

# A Skillful Show of Strength

U.S. Marines in  
the Caribbean,  
1991-1996

*U.S. Marines in Humanitarian Operations*

COVER: *Cpl B. J. Bell, 2d Battalion, 2d Marines, stands guard near civilian Haitians between the town of Cap-Haïtien and the air field during Operation Uphold Democracy. The American flag in the background was raised by local residents as a welcome to the liberating troops.*

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U.S. Marines in the Caribbean, 1991-1996

*U.S. Marines in Humanitarian Operations*



by  
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# Foreword

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What Marines did in the Caribbean between 1991 and 1996 was both new and old. It was new because humanitarian operations were different from combat in Vietnam or Southwest Asia. It was also new for many because it was “joint,” Marines were integrated into joint task forces, especially when they were called on to care for Haitian and Cuban migrants at Guantanamo Bay.

But it was also old and familiar. Generations of Marines have deployed to the Caribbean in one role or another. Although they would not have recognized the words, Marines in Haiti, Dominican Republic, or Panama knew the notions of “military operations other than war” and “low intensity conflict” earlier in the 20th century. It is no accident some of the Marines who went to the Caribbean in the 1990s took with them a copy of *The Small Wars Manual*, a Marine Corps classic about unusual challenges on foreign shores written between the two world wars by writers with fresh memories of earlier operations in many of the same places.

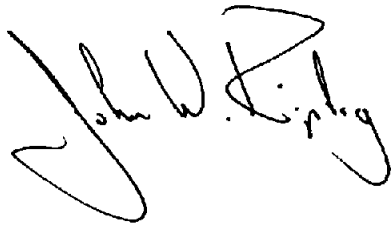
If there was one lesson in the Caribbean, it was that traditional Marine Corps virtues—initiative, discipline, and flexibility—were still as useful and applicable in the final years of the last century as they had always been. Humanitarian operations did not lack intensity. The challenges some of the Marines in this story faced were not combat, but on some days they came close, as thin green lines of Marines confronted crowds of angry and violent migrants at Guantanamo and in Panama. When the Marines of Special Purpose Marine Air-Ground Task Force occupied the northern provinces of Haiti in September 1994, they entered an unusual environment that, at least at first, was not war and not peace. They had to deal with large and usually friendly crowds, as well as a hostile police force and military that disappeared from the scene only after a brief but intense firefight that left a number of Haitian policemen dead. If there are any overall lessons, they are that the same Marine rifleman has to be ready for combat and military operations other than war, and that it is the leaders of small units, squads, and platoons who often determine the outcome in ambiguous situations.

The author, Colonel Nicholas E. Reynolds, USMCR, began collecting material about migrant operations in the Caribbean in 1992. He was able to draw on the work of others, such as the History and Museums Division’s oral historian, Richard A. Long, who conducted a lengthy interview with the Marine commander of Joint Task Force Guantanamo Bay, and to make good use of materials collected by his counterparts at the Naval Historical Center, Captains Alexander G. Monroe and William R. McClintock, USNR, who had the good fortune to spend time at Guantanamo during the operation. Colonel Reynolds then conducted his own interviews of participants and collected additional raw material from various archives.

When it became clear in 1994 there would be a sequel to the operation at Guantanamo, the migrant operations known as Sea Signal and Safe Haven, Colonel Reynolds repeated the process, interviewing participants, collecting documents, and making the trip to Guantanamo himself, where he was able to “walk the ground.”

The story of the Haitian migrants could not be told without telling the related story of the invasion and occupation of Haiti in September 1994, when Marines went ashore at Cap-Haïtien in the northern part of that country. To cover that story, Headquarters Marine Corps dispatched an officer on active duty, Major John T. Quinn II, to join the special purpose task force for a few weeks. Major Quinn did yeoman’s work conducting interviews, taking photographs and generally recording events, either on paper or on tape. He demonstrated anew that the best way to preserve Marine Corps history is to have a full-time historian on the ground during the operation that is able to focus on recording events as they occur.

Colonel Reynolds is currently serving as the officer in charge of the History and Museums Division's Individual Mobilization Detachment. His training in history was at Oxford University, where he wrote a doctoral dissertation about the German army before serving as an infantry officer in the Marine Corps. Following active duty with 3d Battalion, 2d Marines, he held a variety of reserve billets, including that of company commander at The Basic School during the Persian Gulf War. He is also the author of another historical center publication, *Marine Operations in Panama: 1988-1990*, and he edits the *Journal of America's Military Past* for the non-profit Council on America's Military Past.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "John W. Ripley". The signature is stylized with a large, sweeping initial "J" and a prominent "R".

John W. Ripley  
Colonel, U.S. Marine Corps (Retired)  
Director of Marine Corps History and Museums



# Preface

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When the Chief Historian of the Marine Corps, Benis M. Frank, asked me to work on Operation Guantanamo Bay in 1992, I reacted like many Marines when they are told they are no longer primarily riflemen: Wasn't there a combat history that needed doing? But, like a good Marine, I did what I was told, and as time went on, I grew to like the assignment. That is, I gained an appreciation for the challenges of migrant operations. Being a Marine has never been just about combat, and yes, real Marines do "military operations other than war." A close reading of Marine Corps history tells us they always have. The story of Marine operations in the Caribbean from 1991 to 1996 is an interesting one, worth telling and from which future Marine commanders can learn.

