He had successfully exploited the grievances of the common people in 1951 and set Grenada

War. For four years Bishop and the People's Revolutionary Government (PRG) attempted to overhaul the island through democratic socialism. The PRG made advances in many social services through state-led programs in the early stages of the revolution, especially in health and education. Despite some populist support for Bishop himself, the Grenadian Revolution greatly struggled. "We had become the pariahs of the Caribbean," reflected a former revolutionary.¹⁰ The state suppressed their own people, repressed political freedoms, and committed human rights abuses. "The revolution did not care about your personal rights," commented one Grenadian.¹¹ Grenada's relations with other socialist states jeopardized the revolution, as the PRG willingly accepted military and economic aid from Cuba, the Soviet Union, the Eastern Bloc, Libya, and North Korea. Grenada's socialism also strained diplomatic relations within the Caribbean and more so the U.S. Internally, ideological schisms marred consensus on the revolution's direction and tensions derailed its leadership.¹² The PRG hard-liners' coup set the precedent for U.S. intervention when the faction massacred Bishop, his supporters, and several Cabinet members and set up the Revolutionary Military Council (RMC). The U.S. saw in Grenada an opportunity to roll back communism in the developing world, and more so in Latin America and the Caribbean. On October 25, President Ronald Reagan ordered a joint U.S.-Caribbean military operation to evacuate American medical students and citizens and to restore democracy. Although the operation was incredibly controversial and condemned on the world stage, Americans generally supported the mission and over ninety-percent of Grenadians welcomed the invasion and supported a transition back to political democracy.¹³

upon a new course. Twenty years on, he had betrayed most of his promises and failed to realize that the world, including Grenada, had moved ahead. He was an anachronism, and dismissed the growing youthful resistance as beneath his, and God's, contempt. A laughing stock in the Caribbean, he became blind to his image, and to much else in his naiveté and susceptibilities. It was to prove disastrous to him." The man was obsessed with Unidentified Flying Objects (UFOs) and "other cosmic phenomena." "When discussed by him on the world stage, he rapidly became the object of derision." Moreover, Chile's Augusto Pinochet supplied Gairy's paramilitary units the "Green Beasts" and the "Iguanas" with uniforms, and Gairy himself employed a goon squad of "the toughest and roughest roughnecks," the Mongoose Gang, to terrorize opposition and suppress locals. "Repression was justified in terms of anti-communism and Divine wisdom." From *Grenada: Politics, Economics and Society* (London: Frances Pinter, 1985), pp. 39-40.

¹⁰ Kendrick Radix quoted from Deborah Hart Strober and Gerald S. Strober, *Reagan: The Man and His Presidency* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1998), p. 252.

¹¹ Eddie Frederick, interview by author, tape recording, 17, 27 June 2009, St. George's, Grenada.

¹² As Jamaican-born Grenadian historian Beverley A. Steele notes, "The first mistake was seek and accept the help of foreign countries, accept a foreign ideology, and engage in hemispheric animosities in what was a local struggle against oppression. The other mistake was that of condoning unnecessary measures of suppression and brutality against their own Grenadian people." In *Grenada*, p. 412.

Former political prisoner and entrepreneur Winston Whyte reflects on ideology, "There is something exciting about the Marxist rhetoric. It gives us something to hate, and hate is a powerful emotion... It destroys you the hater, not the hated. But while you are in the throes of the excitement it is an absolutely elevating rhetoric. It intoxicates you. That's why you can do so many bad things. It's like a germ in your soul. And that's why so many atrocities are committed in the name of Marxism because you are taken over by a kind of evil." Interview by author, tape recording, 22 June 2009, St. George's, Grenada.

¹³ CBS conducted a statistical poll after U.S. operations ended. The poll found that 91% of Grenadians approved of the intervention, based on 304 responses. Found in "Grenadians Welcomed Invasion, a Poll Finds," *New York Times*, November 6, 1983. Another poll, conducted in early 1984, showed that 86% of Grenadians still believed the intervention was good. See Cynthia Weber, *Simulating Sovereignty: Intervention, the State, and Symbolic Exchange* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 113.

Exploring the 1983 U.S.-led invasion of Grenada, this paper is primarily a story of diplomacy, military interventionism, and foreign-local interaction through the lens of peoples' experiences. This paper does not necessarily alter or reinterpret the metanarrative, but rather utilizes contingencies in the moment and peoples' responses to them to restructure and nuance our understanding of the event. Incorporating previously unused sources and voices, such as oral histories, memoirs, government reports, and periodicals during operational planning and combat, I show the Grenadian civilian and military experience, as well as that of American officials and servicemen and women, as generally seen on the ground. A unique case during the Cold War, particularly in U.S.-Latin American/Caribbean relations, the overwhelming majority of Grenadians undeniably supported an intervention and welcomed the Americans with open arms. At the same time, however, this article demonstrates that the invasion and response was not so clear-cut, but rather was a multi-angled episode in which Grenadians, Americans, and foreign nationals held different perceptions and understandings of October 1983. I strive to answer the following: Utilizing Grenadian experiences, how did islanders perceive their situation and the American invasion? Albeit the operation's overall success, how did intelligence failures lead to soldiers' combat confusion or mishaps? How did American officials or military personnel understand the invasion and interact with locals and vice-versa?

The communist hard-liners' violence were unquestionably the darkest periods in the island's history. The combat operations that followed certainly demonstrated similar levels of violence, exposed psychological depths, and revealed a range of emotions amongst soldiers and non-combatants alike. By accessing memory and personal experiences we understand how Grenadians, representing cross-sections of society, and American personnel felt in the moment. Emerging from that darkness, however, most islanders revealed an incredible sense of hope and relief for the invasion. As former political prisoner and entrepreneur Winston Whyte frankly expressed, "Nobody thought about listening to the Grenadian to find out how we felt."¹⁴

After the massacre the RMC attempted to consolidate the coup. Following orders from Austin, People's Revolutionary Army (PRA) soldiers instituted a daily curfew and threatened to kill more citizens. East German-built BTRs lined the streets of St. George's, the capital city, and the island's parishes. A former teacher and parliamentary official recalled, "I heard on the radio there was a shoot-on-sight curfew so I tipped back into the house and sure enough when I looked down the road I saw a...bit of artillery...a mobile tank...focusing on the hill almost in direct line to my own house."¹⁵ Grenadian radio host and image consultant Eddie Frederick, then in his youth, commented, "When they killed Maurice I was despondent. Totally despondent...I fell asleep weeping. I thought it was a dream...Everything just went haywire." He further expressed, "This is a small island. What the hell were we doing with these kinds of vehicles here? God only knows...I was scared shitless."¹⁶ Medical doctor Terrence Marryshow, who was studying in Cuba, stated Bishops' assassination was "the most tragic period in my entire life." To him and many other Grenadians, the hard-liners "actually created...conditions for an invasion of our country."¹⁷ Grenadians prayed for resolve and an end to the terror. "You didn't know

¹⁴ Whyte, interview by author.

¹⁵ Interview with a government official, tape recording, 1 July 2009, St. George's, Grenada.

¹⁶ Frederick, interview by author.

