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"REFLECTIONS ON GRENADA"  
REMARKS BY  
THE HONORABLE KENNETH W. DAM  
DEPUTY SECRETARY OF STATE  
AT THE  
ASSOCIATED PRESS MANAGING EDITORS CONFERENCE  
Louisville, Kentucky  
November 4, 1983

Mr. Chairman:

I am pleased to be here. My theme, of course, is Grenada -- the origins and results of the United States participation in the collective effort.

But I will also try to place the events of the past 3 weeks in the larger context of United States objectives and policy in that entire region which we have come to call the Caribbean Basin.

In the specific instance of Grenada two basic objectives motivated the President's decision last week to act jointly with Barbados and Jamaica in response to the urgent and formal request from the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States. They were:

- to protect the lives of U.S. citizens; and
- to help Grenada re-establish governmental institutions which would restore order, protect human rights, and maintain peace and stability.

These goals are consistent with U.S. objectives throughout the area -- or the world for that matter. But it is the specific setting which helps to define just what responsible action by the United States should be.

This corner of the Caribbean is a singular setting: Prime Minister Charles of Dominica recently described the

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countries involved in terms of QUOTE kith and kin UNQUOTE. Reuben Harris, the Education Minister of Antigua and Barbuda, was more specific when he spoke last week at a UNESCO conference in Paris. He noted that these nations QUOTE enjoy an economic community, a common currency, joint diplomatic representation and responsibility for...common defence and security UNQUOTE. Minister Harris talked of QUOTE partners in an interlocking relationship....a homogeneous society tied by strong links of blood UNQUOTE. And he pointed out that these nations QUOTE pooled individual sovereignties in a joint relationship under the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States UNQUOTE.

In making the key decisions early last week, President Reagan and the rest of us were very much aware of this singularity. It was the critical background against which action could be taken with confidence in the face of violence and uncertainty. It captioned the words of people like Mrs. Charles and her eastern Caribbean colleagues with the assurance that the United States was -- and is -- listening to the right people.

This is an important consideration in understanding what happened, and why, and what it all means elsewhere.

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Because there is one thing which must be said about how the United States relates to our neighbors to the South today: When they talk, we do listen.

[Political Collapse in Grenada]

Collective action was brought about by ten days of brutality and instability without precedent in the English-speaking Caribbean.

The collapse of governmental institutions in Grenada began the evening of October 12 with an attempt by Deputy Prime Minister Bernard Coard to force out Prime Minister Maurice Bishop. Bishop, who had seized power in 1979, had established close relations with Cuba and the Soviet Union. According to minutes of the party Central Committee, however, he was considered a QUOTE bourgeois deviationist UNQUOTE by the Coard faction for moving too slowly to consolidate a QUOTE Leninist UNQUOTE restructuring of Grenadian society.

After Bishop was taken into custody in the middle of the night October 14, the power struggle became openly violent on October 19. Troops opened fire on Bishop

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supporters who had freed him from house arrest. Bishop, several cabinet ministers and union leaders were taken away, then executed. Education Minister Jacqueline Creft was apparently beaten to death.

In the wake of these murders, the People's Revolutionary Army announced the dissolution of the government and the formation of a 16-member Revolutionary Military Council (RMC). Army Commander General Hudson Austin was declared the nominal head, but it was never clear that Austin or any coherent group was in fact in charge. The RMC, in fact, never purported to be a government. No one knew when -- or how -- governmental authority would be reinstated.

This climate of uncertainty and fear deepened late on October 19 with imposition of a 24-hour curfew; the RMC announced that anyone found outside would be shot on sight.

[Caribbean Reaction]

The murders and breakdown of governmental order shocked, repelled and alarmed leaders throughout the

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Caribbean.

Reaction was particularly strong within Grenada's unique immediate community. Without exception, the leaders of the Eastern Caribbean condemned the murders and expressed their sympathy for the people of Grenada.

Leaders in the wider Caribbean were equally outraged. Prime Minister Tom Adams of Barbados said Bishop and his fellow ministers had been killed by QUOTE disgusting murderers UNQUOTE who had committed the QUOTE most vicious act to disfigure the West Indies since the days of slavery UNQUOTE.

Prime Minister Edward Seaga of Jamaica expressed revulsion at QUOTE the intensity of the barbarity UNQUOTE and broke diplomatic relations with Grenada. The Jamaican opposition party (People's National Party, the PNP), headed by former Prime Minister Michael Manley, on October 20 severed all relations with Grenada's New Jewel Movement, recommended its expulsion from the Socialist International, and declared that the RMC had no right to speak for the Grenadian people.

[The Decision to Act]

Sometimes action is necessary to keep a bad situation

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from getting worse. This was such a time.