It is a story I could not have told without the help of a number of people, many of them participants in the story. Two commanding generals of the humanitarian joint task forces, Brigadier General George H. Walls, Jr., and General Michael J. Williams, made themselves available for interviews and were willing to share personal papers with me. The same was particularly true of two other officers who served with General Williams: Colonel John R. Allen and Major Franz J. Gayl. They did what good historians do: they saved records and wrote about what happened while it was still fresh in their minds. Their con-

When the Marines landed in Haiti in 1915 to restore order, the British diplomat R. M. Kohan cabled a concise summary of the operation to London:

The landing party put on shore at Port-au-Prince on the 28th of July was not strong.... A skillful show of strength was, however, made and by at once seizing all points of military importance, together with practically all government arms and ammunition and disarming all Haitian military and civilians, the landing force was able to anticipate any serious resistance which might have been offered.

—Quoted in Robert Debs Heintz, Jr., and Nancy Gordon Heintz, *Written in Blood, The Story of the Haitian People 1492-1975* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1978)

tributions gave life to what might otherwise have been a dry recitation of facts. I would also like to thank the other Marines, too numerous to mention by name, who made themselves available for interviews. Major John T. Quinn II, who was sent to Haiti by the History and Museums Division in September 1994, would no doubt voice his appreciation for the officers of Special Purpose Marine Air-Ground Task Force Caribbean who supported him, especially the commander, Colonel Thomas S. Jones, and his operations officer, Lieutenant Colonel Thomas C. Greenwood.

I was able to rely on the support and advice of many members of the History and Museums Division and wish to express my thanks to them all. The former Director, Brigadier General Edwin H. Simmons, was kind enough to provide guidance in the early stages of the project, as was former Chief Historian Benis M. Frank. Their support and encouragement over the years has meant a lot to me. My colleagues Colonel Dennis J. Mroczkowski, USMCR, and Dr. Jack Shulimson read early drafts and gave me the feedback I needed. I am grateful to members of other sections of the Division who provided useful assistance: Danny J. Crawford, head of the Reference Section, and his staff; Frederick J. Graboske, head of



*Part I*

*Marines in Refugee  
Operations, 1991-1996*





# Chapter 1

## Operation GTMO

### *Setting the Scene*

During the Spanish-American War of 1898, Sergeant John H. Quick earned the Medal of Honor when he scaled a rock in southeastern Cuba while under heavy fire and began directing naval gunfire from the distant USS *Dolphin* toward enemy positions. In an ensuing dispatch entitled "The Red Badge of Courage Was His Wig-Wag Flag," novelist and part-time war correspondent Stephen Crane captured the moment for posterity, describing Sergeant Quick as the "spruce young sergeant of Marines, erect, his back to the showering bullets [was] solemnly and intently wigwagging." The Marines went on to take the high ground near the large natural harbor known as Guantanamo Bay, which the U.S. Navy wanted for a coaling station. This became the prologue for the modern history of the Marine Corps in the Caribbean.

In the first part of the 20th Century, the United States held sway over the Caribbean, largely because of the strategic importance it attached to the Panama Canal, which was completed in 1911. The U.S. generally resisted any threats to the stability of the region.

Guantanamo Bay was leased in perpetuity from Cuba in 1903 for the Navy, and the harbor became one of the pivots of U.S. power in the Caribbean. Playing a traditional role for the Navy, Marines guarded Guantanamo for the rest of the century.

In 1915, when Haiti disintegrated into anarchy in the wake of yet another revolution, the senior officer present afloat, Admiral William B. Caperton, sent a message to nearby Guantanamo requesting a contingent of Marines to restore order. Within days, the first of what was to become a long column of Marines landed on





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*American sailors and Coast Guardsmen approach a 30-foot, single-masted sailboat in a motor launch from the USS Whidbey Island (LSD 41) in July 1988. The 92 Haitian migrants were taken on board and later transferred to a Coast Guard cutter. In accordance with a standing agreement between the United States and Haiti, the migrants were returned to their homeland.*

Haiti's shores with the concurrence of the British and French governments. For the roughly 2,000 Marines of that first contingent, restoring order was a matter of protecting the customs service and keeping the cacos, or bandit mafias, under control.

Under the provisions of a treaty ratified in late 1915, the U.S. Government would organize a Haitian police force. Marine and naval officers, including such famous Marines as then-Major Smedley D. Butler, were seconded to the paramilitary *Gendarmerie* to occupy the senior posts. Backing them up were Marine noncommissioned officers and Navy corpsmen. Marines served in that capacity for nearly 20 turbulent years.

Throughout the 1900s, Marines were committed to operations on either side of Haiti. Prominent among them were interventions in the Dominican Republic in 1904, then from 1914 to 1924, and finally, in 1965. When Fidel Castro seized power in Cuba, the notion of fighting communism so near U.S. soil added another dimension to operations in the Caribbean, and the base at Guantanamo became an important iconic outpost of freedom. It also proved useful to the mod-

ern Navy as a deepwater training facility. The Marine garrison on the base swelled to regimental proportions during the Cuban missile crisis in 1962, but generally the contingent of Marines stationed there was much smaller. In the early 1990s, Marines numbered roughly 450, mostly committed to security and patrolling operations around the perimeter of the base. The Cubans watched the Marines and the Marines watched the Cubans along the heavily mined fence line separating them.