¹⁷ Marryshow, interview by author.

where you were going because half of your cabinet had been executed. And you don't know what's going on. You don't know where this will end,” stated Frederick.¹⁸ Former teacher, economist, and Prime Minister George Brizan remarked, “When Maurice Bishop was assassinated I said to myself...Grenada will be pleased to be assisted even by the Devil himself.”¹⁹ Frederick affirmed this outlook held by many islanders, “We had reached the point in Grenada where if it were the Devil that came, we would have been honoring him because it was so bad. It was very uncertain.”²⁰ In spite of such remarks and the fact that ideologues controlled the country, the Grenadian population was predominately socially conservative and religiously devout. Although many Grenadians held the socialist Bishop in populist esteem, historian Michael Grow writes, “A majority of the island’s population consisted of socially conservative, Catholic or Anglican peasant small-holders—inauspicious clay from which to mold a Marxist society. They were also the products of a British colonial heritage in which respect for parliamentary democracy and civil liberties had been deeply ingrained.”²¹ Brizan asserted, “Marxism-Leninism is out of place in a peasant society. Grenada is a small peasant society. It is not an industrial society.”²²

Embracing their faith, many islanders hoped and believed that an outside force would intervene. For days leading up to the invasion, local Grenadians noted that “everything was completely dead [and] completely quiet,” but at night they could hear reconnaissance planes. Some assumed the Americans were coming.²³ Frederick stated, “it was intimidating us...so we expected something.”²⁴ One evening, despite the RMC’s curfew and threats, Governor General Sir Paul Scoon ventured into the island’s mountains and saw something in the sky. “Reagan was up in the sky there every night looking to see what was going on,” he observed. “That is Daddy Reagan.”²⁵ Former revolutionary and Minister of Tourism Peter David expected an American invasion, “Grenada was not important to the U.S. prior to October 1983 in any real sense. [By then] Ronald Reagan had Grenada in his cross-hairs.”²⁶ For four years, to be sure, the PRG propagated heavy anti-Americanism as the revolution moved from democratic socialism and toward hardened communism. In turn, the U.S. reacted with diplomatic hostility. The island’s revolution was “like a thorn in Ronald Reagan’s body,” remarked Brizan. “Grenada presented itself like a lance before a bull.” To most Grenadians, however, Cold War geopolitics and U.S. interventionist justification were irrelevant to their own critical situation—they simply wanted to be freed from fear and find justice. “The intervention in Grenada was welcome by the vast majority of Grenadians,” observed Brizan. “The only people who would have been opposed would be ideologues.”²⁷ Describing the islanders’ prayers for help, revered Jamaican-born Grenadian historian Beverley A. Steele used a common local proverb, “If God can’t come, he

¹⁸ Frederick, interview by author.

¹⁹ George Brizan, interview by author, tape recording, 18 June 2009, St. George’s, Grenada.

²⁰ Frederick, interview by author.

²¹ Michael Grow, *U.S. Presidents and Latin American Interventions: Pursuing Regime Change in the Cold War* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2008), 140-41.

²² Brizan, interview by author.

²³ Interview with a government official, tape recording, 1 July 2009, St. George’s, Grenada.

²⁴ Frederick, interview by author.

²⁵ Scoon, interview by author.

²⁶ David, interview by author.

²⁷ Brizan, interview by author.

does send.”²⁸

Prior U.S. military maneuvers, administrative hype, and official reports, however, indicated otherwise that policymakers anticipated some type of conflict. In the early eighties American naval fleets participated in a series of exercises called Operation Ocean Venture around a set of Puerto Rican islands called “Amber and the Amberdines.” This could have been a codename for Grenada and the Grenadines. Grenada was also off the Venezuelan coastline and could have affected sea lines of communication (SLOC), including important oil tanker, cargo ship, and naval routes around the Atlantic and South America. Moreover, President Reagan repeatedly claimed that Grenada’s construction of a military-grade airport would serve as a transit point for Soviet and Cuban arms shipments and soldiers to and from proxy wars and hotspots in Africa and Central America.²⁹ One Grenadian commented, “I’m inclined to believe it [the airport] was more a propaganda push...I can see no evidence at all to indicate it could have been anything else.”³⁰ Yuri Pavlov, head of the Soviet Foreign office’s Latin American division, remarked, “No one in his right mind was thinking in Moscow...of turning Grenada into yet another Cuba. It was too small and too susceptible to economic and political pressures and could not be defended militarily.”³¹ Despite the lack of proper intelligence, the Reagan administration’s Cold Warrior rhetoric nonetheless remained strong through the first term. After the October massacre, Herbert E. Meyer, Vice Chairman of the National Intelligence Council (NIC), wrote, “To be sure, we have no direct evidence of Soviet involvement in the Grenada coup [but] it is standard Kremlin procedure to violently replace an ally with a stooge.”³² “Our intelligence there was primitive. There was virtually none, really,” insisted National Security Advisor Robert McFarlane.³³

Even without clear information on Soviet involvement, U.S. officials still viewed Cuban communist adventurism and the evolving crisis on the island as possible regional destabilizers. Conservative Caribbean leaders, aligned with American interests, held this perspective, as well. The heavily armed island, stockpiled with foreign-supplied weapons, was close in proximity to other nations, a chief concern in the Eastern Caribbean. “We could have supplied the Caribbean,” noted former political prisoner and lawyer Lloyd Noel.³⁴ The Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS), chaired by Prime Minister Eugenia Charles of Dominica, cited a potential threat to surrounding islands. Governor General Scoon, under RMC house arrest and the sole remaining official with legitimate constitutional power, managed to send Charles secret messages requesting intervention. Backed by Prime Minister Tom Adams of Barbados, Prime Minister Edward Seaga of Jamaica, and other Caribbean leaders, Charles and the OECS requested U.S. assistance for “a pre-emptive defensive strike in order to remove a dangerous

²⁸ Steele, *Grenada*, 415.

²⁹ Strober, *Reagan*, 251; Edward A. Lynch, *The Cold War’s Last Battlefield: Reagan, the Soviets, and Central America* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2011), 129.

³⁰ Government official, interview by author.

³¹ Yuri Pavlov, Episode 18 “Backyard,” Cold War Series, National Security Archive/George Washington University, published 21 February 1999.

³² “The Importance of Grenada,” NIC 7692-83, Herbert E. Meyer, 26 October 1983, CIA Freedom of Information Act Reading Room.

³³ Strober, *Reagan*, 262.

³⁴ Lloyd Noel, interview by author, tape recording, 22 June 2009, St. George’s, Grenada.

threat to peace and security to the region.”³⁵ Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger reflected that the Charles “made a particularly eloquent plea to President Reagan, pointing out the very real threat Grenada’s radical government (by then virtually an anarchy) posed to all of the outer Caribbean states.”³⁶ Colonel Oliver North, later embroiled in the Iran-Contra Affair, remembered that “her influence was critical. She was the Margaret Thatcher of the Caribbean. She was regarded across the Caribbean as a staunch believer in democracy.”³⁷ Scholar Russell Crandall encapsulates the Caribbean perspective, “In fact, from the beginning of the crisis, the Caribbean nations were out well ahead of the United States in their belief that a U.S.-led invasion was both desirable and necessary.”³⁸

Regarding the dire situation on Grenada itself, the Reagan administration viewed the hard-liners’ coup as a genuine threat to American citizens on the island and St. George’s University, an American-owned medical school. Duane “Dewey” Clarridge, Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) Division Chief for Latin America, remembered President Ronald Reagan noticeably upset about the students’ condition and pondered another possible hostage situation like Iran. The Marine Barracks bombing in Beirut, Lebanon just days before surely weighed heavy, too. Although Reagan made the final decision, invading Grenada was clearly a divisive episode within different channels of the U.S. government as major infighting took place among top officials during the planning stages in October 1983. Despite the seemingly last-minute decision to invade, Colonel North attested that contingency planning went into operation well before October. Serving as the lead staffer in a non-combatative disposition, he worked with interagency groups at the State Department and chaired committees at the White House. Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs Langhorne Motley insisted planning for intervention in mid-October.³⁹ Relatively uninformed of the Executive decision, the CIA and Department of Defense (DOD), nevertheless, believed there were alternative resolutions and suggested non-military options. As scholar Edward A. Lynch writes, “[E]ven the most paranoid Cold Warrior might have had difficulty seeing Grenada as much of a threat to the United States.”⁴⁰ Weinberger, originally against a military solution, summarized the consensus officials had reached, “This [the coup] clearly threatened the safety of Americans inside Grenada... as well as the security of the neighboring Caribbean nations who were friendly with the United States and were begging us to intervene. All of these factors made it quite clearly a matter vital to our national interest.”⁴¹ Grenada was also an easy Cold War win to roll back communism in the developing world, which was meant to have larger regional implications and send a message to Castro’s Cuba and the Sandinista’s Nicaragua.

³⁵ “The Grenada Invasion: Caribbean states request peace force,” *The Globe and Mail*, 27 October 1983.

³⁶ Caspar Weinberger, *In the Arena: A Memoir of the 20th Century* (Washington, D.C.: Regnery Publishing, 2001), 309.