The disintegration of political authority in Grenada had created a dynamic that made further violence likely and that spread uncertainty and fear. To wait would have meant that those who on October 19 murdered much of the Government of Grenada, and who had since been unable to form a government, would have either driven the island into further chaos or turned it into an armed fortress. In either event, the threat to U.S. citizens and to the peace of the Eastern Caribbean would have increased. Inaction would have made a hostage situation more likely, and increased the costs in lives of any subsequent rescue operation.

On October 23, the heads of state of CARICOM (the overall Caribbean Community), meeting in emergency session, suspended Grenada's membership in the organization.

At the same time, the OECS decided to assist the people of Grenada and to request U.S. help in doing so. In its formal request for U.S. assistance, the OECS cited:

- QUOTE the current anarchic conditions, the serious

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violations of human rights and bloodshed that have occurred and the consequent unprecedented threat to the peace and security of the region created by the vacuum of authority in Grenada. UNQUOTE.

The OECS request also noted:

- QUOTE that military forces and supplies are likely to be shortly introduced to consolidate the position of the regime and that the country can be used as a staging post for acts of aggression against its members; and

- QUOTE that the capability of the Grenada armed forces is already at a level of sophistication and size far beyond the internal needs of that country UNQUOTE.

We had of course also been following events with increasing concern. As is well known, the growing Cuban/Soviet presence on Grenada had led the United States to have serious disagreements with the Bishop regime. Nonetheless, Bishop's visit to the United States in June, 1983 (when Judge Clark and I met with him) had led us to hope that Grenada would adopt a more moderate course.

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What became our overriding concern, however -- as events unfolded -- was not Grenada's political system. Rather, it was the safety of U.S. citizens in the midst of growing anarchy that the countries of the Caribbean also saw as a direct threat.

Some 1,000 U.S. citizens, mainly students, elderly retirees and missionaries, made up the largest community of foreigners on Grenada. Our concern for their welfare was heightened by the murders, the curfew, and the difficulty of getting accurate information. And in the absence of a functioning government, credible assurances of their well-being and future prospects were impossible to obtain.

After carefully considering these developments, and reviewing all aspects of the OECS request, President Reagan concluded that to wait passively would entail great risks. Before acting, however, the President sent a special emissary, Ambassador Frank McNeil, to consult with regional leaders. On October 23, Ambassador McNeil met in Barbados with OECS representative Prime Minister Eugenia Charles of Dominica, Prime Minister Adams of Barbados and Prime Minister Seaga of Jamaica.



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Ambassador McNeil found these Caribbean leaders unanimous -- I repeat, unanimous -- in their conviction that the deteriorating conditions on Grenada were a threat to the entire region that required immediate and forceful action. They strongly reiterated their appeal for U.S. assistance, and insisted that the situation did not bear the possibility of watchful waiting.

[Legal Authority for Action]

U.S. actions have been based on three legal grounds:

First, as these events were taking place, we were informed, on October 24, by Prime Minister Adams of Barbados that Governor-General Sir Paul Scoon had used a confidential channel to transmit an appeal for action by the OECS and other regional states to restore order on the island. The Governor-General has confirmed this invitation to take action since the arrival of the joint security force. This invitation, to which we were unable to refer to publicly until the Governor-General's safety had been assured, was an important element -- legally as well as politically -- in our collective decision to help Grenada. The legal authorities of the Governor-General were the sole

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remaining source of governmental legitimacy on the island in the wake of the tragic events I have described. We and the OECS countries accorded his appeal exceptional moral and legal weight. The invitation of lawful governmental authority constitutes a recognized basis under international law for foreign states to provide requested assistance;

Second, the OECS determined to take action under the 1981 Treaty establishing that organization. That treaty contains a number of provisions, in Articles 3, 4 and 8, which deal with local as well as external threats to peace and security. Both the OAS Charter, in Articles 22 and 28, and the UN Charter, in Article 52, recognize the competence of regional security bodies in ensuring regional peace and stability. Article 22 of the OAS Charter in particular makes clear that action pursuant to a special security treaty in force does not constitute intervention or use of force otherwise prohibited by Articles 18 or 20 of that Charter. In taking lawful collective action, the OECS countries were entitled to call upon friendly states for appropriate assistance, and it was lawful for the United States, Jamaica and Barbados to respond to this request.

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Third, U.S. action to secure and evacuate endangered U.S. citizens on the island was undertaken in accordance with well-established principles of international law regarding the protection of one's nationals. That the circumstances warranted this action has been amply documented by the returning students themselves. There is absolutely no requirement of international law that compelled the U.S. to await further deterioration of the situation that would have jeopardized a successful operation. Nor was the United States required to await actual violence against U.S. citizens before rescuing them from the anarchic and threatening conditions the students have described.