Jack Nicholson, who played the overzealous barracks commander in, "A Few Good Men," a film about Marines at Guantanamo, explained this mission in vivid terms. Although the film was heavily fictionalized, there were a few grains of truth in Nicholson's memorable words, especially his in-your-face remark that every morning he ate breakfast "300 yards from 4,000 Cubans" who were trained to kill him. For the Marines who spent weeks and months on the line, either in watchtowers or on patrol in the scrub brush along the "cactus curtain," it was not an exercise but a deadly serious form of duty. Occasionally, Marines would rescue a refugee from the mine-



field or help one through the wire, and there was occasional gunfire, especially if the Cubans started shooting at an escaping refugee. Marines were authorized to return fire only in self-defense under strictly enforced rules of engagement.<sup>1</sup>

In 1991, many of these historical themes played out again. In February, Jean-Bertrand Aristide, a former Catholic priest and charismatic preacher, took office as the first democratically elected president of Haiti. By September of that same year, the Haitian military was fed up with his rule and easily overthrew Aristide despite his enormous popularity with the masses. Aristide fled the country and began a high profile, extremely vocal campaign against the military regime of Brigadier General Raoul Cedras. The ousted leader eventually made his way to the United States where he lobbied for action against the regime. The U.S. Government reacted by declaring an economic embargo of Haiti, but the move was more to express support of a democratic Haiti than for Aristide. Unfortunately, the embargo resulted in the downward spiral of the already abysmally low

standard of living of most Haitians. The embargo left the tiny ruling class, which always seemed able to assure its own comfort, virtually unaffected.

From the day the coup occurred, there were general fears the country would return to a state of anarchy, which might threaten the lives of the estimated 7,000 U.S. citizens living in the island nation. The new military government fueled those fears through its enforcement of familiar methods of repression such as allowing police and soldiers a free hand to beat real or imagined opponents, often in front of news cameras. The Joint Chiefs of Staff reacted by asking Admiral Leon A. Edney, Commander in Chief, Atlantic (CinCLant), Norfolk, Virginia, to develop a contingency plan for the evacuation of American citizens. By 1 October 1999, approximately 350 Marines had departed Camp Lejeune, North Carolina, for Guantanamo to support the plan. This first contingent of Marines was on stand-by to deploy to Haiti as the forward element of Joint Task Force (JTF) 129, the name for which was eventually



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*Haitian migrants board a U.S. Coast Guard boat. Thousands of Haitians were intercepted and taken on board Navy and Coast Guard ships between October and December 1991. They were then transported to Naval Station, Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, for temporary housing while their legal status was determined.*

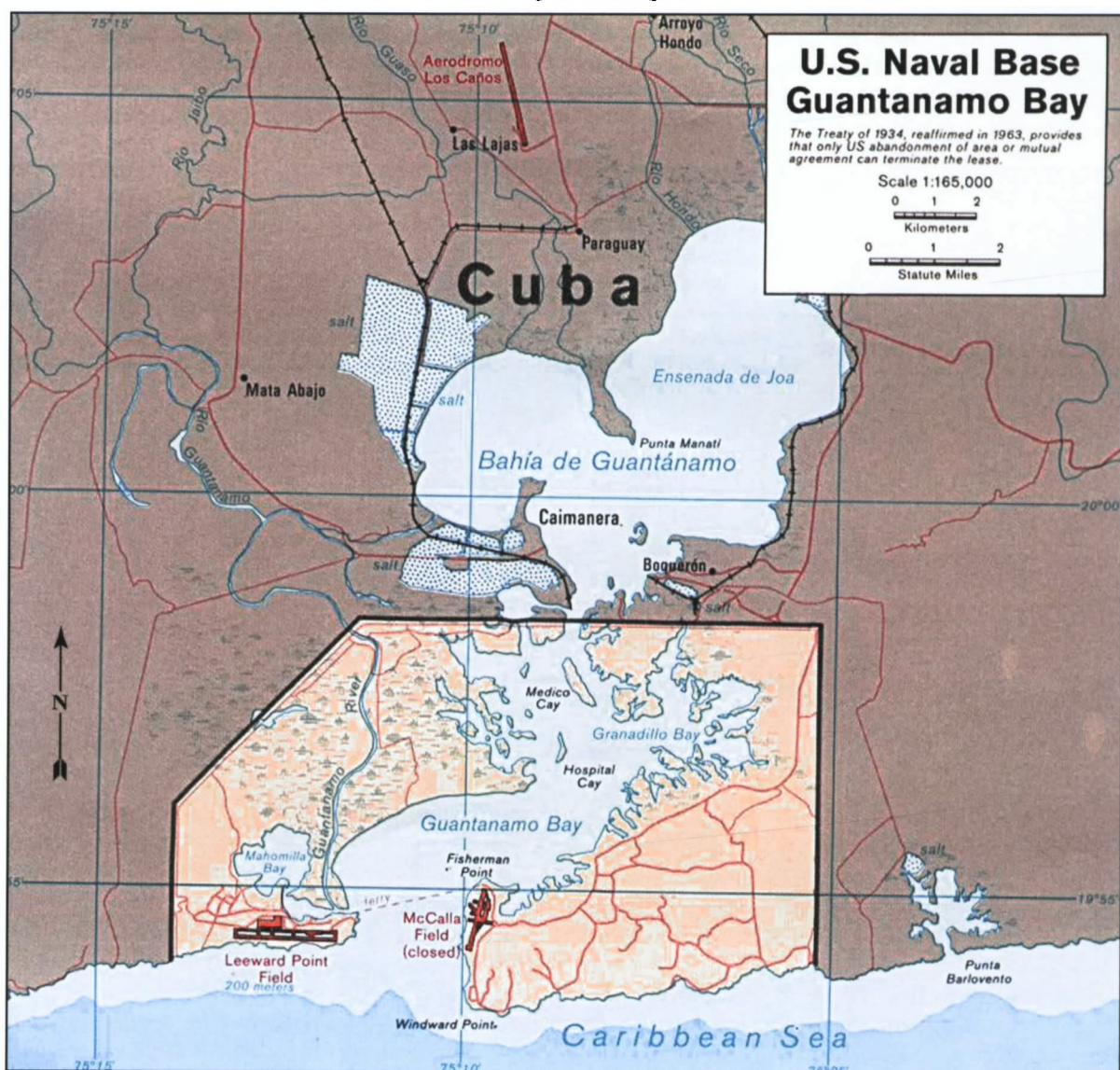
changed to JTF GTMO, a somewhat awkward contraction of Guantanamo. Brigadier General Russell H. Sutton was assigned as commander of the group and he drew his headquarters from the command element of II Marine Expeditionary Force (II MEF).<sup>2</sup>