³⁷ Strober, *Reagan*, 265. British Prime Minister Thatcher herself condemned the intervention, even though Grenada was no longer part of the Empire and she had recently executed the Falklands War against Argentina.

³⁸ Russell Crandall, *Gunboat Democracy: U.S. Interventions in the Dominican Republic, Grenada, and Panama* (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 2006), 108.

³⁹ Strober, *Reagan*, 263, 266; Mark Adkin, *Urgent Fury: The Battle for Grenada* (Lexington: Lexington Books, 1989), 206.

⁴⁰ Lynch, *The Cold War’s Last Battlefield*, 128.

⁴¹ Caspar Weinberger, *In the Arena: A Memoir of the 20th Century* (Washington, D.C.: Regnery Publishing, 2001), 309.

Reagan's hawkish decision to invade Grenada may have been hasty, as the administration only gave a few days for planning a full-on raid and assembling a joint operation among the armed services and participating Caribbean nations. Deemed Operation Urgent Fury, military commanders scrambled to coordinate logistics, reroute naval fleets, and mobilize traditional forces and special operations. U.S. Atlantic Command Admiral Wesley McDonald, who had overall control of Urgent Fury, remarked, "The planning time was very compressed." Vice Admiral Joseph Metcalf, commander of the Second Fleet, took control of the Joint Special Operations Command (JSOC), "I received orders to stand by for the rescue of U.S. citizens who were in peril...I was told to send a flotilla—which was on its way to Beirut as a normal rotation relief—south. And that got my attention: What were we going down there for?"⁴² Reagan's chief objectives for Urgent Fury "were to protect and evacuate approximately 1,000 U.S. citizens, neutralize the Grenadian and Cuban forces, and stabilize the internal situation so that democratic government could be restored."⁴³ Building on the Executive's goals, Metcalf provided three military strategies, "to protect the lives of US citizens caught in the factional fighting between rival Grenadian leftists; to restore order and conditions for democratic government; and to eradicate Cuban, Soviet, and other East Bloc influences on the island."⁴⁴ Commodore Robert S. Owens, deputy chief of staff for operations, mentioned, "Commanders were directed to ensure minimum casualties to both friendly and Grenadian people. We didn't want to go down there and tear the island apart."⁴⁵ Despite such measures and goals, concern for the well-being of the Grenadian people themselves was by and large absent through these diplomatic and military developments. Because of the lack of intelligence and an understanding of local conditions, American and pan-Caribbean perceptions of the situation differed from how the common Grenadian, not American students or foreign nationals, felt on the ground. Again, the Cold War mentality was not particularly relevant to local people, but many Grenadians hoped that external action would overturn the RMC's marshal law. Frederick asserted, "That period represented a kill or be killed scenario."⁴⁶ An intervention was "the only way things would be different in Grenada," expressed Governor General Scoon.⁴⁷

At the U.S. Embassy in Barbados, Caribbean leaders further pandered to Ambassador Milan Bish, who informed the Reagan administration of the known request for intervention. Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs Charles Gillespie also joined the meetings to discuss responses to the situation. Contrary to some prior interpretations on the OECS request, Grenadians knew of plans to invade and evacuate students. Word spread swiftly around the Caribbean, including CARICOM members who voiced opposition, and eventually reached the RMC leadership. A Guyanese official who attended the emergency meeting tipped General Austin that an invasion of Grenada was possible.⁴⁸ "Right after that meeting, someone

⁴² Daniel P. Bolger, "Special Operations and the Grenada Campaign," *Parameters* 18, no. 4 (December 1988): 53; Strober, *Reagan*, 266.

⁴³ Reynold A. Burrowes, *Revolution and Rescue in Grenada: An Account of the U.S.-Caribbean Invasion* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1988), 79.

⁴⁴ Bolger, "Special Operations and the Grenada Campaign," 53.

⁴⁵ "Grenada, Operation Urgent Fury (23 October - 21 November 1983)," *Naval History and Heritage Command*, Department of the Navy, 4 February 2000, <http://www.history.navy.mil/faqs/faq95-1.htm>.

⁴⁶ Frederick, interview by author.

⁴⁷ Scoon, interview by author.

⁴⁸ Strober, *Reagan*, 269. "The Making of an Invasion: Chronology of the Planning," *The Washington Post*, 30 October 1983, p. A1.

passed the word to Grenada that the United States and a Caribbean peacekeeping force would invade,” expressed Captain Thomas Scott, Commander-in-Chief Atlantic.⁴⁹

Little-known last ditch diplomatic exchanges also occurred to avert a military solution. St. George’s University was central to these attempts. University founder Chancellor Charles Modica, in New York, stated that the students were unharmed. In Grenada, General Austin met with university Vice Chancellor Geoffrey Bourne and guaranteed the students’ safety. Austin reportedly gave him his home telephone number in case of an emergency. Two former Carter officials, Robert Pastor and Peter Bourne, the Vice Chancellor’s son, sent numerous cables to the RMC leadership urging a “transition” plan from military rule to short elections and restoration of constitutional law. Furthermore, Lieutenant Leon Cornwall reiterated the RMC’s “concern” for the safety of American citizens. Local reports indicated, however, that Cornwall was planning a possible counter coup to Austin, who some members were blaming for Bishops’ death. Cornwall described the island’s situation as “calm, tense and pretty volatile.”⁵⁰ Speaking on the perceived harm to students, former revolutionary and union president Chester Humphrey recalled:

I could tell you as a fact that American citizens in Grenada faced absolutely no risk. As a commissar I was on the Fort Rupert, which was where my reporting base was, and I was coordinating delivery of water and other supplies to the medical school...I do very well believe there was never any discussion or intent or anything to harm any American citizens. It would have been foolish to do so...And the Americans essentially just used the opportunity to invade.⁵¹

“I do not believe that students were under threat,” added David. “I saw the students. The students were fully reassured in the days leading up to [the invasion].”⁵²

The medical students themselves, however, did not have a definite consensus on the island’s recent events. Some groups of students wished to leave the island immediately because of the RMC, while others wanted to stay behind and finish their studies. Within Grenada many students “had felt isolated and uncertain following a violent coup” and many welcomed an opportunity to return home.⁵³ Despite no intelligence source documentation, Grenadian testimonies certainly contradict U.S. assessments and provide a new angle on the students.

Measures were still taken on both sides for an impending encounter, however. Reagan officials ignored any reconciliation efforts and overtures of “democratic” restoration, given the hardline faction’s recent bloodshed. White House spokesman Larry Speakes said they were “not worth 2 cents because we didn’t trust them.” While the Americans geared up for the offensive, knowledge of the invasion gave “Grenada’s military leaders and a Cuban garrison crucial

⁴⁹ “Grenada, Operation Urgent Fury (23 October - 21 November 1983),” Naval History and Heritage Command.

⁵⁰ “The Making of an Invasion,” p. A1.

⁵¹ Chester Humphrey, interview by author, tape recording, 30 June 2009, St. George’s, Grenada.

⁵² David, interview by author.

