

Operation "Urgent Fury": Military Police (MP) In Grenada

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SUBJECT AREA - National Military Strategy

#### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

TITLE: OPERATION "URGENT FURY": MILITARY POLICE (MP) IN GRENADA

I. Purpose: To provide an understanding of the events that took place leading up to U.S. military intervention in Grenada and the role of the US Army MPs during Operation URGENT FURY.

II. Thesis: Operation URGENT FURY is the first real test of MP combat support since Vietnam and provides an excellent opportunity to evaluate doctrine relative to mission, organization, equipment, and training of both division and corps MP assets.

III. Data: Military police involvement in Grenada centered around the 82nd Airborne (ABN) Division MP Company, the 16th Military Police Brigade (ABN), and the 118th Military Police Company (ABN), XVIII Airborne Corps. On 24 October 1983, the 82nd MP Company (ABN) was alerted for deployment on Operation URGENT FURY. After notification, the 82nd MPs, under the supervision of the the 82nd Airborne Division Provost Marshal (PM), activated their readiness Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) which increased security for the 82nd Airborne Division Headquarters, convoy escorts, and various other MP missions that had to be performed in support of the 82nd Airborne Division. The initial element of the 16th MP Brigade (ABN) that deployed to Grenada consisted of the 118th MP Company (ABN), activated on 27 October 1983. The 118th was attached to the 82nd Airborne Division upon arrival in country, assumed all responsibility for the disposition of 1,300 Cuban and People's Revolutionary Army (PRA) detainees, more than 1,200 refugees, and assisted in the evacuation of American students from the medical school located on the island. The PM cell of the 16th MP Brigade (ABN) deployed with the XVIII ABN Corps augmentation forces 30-31 October 1983. The PM cell was responsible for staff support and expertise in all areas of MP combat support operations. This included enemy prisoner of war (EPW) operations, law enforcement, operating a PM office for the XVIII ABN Corps, and numerous other missions involving MP support unique to Operation URGENT FURY.

IV. Conclusion: Operation URGENT FURY brings to fruition the efforts of planners in conceptualizing Low Intensity Conflict. In addition, problem areas encountered by the MPs left them searching for a solution, particularly in the handling and disposition of EPW.

V. Recommendation: U.S. Army military police must move rapidly to establish better methods of handling and disposing of EPW.

Particular emphasis should be given to developing support packages and deploying them with the MPs during contingency operations.

OPERATION "URGENT FURY": MILITARY POLICE (MP) IN GRENADA

OUTLINE

Thesis Statement: Operation URGENT FURY is the first real test of MP combat support since Vietnam and provides an excellent opportunity to evaluate doctrine relative to mission, organization, equipment, and training of both division and corps MP assets.

- I. Historical Look at Grenada
  - A. Early Government
  - B. Development of Present Government
  - C. Events Leading to U.S. Intervention
- II. Intervention In Grenada
  - A. Military Units Involved
  - B. Casualty Summary
- III. U.S. Army Military Police Operations
  - A. 82nd Military Police Company (ABN)
  - B. 16th Military Police Brigade (ABN)
- IV. Enemy Prisoner of War (EPW) Operations
  - A. EPW Facility
  - B. EPW Processing/Handling/Disposition

OPERATION "URGENT FURY": MILITARY POLICE IN GRENADA

On 25 October 1983, U.S. military forces, with several Caribbean allies, intervened on the island of Grenada. Operation URGENT FURY was initiated to protect the lives of U.S. students, restore democratic government, and eliminate Cuban influence on

the island. Two US Army Ranger Battalions, a brigade of soldiers from the 82nd Airborne Division, a Marine amphibious unit, the Navy aircraft carrier USS Independence and its battle group, and a few Special Operations Forces combined to swiftly overthrow the Cuban and Grenadian defenders.

Before trying to understand the military operation that took place, it would be prudent to first examine very briefly the historic events that led to the intervention of U.S. forces in Grenada.