Throughout much of the coming year, Marines would remain on stand-by for a non-combatant evacuation operation of American citizens in Haiti. Many of those Marines spent much of that time living in the barracks at Guantanamo Bay. The force did not deploy further. By late November the situation in Haiti appeared to have settled and the Marines returned to the continental United States.<sup>3</sup>

There also was some contingency planning for Joint Task Force 140, the mission of which might be to occupy Haiti.<sup>4</sup> But instead of launching

operations against the island of Haiti, Marines became involved with Haitians in a way that few had foreseen. Within a month of the coup, hundreds of Haitians took to the sea in open boats, most with the general intention of sailing to the United States in search of a better life away from economic hardship. This exodus was risky since few of the boats were seaworthy and most were desperately overloaded. One 30-foot fishing boat, which the U.S. Coast Guard came across as it was floundering, held some 240 people, including women and children. Many of the craft could hardly be called boats; more closely resembled the fabled makeshift raft Huck Finn used to float down the Mississippi.

In late October, the Coast Guard, which routinely patrolled the waters in the Windward Passage between Haiti and Cuba, rescued the first







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*Laundry lines and cots for use by Haitian migrants fill the well deck of the landing ship USS Pensacola (LSD 38) while docked at Guantanamo Bay. The Pensacola served as temporary housing while tent camps were being erected on land in late November and early December 1991.*

19 Haitians. Perhaps because the word somehow made it back to Haiti that Americans were picking up migrants in boats, the floodgates opened wide and the Coast Guard was soon rescuing ever-increasing numbers of migrants at sea. Messages from that period suggest most of the Coast Guard and Navy commanders dealing with the growing migrant problem believed the only practical interim solution was to take them to Guantanamo. By 10 November, nearly 500 migrants were on two Coast Guard cutters at anchor in the harbor at Guantanamo. Unfortunately, a cutter is a fairly small ship, more like a large motor yacht than a small warship, and the degree of overcrowding—and subsequent unsanitary conditions—was staggering. A few hundred yards away, those on shore could see just how bad conditions were becoming.

The U.S. Government was now faced with deciding where, and under what conditions, the migrants should be off-loaded. The Coast Guard had previously been able to simply return migrants to Haiti under a bilateral arrangement known as the Alien Migrants Interdiction

Agreement (AMIA). However, a court challenge to the AMIA changed that and prohibited the U.S. Government from returning migrants to Haiti without at least reviewing their status in some way. Guantanamo was nearby and had the advantage of providing a secure holding area without being in the territorial United States.<sup>5</sup>

But this stopgap measure only made the situation more critical as time passed and the number of persons grew. The migrants continued to live under field expedient shelters on the decks of the cutters where heat, dirt, and boredom compounded each other. Various echelons of command debated the problem for nearly two weeks. Finally, the Guantanamo base commander, Captain William C. McCamy, USN, decided conditions on the cutters had become unmanageable and ordered the base to prepare to house the refugees ashore. On 22 November, after receiving authority from Washington, Admiral Edney authorized Captain McCamy to provide “emergency humanitarian assistance” for up to 483 migrants. It was a cautious approval. Although the message mentioned preparations to deploy a joint



