

U.S. MARINES IN GRENADA 1983



HISTORY AND MUSEUMS DIVISION
HEADQUARTERS, U.S. MARINE CORPS
WASHINGTON, D.C.

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by
Lieutenant Colonel Ronald H. Spector,
U.S. Marine Corps Reserve



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Foreword

This short study of the role of the U.S. Marines in Operation Urgent Fury is in some ways an experiment in the writing of contemporary military history. The near-coincident Beirut deployment and Grenada intervention presented us with the problem and opportunity of collecting operational history in real time. The historical effort of the Marine Corps had not been thus challenged since the end of the Vietnam War. Grenada was barely underway when we were directed to send an oral historian to the scene to collect operationally oriented interviews from the participants.

Mr. Benis M. Frank, head of the Oral History Section, was on his way to Grenada by 30 October and joined the 22d Marine Amphibious Unit as it was winding up its eventful stay in that small island nation. He crossed the Atlantic and Mediterranean with the Marines in USS *Guam* and conducted some three dozen interviews before returning to Washington. There he handed off his Grenada responsibilities to then-Major Ronald H. Spector, USMCR, and returned to his ongoing work on Lebanon.

Major Spector was called to active duty and assigned the task of preparing a monograph on Marines in Grenada. He worked closely with the special study group formed by the Commandant to evaluate the lessons of Urgent Fury and accompanied it to Grenada for first-hand observation. The term "monograph" was chosen advisedly. The work presented here does not purport to tell the "whole" story of Operation Urgent Fury. Rather, the object has been to deal as completely as possible with Marine participation in that operation.

The author, since promoted to lieutenant colonel, is a member of Mobilization Training Unit (Historical) DC-7. MTU DC-7 is made up of a varying number of Reserve officers who have expertise in historical matters and who can be called upon to perform special historical tasks.

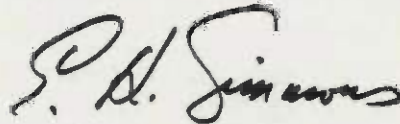
Each member of the MTU works on an assigned historical project throughout the year. But the ultimate purpose of the MTU is to provide for the augmentation of the historical effort of the Fleet Marine Forces in the event of mobilization or crisis situations. It is envisioned that in event of mobilization or in major deployments, as in the case of Vietnam, historical sections would be activated at Fleet Marine Force, Marine amphibious force, division, wing, force service support group, and Marine amphibious brigade levels to oversee such historical tasks as the submission of after-action reports and command chronologies, the conduct of field interview programs, the collection of artifacts—for example, enemy weapons—and the supervision of combat art and combat photography programs.

Lieutenant Colonel Spector entered the Marine Corps in 1967 with a doctoral degree in history from Yale and brief service as a civilian with the historical office of the Joint Chiefs of Staff behind him. He had finished his recruit training at Parris Island and was in his last week at the Infantry Training Regiment at Camp Lejeune when he received orders assigning him as a historian with III MAF in Vietnam. He arrived in time for Tet and found the 3d Marine Division's historical team at Khe Sanh and the 1st Marine Division's historical team covering the battle of Hue.

Following his service in Vietnam, he taught history at Louisiana State University and worked as a historian for the U.S. Army Center of Military History, where he wrote the first volume of the Army's official history of the Vietnam War, *Advice and Support: The Early Years of the U.S. Army*

in Vietnam. In 1984 he became associate professor and subsequently professor of history at the University of Alabama. At present he is on an extended leave of absence from Alabama to serve as Director of Naval History, the first civilian to hold this post. Beside *Advice and Support*, he is the author of *Eagle Against the Sun: The American War with Japan*, which won the 1985 Theodore and Franklin Roosevelt Prize for Naval History and was a book-of-the-month club selection. He also is the author of *Admiral of the New Empire: The Life and Career of George Dewey* and *Professors of War: The Naval War College and the Modern American Navy*.

In the interests of accuracy and objectivity, the History and Museums Division welcomes comments on this history from interested individuals.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "E. H. Simmons". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, prominent "S" at the end.

E. H. SIMMONS
Brigadier General, U.S. Marine Corps, (Ret.)
Director of Marine Corps History and Museums

Preface

This brief account was prepared within a few weeks of the events it describes and relies heavily upon the first-hand testimony of the participants as collected by Mr. Benis M. Frank and the author. The viewpoint presented, therefore, is very much that of the participants and the story is told almost entirely in terms of their perceptions and beliefs. The broader and more complete perspective made possible by the passage of time, and the availability of further historical evidence must necessarily be lacking. Nevertheless, I believe that the documentation of military events as soon after they occur as possible has a historical value far exceeding the concomitant disadvantages of haste, incompleteness, and parochial or partial perspectives. The observation of General Sir Ian Hamilton, "On the actual day of battle, truths may be picked up for the asking; by the following morning they have already begun to get into their uniforms," cited by General Simmons at the onset of our project the statement will, I believe, prove as true for Grenada as for the Russo-Japanese war.

Several of the illustrations in the text are reproductions of the artwork of Lieutenant Colonel A. M. "Mike" Leahy, USMCR, who visited Grenada in December 1983 soon after the fighting and did a series of reconstructive paintings of events based on personal observation and participants' accounts. Lieutenant Colonel Leahy's work was done as a civilian combat artist under the auspices of the Naval Internal Relations Activity, Office of the Navy Chief of Information.

Mrs. Alexandra Chaker put in many long hours transcribing portions of the taped interviews and serving as clearing house for the same. Her assistance and support was truly indispensable in the completion of this project. The project was prepared under the direction of Mr. Henry I. Shaw, Jr., Chief Historian, and Colonel John G. Miller, Deputy Director for Marine Corps History, to each of whom the author is indebted for his support and encouragement.

Finally, the author is responsible for the content of the text, including the opinions expressed and any errors of fact.



RONALD H. SPECTOR
Lieutenant Colonel,
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Table of Contents

Foreword	iii
Preface	v
Table of Contents	vii
The Situation	1
Initial Planning	2
Final Planning	5
The Initial Landing	6
The Capture of Grenville	8
Action at St. George's	9
Grand Mal Bay	12
Movement Toward St. George's	16
The Grand Anse Operation	17
Continuing Operations in the Northeast	18
The Capture of St. George's	21
The Boundary Problems	21
Mopping Up on Grenada	22
Carriacou	23
Departure from Grenada	25
Footnotes	27
Appendices	
A. Command and Staff List, 22d MAU	29
B. 22d MAU Task Organization	31
C. Organization for Embarkation	33
D. Glossary	35
Maps	
"Grenada and Carriacou Islands"	2
"Grenada, Showing 22d MAU Phase Lines"	4
"St. George's City"	15
"Carriacou Island"	24

U.S. Marines in Grenada, 1983

*The Situation—Initial Planning—Final Planning—Initial Landing—The Capture of Grenville
Action at St. George's—Grand Mal Bay—Movement Toward St. George's—The Grand Anse Operation
Continuing Operations in the Northeast—The Capture of St. George's—The Boundary Problems
Mopping Up on Grenada—Carriacou—Departure from Grenada*

The Situation

On the morning of 25 October 1983, Americans were startled to hear President Ronald Reagan's announcement that forces of six Caribbean nations and the United States had landed on the island of Grenada to "restore order and democracy" and to safeguard the lives of approximately 1,000 American citizens there.¹ The President's announcement came as a climax to a week of growing crisis and concern, which had begun with the deposing and subsequent murder of the leftist Prime Minister of Grenada, Maurice Bishop, by soldiers of a hard-line Revolutionary Military Council that had ties to Cuba and the Soviet Union. Following the murder of Bishop and some of his closest political collaborators on the 19th, the Revolutionary Military Council, headed by army chief General Austin Hudson, imposed a round-the-clock curfew and closed the island's airport. Reports of riots and looting appeared in the press.

On 23 October, the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States formally requested United States assistance in dealing with what it called "the current anarchic conditions, the serious violations of human rights and bloodshed, and the consequent unprecedented threat to the peace and security of the region by the vacuum of authority in Grenada."² At the same time, the Governor General of Grenada, Sir Paul Scoon, had sent a secret message to the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States and to the governments of neighboring states, appealing for help to restore order to the island. American leaders were already concerned about the situation on Grenada, especially in regard to the safety and wellbeing of U.S. citizens on the island. Many of these were students at the St. George's University Medical School. State Department officials reported that leaders of the People's Revolutionary Military Council had "repeatedly raised impediments to the orderly evacuation of U.S. citizens."³ Under these circumstances, Secretary of State George P. Shultz later told the press that the President believed it necessary to act before American citizens might be hurt or taken captive.

Among the units selected by Commander-in-Chief Atlantic (CinCLant) for the Grenada operation was an amphibious task force whose commodore was Captain

Carl R. Erie, USN. This group, enroute from the United States to the Mediterranean, consisted of the Navy's Amphibious Squadron Four (PhibRon 4) and the 22d Marine Amphibious Unit (22d MAU). The squadron included the amphibious assault ship *Guam* (LPH 9), the amphibious transport dock *Trenton* (LPD 14), the dock landing ship *Fort Snelling* (LSD 30), and the tank landing ships *Manitowoc* (LST 1180) and *Barnstable County* (LST 1197). The embarked 22d MAU was under the command of Colonel James P. Faulkner. A Marine amphibious unit is the smallest of the Marine air-ground task forces and normally consists of a reinforced infantry battalion, a composite helicopter squadron (which in a few cases includes the AV-8 Harrier, a fixed-wing, vertical short-take-off-and-landing [VSTOL] attack aircraft), and a service support group (MSSG) composed of maintenance, supply, and service units.

The amphibious squadron had taken the Marines on board at Morehead City, North Carolina, on 17 October. The 22d MAU consisted of Battalion Landing Team 2/8 (BLT 2/8) (Lieutenant Colonel Ray L. Smith), Marine Medium Helicopter Squadron 261 (HMM-261) (Lieutenant Colonel Granville R. Amos), and MAU Service Support Group 22 (MSSG 22) (Major Albert E. Shively), along with a small MAU headquarters element.

Battalion Landing Team 2/8 had recently undergone reorganization to conform to a new infantry battalion structure recently adopted by the Marine Corps. In its new incarnation the basic infantry battalion had 43 officers and 779 enlisted men, 10 percent fewer than under the old structure, but with an increase in firepower provided by such weapons as 24 additional grenade launchers (bringing the grand total to 134), 8 additional Dragon antitank weapons for a new total of 32, and 8 M2 .50-caliber machine guns. The Marine Corps planned to add other crew-served infantry weapons, such as a new "Shoulder-launched Multipurpose Assault Weapon" (SMAW), and MK19 40mm machine guns, to the battalion's armory, but these were still in the pipeline at the time of deployment. To enhance mobility and to handle the additional heavy weapons, the battalion was equipped with a total of 52 jeeps—double the number under the previous organization. An additional two dozen jeeps

were available from the attached units of the battalion landing team, such as the artillery battery.

Tactical units were correspondingly smaller in the new battalion. A rifle platoon, which previously contained 45 Marines, now had 36 men (including the platoon leader), organized into three 11-man squads, each composed of two five-man fire teams and a squad leader. Proportional reductions also occurred in the rifle companies' weapons platoons, and in the weapons company of the battalion.

Prior to deployment, the battalion landing team and squadron had undergone an intensive period of training, with exercises designed to prepare them for a variety of combat contingencies. This had included thorough training in night helicopter assaults. Over 40 percent of the battalion's personnel had been with the unit two years or more and many were veterans of an earlier tour in Lebanon. All of the squad leaders and more than a third of the fire team leaders had completed the 2d Marine Division's Squad Leaders' Course and all lieutenants had completed the Infantry Officer's Course.⁴ This combination of training and experience was to prove extremely useful.

Initial Planning

On 18 October the Marines sailed for the Mediterranean, where they were scheduled to participate in an amphibious exercise in Spain before relieving the 24th MAU as the U.S. element in the multinational force in Lebanon. Toward midnight on 20 October, as the amphibious task force was passing north of Bermuda, Captain Erie received orders to turn south and take station approximately 500 miles northeast of Grenada. Although the message gave no reason at the time, a modified track pattern was adopted to keep the task force within easy sailing range of Grenada until 25 October. If no further word had arrived by midnight of 23 October, it would resume the transit to the Mediterranean. The force immediately assumed an emissions control (EmCon) condition, under which messages could be received but not sent (radar and other electronics equipment did not transmit under EmCon). The formation headed south toward the Caribbean at 16 knots.⁵

Early the following morning, Captain Erie told the MAU commander about the message. Colonel Faulkner and his staff initially believed that if the MAU were committed to Grenada its mission would be to evacuate non-combatants. At this point, the task force had no information on the location or precise numbers of American citizens to be evacuated, but



planning proceeded on the assumption that such information soon would be provided.⁶

Information about Grenada itself was extremely sketchy. Marine ground units normally use military maps of 1:50,000 scale, but in the case of Grenada, no maps of any type were available on the ships. The *Guam* did have a full set of nautical charts, which included one for Grenada (based on a 1936 British reference chart). Lacking grid lines and other important information, these had limited usefulness for operations ashore. By a fortunate coincidence, Commander Richard A. Butler, the chief staff officer of the amphibious squadron, was an amateur yachtsman. He had sailed in Grenadian waters six years earlier, and was familiar with the area. Although Commander Butler's visit in 1977 had been purely recreational, his experienced sailor's eye nevertheless had noted important features of the coast, tides, surf, and beach. These would prove invaluable to the Marines as they planned operations for Grenada. At the request of Colonel Faulkner, Commander Butler soon became deeply involved with the MAU staff in examining options for Grenada.⁷

There was one more benign coincidence. Lieutenant Colonel Smith had recently attended the Armed Forces Staff College, where his term paper had covered a hypothetical landing on Grenada. He, too, was quite knowledgeable about the island.