⁵³ Burrowes, *Revolution and Rescue in Grenada*, 87.

advance notice to resupply their troops and fortify defenses.”⁵⁴ “The Cubans and PRA were very well placed. They had occupied the high ground and strategically placed their anti-aircraft positions around the airfield before the initial assault by U.S. and Caribbean forces. They were probably where we'd have been if we'd been on the resisting side,” remembered Scott.⁵⁵ Austin prepared a few thousand PRA soldiers loyal to him and Coard, in hiding, in staffing the island’s heavy artillery and anti-aircraft installations. With arsenal support from East Germany, North Korea, Libya, and the Soviet Union, islanders formed “several well-armed enemy battalions” around southern Grenada, where most of the population resided, including the assumedly endangered American students. Although Fidel Castro saw Bishop as a younger brother and condemned his murder, the Fuerzas Armadas Rebeldes (FAR), the Cuban Armed Forces, dispatched Colonel Pedro Tortoló Comas to organize resistance. Nearly 700 Cuban construction workers and engineers as well as contingents of soldiers, on a holdover from fighting in Angola, assisted the PRA. Tortoló and the Cubans dug trenches, laid telephone lines, and set up medical posts. Austin informed the island of the invasion through radio and requested that every Grenadian pick up arms to defend the nation, including civilians and the youth militia, some in their early teens. He announced that Grenada must be “prepared to fight to the last man and woman to defend our homeland.”⁵⁶ “A number of us wanted to come back and fight [against] an invasion of that nature,” reflected Marryshow, who held a sense of national pride and duty to protect the island’s sovereignty.⁵⁷ Disregarding the socialist aid and anticipating an American intervention, David asserted, “Every nation has a right to develop its defense capabilities...no matter how small.”⁵⁸ The RMC, which massacred the PRG leadership and incited fear amongst the population, and PRA soldiers, conceivably out of touch with how common Grenadians felt, were nonetheless ideologically and militarily prepared for the intervention. “We must see ourselves Army as soldiers, Ready to die in the defence of the homeland and of socialism,” read the last line of an exercise book later taken off a dead PRA combatant.⁵⁹ On the international Cold War stage, however, Soviet official Sergei Tarasenko reiterated Pavlov’s earlier remark and expressed, “In Moscow we had no interest in this affair...Grenada would fall by itself.”⁶⁰

“*Grenada?* That didn’t make any sense...A mission is a mission. But...I mean, Grenada for Chrissakes... We’re not just missing the target here...Hell, we’re not even shooting at it,” remarked Delta Force soldier Eric Haney to his squadron commander. Irrespective of his skepticism, Haney and his B Squadron team, along with other Special Forces such as Army Rangers, Navy SEALs, Air Force Special Operations Wing, and Marine battalions, supplemented traditional forces in Grenada.⁶¹ Many of these Special Forces conducted the initial assaults on the island and stayed behind to assist ground units. “The conventional commanders

⁵⁴ “The Making of an Invasion,” p. A1.

⁵⁵ “Grenada, Operation Urgent Fury (23 October - 21 November 1983),” Naval History and Heritage Command.

⁵⁶ Bolger, “Special Operations and the Grenada Campaign,” 53; O’Shaughnessy, *Grenada*, 6, 10; Peter Huchthausen, *America’s Splendid Little Wars: A Short History of U.S. Military Engagements, 1975-2000* (Viking: New York), 84; Adkin, *Urgent Fury*, 206-7.

⁵⁷ Marryshow, interview by author.

⁵⁸ David, interview by author.

⁵⁹ O’Shaughnessy, *Grenada*, 11.

⁶⁰ Strober, *Reagan*, 257.

⁶¹ Eric L. Haney, *Inside Delta Force: The Story of America’s Elite Counterterrorist Unit* (New York: Bantam Dell, 2005), 292-3.

and staffs for Urgent Fury did as well as they did because, by and large, they remembered the nature of their elite forces...Special warriors led the way in the Grenada fighting.”⁶²

Some missions started in tragedy, though. A day before the invasion, in fact, SEAL Team Six attempted a reconnaissance task to acquire enemy locations and gather intelligence. Jumping from six hundred feet into heavy rain and a stormy sea, four men died when they became entangled in their parachutes and were dragged down by heavy equipment. The SEALs’ Whaler boats flooded, as well, and the team could not complete their objective. Because of the lack of prior mapping and ground intelligence, many of the special and traditional forces thus went into Grenada “blind.”⁶³ Haney expressed perhaps what many soldiers felt, “[W]e had absolutely no intelligence about what to expect or where to expect it.”⁶⁴

Intelligence failures, however, were not the fault of Special Forces or the SEALs’ botched mission. Practically no one in any of the U.S. intelligence agencies felt the need to build a file on Grenada, despite the strained diplomatic relations and presumed safety of the students. “Nobody in our intelligence community ever thought we would need such a map for Grenada, so they never made one,” reflected United States Information Agency (USIA) officer Stephen F. Dachi.⁶⁵ This had serious consequences on how some units conducted their objectives. Haney’s Delta Force commander vented, “All I have is a Xeroxed page from a travel guide, and it ain’t worth a damn. We’ve got a request in to Defense Mapping and to the CIA... We won’t get any maps but we’ll get some damn interesting excuses.” “We didn’t even have a rumor of decent maps. We were able to get our hands on a Michelin guide to the Windward Islands with a somewhat usable chart of Grenada. This allowed us to get a basic feel for the layout of the island,” remembered Haney.⁶⁶ Hearing stories about ground operations in progress on the island, diplomat Robert Beecroft recalled, “One soldier had gone into a service station and bought a map of Grenada because they didn’t have maps.”⁶⁷

An American force of nearly 8,000, supplemented by 353 Caribbean soldiers, clearly overwhelmed the Grenadians and Cubans, numbering only a few thousand, and ensured a supposed easy military victory. Once the Urgent Fury campaign was underway on October 25, aerial flyovers and ground troops provided command with on-site updates. This proved crucial

⁶² Bolger, “Special Operations and the Grenada Campaign,” 56.

⁶³ Huchthausen, *America’s Splendid Little Wars*, 79; Crandall, *Gunboat Democracy*, 144.

⁶⁴ Haney, *Inside Delta Force*, 294.

⁶⁵ Stephen F. Dachi, *American Memory Project*, interview by Charles Stuart Kennedy, 30 May 1997.

⁶⁶ Haney, *Inside Delta Force*, 292, 294.

⁶⁷ Robert M. Beecroft, *American Memory Project*, interview by Charles Stuart Kennedy, 17 September 2004.

Former Vice President Dick Cheney, then a Wyoming Congressman, reflected on combat communication problems, “The invasion of Grenada... was a successful effort, but also underscored disorganization. When I visited the Caribbean island as a member of Congress a few days after we’d gone in, I was told about an army officer who had needed artillery support. He could look out to sea and see naval vessels on the horizon, but he had no way to talk to them. So he used his personal credit card in a pay phone, placed a call to Fort Bragg, asked Bragg to contact the Pentagon, had the Pentagon contact the navy, who in turn told the commander off the coast to get this poor guy some artillery support. Clearly a new system was needed,” taken from *In My Time: A Personal and Political Memoir* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2011), 150.

for special and conventional elements to carry out their missions. Engaged combat quickly corrected the intelligence community's blunder, exposed pragmatism among soldiers and their superiors, and allowed for last-minute changes to plans. Although most tasks succeeded, to be sure, communication errors and bad intelligence caused some to fail in misfortune or embarrassment.⁶⁸ The fighting between the invasion forces and resistance over the span of a few days was also valiant, intense, and utterly frightening for soldiers and civilians alike.

One of Vice Admiral Metcalf's key objectives was to secure the Point Salines airport. In the symbolic first combat parachute operation since World War II, Rangers jumped out of C-130 planes over the Salines runway. Delayed by the SEAL mission and navigation problems, the Rangers risked exposure in broad daylight. Because the PRA configured the Soviet-built ZSU 23mm anti-aircraft at a higher altitude, the Rangers were able to parachute "under the radar," but only at a dangerously low drop space of 500 feet.⁶⁹ Haney observed, "The lead plane broke away, but the others just kept coming, and then we could see the Rangers pouring out the jump doors and into the sky. They were jumping at such a low altitude that their parachutes opened only a few seconds before they hit the ground. Goddamn, what a stirring sight!" After a few more C-130 passes, "the air was full of green parachutes dangling brave men."⁷⁰ In the midst of heavy anti-aircraft fire, two armored vehicles with heavy cannon, and soldiers spraying machine guns, roughly 500 Rangers daringly landed, assaulted across the runway, and effectively dissipated PRA and Cuban resistance under Tortoló's command. A C-141 plane then landed and the 82nd Airborne Division relieved many of the Rangers. A contingent of Rangers, however, stayed behind to locate students on various campuses. Others continued to push into the island's mountainous valleys, capture Grenadian and Cuban installations, and rendezvous with Marines. Grenada's hills were steep and overburdened special and conventional forces, and dozens collapsed with heat exhaustion. The heat and terrain made fighting in the jungle more dangerous and susceptible to casualties. One Ranger recalled, "there was more fire to contend with, steady and well-aimed, from positions that were cleverly placed in the surrounding hills. Whoever was up there, Grenadian or Cuban or both, knew how to fight."⁷¹ The invasion of Grenada was the only time during the Cold War in which American troops and Cubans directly fought each other. "He did a damned good job," commented Metcalf on Tortoló.⁷²

As some scholars and observers have previously noted, Grenadian and more so Cuban resistance turned out to be a "tactical surprise." Crandall writes, "Whatever Castro's instructions really were, the Cubans no doubt put up a fight, one much fiercer than the Pentagon's military planners had anticipated."⁷³ Journalist Hugh O'Shaughnessy adds, "Vastly outnumbered, equipped with

⁶⁸ Crandall, *Gunboat Democracy*, 144; Bolger, "Special Operations and the Grenada Campaign," 58.