Photo courtesy of BGen George H. Walls, Jr.  
*BGen George H. Walls, Jr., commanded Joint Task Force GTMO. He stands on the hill overlooking Camp McCalla, the temporary home to thousands of Haitian migrants. Guantanamo Bay is visible in the background, as is the leeward side of the base.*

task force to Guantanamo Bay to care for the migrants, it went on to stipulate it did not “authorize the erection of any new structures for refugees aboard GTMO, including tents.”<sup>6</sup>

For the Marines at the barracks, it was like waking up the morning after the Marine Corps Ball to find the migrants at their doorstep. They saw the cutters in the bay swinging at anchor and waiting for a decision. When the command in Norfolk permitted them to land, the Haitians first met the Marines, who were working alongside the Navy to prepare for their largely unexpected arrival. The Marines’ principle focus was on the facilities at Camp Bulkeley, an expeditionary training camp in the southeast corner of the base named after famed torpedo boat commander, Lieutenant John Bulkeley, who had spirited General Douglas MacArthur from the Philippines in 1942 and gone on to command the base at Guantanamo later in his career.

Camp Bulkeley was largely down to its bare-bones when the work began. There were a few simple whitewashed buildings nestled in the hills overlooking the sea, some basic plumbing, and concrete slabs designed for tents. Each slab could accommodate one general-purpose tent housing

18 to 20 cots, which left virtually no room for privacy. One news story about the camp described it as “windswept,” which only vaguely conveyed the small, barren stretch of ground perched on a cliff overlooking the Caribbean.<sup>7</sup>

A functional system evolved over time where the Navy ran the camp inside while the Marines provided security outside the perimeter.<sup>8</sup> The operation ran smoothly, in no small part because of an October naval base defensive exercise conducted to test base readiness for handling and processing large numbers of Cuban refugees—the kind of refugees the U.S. Government had been expecting for years.<sup>9</sup>

Meanwhile, the command echelon at Norfolk, recognizing the small force of Marines and sailors at Guantanamo could not care for large numbers of migrants for an extended period, were looking ahead at the possibility of deploying a joint task force to care for the migrants. The Marines of the 2d Force Service Support Group (2d FSSG) at nearby Camp Lejeune were a natural choice for such a mission since the group already had developed rudimentary contingency plans for handling a Cuban exodus of up to 2,500 refugees in response to an August 1991 request from Admiral Paul D. Miller, Commander in Chief, Atlantic Fleet. The support group also had sent representatives to Guantanamo in September and October for further planning and participation in the October defensive exercise.<sup>10</sup>

Commanding the 2d FSSG was Brigadier General George H. Walls, Jr. General Walls, an engineer by training and a universally respected officer from Pennsylvania, had recently served away from the fleet as a professor of naval science. Many considered him the ideal combination of warrior and diplomat, providing firm yet humane leadership and possessing a gift for leading troops and trusting subordinates. Perhaps more than anything, it was General Walls’ hands-on leadership that won him respect. He had a reputation of being in touch with his troops and the situation. A simple anecdote tells of a U.S. Army sentry high in a watchtower at Guantanamo that found himself answering the general’s questions about his work. Not familiar with Marine Corps culture, the sentry was pleasantly surprised that a general officer would actually try to look at the world from a soldier’s point of view.<sup>11</sup>

Among those holding the general in high esteem was a dedicated and professional member of the Service Support Group, Sergeant Major Douglas E. Berry, who was to deploy with the

general because of his earlier experience on joint task forces.

When Lieutenant General William M. Keys, then commander of Fleet Marine Force, Atlantic, began to plan for the humanitarian operation in Guantanamo in mid-November, he turned to General Walls. On or about 20 November, General Keys sent the planning order and General Walls began to pull together the team he thought would be needed for the operation.<sup>12</sup> General Walls and his subordinate, Colonel Peter R. Stenner, who was then commander of Brigade Service Support Group 6 and about to become director of operations for the task force, drafted a table of organization for a JTF at Guantanamo. They drew heavily from the Marine Corps because Marines were, at least initially, a readily available and known quantity.<sup>13</sup> \*

Given its training and mission, 2d FSSG was already organized to establish and run expeditionary camps. Remembering the lessons of the so-called Mariel Boatlift of 1980, when more than 124,000 Cubans fled their country by boat to seek refuge in the U.S. during President Jimmy Carter's administration. Marines had worked with those refugees, and considering the type of work that needed to be done this time, General Walls and Colonel Stenner selected Marines and sailors for the job who were specialists in food service, engineering, and medical assistance. From the start, they also planned to reach outside the Marine Corps to select specialties that were not organic to the Service Support Group, such as the highly professional civil affairs capability of the U.S. Army, to allow other Services to provide a higher proportion of replacements when the Marines rotated home.<sup>14</sup> Initially, they thought the joint task force would comprise a few hundred servicemen caring for no more than 2,500 migrants.