On the afternoon of 22 October, Lieutenant Colonels Smith and Amos met with Colonel Faulkner on board the *Guam*, to discuss the projected Grenada operations. Major Earnest A. Van Huss, the MAU operations officer, presented courses of action for the evacuation of civilians. Planning focused on seizing and securing an evacuation site, should this prove necessary. Major Van Huss proposed a combined surface and air assault, with the primary objectives to be: the Grand Anse Beach area on the east coast, south of the city of St. George's; the partially completed Salines airfield at the southwestern tip of the island; and the high ground overlooking the Salines area, which controlled the road network through which all traffic from St. George's would have to pass. One company would land in assault amphibian vehicles (AAVs) across Grand Anse Beach, while a second company carried out a heliborne assault into the Salines Airport. Tanks and trucks would follow the initial waves into Grand Anse. The units initially landed there would turn left and become a blocking force, to cut off the airport from any reinforcements from St. George's. At this point, no one on either the MAU or PhibRon staff thought such an evacuation to be very likely. Most believed that the task force was sailing toward Grenada as a form of warning to the new rulers of Grenada.⁸ "It's doubtful that we'll be called upon to carry out this mission," Colonel Faulkner noted in his journal.⁹

Those doubts notwithstanding, the 22d MAU continued its planning and preparations for a mission still viewed, at most, as an evacuation in a hostile environment. Fortunately, much of the preliminary work completed in anticipation of the expected Mediterranean landing exercises would apply. The squadron and the battalion landing team had already prepared loading tables, serial assignment tables, a standard landing plan, and other key planning documents for an amphibious landing. Company D had long been designated as the surface assault company, Company E as the initial air-assault company, and Company F as the reserve.¹⁰

In examining the requirements for an evacuation, the staff concluded that Salines Airport should be the primary site for the processing of evacuees, but that a secondary site might also be required. They devoted some thought, therefore, to the insertion of the reserve rifle company into the northeast portion of Grenada to secure Pearls Airfield, the principal commercial airfield on Grenada.

As planning proceeded, the battalion's Headquarters and Service Company began preparations, together with the MAU Service Support Group, to es-

tablish an evacuation control center. One problem that soon emerged was the lack of any State Department guidance concerning the mechanics of the evacuation—decisions about who would be eligible for evacuation; the probable number of people involved; and related matters. These concerns eased somewhat when the MAU received instructions for HMM-261 to send a helicopter to Antigua and pick up five individuals who would join the task force for the Grenada operation.¹¹ "We thought those five guys were going to be State Department people," Lieutenant Colonel Smith recalled.¹²

While they waited for the anticipated State Department representatives, planning for an evacuation continued. Captain Erie received another message at 2200 on 22 October, directing the amphibious ready group to turn toward Grenada. Still another message, received around the same time, provided general information on the strength and disposition of forces in place on Grenada and advised that an intelligence package was on its way to the *Guam* from Roosevelt Roads, Puerto Rico.

The Grenadian People's Revolutionary Army (PRA), as described in the second message to Captain Erie, numbered about 1,200 men, backed by a militia of 2,000 to 5,000 men and 300 to 400 armed police.* The most capable elements of the Grenadian forces, and those posing the gravest threat to the landing force, were the antiaircraft batteries. These reportedly were equipped with Soviet-design 12.7mm and 37mm antiaircraft guns with well-trained gunners. In addition, about 30 to 50 Cuban military advisors, an unknown number of Cuban civilians, and about 600 Cuban construction workers** were believed to be on the island.¹³

At the same time that the amphibious ready group received these two messages, another message from Commander, Second Fleet (ComSecondFleet) advised the commodore that the U.S. Army would conduct an airborne assault on Grenada.¹⁴ Aside from these messages, Colonel Faulkner and Captain Erie had received no further guidance on the impending operation. Colonel Faulkner initially interpreted the three messages to mean that the MAU would probably remain in reserve, as a backup or alternate to the Army, in case weather conditions made an airborne attack impossible. In the MAU commander's mind, a landing on the southern coast near Point Salines continued to

*Post-landing estimates of PRA strength, based on captured documents was 500-600, plus 2,000-2,500 militia.

**Post-landing estimates were 750-800 Cubans of whom perhaps 25 percent were regular military.

GRENADA
 Showing 22d MAU
 Phase Lines

Kilometers 0 1 2 3 4 5

Caribbean Sea





Photo courtesy of 22d MAU

This captured photograph shows members of Grenada's People's Revolutionary Army holding a night-firing exercise with a Soviet-made, quad-mount 12.7mm heavy machine gun prior to the landing of U.S. forces. Antiaircraft guns like this were frequently encountered on Grenada, although they were not always vigorously employed.

be a possibility. He still viewed Pearls as an alternate, or at least a site for a followup landing.¹⁵

These ideas changed abruptly with the return of the CH-53 from Antigua, at 2200 on 23 October. The helicopter did not carry State Department representatives, but brought liaison officers from CinCLant and subordinate commands. These officers brought additional intelligence information about Grenada and a draft operations order for the assault on the island. Vice Admiral Joseph Metcalf III, the Commander, Second Fleet, would be in overall command of the Grenada operation, with a tactical designator of Commander, Joint Task Force 120. He assigned to the amphibious force, now designated Task Force 124, the mission of seizing the Pearls Airport and the port of Grenville, and of neutralizing any opposing forces in the area. Simultaneously, Army Rangers (Task Force 121)—together with elements of the 82d Airborne Division (Task Force 123)—would secure points at the southern end of the island, including the nearly completed jet airfield under construction near Point Salines. A carrier battle group (Task Group 20.5) and Air Force elements would support the ground forces.¹⁶

Lieutenant Colonels Smith and Amos, summoned to a meeting on the *Guam*, arrived just as the liaison officers were completing their briefing. Around 2400 on 23 October, less than 30 hours before the sched-

uled H-hour, the battalion landing team and the squadron began planning for their assault on Grenada. At midnight, Lieutenant Colonel Smith made a brief notation in his journal, "It's on!"¹⁷

Final Planning

Admiral Metcalf had designated 25 October as D-day and had directed that no landing occur before 0400 on that date. Lieutenant Colonels Amos and Smith wished to make the assault before first light, to minimize any antiaircraft threat to helicopters. With the prohibition on a pre-0400 attack, the MAU had only a narrow time window for the landing. H-hour and L-hour, the times of the initial air and surface landings, were each set for 0400 on 25 October.¹⁸

Rules of engagement were established which called for the use of only those weapons that were essential to the success of the mission. "Disruption to the local economy [is] to be minimized, commensurate with the accomplishment of the mission."¹⁹ All Marines received thorough briefings on the importance of establishing friendly relations with the Grenadian people. As Lieutenant Colonel Smith stressed, the Marines were liberating the Grenadians, not attacking them.²⁰

The MAU's original concept of operations called for a combined air and surface assault to seize objectives in the Pearls and Grenville areas. Because the MAU



Photo courtesy of 22d MAU

The USS Guam (LPH-9), with its complement of Marine helicopters parked on the flight deck, steams through calm seas. Commodore of the task force, which included the Trenton, Fort Snelling, Manitowoc, and Barnstable County, was Capt Carl R. Erie, USN.

still had received little information about the island it was about to attack, the planners wished to give the BLT commander the maximum strength and flexibility to deal with whatever opposition might be waiting ashore. Commander Butler warned, however, that the beaches on the eastern side of the island, with their consistently high winds and heavy surf, might be unsuitable for surface landings.²¹

On 24 October, the Marines hurriedly completed their planning. Admiral Metcalf met in the early morning hours with the Commander-in-Chief, Atlantic and the commanders of the Army elements of his joint task force. As a result of this meeting, he changed H-hour to 0500. Amphibious Task Force 124 made a rendezvous with its supporting carrier battle group (Task Group 20.5) off Barbados, and at 1745 Admiral Metcalf and his staff arrived on board the *Guam* by helicopter to assume command of the Joint Task Force. They had received little more advance warning of the operation than the Marines, and requested a briefing on the specialized aspects of the amphibious operation and the capabilities of the Marine units within the amphibious task force. Later that day, MAU officers briefed the admiral and his staff on the plans for the assault into the Pearls area. Except for the time change of H-hour to 0500, Admiral Metcalf approved the plan as presented.²²

The Initial Landing

Near midnight, a SEAL* team slipped into the Pearls area to conduct a beach reconnaissance. Around 0200 on 25 October, the amphibious task force entered Grenadian waters. Two hours later, the SEAL team reported by radio, "Walking Track Shoes," the codeword phrase for a marginal beach, where amphibian tractors might land with great difficulty and other landing craft not at all. After hearing the SEAL team's report, Captain Erie directed that the initial assault would be exclusively by air.

The MAU quickly shifted to an alternate plan, which provided for two companies to be helilifted in succession to the east coast to seize the Pearls Airport and the town of Grenville. Captain Erie agreed that if, after daylight, the Marines already ashore identified a suitable beach, a surface landing might then be carried out.²³ As planners on board the *Guam* made their final preparation, the enlisted Marines gathered in their berthing spaces for the nightly movie. To put the men in the proper frame of mind for the landing, the ship preempted the scheduled feature for a showing of *Sands of Iwo Jima*, starring John Wayne.

For those who were able to sleep, reveille sounded

*The SEALs, whose name represents an acronym for "sea-air-land," are the Navy's unconventional warfare specialists.

at 0100 for the Marines on board the *Guam* and the other ships of the amphibious task force. The infantrymen ate a hurried meal and drew live ammunition below decks, while flight deck crews and maintenance personnel made final preparations to launch the first helicopters from the *Guam*. Few of the pilots and none of the crew chiefs in HMM-261 had any combat experience. Most of the senior noncommissioned officers, however, had served in Vietnam. The squadron maintenance officer, Major Melvin W. DeMars, Jr., carefully parceled out these experienced men to each aircraft so that, "In case there were the early jitters, which you'd obviously have on the first combat experience for any of these young guys, they would have that old hand right there to steady them or if they looked to him, they'd know exactly what to do."²⁴

At 0315 the first helicopters took off from the *Guam*, in total darkness. Operating under EmCon restrictions, the aircraft could communicate neither with each other nor with the ship. All aircraft carried night

vision goggles, but some of the pilots had not yet qualified in their use. Four divisions of transports plus one escort division of gunships comprising a total of 21 helicopters, launched from the *Guam*. The MAU did not attempt to use holding sectors for the separate flight divisions, nor did it establish a rendezvous point.²⁵

Intermittent rain squalls delayed the launching of the helicopters, so the first CH-46s, carrying elements of Company E, and their AH-1 Cobra escorts were almost a half hour late in reaching the landing zone, "LZ Buzzard," just south of the Pearls airfield. The rain had stopped by the time the helicopters approached the landing zone. Although the sun was just below the horizon, and the sky was still dark, the pilots could begin to distinguish some terrain features.²⁶

The original MAU plan had called for a heliborne assault directly onto the Pearls Airport. An examination of aerial photos taken of the airport, however, convinced Lieutenant Colonel Amos that antiaircraft sites

Launching from the USS Guam at dawn on D-Day, an AH-1 Cobra attack helicopter and troop-carrying CH-46s of HMM-261 are ready to assault and capture Pearls Airport on Grenada's eastern coast. (Reconstructive art by LtCol A. M. "Mike" Leahy, USMCR).

Photo courtesy of Navy Chief of Information



were probably located on the high hills surrounding the field. At his urging, the MAU had changed the landing zone to a location just south of the airfield, identified as an unused racetrack on the charts available to the planners. Aerial photos seemed to confirm that the new site, called LZ Buzzard, was a relatively clear open area covered with small scrub brush. However, as the leading helos approached the so-called "racetrack," those pilots who wore the night vision goggles could make out tall palm trees and high scrub brush. To Major DeMars, "It almost looked like you were landing in front of the Palm Springs Inn."²⁷

Lieutenant Colonel Amos immediately directed the helicopters to make for the relatively clear northwest corner of the zone, where the aircraft touched down without mishap. During the unloading, two TOW jeeps on one of the CH-53s became entangled and wedged in the cargo bay. After 30 minutes of unsuccessful attempts to free the vehicles, Marines tipped one TOW jeep out the rear cargo door, freeing the helicopter but wrecking the TOW launcher. One man broke an arm and another a leg during the unloading, but there were no other casualties as the Marines quickly fanned out across the zone.²⁸

Despite the unexpected appearance of palm trees and marshy soil in the landing zone, the wisdom of choosing LZ Buzzard was confirmed when two 12.7mm antiaircraft guns in the hills near Pearls Airport finally came to life, opening fire on the following waves of helicopters. The antiaircraft fire was erratic and inaccurate, probably because of the lingering darkness. Cobra gunships quickly silenced the antiaircraft guns with 20mm cannon and 2.75-inch rockets.