Grenada, formerly a British colony, attained internal self government in 1967. From the 1950's, politics had been dominated by Sir Eric Gairy, who combined flamboyant populism and strong-arm tactics with interest in unidentified flying objects and unconventional religion. (9:14).

On February 7, 1974, Grenada became independent over the objections of opposition parties who feared Gairy's intentions, and who later accused him of winning the elections of 1976 by fraud. The New Jewel Movement (NJM), formed in 1973 and led by Maurice Bishop, became the major opposition party. Its program stressed socialist and nationalistic ideals, and protested economic and social conditions in Grenada, as well as abuses of power by the Gairy regime.

On March 3, 1979, the NJM overthrew the Gairy government in a nearly bloodless coup. Bishop became the new Prime Minister.

The new government, initially welcomed by Grenadians, promised to hold early elections and model Cuban revolutionary democracy, which it tried to implement with Cuban aid.

Human rights were regularly violated. Habeas corpus was

abolished for political detainees, and by 1982 there were over 95 to 98 political prisoners in Grenada. Freedom of the press and political freedom were all but abolished as well. (9:19).

Bishop established close ties with the Soviet Union and Cuba. In January 1980, Grenada was the only Latin American country other than Cuba to vote against a U.N. resolution condemning the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan.

By 1980 there were about 30 Cuban military personnel in Grenada. Approximately 700 were there in October 1983, which included several hundred "construction workers" engaged in helping to build a new airport at Point Salines in the southwest corner of the island. The airport, ostensibly to promote tourism, plainly has features valuable for military purposes, and many of the Cuban workers there were para-military personnel. (4:27).

The October 19, 1983 murder of Bishop and most of his Cabinet was apparently part of a power struggle instigated by Bishop's reluctance to impose an even more radical program, and by reports that he was engaged in an attempt to improve relations with the United States.

The U.S. assault on Grenada commenced at dawn, 23 October, 1983, with nearly simultaneous assaults on the island's two airfields. Army Rangers parachuted into Point Salines airstrip, while two Marine companies secured the Pearls Airport and nearby Grenville. The Rangers encountered heavy anti-aircraft fire, but they secured the runway and a group of grateful students at the nearby True Blue Medical School Campus. Reinforced by paratroopers of the 2nd Brigade, 82nd Airborne Division, the Army elements attacked into the thick foliage around Salines to isolate

and destroy the remaining opposition. (8:57-58).

During the eight-day campaign, 599 US and 80 foreign students were evacuated without injury. Civil order was restored. Cuban, Soviet, and various Eastern bloc representatives were removed from the island. The casualty toll was relatively light considering the amount of men and equipment utilized for the operation. Eighteen US troops were killed in combat, one died of wounds, 115 were wounded and 28 more suffered nonhostile injuries. The Cubans lost 24 killed, 59 wounded, and 605 captured who were later returned to Cuba. The PRA suffered 21 killed and 58 captured. There were 24 Grenadian civilians killed during the operation. (8:60-62).

Now that a historical background has been given, it is time to focus on the U.S. Army military police involvement in Grenada. I will discuss the deployment of the XVIII Airborne Corps assets, both division and corps.

On 24 October, 1983, the 82nd MP Company (ABN) was alerted for deployment on Operation URGENT FURY. At the time of notification, the unit was performing garrison law and order duties, as well as company training. After notification, the 82nd Division PM and the 82nd MP Company (ABN) activated their readiness SOP. Approximately 13 hours later, the 2nd platoon (+) began deploying in direct support of the 2nd Brigade, 82nd Airborne Division.

Upon arrival in Grenada, the 2nd platoon (+) was task organized by squads for EPW collection/holding/processing, detainee/refugee control, battalion Tactical Operation Center security, and assisting with the clearing of civilian homes of possible resistance. It can be readily seen that this platoon had

its hands full from the minute it landed on Grenada. In addition to the combat support missions already outlined, the platoon moved two squads to the True Blue Medical College and given the mission of providing security and evacuation of foreign and U.S. medical students. This mission lasted until October 28. (5:31-34).