Back at Guantanamo, even though the initial 483 migrants had been brought ashore, pressure continued to mount as more migrants put to sea and were rescued by the Coast Guard. A temporary restraining order from the Second Federal District Court in Miami on 19 November complicated the situation by closing the option of quick repatriation, forcing the migrants to remain guests

of the armed forces for the time being. With the need for the JTF growing, General Walls acted quickly on a 22 November pre-deployment order stating "U.S. CinCLant is authorized to land refugees temporarily aboard NS [Naval Station] Guantanamo as a last resort." The order went on to direct the deployment of an advanced echelon and liaison officer team to Guantanamo to further preparations for the "possible" deployment of the JTF.<sup>15</sup> On 23 November, the advance party left Camp Lejeune. Just two days later on 25 November, with six cutters in the harbor carrying 1,415 migrants on board, and another ship enroute with an additional 304 migrants, General Walls finally received a formal deployment order and literally packed his bags.<sup>16</sup>

According to the concept of operations, the Atlantic Fleet was to deploy a joint task force to Guantanamo to conduct temporary emergency humanitarian assistance and security operations. The order contained a number of interesting caveats, such as: the force should deploy "so as to

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*Back at Guantanamo, even though the initial 483 migrants had been brought ashore, pressure continued to mount as more migrants put to sea and were rescued by the Coast Guard.*

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[be] mostly self-sufficient" without the need for support from the Navy base; at the same time, no construction of tents or other temporary facilities were permitted until Norfolk obtained the approval of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. The next day, as CinCLant authorized the Navy and the Coast Guard to offload the additional migrants, General Walls landed in Cuba and officially became the commander of Operation Safe Harbor, which was renamed two days later as Operation GTMO.<sup>17</sup> An interesting footnote to the order that renamed the operation stated the anticipated length of the operation was "in excess of 30 days." The footnote indicates many in the higher echelons, although reluctant to commit, expected the crisis would not blow over quickly.

General Walls immediately went to work to get enough members of his task force on the ground to take control of Camp Bulkeley from the Navy, which was scheduled to occur 29 November.<sup>18</sup> Then, working with the Navy, he had to ensure

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\* Sergeant Major Berry realized one of the problems the JTF would face would be the different ways each Service treated its members, and it would be important for the JTF's personnel policies to be as uniform as possible, especially with regard to benefits and discipline. He worked hard to make that happen, reaching out to all of the noncommissioned officers in the JTF. (Berry intvw)



## 8 A SKILLFUL SHOW OF STRENGTH

Camp Bulkeley could shelter as many as 2,500 migrants and make plans for possible expansion to another, better location at Camp McCalla, a former airfield on the coast near the heart of the base. (The camp was named for Commander Bowman H. McCalla, the commander of the squadron that had carried Sergeant John Quick to Cuba. The commander has been described as generally irascible and a friend of the Marine

appear to occupy it. The task force hoped to unload all the migrants from the anchored cutters by 2 December and to put them to work alongside the Marines, sailors, and soldiers helping to build their own camps.<sup>19</sup> The intent was to construct adequate facilities for some 12,000 migrants and phase out Camp Bulkeley by 20 December, keeping those facilities in reserve or using them for special purposes. It was soon to become the



Photo courtesy of BGen George H. Walls, Jr.

*In late 1991, Camp McCalla's rows of tents are clearly visible on the abandoned runway of the former airfield. The naval base's piers and the area known as "Mainside" are evident in the background.*

Corps.) Although initially lacking in many needed facilities, the former runways, aprons, and hangars had obvious refugee camp potential. The migrants would not have to live in an environment of dust and sand, and while the hangars could not accommodate everyone, they were well suited as ready-made shelters for many of the migrants. The Joint Chiefs apparently approved further construction at the site and work started on 30 November, which was General Walls 49th birthday.

Time remained a critical element as the joint task force worked frantically to keep pace with the flow of refugees. As soon as U.S. servicemen erected a shelter, Haitian migrants seemed to

camp for migrants who had been cleared to proceed to the United States. The overriding theory was to separate the fortunate migrants from those who were still in limbo or awaiting repatriation to Haiti.<sup>20</sup>

To meet the deadlines, many of General Walls' Marines worked 18-hour days. Even those Marines with other duties found themselves impressed into the task force. The barracks Marines, along with an artillery unit that had come to the base for an exercise, Battery H, 3d Battalion, 10th Marines, soon came under the operational control of the JTF, which reached the strength of 46 officers and 549 enlisted Marines by 30 November. Colonel Gary A. Blair, commanding



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*After disembarking from the USCG Vigilant (WMEC 617) at Guantanamo Bay, a group of Haitian migrants board a bus that will carry them to a humanitarian relief center at Camp McCalla. The migrants' faces convey the sense of apprehension that many felt on their first day at the naval base.*

officer of the Marine Barracks and a common sense leader who got the job done without fanfare, was given command.<sup>21</sup> Colonel Blair was especially happy to have Battery H under his control since that group had recently returned from Operation Provide Comfort, a large-scale refugee operation in Northern Iraq where Marines helped establish and run Kurdish refugee relocation camps.<sup>22</sup>