At LZ Buzzard, Company E's commander, Captain Henry J. Donigan III, assigned one platoon to secure the perimeter and started moving the remaining two platoons toward the Pearls airfield. He dispatched a small detachment from the 2d Platoon to mark the beach area near Pearls for the still-hoped-for surface assault. Moving quickly, even with security elements to their front and flanks, the two platoons closed on the airport just as dawn was breaking. As the Marines breached a chain link fence surrounding the airfield complex, Grenadian soldiers fired a few bursts from their automatic weapons, then fled toward the west end of the runway. The Marines briefly returned fire, then fanned out to search the terminal area. By 0730 they had secured the airfield, after searching two Cuban aircraft on the field and taking their crews into custody.²⁹

The AH-1 Cobras, which had flown ahead of the advancing platoons to reconnoiter the route to the airfield, reported an antiaircraft gun position on Hill 275,

part of the high ground overlooking the airfield. This site resembled the positions that had fired on the helicopters during the descent into LZ Buzzard, but it appeared to be unmanned. Lieutenant Colonel Smith, now on the scene with his Alpha command group,* ordered one platoon to take Hill 275. Although the position now appeared to be manned, the enemy gunners were not firing their heavy weapons at the advancing Marines, either because of panic or inability to depress the antiaircraft guns far enough to hit troops on the ground. As the Marines approached the crest of the hill, the Grenadian soldiers dropped their weapons and fled down the rear slope. The Marines pursued them down the hill, but—encumbered by packs, flak jackets, and rifles—they had little chance of overtaking the local soldiers, clad only in T-shirts and shorts. On the hilltop position the Marines found, in addition to the two 12.7mm antiaircraft machine guns, a cache of small arms and a large supply of ammunition.³⁰

With the hill secure and antitank weapons positioned to control the main avenues of approach to the airfield, Lieutenant Colonel Smith directed Company E to push on to the west, along the axis of a road that ran to the west of the airport. Since each platoon had to move to the assembly area through rugged wooded terrain, it took nearly two hours to reposition the scattered platoons of the company. Just as the Marines were about to move out to the west of the terminal area, they came under scattered 82mm mortar fire. Two or three rounds landed near the terminal complex and five more landed in the vicinity of LZ Buzzard.³¹ There were no casualties, however, and the fire soon ceased. As the Marines later learned, a round had misfired while still in the mortar tube, apparently causing the crew to abandon its weapon. Company E later discovered the mortar intact, with a large number of rounds nearby.

The Capture of Grenville

One hour after Company E had landed at LZ Buzzard, helicopters airlifted Company F into the Grenville area for the planned assault on the town. As in the case of LZ Buzzard, aerial photos had given a false impression of the terrain, and the selected landing zone proved unusable. Lieutenant Colonel Amos, who was controlling the insertion, could see only one suita-

*In a tactical situation, a commander may divide his staff into two groups. Alpha and Bravo. The commander heads the light Alpha group; his executive officer the other. Should enemy action make the Alpha command group unable to control the situation, the Bravo group takes over.



Photo courtesy of Navy Chief of Information

Pearls Airport, Grenada's principal civilian airfield, was captured by Marines on D-Day and temporarily renamed Marine Corps Air Station (MCAS) Douglas in honor of a sergeant major who died in Lebanon. The artist, with the help of Army and Air Force friends, recovered the seven-foot, scarlet-and-gold sign in December 1983 and gave it to the Marine Corps Museum. (Reconstructive art by LtCol A. M. "Mike" Leahy, USMCR)

ble landing zone, a soccer field directly in the center of the town. Although the field was large, level, and free of obstructions, it was surrounded on all sides by a high brick wall. If the landing were opposed, the company would be in an untenable position. Lieutenant Colonel Amos knew, however, that the insertions at LZ Buzzard had been unopposed. Furthermore, he could see the people in Grenville waving, in apparent welcome to the Marines. He decided to land the company on the soccer field. At approximately 0630, Company F landed at the field, hastily designated "LZ Oriole." There was no opposition there, and the company quickly deployed to secure the town and the port area.³²

At both Pearls and Grenville, the Marines were relieved to discover that most of the local population, far from regarding them as invaders, welcomed them as liberators from the rule of Hudson's military coun-

cil, which many Grenadians were describing as a gang of criminals and thugs. Local citizens immediately began to point out members of the militia and the People's Revolutionary Army to the Marines, leading them to houses and other sites of concealed arms caches. Grenadians even loaned their vehicles to the Marines for use in gathering the considerable quantities of arms and ammunition that were being uncovered. Patrols, accompanied by local guides, moved into the countryside to search out caches; and Marines established roadblocks to stop and identify members of the Grenadian army and militia who were trying to escape detection by changing into civilian clothing.³³

Action at St. George's

While the Marines in the Pearls area were consolidating their positions and beginning to move out, U.S. Army Rangers, who had landed in the Salines area

at 0536, were encountering stiff resistance.* Planes carrying the lead elements of the Rangers had received heavy antiaircraft fire from the hills surrounding the uncompleted airfield. Once on the ground, the Rangers found themselves heavily engaged against pockets of armed Cubans in the vicinity of the airstrip. Despite this opposition, the Rangers eventually succeeded in securing the airfield and evacuating American medical students from the nearby True Blue campus of the St. George's University Medical School.

A special mission force, dispatched to rescue Governor General Paul Scoon, had succeeded in reaching the Governor's mansion but was now surrounded by a Grenadian army force with armored personnel carriers. Early reports, which later proved erroneous, indicated that the special mission force had sustained heavy casualties, was low on ammunition, and was receiving intense heavy weapons fire.³⁴

To lift the siege of the Governor's residence, Admiral Metcalf directed the amphibious task force, with Company G still embarked in two ships, to conduct a landing on the western side of the island. Augmenting the company's firepower would be some of the battalion landing team's tanks, TOWs, and heavy machine guns, most of which were still on board ship. As an immediate measure to help the Army, Admiral Metcalf directed the four Cobras of HMM-261 to fly south and support the forces engaged in the Salines area.³⁵

Captains John P. "Pat" Giguere and Timothy B. Howard had their Cobras on station in the Salines area when they received orders from the *Guam's* Helicopter Direction Center (HDC) to proceed south and contact "Spectre," an Air Force AC-130 gunship, for a mission in support of the Army. Giguere and Howard were unable to raise either the Air Force gunship or any Army unit with the radio frequency lists they had been given. After failing to spot either enemy or friendly units through visual reconnaissance, they returned to the *Guam* for fuel. On board the *Guam*, Captain Douglas J. Diehl's "Darth Flight" (so named because Diehl's squadron mates insisted that he sounded like movie villain Darth Vader on his radio) was preparing to relieve Giguere's flight on station, when Diehl's wing man, Captain Gary W. Watson, happened to pick up an Army frequency on his receiver.³⁶

Once airborne, Diehl and Watson succeeded in contacting a forward air controller attached to the 1st

Ranger Battalion. The forward air controller attempted to direct the Cobras to a target, but it soon became apparent that the Army was using different maps. He could not give Diehl and Watson a precise fix on the target. Using a reflecting mirror, the Army controller finally succeeded in directing the Cobras onto a house that concealed a 90mm recoilless rifle. Still uncertain as to the exact location of the house, Diehl and Watson began a run-in toward the target area. "That's it! that's it!" yelled the controller. "It's right under you!"³⁷

Watson peeled off sharply to the left and behind him Diehl opened fire with his 20mm cannon. Circling the target a second time, Watson fired a TOW missile that entered a window and exploded, completely destroying the house. As the house collapsed, three men ran to a nearby truck, which had apparently carried the 90mm gun. Watson fired a second TOW and hit the truck, which blew up, with fragments hurtling into the air. When they returned to *Guam* for fuel, Diehl and Watson passed the frequency they had been using to Howard and Giguere, who had completed refueling and were now airborne again.

Giguere and Howard made contact with a controller who directed them to attack Fort Frederick, an old masonry fort overlooking St. George's from the high ground east of the town. Although the fort was a more suitable target for naval gunfire, fear of damage to the heavily settled areas near the fort caused Admiral Metcalf to select an attack by the Cobras.³⁸ Fear of collateral damage to houses near the fort also determined the Cobras' method of attack—causing the Cobras to remain on a fixed course for a dangerous length of time.

On the fifth run, Captain Howard's Cobra was hit by antiaircraft fire. One round went through both engines. Several others entered the cockpit, wounding both Howard and his copilot, Captain Jeb F. Seagle. The fire knocked Seagle unconscious. Howard's right arm was useless and his right leg was broken. Despite his wounds, Howard remained conscious and alert, and managed to land the stricken aircraft on a nearby soccer field. As he later recalled:

We were only at about 1,200 feet, which was another thing in our favor. I couldn't use the pedals, so I set the stick where I thought it would level the helicopter and propped my left foot around it. As I pulled it towards me, the bird hit hard. I was sure the crash would kill us. It hit so hard the canopy removal systems must have activated because all the windows blew out. Even though the helicopter bounced very hard off the deck, it didn't flip over.³⁹

Seagle regained consciousness immediately after the crash landing and dragged Howard away from the

*The initial assault on Salines was made by the 1st Ranger Battalion, followed closely by the 2d Ranger Battalion. At 1405, a reinforced battalion (2d Battalion, 325th Infantry) of the 2d Brigade, 82d Airborne Division began landing at Point Salines.

burning aircraft. As soon as they cleared the helicopter, the two pilots came under intense—but inaccurate—fire from the troops in the vicinity of the fort. Howard persuaded Seagle to take his pistol, to leave him near the helicopter, and to go for help. Shortly after that, the burning Cobra exploded, igniting the 2.75-inch rockets still on board.

The explosion and flying rockets may have frightened or distracted the Grenadians, because their firing ceased for a time. Howard, who had managed to salvage his radio, began calling for help. The enemy troops now resumed their fire, as they walked slowly down the hill. When they reached the edge of the field, "The earth started shaking," Howard recalled. "I thought at first it was naval gunfire, but it was Pat Giguere shooting 2.75 at them."⁴⁰

The rocket attack scattered the troops on the ground, leaving Captain Howard unmolested for the time being. A CH-46 summoned by Giguere approached St. George's to attempt a medical evacuation (MedEvac). By radio, Captain Giguere briefed

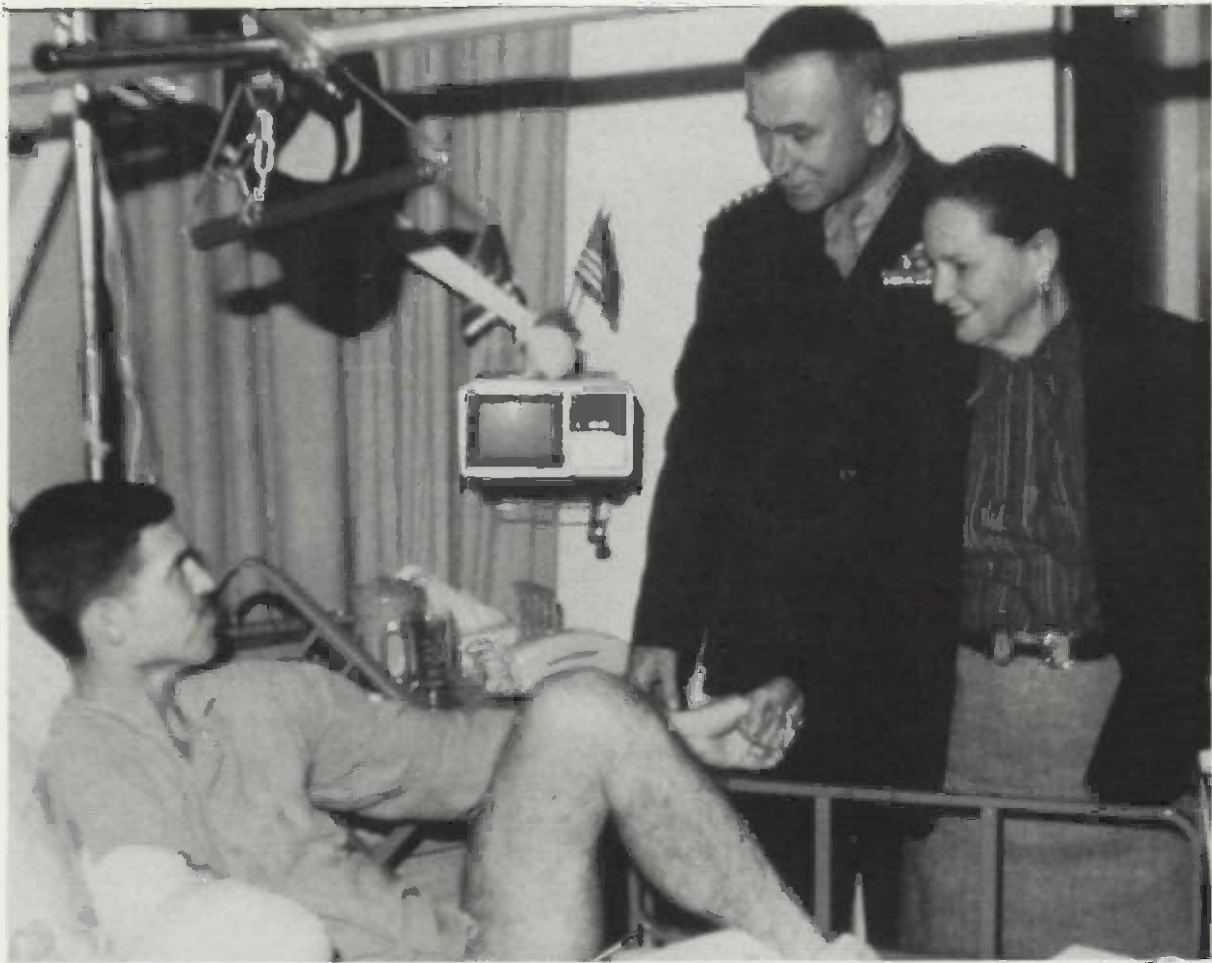
Major DeMars and First Lieutenant Lawrence M. King, Jr., the pilots flying the CH-46. "We were going to have to fly in right past this triple-A [antiaircraft artillery] site, right [over] the capital city of the island to land in this LZ," DeMars recalled. "He was going to provide cover for me as I went in, as I set down, and [provide] escort back out. . . . That was a very difficult thing for him to do, to have to cover an aircraft going into a landing zone with only one aircraft because, as he would come in to make his runs on target and turn back off, he would have no one to cover him. So he was going to expose himself to some pretty serious triple-A fire in order to cover me into the zone."⁴¹