The 3rd platoon, 82nd MP Company (ABN) was deployed on 26-27 October 1983, by squad with their supported battalions of the 2nd Brigade, 82nd Airborne Division, and remained in direct support throughout the operation. Missions included EPW escort, clearing procedures, search missions for Cuban hideouts and weapons caches, and some escort duty for prominent visitors to the area.

On 29 October 1983, the General Support platoon of the 82nd MP Company (ABN) was deployed and assumed responsibility for securing the 82nd Division Tactical Operation Center. This platoon also assisted with EPW missions and locating and securing weapons caches. Additional missions included assisting Air Force Security Police with flight line missions at the Point Salines Airport.

On 2 November 1983, the 1st platoon, 82nd MP Company (ABN) was deployed along with the headquarters element of the 82nd MP Company (ABN). The primary mission of this platoon was to establish a 24-hour customs operation, which they did with excellent results. Although the military operation resulted in casualties, lost equipment, and had all the distinguishing characteristics of a small scale war, re-deployment back to the United States required a customs check of all soldiers and personnel.

The magnitude of the EPW operations was such that support was required from the XVIII ABN Corps military police assets. On 25

October 1983, the 503rd Military Police Battalion (BN), 16th MP Brigade (ABN) was ordered to return to Fort Bragg, NC, from Seneca Army Depot, NY, where it had been deployed in response to anti-nuclear protest demonstrations. The 118th MP Company, a separate unit of the 16th MP Brigade (ABN), was attached to the 503rd MP BN and deployed to Grenada on 27 October 1983, prior to the return of the 503rd MP BN from Seneca.

The 118th MP Company (ABN) further attached to the 82nd MP Company (ABN) upon arrival in Grenada, pending arrival of the 503rd MP BN headquarters and the 21st MP Company, 503rd MP BN. The 108th MP Company, 503rd MP BN, remained at Fort Bragg and provided law enforcement support to the XVIII ABN Corps elements that did not deploy to Grenada. On 3 January 1984, the 108th was rotated into Grenada and became the first of the rotational units to provide continued law enforcement support on the island of Grenada along with the Caribbean Peacekeeping Force (CPF). The missions performed by these units included personnel security, point security of select and critical facilities, customs operations, cordon and search, roadblocks, and combat patrols. These units also worked closely with Grenadian police to re-establish local control.

The 82nd Division MP Company has a vital role to play in Division combat operations and this point was clearly demonstrated during their participation in Operation URGENT FURY. Operating primarily at squad level, MPs were confronted with a myriad of missions which they completed with decisiveness, ingenuity, and resourcefulness. They demonstrated that they were equally capable of performing purely combat type missions such as EPW operations,

which proved to be the biggest challenge for MPs in Grenada. More importantly, the 82nd MPs showed they could transition from combat to combat support missions with minimal planning. For a unit that had recently been filled with paratroopers out of Basic Training, the value of Grenada as a training tool can not be overemphasized. The 82nd MP Company (ABN) performed over 83% of their assigned doctrinal missions during Operation URGENT FURY. The operation validated the concept of attaching a Corps MP Company to a Division PM for use in performing assigned missions that exceed available resources within the Division. While a lot of Operations Plans call for this to happen, there has been some skepticism as to whether this would actually work. (9:54-57). Indeed, it worked so well that the 118th MP Company actually arrived in Grenada before the 82nd Airborne Division PMI

This last point leads to the consideration of three problem areas, that, if corrected, can significantly enhance MP support to the commander in future operations. Although all three problems are significant, I will only discuss one: the handling, processing, and disposition of EPW. The other two problem areas deal with equipment and/or personnel issues that do not warrant discussion in this paper.