⁶⁹ Crandall, *Gunboat Democracy*, 146.

⁷⁰ Haney, *Inside Delta Force*, 302.

⁷¹ Haney, *Inside Delta Force*, 302; Bolger, "Special Operations and the Grenada Campaign," 55; Adkin, *Urgent Fury*, 289; Burrowes, *Revolution and Rescue in Grenada*, 81.

⁷² Burrowes, *Revolution and Rescue in Grenada*, 80.

⁷³ Crandall, *Gunboat Democracy*, 144, 149. Historian Piero Gleijeses notes that, according to CIA assessments, the extent of Cuban adventurism in Africa, conducted independently of Moscow, stunned analysts. Cuban-funded revolutions and guerilla strength in Algeria, Congo, Guinea-Bissau, and Angola surprised many American covert operations and U.S.-supplied paramilitaries on the continent. See *Conflicting Missions: Havana, Washington, and Africa, 1959-1976* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002).

hardly a fraction of the weapons and accoutrements available to the US forces and their Caribbean auxiliaries...the Grenadian forces and their Cuban allies were nevertheless ready when the US troops landed to put up a fiercer fight than Washington or any outside observer foresaw.”⁷⁴ The construction workers, supplemented by Cuban soldiers, certainly knew how to fight and confirmed U.S. estimates that they were militarily-trained. In D.C., Robert Gates, Deputy Director of Intelligence, wrote to Colonel North after the first day of operations that the intelligence community reaffirmed Cuban strength and noted the possibility of Cuban reinforcements on the ship *Vietnam Heroico*.⁷⁵ In Grenada, Humphrey disagreed, “The Cubans insisted that they were not going to get involved in this conflict...they condemned Bernard [and] refused to give any kind of military assistance...The Cubans really only fought in self-defense.”⁷⁶ Further accessibility of documents may reconcile these differing viewpoints or provide new insight into the roles of various groups of Cubans in Grenada.

On the north side of the island and around strategic coastal points, Colonel James P. Faulkner and Lieutenant Colonel Roy Smith commanded a Marine battalion team. SEAL Team Four first reconnoitered the beaches. Assisted by AH-1 Cobra gunships and CH-46 Sea Knight helicopters, Marines landed amphibiously and took the lesser-used Pearls airport with little resistance. Another Marines contingent attacked and captured a PRA fort. The Marines on land swept through the northern parishes and headed south, eventually linking up with the Rangers. One company was ordered to sail around the island and assist with the battle in St. George’s and help a SEAL team rescue Governor General Scoon, while another coordinated a beach assault between Point Salines and the capital. Cobra gunships, circling the jungle to root out resistance, sustained heavy fire from the surrounding hills.⁷⁷

While the Rangers secured the airport and Marines captured the northern portion, Metcalf also ordered a full-scale attack on St. George’s and southern defenses and to take out the anti-aircraft on the surrounding hills. Traditional and special elements were used. SEAL Team Six, supported by an offshore destroyer, used demolitions to destroy an enemy radio tower so as to cut off the island’s communication. Naval ships at sea and Air Force planes, supplemented by Delta Force gunships, then attacked Fort Rupert, one of the PRA’s artillery strongholds. Heavy fire turned back Delta’s A Squadron near the fort. Such aerial support was also critical to invading traditional ground forces.⁷⁸ “The first points of bombardment came from American battleships on the horizon and they bombarded the fort where we were,” recollected Humphrey, commissar at Fort Rupert. “I had seen several people killed. The chief of the anti-aircraft guns on the fort...was killed thirty feet away from me. There was an explosion and I saw a flash of light and when I looked around I saw his headless body on the ground.”⁷⁹ Numerous PRA members fled the fort while others hid in the barracks. During an airstrike on Fort Frederick, the

⁷⁴ O’Shaughnessy, *Grenada*, 18.

⁷⁵ “Assessment of Cuban Forces in Grenada,” prepared by Robert A. Gates, 26 October 1983, CIA Freedom of Information Act Reading Room.

⁷⁶ Humphrey, interview by author.

⁷⁷ Huchthausen, *America’s Splendid Little Wars*, 76, 79, 82; Crandall, *Gunboat Democracy*, 146; Bolger, “Special Operations and the Grenada Campaign,” 5-6.

⁷⁸ Bolger, “Special Operations and the Grenada Campaign,” 59; Crandall, *Gunboat Democracy*, 145; Haney, *Inside Delta Force*, 303

⁷⁹ Humphrey, interview by author.

main military headquarters, an adjacent mental hospital was mistakenly bombed and destroyed. U.S. forces mistook the hospital as an enemy location because of its advertised flag, and PRA soldiers manned its artillery and fired machine guns on aircraft.⁸⁰ The attack on defensive positions and aerial bombardments still overwhelmed many PRA soldiers and islanders who fought. Scoon recalled, “There were the local boys shooting at the aircrafts but their shots couldn’t reach.”⁸¹ “I had a half-brother who was in the People’s Revolutionary Army. I saw him walking...and I said the bombers were too much for him and he more or less deserted,” stated Brizan.⁸²

The aerial assault on the southern half of the island was quite the spectacle for Grenadians watching from their private homes. To many locals, however, the bombardment was a haunting experience but also one with mixed emotions. One Grenadian recounted, “The whole valley was reverberating. A very scary thing...The bombing was a terrible thing. You’d hear the scream of the overhead bombers.” In a very close encounter, “A bit of shrapnel came in and sliced across the carpet and ended up in my parent’s bedroom,” they added. Some islanders used their faith to get through the assault. The bombardment was “quite a scary experience and of course being a religious person I prayed a lot,” confided a local.⁸³ Frederick mentioned that the Air Force jets were “daunting...When you hear them they feel like they are taking your skin off because they were flying so skillfully and low.” Frightened and numbed by the fighting, he expressed, “You don't know what to feel. You just want it to be over...It was like a long nightmare.” At the same time the bombing shook the island to its core, Frederick recalled that “You could literally hear people celebrating in their homes.”⁸⁴ This was a major surprise for ground forces in the capital under aerial cover. “We encountered this all through St. George's," said Thomas Brooks, assistant chief of staff for intelligence. “People were leaning out of windows and saying 'God bless America.'”⁸⁵

Some combatants and civilians observed individuals in the throes of warfare on the ground. Haney recalled the daring account of a helicopter that crashed near the coast, broke its tail off, and blades flew into the trees and hills. The pilot had been shot through the head, which likely caused the collision. Almost immediately, a Cuban patrol attacked the downed crew. One soldier was pinned underneath, while discharged hydraulic fluid blinded half of the crew. As soon as the helicopter engulfed in flames, three crewmates lifted the hulk up and pulled the soldier out to safety. Another fired shots and threw grenades to keep the Cuban patrol at bay. A relief helicopter eventually flew the crew to a carrier hospital bay.⁸⁶ One Ranger described getting out of another downed helicopter in the water, “As soon as we hit the shore we headed down the beach. We ran about 500 meters ‘til we linked up with the rest of the guys, and joined the perimeter. Scared the shit out of me!” Leonel Cairo, a Cuban worker, had orders to report on U.S. troop movements around the airport, “I saw the parachute troops landing. They

⁸⁰ Huchthausen, *America's Splendid Little Wars*, 82.

⁸¹ Scoon, interview by author.