While Giguere attacked the antiaircraft site with 20mm cannon and rockets, DeMars landed his CH-46 in the field near Howard. The landing attracted more small arms fire to the field. A few rounds hit the helicopter, slightly damaging the stabilizing equipment. The squadron maintenance chief, Gunnery Sergeant Kelly M. Neidigh, a Vietnam veteran riding with

Capt Jeb F. Seagle drags Capt Timothy D. Howard away from their burning AH-1 Cobra, shot down by enemy antiaircraft fire near Fort Frederick. Capt Seagle was killed while looking for help for the badly wounded Howard, who was subsequently rescued by a CH-46 of HMM-261. (Reconstructive art by LtCol A. M. "Mike" Leahy, USMCR).

Photo courtesy of Navy Chief of Information





MCHC Photo Collection

The Commandant of the Marine Corps, Gen Paul X. Kelley, and Mrs. Kelley visit Capt Timothy B. Howard at Bethesda Naval Hospital, following the Grenada operation. The wounded Cobra pilot, whose life was saved by a daring rescue effort by GySgt Kelly Neidigh, but who subsequently lost his right forearm, had asked to remain on active duty.

DeMars as a gunner, quickly disconnected himself from his intercom equipment and jumped from the aircraft. Armed with an M-16 rifle, he sprinted the 40-yard distance to Captain Howard. Ignoring the fire directed at him, Neidigh half-dragged, half-carried Howard back to the aircraft and hoisted him on board with the aid of the crew chief, Corporal Simon D. Gore, Jr. Still under fire, DeMars continued to wait in hopes of finding Captain Seagle, not knowing that hostile fire had already killed Seagle. Finally, with no sign of the second Cobra pilot, and with Howard's condition rapidly worsening, DeMars decided to take off. Covered by Giguere, the CH-46 passed safely over St. George's but the Cobra was soon hit by antiaircraft fire and crashed into the harbor with the loss of Giguere and his copilot, First Lieutenant Jeffrey R. Scharver. The CH-46 flew Captain Howard to the

Guam, where he received medical treatment that saved his life, but could not save his right forearm.⁴²

Grand Mal Bay

While the Cobras were seeing action in the south, hurried preparations continued for an amphibious assault at Grand Mal Bay. Lieutenant Colonel Smith, ashore with two rifle companies in the Pearls/Grenville area, had trouble maintaining communication with the Guam. Although he had heard earlier from the MAU operations officer that an operation in the Grand Mal or Gouyave area was under consideration, Smith heard nothing more until approximately 1500 when his reconnaissance platoon commander, using a hand-held radio from a weather deck of the *Fort Snelling*, managed to contact him. The platoon commander in-

formed him of the impending assault and asked what was going on.⁴³

With the same question in mind, Lieutenant Colonel Smith boarded a resupply helicopter to the *Guam*, leaving his executive officer in command at Pearls and Grenville. Arriving on board the flagship, Smith received a hurried briefing from Major Van Huss. The ultimate objective of the landing at Grand Mal was to secure the Governor General's residence and relieve the special mission force. Company G would land at Grand Mal Beach and Company F would land by helicopter from Grenville that very evening.

Rushing to the *Guam's* flag plot compartment, Smith succeeded in getting the landing's H-hour postponed from 1630 to 1830, to allow more time for planning and coordination. The *Manitowoc*, carrying Company G, had already lowered her ramps, launched her safety boats, and was about to launch the first assault amphibious vehicles when word of the postponement reached the bridge.⁴⁴

For the Company G commander, Captain Robert K. Dobson, Jr., the postponement was only the latest in a long string of perplexing events in a rapidly-changing D-Day situation. His company had been loaded in amphibian tractors since 0345, for a planned 0430 landing. The 0430 landing had been postponed

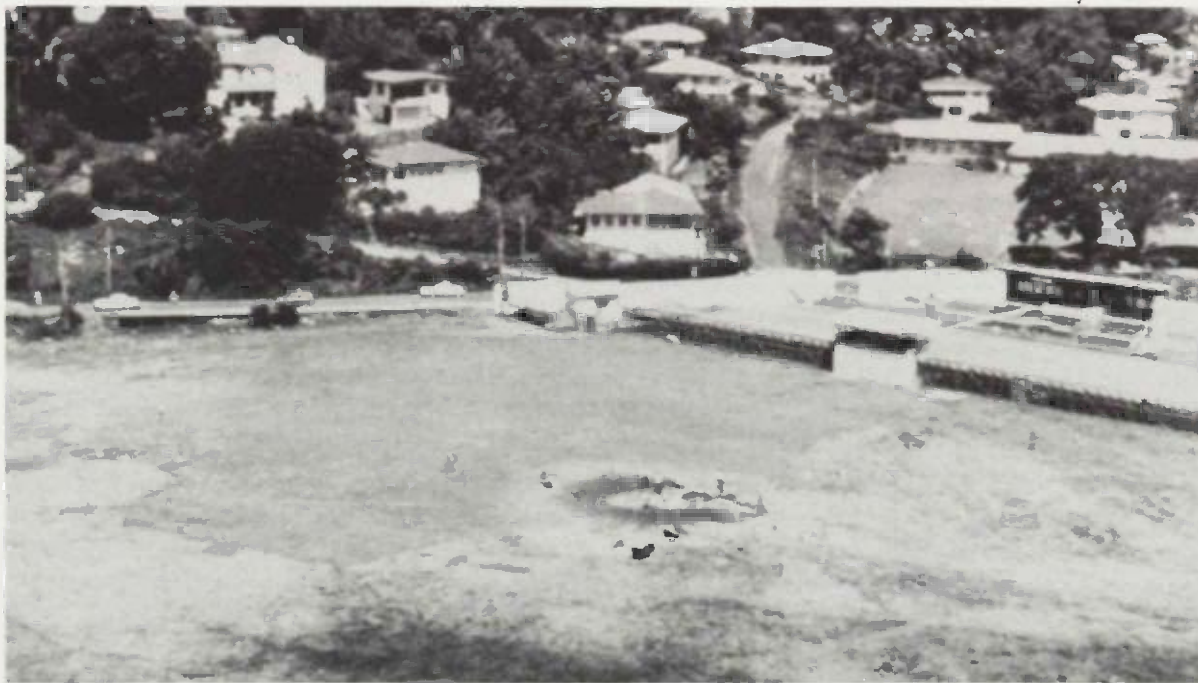
until 0530, then 0630, then 0730, then cancelled altogether until more information about the beach could be obtained. To find out more about the conditions on the beach, which the SEALs had reported as marginal, the MAU commander sent the commander of the amphibian tractor unit ashore in an empty vehicle with the unit's most experienced operator. They reported that a surface landing was possible but would be extremely difficult.⁴⁵

Shortly after noon, Dobson received word that the amphibian tractors would go in empty, while the troops were being lifted in by air. At 1330, as Company G was staging on the flight deck for the helilift, the *Manitowoc's* commander summoned Dobson to the bridge and informed him of the shift in landing site from the Pearls area to the northwest coast. The new landing site reportedly was to be in the vicinity of Victoria (Captain Dobson still had no information that his company would land at Grand Mal Bay). The company hurriedly reembarked in the amphibian vehicles, but as the ship neared Victoria, no word came to land. Dobson was next told that his landing would probably be at the coastal town of Gouyave, about four kilometers south of Victoria.*

*The *Manitowoc* sailed around the north end of Grenada. Other ships, including the *Guam*, sailed from the Pearls area around the southern end of the island.

Curious Grenadians inspect the ashes and rotor blade that represent the only remains of the AH-1 Cobra helicopter piloted by Capt Timothy B. Howard. Both Capt Howard and copilot Capt Jeb F. Seagle survived the crash, but Capt Seagle died seeking aid.

Photo courtesy of 22d MAW



Gouyave also proved a false alarm, and as they sailed past that town, Dobson summoned his platoon commanders to a meeting in his stateroom. It was now 1750 and rapidly growing dark. Dobson told his platoon commanders that he still had received no word from the battalion, but that in view of the late hour, it seemed likely that the landing would be postponed until next morning. He instructed his platoon commanders to secure all weapons and ammunition on board the assault amphibian vehicles (AAVs) and to have the men return to their berthing spaces for some much-needed sleep.

Dobson had just given these instructions when he again received a summons to the bridge. The landing would be at Grand Mal Bay at 1830. The selected site, designated LZ Fuel because of a small tank farm at one end, was long and extremely narrow, with high ground rising steeply behind it. Several large fuel storage tanks occupied the only area of flat ground behind the beach and blocked egress from it. Between the beach and the high ground ran the main road south to St. George's.

The first AAVs launched from the *Manitowoc* at 1830. It was now completely dark, with no moon. The AAVs made for the beach in a single column, the only possible formation in view of the darkness and the fact that no one had marked or even reconnoitered LZ Fuel. By 1901, the first AAVs were ashore on the narrow beach with no opposition. Captain Dobson still had received no orders or instructions and was out of communication with everyone but the elements of his command ashore. As Navy utility landing craft (LCUs), bearing tanks and jeeps with heavy machine guns and TOWs, began to land their cargo, the AAVs moved to parking areas near the fuel tanks. There were now several hundred Marines crowded onto the tiny beach-head, 750 by 100 meters, with limited exit routes and highly flammable fuel tanks close at hand.

Making the best of the situation while still awaiting instruction about his mission, Captain Dobson sent two platoons, backed by antitank weapons, to establish blocking positions on the coast road 200 meters north and south of LZ Fuel. He next posted security on his flanks, sent his reconnaissance platoon to conduct a road reconnaissance to the south, and settled in to wait for daylight and for new orders.⁴⁷

At about 2300, the Marines at LZ Fuel heard the sound of a helicopter overhead. Dobson's men quickly rigged up a landing zone with some red lights and a strobe light to guide in the aircraft, which proved to be a UH-1 (Huey) carrying the MAU air liaison officer, Major William J. Sublette. Sublette brought

Dobson up to date on the operations of the preceding day and told him there were apparently strong enemy forces between Company G and St. George's. He also said that Company F would arrive in his area by helicopter sometime after midnight. Dobson asked Sublette to try to contact Lieutenant Colonel Smith, to inform him of Company G's current dispositions, and to ask for further guidance.⁴⁸ An hour later, Company G again heard the sound of a helicopter as Major Sublette's Huey returned, leading in a CH-46 bearing the battalion commander.