In addition to the Marines, approximately 400 members of the task force were from other Services. There were now 1,477 migrants in the camps and more than 1,000 sat waiting on ships in the harbor.<sup>23</sup> \* Although responsibilities shifted, the Army generally administered Camp McCalla while the Marines controlled Camp Bulkeley and

provided external security in the form of on-call reaction forces for both camps. Among the many competing priorities was the urgent need for medical treatment, or at least triage. Many of the migrants had never had any kind of medical treatment in their lives, and there was an abundance of communicable diseases that required immediate treatment to avert the specter of epidemics. Navy (and later U.S. Air Force) medical personnel set to work and quickly made enormous strides in the management of this public health problem. The corpsmen, nurses, and doctors went aggressively in search of patients and maintained a 24-hour presence in the camps. A migrant could see a corpsman any time of the day or night. Migrants with communicable diseases were treated and, if necessary, isolated from the general population. Pregnant women—at one time there were some 400 in the camps—received special attention. These were the first steps in establishing patient-practitioner relationships. One small gauge of the strength of these relationships was the case of one migrant who refused to return to Haiti until he

\* By the beginning of December 1991, the joint task force had banned the use of the term "refugee" for the Haitians at Guantanamo. They were to be referred to as "migrants" to avoid the impression, especially when speaking to journalists, that they had the legal status of refugees. (Maj Theodore R. McKeldin III, Notes on Operation GTMO, Dec00, GTMO/Haiti Collection, MCHC)





DVIC DN-ST-92-05576

*As part of the processing at Camp McCalla, each migrant received a quick medical checkup. For many this was the first time in their lives that a health care provider had seen them.*

had completed the prescribed round of dental work.<sup>24</sup>

Another early priority, one that received the personal attention of General Walls, was the promulgation of a set of rules of engagement. This document began with a reminder that "Haitians are not EPWs [enemy prisoners of war]. Treat them humanely with dignity and respect. ... Use only the minimum force necessary." General Walls intended to set the tone for his command's relations with the migrants through the rules of engagement and his own brand of leadership. He maintained that tenor throughout his time at Guantanamo.<sup>25</sup>

Another important aspect was the development of the civil affairs concept of operations. Civil affairs occupied a central role in Operation GTMO. It dealt with the day-to-day management of the camps and was conducted by a well-trained and well-prepared group of soldiers from the Army's 96th Civil Affairs Detachment, 96th Civil Affairs Battalion.

The plan, already elaborated by 11 December, was split into three phases. Phase I covered short-term actions required over the first 30 days for migrant security, safety, and welfare. These included the closeout of Camp Bulkeley, the refinement of migrant living arrangements to permit the reunification of extended families, providing some means of communication with relatives in Haiti, and establishing a photo identity system. Phase II was the transition to a steady-state camp in the period from day 30 to day 120. It included the provision of religious services, the creation of a community council, and the employment of migrants in construction and maintenance projects. Phase III, which would run from day 120 until the end of the operation, would emphasize public education, cottage industries, and the publication of a camp newspaper.<sup>26</sup>

The separation of migrants into various categories was a particularly sensitive issue. From the start, the JTF had been organizing individuals into categories: families, single males, unaccompanied minors, "screened-in" for immigration to the United States, and "screened-out" for repatriation to Haiti. Most of those who were screened-in were able to claim they were victims of political persecution. Some of these categories, while mak-



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*A Marine processes paperwork for Haitian migrants at Camp McCalla. Individuals were divided into two basic groups, those slated for immigration to the United States and those to be returned to Haiti.*