Some are asking how this U.S. action can be distinguished from acts of intervention by our Soviet adversaries. Let me say that the distinctions are clear. The U.S. participated in a genuine collective effort -- the record makes clear the initiative of the Caribbean countries in proposing and defending this action. This action was justified by an existing treaty and by the express invitation of the Governor-General. Our concern for the safety of our citizens was genuine. The factual circumstances on Grenada were exceptional, and

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unprecedented in the Caribbean region -- a collapse of law, order and governmental institutions. Our objectives are precise and limited -- to evacuate foreign nationals and to cooperate in the restoration of order; they do not encompass the imposition on the Grenadians of any particular form of government. Grenadians are now free to determine their institutions for themselves. Finally, we have made it clear that we will withdraw as soon as circumstances permit, and in any event immediately upon the request of the Grenadian authorities.

Those who do not see -- or do not choose to see -- these signal distinctions have failed to analyze the facts. We have not made, and do not seek to make, any broad new precedent for international action; we think the justification for our actions is narrow, and well within accepted concepts of international law.

[Results]

The results of the collective peace-keeping operation have been significant.

First, 17 flights have safely evacuated at their

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request 599 Americans and 121 foreigners. Their accounts of conditions in Grenada and praise for their rescuers speak for themselves. The respected Grenadian journalist Alister Hughes evidently spoke for the vast majority of people in Grenada, Grenadians and foreigners alike, when he said of the Caribbean peace force: QUOTE Thank God they came. If someone had not come in and done something, I hesitate to say what the situation in Grenada would be now UNQUOTE.

Second, the Governor-General has thanked us for our assistance as a QUOTE positive and decisive step forward in the restoration not only of peace and order but also of full sovereignty UNQUOTE.

The OECS is working with the Governor-General and prominent Grenadians to establish a provisional government capable of restoring functioning institutions and permitting early elections. I repeat all governments participating in this collective action will withdraw their forces just as soon as circumstances permit.

This brings me to a third result, which was something of a bonus. As I mentioned earlier, the United States had

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been concerned -- well before the series of unique events which brought about the Caribbean Peace Force collective action -- that Grenada could be used as a staging area for subversion of nearby countries, for interdiction of shipping lanes, and for transit of troops and supplies from Cuba to Africa and from Eastern Europe and Libya to Central America.

When the Caribbean Peace Force entered Grenada, the chief resistance they encountered came from Cuban forces deployed around the airport, the medical school where a large number of US citizens were studying, the Governor General's house, a Cuban military encampment at Calivigny, and several other forts and strategic points.

We now know that the Soviets, Cubans and North Koreans had a military relationship with Grenada which led to signed agreements to donate amounts of military equipment without precedent for a population of 110,000. \$37.8 million in artillery, anti-aircraft weapons, armored personnel carriers, small arms, and abundant ammunition were to be furnished to an island touted by its suppliers as a tourist haven. The signed secret agreements also called for 40 Cuban military advisors -- 27 on a QUOTE permanent UNQUOTE basis, the others for QUOTE short periods UNQUOTE.

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An October 1980 treaty with the USSR called for the provision gratis of, among other things, 1,500 7.62 mm carbines, 1,000 7.62 mm submachine guns, and 18 anti-aircraft mounts. The agreement called for Grenadian military personnel to be trained in the USSR at Soviet expense.

Moscow tried to keep the arrangements secret by obliging the Grenadians to treat it as secret, routing their supplies through Cuba and delaying the establishment of diplomatic relations with Grenada until 18 months after entering into the military supply relationship.

The fact that Moscow was willing to provide military equipment and training free-of-charge is unusual for most of its third world arms deals. It is one indication of the importance the USSR attached to the toehold Grenada afforded in the eastern Caribbean.

What has been found in Grenada -- secret military fortifications, extensive arms caches, and communications facilities all controlled by non-Grenadians -- dramatizes just how important it is that Grenada have governing

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institutions responsible to its own people.

Ladies and gentlemen, that is precisely what Grenada's neighbors -- and the United States -- had in mind in launching our joint rescue operation.

(Broader Lessons)

Eleven days have passed since the combined U.S.- Caribbean peace force landed in Grenada to protect lives and restore order. That is not enough time to make definitive historical judgments.

But it is not too early to begin to reflect on the meaning of what happened.

Perhaps the basic lesson is that in a dangerous world, the measured and lawful measured use of force is at times necessary to keep the peace.

We are committed to peace. In the best of all possible worlds, solving problems through peaceful negotiations is the only way disputes should be settled.