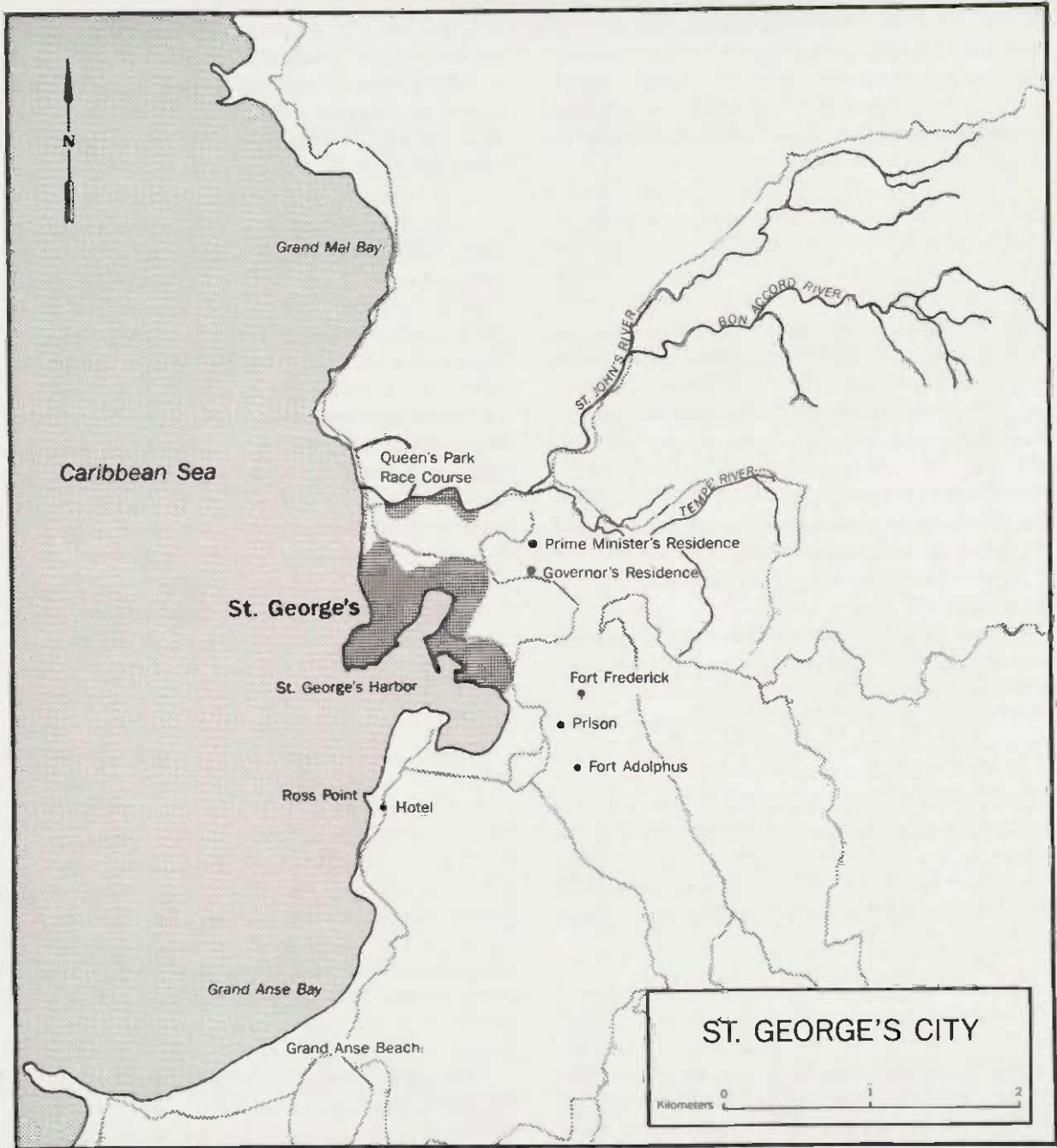
Lieutenant Colonel Smith had also experienced an eventful evening. Following his conference on board the *Guam*, Smith had planned to return immediately to Pearls, pick up his small command group, and join Company G on board the *Manitowoc* for the landing. It took almost 30 minutes for Smith to find a helicopter to return him to Pearls. But that was only the beginning of his odyssey. The *Guam's* Helicopter Direction Center had mistakenly vectored his helicopter to Point Salines instead of Pearls. He spent 45 minutes in the air and did not arrive back at Pearls until 1810, 20 minutes before the scheduled H-hour for Grand Mal.

Hastily rounding up his command group at Pearls, Smith returned to the helicopter and instructed the pilot to make for the *Manitowoc* or, since the *Manitowoc's* exact position was by now uncertain, the *Guam*. It was now dark and the pilot had lost his communications with everyone but the *Trenton*, which had remained on the northeast side the island. At the end of its fuel supply, Smith's helicopter finally landed on the *Trenton* after an hour of fruitless searching. After further delay, Smith, "so frustrated [he] could barely see," flew back to the *Guam*. He had left there six hours earlier, for (he had expected) a six-minute flight to Pearls and a 20-minute flight to the *Manitowoc*.

Shortly after Lieutenant Colonel Smith's landing on the *Guam*, Major Sublette returned from LZ Fuel in his Huey. Sublette offered to lead Smith to Grand Mal Bay. Smith quickly loaded his command group into a CH-46 and set out on his long-delayed journey to LZ Fuel.⁴⁹

There was so little room on the narrow beach at LZ Fuel that Smith's CH-46 had to land with its back wheels in the surf. As the rear ramp came down and the command group waded ashore, Smith reflected that this was a new first, "A heliborne ship-to-shore movement where you still had to wade through the surf."⁵⁰

Smith sent Major Sublette back to Pearls with word to Lieutenant Colonel Amos to bring in Company F



as soon as possible. He then collected his subordinate commanders and briefed them on their mission. Except for Smith himself—who had a good military map captured at Pearl's—the Marines lacked reliable maps of the area. Dobson's platoon commanders were still using photo copies of the Navy charts, which lacked grid squares. Consequently, for locating and reporting unit positions Smith established a simple clock system using the easily visible Queen's Park Racecourse as the base point.⁵¹

While on board the *Guam*, Lieutenant Colonel Smith had learned that an estimated battalion of Cuban troops was still in the St. George's area, and that a second battalion, possibly Cuban, was somewhere to the north of Grand Mal Bay. Smith directed Captain Dobson to station one platoon, reinforced with Dragon antitank weapons, facing northward as a rear guard and to send the reconnaissance platoon on foot, down the road that led toward the Queen's Park Racecourse. Dobson's remaining two platoons, riding in AAVs and accompanied by tanks, would follow the recon platoon to the racecourse. Company F, on its way by air from Grenville, was to land at LZ Fuel, link up with Dobson's rear guard platoon and follow Company G south toward the racecourse and St. George's.⁵²

Around 0400, Company F began to arrive at Grand Mal Bay. Since the tiny landing zone at LZ Fuel allowed room for only two helicopters to unload simultaneously, it was nearly daylight before the entire company had finished landing. Meanwhile, Dobson's AAV column had secured the racecourse, challenged by only a few scattered rounds of RPG fire. A captured PRA officer later told the Americans that his troops in the area, frightened by the sounds of the amphibian vehicles and tanks rumbling noisily down the road during the dark night, had quickly taken to their heels.

Movement Toward St. George's

Lieutenant Colonel Smith had planned for Company G to secure the high ground overlooking St. George's and the Governor's residence. Once he received word that Dobson had encountered scant resistance, however, he ordered the company to make directly for the Governor General's house. Leaving the tanks and AAVs to provide a base of fire from the racecourse, Dobson advanced rapidly up the mountain path leading to the residences of the Prime Minister and the Governor General. One squad outposted the unoccupied Prime Minister's residence, while the remainder of the company continued on to the Governor General's house. There they easily linked

up with a special mission team of 22 men. Inside the house were Governor General Sir Paul Scoon, his wife, and nine other civilians. All were evacuated to the *Guam*.⁵³

Lieutenant Colonel Smith had now arrived at the racecourse with Company F. He ordered Company G to continue west along the ridge line that was the site of the Governor General's residence, and to secure Fort Frederick, the 18th century masonry fortress that dominated the entire St. George's area.

In talking with local Grenadians, Dobson gained the impression that the fort had suffered heavy attacks from AC-130 gunships, but that a unit of at least company size remained inside. The fort was well supplied with ammunition. Dobson decided to send part of his company to seize an adjacent piece of high ground, located about 300 meters north of the fort. From there, they could provide covering fire. Dobson then advanced through dense foliage along the ridgeline with his remaining force. As they approached the fort, the Marines observed parties of men climbing down the far side of the walls. Estimating that the PRA might be abandoning the position, Dobson decided to press on, getting as close as possible to Fort Frederick while still under cover of his machine guns.

To their surprise, Dobson and his men were able to enter the fort unopposed. Inside, the Marines observed a number of uniforms scattered over the ground. The fort's defenders, apparently unnerved by the sight of the long columns of Marines snaking toward them, had quickly decided to abandon their military calling and return to civilian life. A captured PRA officer, Major B. Gahagan, later explained the reasons for the disintegration of the Grenadian forces. PRA commanders, said Gahagan, did not expect a combined helicopter and surface assault at night and did not expect an attack of any sort north of St. George's. "This combined night assault was a psychological shock to the PRA," Gahagan reported, "whereby the few remaining senior officers present opted and agreed to pass the word to lay down their arms and return home."⁵⁴

Large quantities of weapons, including light machine guns, AK-47 assault rifles, heavy machine guns, and great stacks of ammunition were left behind in Fort Frederick. Nearby, Marines discovered a truck with three new 82mm mortars and two trucks heavily loaded with antiaircraft ammunition. In underground tunnels below the fort, which had housed a headquarters of some type, Dobson's men found quantities of significant documents, including an arms agreement recently signed by Nicaragua, Cuba, Grenada, and the Soviet Union, as well as situation



Photo courtesy of Navy Chief of Information

Army Rangers dash out from the ramp of an HMM-261 CH-46 onto the Grand Anse Beach and move forward under fire to rescue American medical students at one of two St. George's campuses. Overhead covering fire is delivered by a Navy A-7 Corsair and an Air Force AC-130 gunship. (Reconstructive art by LtCol A. M. "Mike" Leahy, USMCR)

maps detailing the island's defenses and the location of PRA forces.⁵⁵

The Grand Anse Operation

While Lieutenant Colonel Smith's two companies were consolidating their positions in the St. George's area, the helicopters that had transported them to Grand Mal prepared for quite a different mission. Late on the afternoon of D-day, the American commanders learned that the True Blue campus was only one of two campuses of St. George's medical school. A large number of students, perhaps as many as 200, were located in the medical school annex at Grand Anse Beach on the southeast coast of Grenada, south of St. George's. Army commanders at Point Salines had been in telephone contact with the students and had planned an evacuation for the following day.⁵⁶

Admiral Metcalf directed the MAU commander to make HMM-261 available to support U.S. Army forces in the assault on Grand Anse to evacuate the students.

The pilots and crews of HMM-261 had left the Guam expecting to lift the Marines for an assault on Victoria or Gouyave and were surprised to learn of their new mission. At Salines Airport, Lieutenant Colonel Amos conferred with the commander of the 2d Ranger Battalion, Army Lieutenant Colonel Ralph L. Hagler, Jr., an old friend and classmate from the Virginia Military Institute. Seated on concrete blocks in the unfinished terminal of the newly captured airfield, Hagler and Amos hastily planned the coming heliborne assault.

The beach at Grand Anse was short and extremely narrow, with a dense growth of palm trees and other plants extending almost to the water's edge. The CH-46s, carrying a company of Rangers, would land on the beach in three divisions of three helicopters each. Four CH-53s would follow to pick up and evacuate the students. Finally, the nine CH-46s would return, again in three waves, to extract the Rangers.

Lieutenant Colonel Amos, airborne in a UH-1, would direct the helo operations and control both the Navy A-7 Corsair attack aircraft from the carrier *Independence* and an Air Force AC-130 gunship. Further fire support would be available from naval gunfire ships, Army artillery and mortars, and the two remaining Cobras of HMM-261. Sharing the command-and-control Huey with Lieutenant Colonels Amos and Hagler was another Army officer acting as a fire support coordinator.⁵⁷

A fierce sense of resolve swept through the squadron as the men learned the details of their mission. "The first thing that popped into our minds was, we were going to rescue U.S. citizens," recalled Major Frank L. Brewer, who was designated to lead the first division of CH-46s. "The Iranian hostage rescue attempt was on everyone's mind." Many of the CH-53 pilots in HMM-261 had trained at New River Air Station under instructors who had flown on the Iranian rescue attempt. Amos's closest friend, in fact, had been a flight leader on that mission. "Lieutenant Colonel Amos said to me, 'Regardless of what happens to any of our aircraft or any of the Rangers on that beach, it's going to go down,'" Brewer recalled later. "We were coming out with something, or there was not going to be an air frame left."⁵⁸

At 1600, the CH-46s left Salines for the short flight to Grand Anse. Supporting fires by artillery, mortars, and close air support aircraft on suspected PRA and Cuban positions near the campus began about five minutes later. This fire did not lift until 20 seconds before the nine CH-46s touched down at Grand Anse Beach at 1615. Scattered, but steadily increasing small arms and automatic weapons fire greeted the helicopters as they maneuvered into the crowded beach area. Waist gunners returned fire with their right side .50-caliber machine guns. The helicopters, in a rough echelon formation, touched down in a swirl of sand and dust on the narrow beach. Rangers raced down the lowered rear ramps and headed for the nearby buildings that housed the medical school annex.⁵⁹

The narrowness of the beach area forced the last helicopter in line too close to the overhanging palm trees. A rotor blade brushed a palm tree, and the pilot had to shut down and abandon his damaged helicopter. As the last of the eight undamaged aircraft cleared the beach, Amos called in the four CH-53s. Hagler had remained in telephone contact with the students and instructed them to place mattresses in front of their windows, and to keep under cover. They were not to rush out when the first group of helicopters arrived, but to wait for the Rangers to

take them to the CH-53s. A few seconds after the CH-53s touched down, the first American students and other evacuees began loading aboard. In a few minutes, the last CH-53 had left Grand Anse Beach. Despite intermittently heavy fire on the beach, the evacuation concluded without serious casualties.⁶⁰