The most crucial problem facing the MPs in Grenada was the operation of an EPW facility. MPs were called upon to rectify equipment/supply shortages and overcrowding at the EPW camp. Managing the evacuation of U.S. and Foreign nationals, detainees, and refugees (handling detainees, refugees, and evacuees are all considered as part of the EPW mission) also created a severe strain on MP resources. Upon arrival of the 82nd PM in Grenada,



he divided the primary responsibilities among his staff members to help deal with the EPW mission. The Deputy PM was assigned all EPW actions to include the building and occupying of a new EPW camp and subsequent evacuation of all EPW and detainees. This was no small undertaking.

Caribbean Peacekeeping Forces initially placed in charge of the EPW/detainee camp were not sufficiently equipped or aware of the requirements inherent in running an EPW facility. Because of the political nature of URGENT FURY, the CPF was responsible for the EPW facility. These personnel had no experience in handling EPW, were not aware of the Geneva Convention requirements governing EPW, and did not know U.S. military points of contact to obtain the necessary equipment to run the Facility. As a result, EPW were not properly processed, the EPW camp was poorly situated, had inadequate security, lacked functional sanitation facilities, and adequate medical facilities. The MP platoon leader, the senior MP at the location of the EPW facility, recommended corrective action which was frequently taken, but he did not have the influence to ensure that significant progress was made. It appeared to the MPs on the ground that they had the responsibility to resolve the problems with the EPW camp, but not the authority. A simple fix to this problem would be to deploy a field grade military police officer with the contingency force. This would insure someone with experience and authority would be available to resolve problems with an EPW facility.

It is an interesting fact that none of the EPW attempted to escape while in confinement. Initially, some of the EPW walked away from the holding area, but were easily and quickly brought

back under military control. This was a result of the area used, which had no way to control movement and the lack of personnel to guard the prisoners also contributed. Once the military MPs took charge of the EPW facility, there were no efforts to try and leave the facility. Prisoners did what they were told to do.

There was no host nation support provided to the military MPs to assist in running the EPW facility. The 82nd Division was tasked to support the facility logistically, a mission which caused a lot of concern initially. The 82nd did not deploy to Grenada planning to feed, clothe, and shelter over 1,500 personnel who would need care after initial military operations had been completed.

EPW operations required a full military police company 24 hrs/day, seven days/week. This drastically reduced the number of MPs available to support Corps operations. In addition, the capturing troops of the 82nd Division did very little tagging of EPW which placed a burden on the MPs to try and segregate EPW. Rangers and Marines left large numbers of EPW located in central collection points with no tagging done at all. Processing of these EPW was done by military intelligence personnel and civil affairs assets. Combat troops turned to the MPs to handle EPW as soon as possible. When no MPs were available, combat troops escorted EPW to the collection points thus reducing the combat resources of the Corps.

One of the biggest headaches for the MPs in Grenada with regards to EPW was the segregation effort. Doctrine calls for the segregation of EPW by rank, however, the detainees wore no rank nor did they have an identifiable rank structure among

themselves. There was an MP to EPW ratio of 1:12 instead of the desired ratio of 1:4. The potential for an extreme emergency was always "just around the corner". The MPs did a superb job of heading off trouble before it found them.

Operation URGENT FURY provided the first true test of military police combat support operations since the Vietnam War, and the only test under current doctrine. Experiences during this operation for the military police have proven current doctrine to be valid, and has further served to point out shortcomings in some operational areas. Of significant importance is the need to provide a military police package available early in the operation to free the combat soldier from military police related duties and combat support missions. Some missions that caused combat commanders extreme manpower burdens during URGENT FURY were responsibilities for EPW operations, circulation control, and security of critical facilities.

The military police experience during this operation will be valuable in planning for future Low Intensity Conflict operations anywhere in the world. If we have learned our lessons, the next contingency deployment involving military police will be conducted with greater ease than Grenada.

Few military operations are free of flaws and human errors, and the operational planning for URGENT FURY was not perfect by any means. There is plenty of room for improvement using military police in contingency operations. We should, however, appreciate the soldiers who fought and died in Grenada, regardless of their military occupational specialty or service. Criticism of Operation URGENT FURY has been loud, but the mission was

accomplished.

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