⁸² Brizan, interview by author.

⁸³ Government official, interview by author.

⁸⁴ Frederick, interview by author.

⁸⁵ “Grenada, Operation Urgent Fury (23 October - 21 November 1983),” Naval History and Heritage Command.

⁸⁶ Haney, *Inside Delta Force*, 303-4.

grouped...and slowly began to engage in reconnaissance. The Yankee planes landed on the runway. I kept watching their movements. A few minutes later we were attacked. I had a rifle and shot back.”⁸⁷ In the city itself, U.S. troops snaked their way through the streets of St. George’s. They were “maneuvering through the drains on either side,” one Grenadian remembered. Some individual soldiers’ stealth movements shocked and surprised locals. An islander recollected, “I remember sitting on my parent’s veranda...I suddenly looked up and looked straight into a pair of eyes of an American soldier. It was the most startling thing!”⁸⁸ On Richmond Hill, just below the prison, Frederick and his friends watched the invasion forces near the coast. Witnessing a violent act, he recounted, “We were looking through binoculars and saw when the guy came out of the [American] helicopter with his hands up and the guy [resistance] shot him...And then he dragged him...there was a beach on the side and he dragged him down to the water.” Frederick conveyed, “It was a grueling experience.”⁸⁹

Like the SEALs’ classified task, another special operations mission ended in failure. Delta Force attempted to take Richmond Hill Prison by attacking the nearby fortress and releasing any political prisoners. On the day of the invasion a series of Blackhawk helicopters left Barbados and crossed the sea. “It looked like Vietnam. I saw all these helicopter gunships right in a row,” recalled one Grenadian.⁹⁰ Haney explained his initial observations, “We crossed the coast of Grenada on the backside of a rainstorm, just as the first light of dawn lit the eastern sky. The terrain was mountainous, with steep, jungle-covered ridges separated by deep, narrow valleys.”⁹¹ The impressive aerial view quickly gave way to some of the most intense fighting on the island. Brigadier General David Grange, in charge of the assault, coupled Haney’s initial skepticism and observed, “As we flew across the island in morning light, some people waved, some shot at us with AK-47s. It was confusing at first from what we expected of the attitude of the people...The mission was not very clear, nor were the rules of engagement.”⁹² Haney and Grange perhaps did not comprehend the invasion’s overall purpose but nonetheless followed orders. A series of sustaining rifle bursts and machine guns first found the helicopters, followed by heavier fire. “The anti-aircraft started to go off and the phones started to ring and the people screaming ‘Stop shooting! Stop shooting!’” remembered David, who was stationed at one of the island’s radio towers.⁹³ Anti-aircraft batteries successfully picked apart the incoming helicopters. “Parts of the helicopter were being blasted off. I could feel the heat of the rounds passing through the bird and near my face,” recalled Haney. “I had never, ever seen ground fire so concentrated and effective.” PRA fighters were, in fact, able to defend their positions with enhanced optical sights. Bullets ripped through Haney’s men, including the gunner and navigator. He also saw other helicopters take heavy fire, and one went down in a controlled crash. Notwithstanding the battle, bad intelligence indicated the wrong target, as the intended fort was abandoned. Badly wounded, the squadron flew to a carrier for immediate medical attention. Haney then boarded another helicopter to sweep the hills for resistance and assist the Rangers and 82nd Airborne. With the exception of SEAL Team Six and Delta Force’s B Squadron, all other Special Forces

⁸⁷ Adkin, *Urgent Fury*, 272, 228.

⁸⁸ Government official, interview by author.

⁸⁹ Frederick, interview by author.

⁹⁰ Government official, interview by author.

⁹¹ Haney, *Inside Delta Force*, 294-6.

⁹² Huchthausen, *America’s Splendid Little Wars*, 82.

⁹³ David, interview by author.

tasks succeeded as planned.⁹⁴

In addition to special operations, a conventional warfare task one day of fighting went terribly awry. 82nd Airborne troops, assisted by Rangers, were assigned to raid the Calivigny Barracks. Poorly planned, uncoordinated, and with little ground intelligence, soldiers nonetheless followed orders and embarked on a “suicide mission.” Boarded upon Blackhawk helicopters, several contingents performed an air assault on the compound. Due to operational confusion and a PRA-Cuban battalion with intense anti-aircraft fire, three helicopters crashed, three crewmen died, and over a dozen were wounded. It was clearly a misuse of Ranger abilities and special warfare and an embarrassing episode for the U.S. military during Urgent Fury.⁹⁵

After securing the airports and taking out defensive positions, the other main objectives were to procure Governor General Scoon and rescue hundreds of students, located at multiple campuses.⁹⁶ Before dawn on the 25th, a SEAL Team Six detachment swiftly made their way to Scoon, who the PRA had placed under house arrest, as well as his family and over two dozen civilians inside. “We heard voices shouting ‘Mr. Scoon! Mr. Scoon!’” recalled the Governor General. Grenadian fire poured down on the Scoon residence and pinned the SEALs to a precarious situation. PRA soldiers also used armored BTRs and besieged the SEALs. With few weapons and poor communication, the soldiers and the Governor General’s group could not leave. In spite of heavy anti-aircraft fire, Metcalf ordered Air Force and Navy jets to provide air support. Norman Schwarzkopf, Metcalf’s deputy commander for Urgent Fury, suggested a heavily-armored aerial Marine unit to evacuate the Governor General, his attended party, and the embattled SEALs. Commanders dispatched several Cobra helicopters to the residence, one of which went down in fire in St. George’s harbor. Marines landed, took out Grenadian positions, and assisted the SEALs in escaping. Scoon, the only legal representative left with constitutional authority in Grenada, then flew to the *USS Guam*, where he wrote a formal appeal of assistance to the OECS and U.S.⁹⁷

Initially unaware of more than one St. George’s campus, ground reports indicated that students were at both the True Blue and Grand Anse locations. Intelligence did not provide the military with a task file on the American-owned university, a clear logistical mishap that could have compromised the mission. The contingent of Rangers that stayed behind at Point Salines first went to True Blue and found a couple hundred scared but unharmed students. Schwarzkopf took the lead on Grand Anse. He ordered Marine helicopters to fly in Rangers behind PRA lines and use the same helicopters to fly students out. A medical student looked out their window and saw “something right out of *Apocalypse Now*” as a line of helicopters headed toward the beach. During the vertical assault, anti-aircraft shot down one Sea Knight helicopter. Needing additional seats to evacuate the students, a dozen Rangers stayed behind and managed to evade

⁹⁴ Haney, *Inside Delta Force*, 296-9.

⁹⁵ Bolger, “Special Operations and the Grenada Campaign,” 57-58.

⁹⁶ These two events have been written on extensively in scholarly works and memoirs, including Scoon’s *Survival for Service: My Experiences as Governor General of Grenada* (Oxford: Macmillan, 2003).

⁹⁷ Scoon, interview by author; Bolger, “Special Operations and the Grenada Campaign,” 59; Crandall, *Gunboat Democracy*, 144.

the PRA and Cubans. The soldiers stole a fishing boat and headed to a destroyer offshore. Although the “rescue” operation took over two days, all American students and civilians were eventually evacuated and headed north. Whether in true danger or simply frightened by the island’s situation, many “students had nothing but praise for the U.S. military and nothing but gratitude and relief to be home safe.” Much of the intelligence community and politicians learned of these sentiments after the fact, and Reagan used students’ stories to his advantage to justify the intervention. One medical student, for instance, reflected on their situation before the U.S. invasion, “We thought we could be potential hostages. We just wanted to get out, if we could.”⁹⁸