As the CH-53s were approaching the beach, Lance Corporal Martin J. Dellert, crew chief of the downed CH-46, broke from cover and began a hasty inspection of his aircraft. The spot where the helo had shut down had now become the hottest area on the beach, a target for incoming mortar rounds and fire from small arms and automatic weapons. "I thought he must be looking for somebody," recalled the squadron maintenance chief, Master Sergeant George T. Curtis. "I couldn't fathom why he had run to this aircraft [in the face of the heavy fire] and he's scrambling all over it He ran back to the pilot and he said to him, 'I think we can fly it.' So the pilot, the copilot, and the gunner ran back to the airplane and turned it up." Vibrating and shaking severely, the CH-46 lifted off the beach and lurched back to Salines.⁶¹

By this time, the remaining CH-46s were returning to the beach. Lieutenant Colonel Amos directed the aircraft to land by threes so that the Rangers would be able to board as they disengaged gradually from the fire fight. The first division successfully completed their extraction, but as the second division was landing, another CH-46 struck a palm tree. Part of the tree trunk fell through the rotor blades, completely destroying the rotor system. The crew of the disabled helicopter quickly jumped on board one of the two remaining helicopters and the extraction continued. A few of the Rangers of the downed aircraft inflated one of the life rafts carried by the helicopter and "joined the Navy," paddling out to sea, where they were picked up by the destroyer *Caron*. The operation cost the squadron one CH-46, and another one damaged, but close to 200 civilians had been evacuated without injury and without loss of any Rangers or Marine airmen.⁶² It was, as one pilot put it, "A real successful mission."⁶³

Continuing Operations in the Northeast

While the squadron and Companies F and G had been occupied with new missions in the southwest, Company E had continued operations in the north. During the late afternoon of D-day, the company received an intelligence report that armored vehicles, including at least one tank, were approaching from the north. This was one of several erroneous reports received that day about attacks, either threatened or

in progress, against the Marine positions at Pearls.⁶⁴ The report caused Company E to begin hurried preparations to withstand a mechanized attack. Second Lieutenant Rand W. Hammel's 1st Platoon, the northernmost Marine unit, began to erect antitank obstacles. Although many Grenadians offered to stay and help (one man even offering to dismantle his house to provide materials for a roadblock), Lieutenant Hammel's men urged them to leave the area and seek safety farther south. These people began to stream down the north-south road, passing through the position of Company F in the Grenville area. Not knowing that this evacuation was taking place at Company E's behest, Company F interpreted the stream of civilians as confirmation of the fact that an enemy attack was imminent.

The Marines soon learned that the "mechanized attack," was only a false alarm, but nerves were on edge as Company E took up its night defensive positions. Captain Donigan established a blocking position, backed by antiarmor weapons, on the major roadway leading into the air terminal complex from the southeast. He set up another blocking position on the north-south road to the west of the airfield. These positions could call upon the battalion's 81mm mortars, which had come ashore during the day. (The arrival of the mortars, incidentally, had touched off another false alarm. A radio operator interpreted a message from Company E that the mortars were ashore as a report that, "The Marines ashore are receiving mortar fire.")

Meanwhile, Company F had staged at Pearls for its airlift to Grand Anse, which got underway at 0330.⁶⁵ Company E spent most of D Plus 1 in the vicinity of the Pearls Airfield. Throughout the day, Grenadian civilians continued to bring in arms and ammunition and lead Marines to nearby arms caches. During the afternoon a motorized patrol, riding in vehicles loaned by local residents, followed friendly Grenadians to a large truck, sitting camouflaged on an agricultural road. The truck carried a full load of small arms and ammunition. Behind the truck, Marines found a loaded four-barrelled 12.7mm antiaircraft gun. The Marines secured the gun to the back of the vehicle, hot-wired the truck to get it started, and returned to Pearls with their haul. Other Marine search parties, with Grenadian guides, found quantities of military packs and cartridge belts and more small arms.

On 27 October, Company E received orders to carry out a reconnaissance in force to the Mount Horne area, about three kilometers east of Grenville. Captured documents had identified Mount Horne as the

headquarters of the regional People's Revolutionary Army battalion. Captain Donigan departed Pearls with a reinforced rifle platoon mounted in Marine jeeps together with trucks and flatbeds borrowed from the Grenadians. Two TOW jeeps and some Dragon teams accompanied this heterogeneous convoy. Fuel for all vehicles came from stores captured at Pearls Airfield.

The reconnaissance force met no resistance, and received a warm welcome from civilians along the way. At their destination the Marines found two buildings of the Mount Horne Agricultural Center that evidently had served as a battalion command post. One of these contained a complete communications center with modern radio equipment, as well as maps and documents. Both buildings held large quantities of military equipment and propaganda material.

Local residents urged the Marines to move on to the nearby Mount St. Catherine television and microwave relay station, where they thought PRA troops might be found. After considerable effort, a few vehicles of the convoy managed to push their way up the narrow precipitous road to the top of Mount St. Catherine. As they reached the crest of the ridgeline, in a heavy rain squall, the Marines saw a handful of soldiers retreating down the opposite slope, carrying what appeared to be an 82mm mortar. The Marines opened a heavy fire on the fleeing figures, but appeared to inflict no casualties. They received no return fire. A search of the hillside area yielded a number of 82mm mortar shells and some antitank rounds.

A driving rain brought new hazard to the return trip down the steep slope of Mount St. Catherine. A Dragon jeep towing a trailer jackknifed and overturned, injuring the driver and a passenger. Since there was no possibility of landing a medevac helicopter in the heavy rain, the Marines placed the casualties on improvised stretchers and loaded them onto a flatbed truck for the remainder of the journey down the mountain. At a schoolyard near the base of the slope, the company's forward air controller was able to call in a CH-46 to carry out the casualties. The reconnaissance force then returned to the airfield without further incident.⁶⁶

The following day, another platoon-sized reconnaissance force, searching to the north of Pearls, took a wrong turn and found itself on the outskirts of a town named Sauteurs on the northern coast of the island, about 10 kilometers northwest of Pearls. Since the force had encountered no opposition on their approach or withdrawal, Captain Donigan proposed to return and seize Sauteurs. Before his proposal could be acted upon, however, the battalion command post

received a report of a very large arms cache at Mirabeau Hospital, which was actually a small village near Mount Horne.

Departing for Mirabeau Hospital with his motorized platoon recon force, Donigan moved eastward with caution, arriving at his objective in the late afternoon. Donigan left the vehicles concealed at the bottom of a draw, with a small detachment to provide security, while the remainder of the Marines proceeded on foot to a cave which, according to local civilians, concealed an arms cache. Finding the cave empty, Donigan decided to push up the hill toward the Mirabeau Hospital.

Advancing along the heavily wooded ridge, the Marines fanned out by fire teams. Near the top, the woods changed to a banana patch. The Marines encountered a civilian carrying coconuts and detained him to keep him from giving a warning to others. As the lead fire team crested the hill, the point man abruptly stopped and silently pointed to his rifle to indicate possible trouble. In the clearing at the top of the hill were three men standing next to a Land Rover. A Marine shouted, "Freeze!" The three men stopped, exchanged some

hurried words, then broke and ran. The Marines opened fire, hitting two of the men. The third man ran into a house, out the rear door, and down the mountain. The two wounded men, one of whom subsequently died, were later identified as Cubans.

At almost the same time, the Marines left in the draw to guard the vehicles came under fire from an unknown number of enemy. The Marines responded and a short firefight ensued in the fading light. After a few minutes, the enemy broke off the fight. The Marines suffered no casualties.

Captain Donigan and his patrol, having heard of the fight by radio, now returned to the convoy vehicles, bringing with them the captured Land Rover and the wounded Cubans. Donigan began to take the convoy back along the draw. As they withdrew, the Marines received fire from a nearby ridgeline. They replied with small arms and machine gun fire and fired a LAW antitank rocket into a group of seven to eight figures on the ridgeline. The Marines were unscathed once again. Enemy casualties could not immediately be determined but subsequent interrogation of PRA officers revealed that some casualties

Prisoners, suspected members of the Grenadian People's Revolutionary Army, are escorted by Marines to temporary compounds located at Queen's Park Racecourse just north of St. George's. In the background is a jeep mounting a .50-caliber machine gun.

Photo courtesy of Sgt Christopher Grey, USMC



probably had been inflicted on their units as a result of this action. Captain Donigan's force returned to the airfield without further contact.⁶⁷

The Capture of St. George's

While Company E was extending its operations in the northeast section of Grenada, Companies F and G were completing the capture of strong points around St. George's. During the night following the capture of Fort Frederick, a jeep on a resupply run to Company G had a meeting engagement with a Soviet-made BTR 60 armored personnel carrier in the road between Fort Frederick and the Governor General's residence. A quick shot at close range with a LAW antitank rocket knocked out the BTR.⁶⁸

For D plus 2, Lieutenant Colonel Smith received the mission of attacking south to seize Richmond Hill Prison, Fort Adolphus, and Fort Lucas.⁶⁹

Shortly after daylight, however, Lieutenant Colonel Smith encountered three American journalists,* who informed him that Richmond Hill Prison was no longer guarded. Immediately radioing this information to Captain Dobson, Smith ordered him to get a platoon to the prison as fast as possible. Fort Lucas, in actuality only an old unmanned gun battery position, was occupied along the way. By 0800, Dobson had secured the now-empty prison and was beginning to move on Fort Adolphus.⁷⁰

Unlike Richmond Hill Prison, Fort Adolphus was definitely occupied. Dobson's men could see an unrecognizable flag flying above it, and considerable movement within the complex. Smith and Dobson discussed using TOW and heavy machine gun fire to "prep" the fort before Dobson's men attacked. Admiral Metcalf told Smith that naval gunfire and air support would also be available, if needed. "I'm not sure what stopped us from doing it," recalled Lieutenant Colonel Smith. "The only thing that stopped us from going in and prepping it, is that we had been so successful without shooting that I recall consciously making a decision: 'It's working, let's just keep doing it the way we're doing it.' And I said, 'Just scout it out. If you take any fire, back off and we'll blow the hell out of it.'" ⁷¹ Dobson's men cautiously closed in on Fort Adolphus, until they encountered the Venezuelan ambassador. The unfamiliar flag flying above the fort was the flag of Venezuela, and Fort Adolphus was, in fact, the Venezuelan Embassy.

With the forts overlooking St. George's now in

*These reporters were among a handful who had slipped into Grenada despite the initial ban on press travel to the island. The ban was lifted after the securing of all military objectives.

hand, Company F proceeded into the town itself. The Marines encountered no resistance and spent most of their time searching for weapons caches and taking into custody men who had been identified by the local residents as members of the PRA.

The Boundary Problem

In order to let the Marines continue their advance south, the Commander, Joint Task Force 120 changed the boundary between the MAU units (Task Group 124.2) and elements of the Army's 82d Airborne Division (Task Force 121). The boundary shifted south to the grid line which ran from Ross Point on the east coast to Requin Bay on the west. Information about this important change, however, did not reach all units of the 82d Airborne. To compound the difficulty, the Marine and Army units involved had not yet exchanged liaison officers. A linkup communications frequency had been designated, but call signs had not been disseminated and joint fire support control measures were not in use. The result was that Marine and Army units remained unaware of their close proximity to each other.⁷²

The area under the control of the two Marine companies in the south had now grown so large that Lieutenant Colonel Smith was obliged to form a provisional rifle company, drawn from his artillery battery (whose guns had remained on board ship). This provisional company's mission was to patrol St. George's, freeing Companies E and F for other tasks.

Toward evening of D plus 2, Smith received information that the boundary line between the Marines and the 82d had again been shifted south. This would allow the Marines to secure the Ross Point Hotel on Martin's Bay, just south of St. George's harbor, and to link up with the 82d Airborne. Word of this second boundary change also failed to reach the 82d.⁷³

Reports said that as many as 400 Canadian, British, and American nationals were at the Ross Point Hotel, and were eager to be evacuated. Since President Reagan was planning to address the nation on television that same evening, Washington leaders were anxious to make sure that all American citizens on the island were safe and had been accounted for. Company F arrived at the pleasant seaside hotel just after dark to find less than two dozen foreign nationals, mostly Canadians. Although they were glad to have the protection of the Marines, few of them wished to be evacuated from Grenada.⁷⁴

With no sign yet of units of the 82d Airborne, Company F assumed night defensive positions around the hotel. The following morning, the lead elements of

the 2d Battalion, 325th Infantry, reached the hotel. The company and platoon commanders of the 2d Battalion still had not been briefed on the planned link-up and were surprised to find Marines in the area. One company commander told the Marines that his men had considered the Ross Point Hotel and vicinity a free fire zone. It eventually became clear that only the division commander and the brigade commanders in the 82d knew about the boundary changes made the previous day. The confusion about boundaries caused the Marines to worry continually about the whereabouts of friendly forces during the final days of the operation.