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But some nations and groups consider violence and terror as normal modes of behavior. Witness the downing of Korean Airlines flight 007, the murder of nearly 300 American and French soldiers in Beirut, the New Jewel Movement's use of murder to resolve its internal disputes.

In the world like this, the U.S. must be prepared, even if only when absolutely necessary, to respond to a crisis with considered, effective and lawful force.

A second lesson is that collective security arrangements do work: that they are a way for smaller countries to protect themselves through joint action and, if necessary, requesting the support of other friendly countries.

Thirdly, Grenada is a clear warning to regimes that abandon democratic procedures and isolate themselves from their own people.

A few weeks ago, many believed that Cuba was only "helping" Grenada to build tourist facilities.

On the basis of what we have discovered, what leader

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can from now on rest easily at night knowing of a massive Cuban presence in his country?

The Nicaraguan government has already made the reverse case: that Grenada was a "trial run" for the United States.

That they believe the Grenada shoe fits is very revealing about the Sandinistas. But it says little about U.S. policy. Our own policy is to attempt to resolve conflict in Central America through a combination of negotiations, economic assistance, support for democracy, and a military shield.

Our policy -- and that of every Central American country except Nicaragua -- is to resolve problems without the use of force.

There are, of course, lessons which Nicaragua's leaders should perhaps draw from events in Grenada. Grenada demonstrates the importance of pluralistic institutions in resolving policy differences. In the absence of such institutions, differences tend instinctively to be resolved by violence.

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The Sandinistas might also draw some conclusions about their behavior toward other countries. Nicaragua's willingness to negotiate seriously, to reduce its dependence on military power, and, most importantly, to stop belligerent behavior towards its neighbors are an obvious path to peace. Our commitments to the security of Nicaragua's democratic neighbors are every bit as strong as our commitment to the neighbors of Grenada.

My own feeling is that the most important lesson of Grenada is that we must find more creative ways to foster democratic development and regional cohesion so as reduce the likelihood of being forced to choose between military action or allowing small dictatorial cliques to threaten their own and other peoples, including U.S. citizens.

Finally, what happened, what was said, and what was discovered all confirm the wisdom of the policy precept I mentioned earlier: that of listening to what the people on the block are saying about their own neighborhood -- and then acting accordingly. What Mrs. Charles and the others told us while the crisis was building proved to be accurate; they faithfully reflected the feelings, the concerns and hopes of their kin in Grenada -- and, may I

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add, of the U.S. citizens there as well. I believe the American people have also sensed that their government has done well in this regard.

It may be that this pattern of 'listening' to the right people will be the enduring link between these events in the eastern Caribbean and the rest of the region. The Caribbean Basin Initiative -- that innovative effort on the part of the United States to help countries develop the basis for sustained growth -- was largely the result of listening to what Latin and Caribbean economists have been telling us for years about their preference for QUOTE trade not aid UNQUOTE.

And, in Central America, the largely untold story is how the United States is quietly supporting the Contadora -- initiated, pursued, and organized by a group of Latin American nations -- process of dialogue in the interests of settling the conflicts there before they reach a crisis stage.

[A FINAL WORD - GOVERNMENT AND PRESS RELATIONS]

I cannot conclude before this audience without touching on the need to restore, on both sides, mutual

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respect and trust between press and government.

To minimize the potential loss of lives and maximize the chances of success, both the preparations for the multinational peace force and our final decision to participate had to be protected by an unusual degree of secrecy.

I believe the need for secrecy and its limited objectives are gradually becoming clearer as the full implications of our own and Eastern Caribbean fears come to light, as order is restored, and as the Grenadians reenter the democratic family that has for so long been the strength of the Caribbean.

But a great deal of the concern about restrictions on the press in the Grenada operation is legitimate.

Let me start with a factual footnote. On October 24(?), a small group of journalists bravely attempted to enter Grenada by boat. They were incommunicado for a period of days. Their editors called the State Department, the Pentagon and the White House asking that U.S. resources be diverted to search for them.

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I can understand why these reporters wanted to go to Grenada. I can also understand why their editors went to such lengths to ensure their safety after they appeared to be in trouble.

But in all honesty, isn't it apparent that when we are trying to rescue 1000 Americans, we do not want an additional 200 or so, roaming around? Because of the secrecy of the operation. And especially because they might force us to "divert resources" to help them out of a scrape?

Clearly, we ought to find a better way to resolve this real conflict of objectives than the one we found this time. But it may require a little give on both sides.

If the press would accept restrictions on their movements -- never on what they write -- in the actual zones of battle (which in the early hours was the entire island of Grenada) -- it might be easier to accommodate their legitimate and important desire to serve the public by covering all the news.

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