Despite the fierce battle between Delta Force and the PRA unit at Richmond Hill, which heavy resistance repelled the Americans, many Grenadian soldiers abandoned their posts toward the end of fighting. Some threw away their weapons and uniforms and blended into society. Others were treated for wounds at local hospitals and makeshift medical tents. The prison guards fled, too, allowing some political prisoners to escape without assistance. Others were still at Richmond Hill Prison when they encountered an American unit looking for them. Whyte, an entrepreneur and former senator jailed for four years for openly speaking against the revolution, remarked, “I was totally unafraid. This is my country as much as theirs and I had equal right to do what I had to do to protect freedoms they said they would protect.” He and his prison mates had many near-death experiences. When Bishop was murdered, guards “came like mad dogs [and] cranked their guns up.” One pushed a machine gun into Whyte’s throat. He reflected on the power of faith while imprisoned, “We stayed them off by chanting spiritual hymns and by resisting them through the power of the spirit...My strength comes from within. They can’t find that. That’s why they had to lock you up and beat you and torture you and kill you.” He added, “In your own quiet way you fight them.” Whyte felt incredible reprieve during the American invasion, “They released me...The U.S. soldiers took me out...I never knew my name could have sounded so nice.”⁹⁹ Another political prisoner, lawyer Lloyd Noel, resigned as the revolution’s attorney general and was subsequently jailed for voicing criticism. Imprisoned for over two years, Noel stated, “No charge. No trial. No interview. No nothing. Just in jail 24 hours a day.” He lamented, “You don’t exist.” Like Whyte, Noel used faith to get through the ordeal, “Our job was consoling...the less-able guys.” A Roman Catholic, he held onto his rosary and shared his light-up cross with other prisoners. “That was our light,” he symbolically reflected. Noel remembered armored vehicles came up and American soldiers busted the locked iron doors. The soldiers guarded some freed prisoners and stayed the night to stave off snipers. A few prisoners, including Whyte, Noel, and Leslie Pierre, spent the night at Alistair Hughes’ home, a revered Grenadian journalist who was also detained. During the revolution Amnesty International apparently found ways to acquire information about Richmond Hill. U.S. intelligence also built a list of prisoner names, which the military used to locate and identify them. Noel visited the U.S. and lobbied for aid, “I had to start from scratch.” He and other prisoners testified before Congress and even visited the White House. “Reagan was seen as the savior,” he remarked. Venerating the decision to intervene, Hughes boldly stated, “Don’t call it

⁹⁸ Lynch, *The Cold War’s Last Battlefield*, 129, 143; Crandall, *Gunboat Democracy*, 146-8, 153.

⁹⁹ Whyte also spoke on democracy and individual rights, “If you are really free you don’t have to proclaim that you are free. If you are democratic you don’t have to thump your chest and say that you are democratic. Your actions will prove who and what you are...It is repugnant to me to take away a man’s right because you can only unleash the creative powers of people when you give them the right to think.” Interview by author.

an invasion. It was a rescue mission.”¹⁰⁰ These types of statements reverberated around the island. Most Grenadians felt immense relief and believed the intervention was specifically intended for them, irrespective of U.S. foreign policy to defeat communism or Reagan’s sideshow objective to evacuate Americans.

Despite such celebrations across the island, some operations exhibited a clear Cold War picture. Along with the fierce battles between the PRA, Cubans, and Americans, psychological operations and interrogations exhibited some of the darker elements of the intervention and spread heavy anti-communist rhetoric. The Army deployed the 1st Psychological Operations Battalion, commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Jimmy Ashworth. Operating on “humanitarian” aspects and disregarding territorial ambitions of the U.S., Ashworth’s team prepared propaganda material a few days before the invasion. During combat operations a Barbadian radio station played taped recordings and a naval ship broadcast the team’s messages. In Spanish, the broadcast asked Cubans to not fight and give themselves up, reminding construction workers they could return to their families in Cuba as soon as possible. In English, the messages asked Grenadians to stay in their homes during the conflict to avoid harm but also assist soldiers in finding PRA members when possible. On the island, the U.S. took control of “Spice Island Radio,” as well as flew a helicopter with an attached loud speaker, spreading anti-Cuban messages. The team also plastered city walls with wanted and reward posters for hiding combatants and weapons, dropped leaflets from helicopters over parishes, and drove jeeps with speakers around the coastline and countryside to “Help send the Cubans back to Havana where they belong.” They also gave out green and blue handbills asking locals to join the invasion force and restore democracy. The unit also distributed a gruesome cartoon that showed two options for Cubans—bleeding corpses or surrendering soldiers. A good thing that occurred was that many turned themselves in, limiting the potential for more violence. Given the revolution’s direction and recent coup, the psychological operations team limited rhetoric toward the Grenadian population. “There is an anti-Communist feeling in this country right now. We would not want to do anything offensive or politically untoward,” remarked Ashworth. One poster, however, depicted several of Grenada’s Marxist leaders with red lines across their faces. Another showed word associations between communism destroying the country and another demonstrating the progress and prosperity of democracy. Absent from the broadcasts and posters was Bishop who, despite socialist leanings, many Grenadians held in nationalist populist esteem. While the team’s operation was fairly effective in Grenada, it drew criticism elsewhere. The unit disseminated a poster with a photograph of a half-naked black PRG leader with a psychological operations soldier standing over him, showing islanders they did not have to live in fear anymore. Although Grenadians had little negative reaction to the poster, it had blowback in the U.S. The *Washington Post* published the photograph, resulting in accusations of racism perpetuated by the military.¹⁰¹

¹⁰⁰ Noel, interview by author; O’Shaughnessy, *Grenada*, 25, 27.

¹⁰¹ “U.S. Psychological Team on Offense in Grenada,” *Los Angeles Times*, 15 November 1983, p. 1; O’Shaughnessy, *Grenada*, 209-211; *Unpublished Collection on Grenada*, boxes 1-4, National Security Archive, accessed August 2009; “Review of Psychological Operations: Lessons Learned from Recent Operational Experience,” prepared by Christopher J. Lamb, September 2005, National Defense University Press, Washington, D.C., p. 104.

Concurrent with psychological operations, U.S. and Caribbean soldiers and intelligence officers rooted out and interrogated revolutionaries and foreign nationals. On his way to setting up a defensive line in the parish of St. David, the 82nd Airborne captured Chester Humphrey and placed him under detention at Point Salines, along with other PRA and Cuban fighters. Humphrey would be arraigned and released numerous times and later became a labor unionist leader. U.S. personnel searched extensively for other members in St. George's. Ferron Lowe recounts his experience:

I was one of the people taken out by the Americans...I was taken about five or six days after the invasion because there were different agents telling them who were involved...They mashed up my home...When they pulled me out they put me down in the street and put their feet on my head and my face on the bare street...They really terrorized my parent's house [and] took all my personal documents."

Like Humphrey, soldiers took Lowe to Point Salines. Confined behind barbed wire with other Grenadian resistance, as well as Cubans who awaited deportation, Lowe was detained and sleep deprived for four days. Americans interrogated Lowe about his involvement in the revolution and his connections to other communist countries. "Eventually after four days they realized I'm not one the bigwigs," he remarked. "The main thing was to break you psychologically."¹⁰² Peter David, too, had been questioned. "I was detained on several occasions," he said. "Certain persons were painted in a certain way [and sought after]." After a series of interrogations, officials released David and ordered him not to take part in any political activities. He recollected, "You've already been detained and questioned and you are...no longer a threat. [The Americans then] gave me a green card that permitted me to travel throughout my own country."¹⁰³ Moreover, U.S. personnel had interrogated numerous foreign nationals, including Soviet ambassadors and Cuban advisors, as well as civilians from socialist countries. Over a period of four days, officials detained West German doctor Regina Fuchs, who had practiced medicine on the island for nearly two years, on Richmond Hill. She said, "I knew I was innocent. I had not been involved in politics." Agents, assumed to be CIA affiliates, questioned her about politics, travel history, and involvement in East Germany, Cuba, and Grenada. After detention, a captain for the Caribbean forces explained that she had a little more than 48 hours to leave the island. "I was never charged or never told what it was I was supposed to have done wrong," stated Fuchs.¹⁰⁴ Although these individuals held various political beliefs or positions under the revolution, Scoon remembered that many Grenadian officials, along with Jamaican soldiers assisting the U.S., expressed their desire to eliminate Grenadian hard-liners like Coard and Austin. "[They believed] the one mistake the Americans made was [that] they shouldn't have brought them in alive. Better to save a lot of money and trouble," he remembered. "But I guess the Americans had to play the rules of war."¹⁰⁵ Altogether, Operation Urgent Fury achieved all of its intended strategic goals. Major Mark Adkin summarizes

Urgent Fury was an overall success politically and militarily. Communist plans for Caribbean expansion had been dealt a severe blow, ordinary Grenadians had been freed

¹⁰² Lowe, interview by author.