Mopping Up on Grenada

By the end of D plus 3, the island was under the control of U.S. and Caribbean forces. The following day brought a slower tempo of operations. In the St. George's area, Marines continued to search for enemy personnel and weapons, while those in Pearls extended their patrolling operations farther north and west. Admiral Metcalf came ashore and looked at Marine positions and the operations around St. George's. Commanders of the Caribbean peacekeeping forces, who were scheduled to relieve the Marines in the city and who had already taken position in some of the nearby forts, arrived for meetings and orientation. Preparations also were underway for the turnover of the Marine area of operations to the 82d Airborne. In St. George's, local citizens aided the Marine artillerymen of Lieutenant Colonel Smith's provisional rifle company in locating high-ranking former officials of the Grenadian government, including Deputy Prime Minister Bernard Coard and his wife Phyllis, Minister of National Mobilization Selwyn Strachan, and Lieutenant Colonel Liam James, all members of the Central Committee of the New Jewel Movement, Grenada's revolutionary political party.⁷⁵

Meanwhile, in the north, preparations went forward for the attack to seize Sauteurs. During D plus 4, Company E learned through its local informants that the PRA regional battalion commander, a Lieutenant George, was staying in Grenville. Grenadians guided Lieutenant Rand W. Hammel's 1st Platoon to the correct house. George surrendered quietly to the Marines, and divulged much information about the location of PRA and militia units in Sauteurs.⁷⁶ That afternoon, the MAU commander gave final approval for the move to Sauteurs. Company E left Pearls for Sauteurs at 0330 the following morning.

The attacking force split into two parts. A raiding party, "Team Mike," would seize the PRA camp near Sauteurs prior to the general advance on the town. At

the same time, the 81mm mortar platoon would establish a position on Mount Rose, about halfway between Sauteurs and the airport, to support the attack if needed and to establish a radio relay station. At 0515, Team Mike signaled that it had occupied the camp without opposition. Reaching the edge of the town, the main force, under Captain Donigan, parked their vehicles and entered Sauteurs on foot. At first light, the people of Sauteurs were startled to find Marines deployed in their town.⁷⁷

Having been advised by intelligence reports that Sauteurs was short of food, Company E had brought large numbers of spare rations. A food distribution point was established with the assistance of local clergymen and Red Cross workers. By mid-morning, most of the town's 300 people had received food from the Marines. The citizens, apprehensive at first, soon became friendly and cooperative. They willingly identified PRA members and the locations of arms caches. One Grenadian persuaded the PRA regional commander to surrender himself voluntarily to the Marines. The commander also furnished information about other members of the PRA, as well as the location of additional arms and equipment.⁷⁸

Company E, minus one platoon that had remained at the airport, spent a quiet night in Sauteurs. Captain Donigan had set up blocking positions on the principal avenues of approach to the town and Marines patrolled the streets without incident. Early in the evening, a midwife summoned Hospital Corpsman 2d Class Glen M. Scott, the company's senior corpsman, to a house where a Grenadian woman had just given birth and was experiencing complications, including severe hemorrhaging. A quick examination convinced Scott that the woman would require immediate hospitalization. The company's call for a medevac helicopter had to be relayed by the station at Mount Rose to Pearls Airfield, from Pearls to the *Trenton* and from the *Trenton* to the *Guam*, located off the southwest coast. The company managed to establish communications with the *Trenton*, but that ship was unable to contact the *Guam*, in turn.

At an improvised landing zone, Captain Thomas M. Davis, the forward air controller, was receiving periodic updates on the woman's rapidly deteriorating condition from Scott. A feeling of frustration spread through the company as the time slipped by with no sign of a medevac. Scott made a grim report: "If we don't get a bird here real soon, we're going to lose her." Captain Davis turned his radio to the helicopter frequency and put out a general call for any helicopter in the area. Finally, around 2045, the Marines at the

landing zone heard the welcome sound of helicopter rotors.

One of Captain Davis' calls had finally reached the *Guam*, and a CH-46 piloted by Major Richard J. Gallagher and Captain John L. Quick flew from the ship to carry out the emergency medevac. Since it was unclear whether the landing zone was safe, two Cobras, piloted by Captain Douglas J. Diehl and Major Larry D. Outlaw, escorted the medevac helicopter. Major Outlaw established radio contact with Captain Davis and led the CH-46 into the landing zone, which Davis had illuminated with the headlights of a jeep. The helicopter evacuated the Grenadian woman to the *Guam*'s sick bay, and she was soon out of danger.⁷⁹

While Company E was at Sauteurs, the two companies in the Saint George's area received a new mission: to seize Gouyave and Victoria on the northwest coast. These were the only towns of any size not yet in American hands. Lieutenant Colonel Smith expressed concern about moving both companies up the coast. This would leave insufficient forces to provide security for St. George's, and to guard the detention center which the Marines had established. By now a substantial number of detainees had been gathered.

Following a brief meeting on board the *Guam*, the order for this advance up the coast was modified to allow Company F to remain in the St. George's area while Company G, mounted in AAVs, moved on Gouyave and Victoria. The movement began at 1530. A UH-1 command-and-control helicopter, with the squadron commander and battalion operations officer (S-3) aboard, provided the communications link between the battalion rear and the moving column. Just offshore, two tanks on board two LCU landing craft accompanied the column, either to provide fire support or to come ashore if needed. TOW helicopters were on station above the column. Close air support and naval gun fire support were also available.⁸⁰

Company G experienced no opposition, but on the outskirts of Gouyave, the Marines encountered a large tank ditch. Fortunately, a bulldozer, evidently once used to dig the ditch, was still in the vicinity. The Marines quickly hot-wired the dozer and used it to fill the ditch. Captain Dobson left a platoon behind at Gouyave and continued on toward Victoria, encountering no opposition and arriving in the town around 1900.⁸¹

Carriacou

While Company E spent the night in Victoria, staff officers of the battalion landing team on board the *Guam* were planning for yet another operation. For some time, unconfirmed reports had told of PRA

units—or possibly even North Korean soldiers—still active on the island of Carriacou, one of the two inhabited islands between Grenada and St. Vincent. There were also unconfirmed reports that members of the PRA were escaping to Carriacou from Grenada. With this in mind, Admiral Metcalf ordered the amphibious task force to conduct a combined surface and air landing on Carriacou prior to daylight on 1 November.⁸²

On 31 October, men and equipment of the MAU re-embarked from such widely scattered points as Sauteurs, Victoria, Pearls, and St. George's. Elements of the 82d Airborne Division assumed responsibility for positions previously held by the Marines. By 1950 on 31 October, all ground combat elements of the MAU were back on board ships of the amphibious task force, and heading for Carriacou. At 1846, the initiating directive for the Carriacou operation arrived, just as staff officers were completing their final plans for the assault.

The concept of operations called for one company to be inserted by air in the vicinity of the Lauriston Point Airstrip, near the northwest coast of the island, just west of the town of Hillsborough. The company would then advance and seize Hillsborough. At the same time, a second company would land at Tyrrel Bay, to attack and seize a suspected PRA training base near the east end of the island. A SEAL team landed early on the morning of 1 November to reconnoiter the Lauriston Point area. At 0530 Company F landed in helicopters on the airstrip while Company G, in assault amphibian vehicles, landed at Tyrrel Bay. Most Marine commanders privately expected little or no opposition, but ample air and naval gunfire support were available to back up the assault if needed.⁸³

In any event, the people of Carriacou welcomed the Marines even more warmly than the people on the main island of Grenada. Many of the citizens had worked or studied in the United States, or had relatives who had done so. Some even suggested to Lieutenant Colonel Smith, perhaps not altogether in jest, that he run up the American flag and annex the island. The local PRA members, who had already changed into civilian clothes, voluntarily surrendered. The Marines also confiscated a huge store of arms, ammunition, and equipment at Belair Estate, the abandoned PRA headquarters, located on a mountain near the center of the island.⁸⁴

Lieutenant Colonel Smith was so confident about the security situation on Carriacou that he paroled the 19-man PRA platoon, telling them to return to their

CARRIACOU ISLAND

Kilometers 0 1 2 3

Caribbean Sea

Belair Estate

Hillsborough

Lauriston Point Airstrip

Tyrrel Bay





Photo courtesy of Sgt Christopher Grey, USMC

Shortly after landing at Tyrell Bay on Carriacou Island, Capt Robert K. Dobson, Jr., Commanding Officer, Company G, 2d Battalion, 8th Marines, questions some friendly natives from his perch in an amphibian tractor. Marines, landing by sea and air, were virtually unopposed and swiftly overran the small island to end the Grenada campaign.

homes and to muster back in the town at 0800 the next morning. By late afternoon, Smith recalled, "The atmosphere in Hillsborough was more like that of a liberty port," than a battle zone.⁸⁵ Major Sublette, the air liaison officer, arrived to find, "A Navy Huey, a Marine Huey, and a Marine [CH-46] . . . in the LZ. The people were being given tours of the helicopters . . . walking around them. The kids were climbing all over. It was like an air show. . . . A soccer game started and Tony Morales [a member of the squadron S-4 section] . . . was out playing soccer with a couple of Navy guys against the locals."⁸⁶

Departure from Grenada

At 0700 the following morning, 2 November, elements of the 82d Airborne Division arrived to relieve the Marines. At 0800, the PRA platoon mustered as ordered and went into the custody of the newly arrived paratroopers. By late afternoon on 2 November, all Marines had returned to their ships and the am-

phibious task force resumed its interrupted journey to the Mediterranean.

A week later, the Marines of the 22d MAU assembled topside on the ships of the task force, to take part in the traditional cake-cutting, toasts, and other ceremonies of the Marine Corps birthday. Later, as the birthday banquet was drawing to a close, a message arrived for Lieutenant Colonel Amos, the acting MAU commander*:

TO 22d MAU: ALTHOUGH YOU HAVE SCARCELY CLEANED OFF THE SAND OF GRENADA WHERE YOU WERE MAGNIFICENT, YOU NOW WILL SHORTLY RELIEVE 24TH MAU IN BEIRUT. ONCE THERE YOU WILL ASSUME THE KEY ROLE IN OUR EFFORTS TO BRING PEACE TO LEBANON. YOU HAVE PROVEN WITHOUT DOUBT THAT YOU ARE UP TO THE TASK AS OUR VERY BEST. GODSPEED AND A HAPPY 208TH. SEMPER FIDELIS, RONALD REAGAN.

*Colonel Faulkner had been called to Atlantic Command headquarters in Norfolk. He rejoined the MAU later.

Footnotes

1. U.S. Department of State and Department of Defense, *Grenada: A Preliminary Report*, Washington, D.C. December 16, 1983, p. 1.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 2.
3. *Ibid.*
4. 22d MAU Preliminary AAR for Operation Urgent Fury: Operational Summary of Landing Force Participation, dtd 1Nov83.
5. *Ibid.*
6. Col James P. Faulkner, intvw, 13Nov83 (Oral HistColl, MCHC, Washington, D.C.), hereafter Faulkner intvw.
7. *Ibid.*; Cdr Richard A. Butler, USN, intvw, 4Nov83 (Oral HistColl, MCHC, Washington, D.C.), hereafter Butler intvw.
8. Faulkner intvw; LtCol Ray L. Smith intvw, 8Nov83, pp. 4-6 (Oral HistColl, MCHC, Washington, D.C.), hereafter Smith intvw.
9. Faulkner intvw.
10. Smith intvw, p. 5.
11. Smith intvw, pp. 3-6; Faulkner intvw.
12. Smith intvw, pp. 6-7.
13. 22d MAU, Operation Urgent Fury AAR, 15Jan84, p. 6.
14. Faulkner intvw.
15. *Ibid.*
16. USCinCLant msg to ComSecondFlt, 10Oct83; ComSecondFlt memo to ComUSAtlantic, 23Nov83, Subj: Urgent Fury, Lessons Learned (Grenada Files, U.S. Marine Corps Development Center, Quantico, hereafter [Grenada Files, MCDEC]).
17. Smith intvw, p. 8.
18. *Ibid.*
19. 22d MAU Operation Urgent Fury AAR, 15Jan84 (Grenada files, MCDEC).
20. Smith intvw, p. 56.
21. *Ibid.*; Butler intvw.
22. 22d MAU FragO 01-83 (Operation Urgent Fury) 24Oct83, pp. 1-3 (Grenada Files, MCDEC).
23. Faulkner intvw; Butler intvw; Smith intvw; 22d MAU msg to CGFMFLant, 30Oct83, Subj: SITREP 8 (Grenada Files, MCDEC).
24. Maj Melvin J. DeMars intvw, 5Nov83, pp. 3-4, (Oral HistColl, MCHC, Washington, D.C.), hereafter DeMars intvw.
25. HMM-261, Detachment "H" Urgent Fury After Action Report, dtd 3Dec83, Enclosure (3) (Grenada Files, MCDEC).
26. LtCol Granville K. Amos intvw, 7Nov83 (Oral HistColl, MCHC, Washington, D.C.), hereafter Amos intvw.
27. DeMars intvw.
28. Capt Henry J. Donigan intvw, 6Nov83, pp. 5-7 (Oral HistColl, MCHC, Washington, D.C.), hereafter Donigan intvw.
29. *Ibid.*, pp. 6-10.
30. *Ibid.*, pp. 9-10; Smith intvw, pp. 3-15.
31. Donigan intvw, p. 11.
32. Amos intvw.
33. Smith intvw; Donigan intvw.
34. Maj Earnest A. Van Huss intvw, 2Nov83 (Oral HistColl, MCHC, Washington, D.C.), hereafter Van Huss intvw; Faulkner intvw.
35. VAdm Joseph Metcalfe III, intvw, 2Nov83 (Grenada Files, MCDEC), hereafter Metcalfe intvw; Faulkner intvw.
36. Capt Timothy B. Howard intvw, 6Dec83 (Grenada Files, MCDEC), hereafter Howard intvw; Capt Douglas J. Diehl intvw, 7Nov83 (Oral HistColl, MCHC, Washington, D.C.), hereafter Diehl intvw.
37. Diehl intvw.
38. Howard intvw; Metcalfe intvw.
39. Howard intvw; "Grenada Vet Describes Longest Hour," *Rotovue* (MCAS, New River, N.C.), 1Dec83, p. 1; HMM-261 AAR, 3Dec83, p. 16. (Grenada Files, MCDEC).
40. Howard intvw.
41. DeMars intvw, pp. 9-11.
42. DeMars intvw, p. 11; HMM-261, 3Dec83, p. 6.
43. Smith intvw, pp. 21-22.
44. *Ibid.*, pp. 22-23.
45. Faulkner intvw; Butler intvw; Capt Robert K. Dobson intvw, 8Nov83 (Oral HistColl, MCHC, Washington, D.C.), pp. 3-5, hereafter Dobson intvw.
46. Dobson intvw, pp. 5-7.
47. *Ibid.*, pp. 7-10.
48. *Ibid.*, pp. 10-11; Maj William J. Sublette intvw, 3Nov83 (Oral HistColl, MCHC, Washington, D.C.), hereafter Sublette intvw.
49. Smith intvw, pp. 22-27.
50. *Ibid.*, p. 27.

51. *Ibid.*, p. 28.
52. *Ibid.*, pp. 28-30; BLT 2/8 FragO 19-83 (Grenada Files, MCDEC).
53. Dobson intvw, pp. 12-13; Smith intvw, pp. 31-32.
54. BLT 2/8 After Action Report for the Grenada Operation, 25Oct-2Nov83, 8 Nov83, p. 7 (Grenada Files, MCDEC).
55. Smith intvw, pp. 32-35; Dobson intvw, pp. 15-17.
56. Faulkner intvw; Van Huss intvw.
57. Amos intvw.
58. Maj Frank L. Brewer intvw, 10Nov83 (Oral Hist-Coll, MCHC, Washington, D.C.), hereafter Brewer intvw.
59. Amos intvw; DeMars intvw, pp. 22-23.
60. DeMars intvw, pp. 23-25; Brewer intvw.
61. MSgt George T. Curtis intvw, 8Nov83 (Oral Hist-Coll, MCHC, Washington, D.C.).
62. DeMars intvw, pp. 24-30; Brewer intvw.
63. DeMars intvw, p. 29.
64. Van Huss intvw; Smith intvw, pp. 31-40; Donigan intvw, pp. 15-17.
65. Donigan intvw, pp. 15-19; Van Huss intvw.
66. Donigan intvw, pp. 19-31.
67. *Ibid.*, pp. 41-48.
68. Manuscript "Journal of Grenada Operations" by LtCol Ray L. Smith (Copy in MCHC), hereafter Smith Journal.
69. BLT 2/8, After Action Report for Grenada Operation, 25Oct-Nov83, 8Nov83, p. 18; Smith intvw, pp. 42-43.
70. Smith intvw, pp. 44.
71. *Ibid.*, pp. 44-46.
72. [Task Force Report], BLT 2/8 After Action Report for Grenada Operation, p. 21; Smith intvw, pp. 54-56; Capt Michael J. Dick intvw, 7Nov83 (Oral HistColl, MCHC, Washington, D.C.).
73. *Ibid.*
74. Smith intvw, pp. 53-54.
75. BLT 2/8 After Action Report for Grenada Operations, pp. 7-10.
76. *Ibid.*; Donigan intvw, pp. 49-51.
77. Donigan intvw, pp. 51-54.
78. *Ibid.*, p. 54.
79. *Ibid.*, pp. 58-61; Diehl intvw.
80. BLT 2/8 After Action Report for Grenada Operation, p. 18; Smith Journal; Smith intvw, pp. 72-74.
81. Smith intvw, p. 73.
82. Butler intvw; Smith intvw, pp. 75-77; 22d MAU Preliminary After Action Report for Operation Urgent Fury, p. 3.
83. Butler intvw; 22d MAU Preliminary After Action Report for Operation Urgent Fury, p. 3; Smith intvw, pp. 75-78.
84. Smith intvw, pp. 77-79.
85. *Ibid.*, p. 80.
86. Sublette intvw.

Appendix A

Command and Staff List

22d MAU

Headquarters, 22MAU

Commanding Officer	Col James P. Faulkner
Executive Officer	LtCol Ronald R. Rice
S-1	1stLt Kenneth R. Bergman
S-2	Capt Paul M. Jungel
S-3	Maj Earnest A. Van Huss
S-4	Capt Albert J. Martin
Air Liaison Officer	Maj William J. Sublette
Fire Support Coordinator	1stLt Billy D. Martin
Senior Judge Advocate	Maj Donald R. Jillisky
Headquarters Commandant	1stLt Tom F. Ansler
Sergeant Major	SgtMaj Thomas E. Donahue

BLT 2/8

Commanding Officer	LtCol Ray L. Smith
Executive Officer	Maj Joseph J. Streitz
S-1	CWO-2 David D. Huber
S-2	CWO-4 Ronald D. Lambert
S-3	Capt Steven D. Anderson
S-4	2dLt John C. Watts
Sergeant Major	SgtMaj Calvin Lynn
H&S Company	Capt Billy J. Clarkson
Company E	Capt Henry J. Donigan III
Company F	Capt Michael E. Dick
Company G	Capt Robert K. Dobson, Jr.
Weapons Company	Capt Chris J. Gunther
Battery H, 3/10	Capt Bradley M. Gates

HMM-261

Commanding Officer	LtCol Granville R. Amos
Executive Officer	Maj Frank L. Brewer
S-1	Maj Gerald A. Banner
S-2	1stLt Michael J. Mattie
S-3	Maj Richard J. Gallagher
S-4	Maj Frederick J. Moon
Maintenance Officer	Maj Melvin W. DeMars, Jr.
Sergeant Major	SgtMaj Daniel W. Piper

MSSG-22

Commanding Officer	Maj Albert E. Shively
Executive Officer	Capt Charles H. Rucks
Operations Officer	Capt Dennis A. Cerveny
First Sergeant	1stSgt Donald E. Short

Appendix B

22d MAU Task Organization

HEADQUARTERS, 22D MARINE AMPHIBIOUS UNIT

Headquarters, 22d Marine Amphibious Unit

Detachment, Photo Imagery Interpretation Unit, Wing Headquarters Squadron 2, 2d Marine Aircraft Wing

*Detachment, Redeye Platoon, Forward Area Air Defense Battery, Marine Air Control Group 28, 2d Marine Aircraft Wing

Subteam, Interrogation Translation Team, Headquarters Battalion, 2d Marine Division

*Detachment, Marine Air Base Squadron 1 (Direct Air Support Center), 2d Marine Aircraft Wing

Detachment (Photo), Marine Air Base Squadron 31, Marine Air Group 31, 2d Marine Aircraft Wing

*Detachment, 8th Communications Battalion, 2d Force Service Support Group

*Section, Sensor Control and Management Platoon, Headquarters Battalion, 2d Marine Division

Subteam, Counter Intelligence Team, Headquarters Battalion, 2d Marine Division

BATTALION LANDING TEAM 2/8, 2D MARINE DIVISION

2d Battalion, 8th Marines

Battery H (Reinforced), 3d Battalion, 10th Marines

Detachment, Headquarters Battery, 3d Battalion, 10th Marines

3d Platoon, Company A, 2d Tank Battalion

4th Platoon (Reinforced), Company A, 2d Assault Amphibian Battalion

Detachment, Headquarters and Service Company, 2d Assault Amphibian Battalion

2d Platoon, Company D, 2d Combat Engineer Battalion

1st Section, 1st Platoon, Antitank (TOW) Company, 2d Tank Battalion

1st Platoon, Company A, 2d Reconnaissance Battalion

MARINE MEDIUM HELICOPTER SQUADRON 261, 2D MARINE AIRCRAFT WING

Marine Medium Helicopter Squadron 261 (Reinforced)

Detachment, Marine Heavy Helicopter Squadron 362

Detachment, Marine Light Attack Helicopter Squadron 167

Detachment, Headquarters and Maintenance Squadron 26

Detachment, Marine Air Base Squadron 26

Detachment, Marine Wing Support Group 27

MARINE AMPHIBIOUS UNIT SERVICE SUPPORT GROUP 22, 2D FORCE SERVICE SUPPORT GROUP

Headquarters, Marine Amphibious Unit Service Support Group 22

Detachment, 2d Landing Support Battalion

Detachment, 2d Maintenance Battalion

Detachment, 2d Dental Battalion

Detachment, 2d Medical Battalion

Detachment, 2d Supply Battalion

Detachment, 8th Engineer Support Battalion

Detachment, 8th Motor Transport Battalion

Detachment, Headquarters and Service Battalion

Detachment, Explosive Ordnance Disposal Platoon

Detachment, Military Police Company, Headquarters Battalion, 2d Marine Division

*These units remained behind as CONUS standby, 24-hour alert forces under the deployment control of the Commanding General, Fleet Marine Force, Atlantic.

Appendix C

Organization for Embarkation

USS *Guam* (Amphibious Assault Ship 9)
Commander, Amphibious Squadron 4
Headquarters, 22d Marine Amphibious Unit
Company E, Battalion Landing Team 2/8
Company F, Battalion Landing Team 2/8
Marine Medium Helicopter Squadron 261

USS *Trenton* (Amphibious Transport Dock 14)
Headquarters, Battalion Landing Team 2/8
Headquarters, MAU Service Support Group 22
Weapons Company, Battalion Landing Team 2/8
Shore Party, MAU Service Support Group 22
Navy Beachmaster Unit

USS *Fort Snelling* (Dock Landing Ship 30)
Tank Platoon, Battalion Landing Team 2/8
TOW Section, Battalion Landing Team 2/8
Navy Underwater Demolition Team
Reconnaissance Platoon, Battalion Landing Team 2/8

USS *Manitowoc* (Tank Landing Ship 1180)
Company G, Battalion Landing Team 2/8
Motor Transport Platoon, MAU Service Support Group 22
Assault Amphibian Platoon, Battalion Landing Team 2/8

USS *Barnstable County* (Tank Landing Ship 1197)
Battery H, 3d Battalion, 10th Marines
Engineer Detachment, MAU Service Support Group 22

Appendix D

Glossary

A-7 Corsair II—The U.S. Navy's carrier-based, single-seat, single-engine, jet attack aircraft.

AH-1 Huey Cobra—Bell attack helicopter with a crew of two. Armament includes a chin-mounted 20mm machine gun, plus a variety of other ordnance, depending upon the mission. The latest version carries the TOW antitank missile.

AAR—After action report submitted after a combat operation.

AC-130 Spectre—Air Force's attack version of the four-engine, turbo-prop C-130 transport aircraft. Uses a modern version of the Gatling gun to deliver a high volume of fire on ground targets.

AK-47—Russian-designed Kalashnikov 7.62mm gas-operated assault rifle. Effective range of 400 meters.

AAV—Acronym for assault amphibian vehicle, previously called an amphibian tractor. Current model is the AVT-7.

BLT—Battalion landing team, composed of an infantry battalion reinforced by artillery, tanks, and other combat support units.

BTR-60—Soviet-made 8-wheeled armored personnel carrier.

CH-46 Sea Stallion—Dual-piloted, twin-engine, single main rotor, medium transport helicopter which can lift 16 tons of cargo over mission radius of 50 miles.

Dragon—Medium antitank/assault weapon, consisting of a man-packed, tube-launched, optically-tracked, wire-guided missile with a range of approximately 1,000 meters.

LAW—Light antiair weapon, a shoulder-fired rocket launcher with a discardable tube.

LZ—Landing zone.

M-16—U.S.-made 5.56mm gas-operated automatic rifle. The standard U.S. infantry assault rifle.

MAU—Marine amphibious unit, consisting of a small headquarters element, a battalion landing team, a composite helicopter squadron, and a service support group. The smallest Marine air-ground task force.

Mk-19 40-mm machine gun—An automatic grenade launcher capable of engaging infantry and lightly armored vehicles from 65 meters out to 2,200 meters.

82mm mortar—Soviet-designed, smooth-bore mortar weighing about 123 pounds. Can fire U.S.-made 81mm mortar rounds, but not vice versa.

New Jewel Movement—Grenadian acronym for New Joint Endeavor for Welfare, Education, and Liberation. The political arm of the Grenadian revolutionary government.

PRA—People's Revolutionary Army. Military arm of the Grenadian revolutionary government.

RPG—Soviet-designed, light-weight, shoulder-fired rocket launcher used as an antitank or assault weapon.

SMAW—Acronym for shoulder-launched, multi-purpose assault weapon. The planned replacement for the LAW.

TOW—Acronym for tube-launched, optically-tracked, wire-guided missile. Heavy antitank and assault missile available in both ground and air-launched versions.

UH-1 Huey—Twin-engine, two-seat, single-piloted, single-rotor, utility helicopter.

The device reproduced on the back cover is the oldest military insignia in continuous use in the United States. It first appeared, as shown here, on Marine Corps buttons adopted in 1804. With the stars changed to five points this device has continued on Marine Corps buttons to the present day.