¹⁰³ David, interview by author.

¹⁰⁴ "Grenada Weighed Seeking U.S. Aid, Report Shows; W. German Doctor Tells of U.S. Interrogation," *The Washington Post*, 21 November 1983, A1.

¹⁰⁵ Scoon, interview by author.

from an oppressive regime, U.S. combat casualties were insignificant, hundreds of students had been evacuated without a single injury, it was all over comparatively quickly, and American troops had been welcomed as liberators by many.¹⁰⁶

After combat operations ended on November 2, the 82nd Airborne and a Caribbean peacekeeping contingent stayed behind to keep order during the island's transition. Most troops left by late December, in time for the Christmas holiday. At the request of Grenada's Advisory Council and Caribbean leaders, as well as the Reagan administration's urging, a couple hundred U.S.-Caribbean forces remained through 1984 to augment police, leading up to the restoration of democratic elections and implementation of an extensive development program to modernize the island. In the States, Americans generally supported Urgent Fury. The disordered success of the operation, chiefly the intelligence blunders, communication mishaps, and special operations misfortunes, led to the Goldwater-Nichols Department of Defense Reorganization Act (1986), which streamlined command and emphasized cooperation during joint efforts, and the activation of the four-star unified U.S. Special Operations Command (USSOCOM) (1987). On the world stage, however, much of the international community condemned the intervention, citing violations of sovereignty and disregard for Organization of American States (OAS) and United Nations (UN) charters. Scoon's appeal and the OECS request, as well as the discovery of enormous reserves and warehouses of Soviet-made and Cuban-supplied weaponry, legitimized the U.S.-led operation in the eyes of American politicians and Eastern Caribbean leaders. Some Grenadians, however, disagreed with how the episode was conducted. Marryshow commented, "We were robbed of an historical opportunity to resolve a problem for ourselves that we ourselves had created." He added, "We need to honor the soldiers who gave their lives...in the defense of the country."¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁶ Adkin, *Urgent Fury*, 333.

Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General John W. Vessey added, "We planned the operation in a very short period of time--in about 48 hours. We planned it with insufficient intelligence for the type of operation we wanted to conduct. As a result we probably used more force than we needed to do the job, but the operation went reasonably well...Things did go wrong, but generally the operation was a success. The troops did very well." From "Operation Urgent Fury: The Planning and Execution of Joint Operations in Grenada, 12 October-2 November 1983," by Ronald H. Cole, Joint History Office, Office of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, 1997, Washington, D.C.

¹⁰⁷ By the end of operations, 18 American soldiers died and 116 were wounded. Cited from Bolger, "Special Operations and the Grenada Campaign," 57. Grenadian and Cuban figures vary. For different interpretations on combat casualty rates, refer to Cole Blasier *The Hovering Giant: U.S. Responses to Revolutionary Change in Latin America, 1910-1985* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1985), 286-7, and Crandall's chapter on Grenada in *Gunboat Democracy*, 106-162.

Retired General Colin Powell, who assisted with Operation Urgent Fury, wrote on the adjustments in military protocol, "Relations between the services were marred by communications, fractured command and control, interservice parochialism, and mismanagement from Washington. The invasion of Grenada succeeded, but it was a sloppy success," taken from *My American Journey* (New York: Random House, 1995), 292.

Despite the intervention and short-lived occupation, the majority of Grenadians regarded the Americans as liberators and welcomed them with open arms. Many alleviated islanders perceived the soldiers as angels in parachutes. Indeed, the U.S. invasion answered the prayers of distressed and frightened Grenadians but also served Cold War aims. "The American government used this as an opportunity to seek their interests and at the same time look at the political implications of returning Grenada to some form of normalcy," commented post-invasion Minister of Education George McGuire.¹⁰⁸ American personnel were a godsend that overturned the chaos, relieved the fears of locals, and set the island back on track, even if it was a moderate path. "We were not treated as conquerors, but as friends of the people," remarked Colonel Faulkner. "Uniformly and universally, they were very, very happy to see us there," recalled intelligence officer Brooks. "I thought it must have been like it was a generation earlier, when Europe was liberated during World War II. We hadn't anticipated anything like that."¹⁰⁹ Private Rebecca Church, who assisted in seizing hidden caches, stated, "We feel really proud when the locals shout 'We love America.'"¹¹⁰ Grenadians confirmed how the island's population felt. "These people were so proud to point to the American presence in their little capital cities because [it] gives them a sense of importance," avowed Whyte.¹¹¹ Another Grenadian reflected, "I did not pick up an anti-American sentiment at all... I was glad that they came in... because I subsequently heard that my own name was on a list to be eliminated."¹¹² Frederick remembered people had no fear about U.S. soldiers around because they were "fed up with that during the revolution." At checkpoints and in homes around the island Grenadians of all ages blessed U.S. troops with gracious pleasantries, presented flowers, or provided cooked meals and fruit. "Grenadians treated the soldiers well... Wonderful camaraderie... They were a guest," stated Frederick. Groups of children, excited and fascinated with the soldiers, socialized with the soldiers or inquired about equipment. Patrol units on the street frequently stopped to join groups of locals in friendly conversation. Many U.S. troops, however, were careful to leave behind a good impression by thanking locals for their hospitality or wishing them well. Frederick even remembered American personnel visiting the museum where he worked and wanting to learn more about the island's history. Through the overall experiences of the Grenadian Revolution, Bishop's overthrow and massacre, the RMC's marshal law, and subsequent American intervention, though, Frederick solemnly expressed, "We were battle-weary as a people."¹¹³

As an interesting anecdote about the caches, more than one million rounds were found under a false floor in the Cuban embassy. The amount of weaponry captured overall was enough to fill a hangar at Andrews Air Force Base. Open to the public, anyone could ride a shuttle to examine the arsenal and documents discovered in Grenada. See Lynch, *The Cold War's Last Battlefield*, 147.

"U.S. Troops Pull Out," *The Grenadian Voice*, 17 December 1983, p. 1; Cheney, *In My Time*, 150; Bolger, "Special Operations and the Grenada Campaign," 60; Marrayshow, interview by author.

¹⁰⁸ George McGuire, interview by author, tape recording, 30 June 2009, St. George's, Grenada.

¹⁰⁹ Steele, *Grenada*, 415; "Grenada, Operation Urgent Fury (23 October - 21 November 1983)," Naval History and Heritage Command.

¹¹⁰ Although they had no direct combat role, American servicewomen like Church assisted with intelligence, logistics, and peacekeeping. The discovery of foreign weaponry further justified Reagan's mission. See "Women in Army pass the acid test in Grenada 'war,'" *The Grenadian Voice*, 10 November 1983, p. 9.

¹¹¹ Whyte, interview by author.

¹¹² Government official, interview by author.

¹¹³ O'Shaughnessy, *Grenada*, 180; Frederick, interview by author.

The U.S.-led invasion of Grenada was certainly, then, in many ways an aberration during the Cold War, especially in the developing world. The U.S. often supported western-style democracies, repressive regimes, or counterrevolutionaries through direct assistance or backdoor channels. Regionally, the Grenada episode was a unique case in Latin America and the Caribbean. While many countries willingly accepted or appealed for economic aid, not too many places in the developing world resoundingly supported military interventions or openly received American boots on the ground.

USAID Officer Hariadene Johnson reflected, “I’d never been any place where Americans were not more popular than Grenada. They really and truly appreciated the fact that Ronald Reagan had sent the troops down. They did not feel that it was an invasion. They felt that the troops came to save them and they went out of their way to express appreciation to any American, tourist, government official, or what have you. At the same time, they were bitterly disappointed, because they felt that by coming down there that America had more or less adopted the island and why didn’t we turn it in to another Puerto Rico and that Puerto Rico was their symbol for success in the Caribbean,” *American Memory Project*, interview by W. Haven North, 8 September 1998.