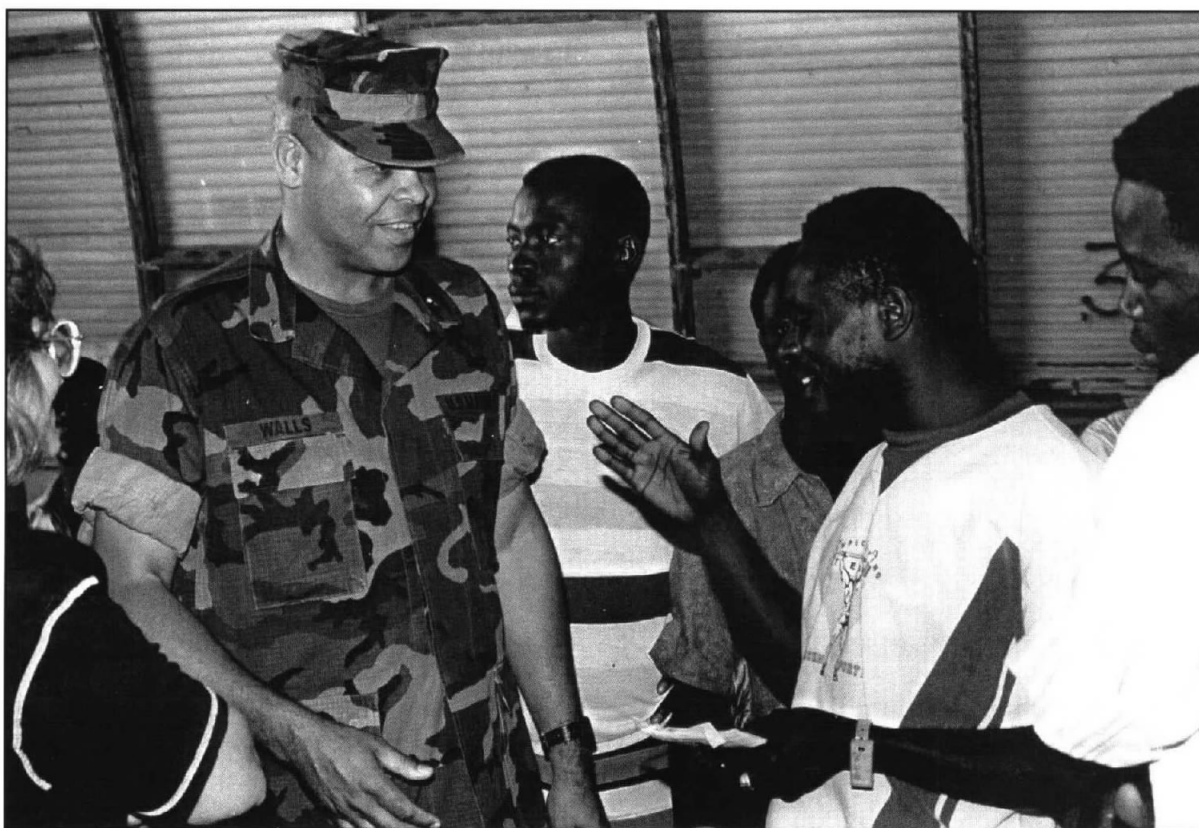


Photo courtesy of BGen George H. Walls, Jr.

*During a happy moment, BGen George H. Walls meets with "screened-in" Haitian migrants eligible to proceed to the United States. Hospital-style plastic identification bracelets, visible on the right, were provided to each migrant and became indispensable in keeping track of individuals.*

ing perfect sense to planners, were confusing to the migrants. For example, the Haitian idea of family was the extended family, not just the nuclear family. And grouping single males together turned out to be a force multiplier for malcontents, who grew increasingly vocal in early December.

### *Unrest at Camp McCalla*

Task force members often felt a degree of uncertainty about the future. They did not know how long they would be on the island or what, exactly, was U.S. Government policy on a range of migrant issues. But that confusion was minor compared to the uncertainty felt by the migrants. From their point of view, life had turned into a strange combination of action and inaction that started with a dramatic rescue at sea by a warship followed by a long wait under difficult conditions afloat. Then, one day, seemingly at random, they were transferred to shore, placed in compounds bounded by barbed wire and asked to subsist on strange food. While it was better to live in a camp

than on the deck of a ship, there was now even more waiting and little hard information on their status. Were they on their way to the U.S.? Or was there some less desirable fate in store for them?

These uncertainties led to various kinds of disturbances in the camps during the period from 5 to 17 December even though the joint task force continued to work tirelessly to implement its plans, often ahead of schedule. Already, a camp newspaper was being published in the native Creole language to provide up-to-date information, a 60-bed hospital for migrants was up and running, and a new water system for laundry had been installed. Portable toilets and showers were in place and a good lighting system illuminated the hundreds of tents austere divided by rolls of concertina wire into compounds—which were designated McCalla I, II, and III. The screened-in migrants had been moved four miles away to Camp Bulkeley to await their happy fate. Camp McCalla was, almost by definition, a haven for the unhappy, the confused, and the angry.<sup>27</sup>

While none of the early disturbances were particularly serious, they did not bode well for the



future. A 5 December demonstration at Camp Bulkeley was sparked by complaints the processing was too slow and camp conditions were too restrictive. A demonstration at Camp McCalla II on 10 December grew from a lurid rumor the Cuban army planned to storm the base and kill the Haitians if they were not out of Cuba within five days. The rumor spawned after one migrant reported hearing the news on a Cuban radio station. The result was near panic. Responding later to reporters, Major Donald J. Kappel, the JTF's public affairs officer, said: "There were no injuries, no violence—just agitation. People were yelling and running around the camp. ... Once we got wind of this, we told them ... they were safe and no one would hurt them."<sup>28</sup> Nevertheless, demonstrations at McCalla II and McCalla III continued over the next few days. Marines and soldiers erected additional concertina barriers between the various groups as a precaution.<sup>29</sup>

On the night of 14 December, McCalla II was once again the focus of attention. There was a series of meetings in the compound, which housed single males as well as a few families. The meetings began small, with key individuals

haranguing listeners. Videotapes made by the JTF intelligence section (J-2) show organizers speaking and gesticulating to groups seated on the ground around them. The leaders made their way through the compound threatening and cajoling others into sharing their viewpoint. A few hold-outs that stayed in their tents were aggressively harassed; some may have been beaten.<sup>30</sup>

The JTF found out the next day just how far the militants were willing to go. General Walls and his staff were in their offices in the small headquarters building on a hill overlooking Camp McCalla. Sergeant Major Berry recalled General Walls coming down the passageway and exclaiming, "Sergeant Major, they're out of the camp!" Walls and Berry, along with the general's aide and driver, quickly covered the short distance to the camp to confront the crowd, which comprised roughly 500 males from McCalla II who had gathered along the north and east fences. General Walls attempted to reason with them across the looped strands of concertina wire. Some of the demonstrators were polite, thanking him for his efforts but adding it was time for them to move on. Other demonstrators were more hostile, threaten-



Photo courtesy of BGen George H. Walls, Jr.

*During a less happy moment in early December 1991, Haitian migrants protest camp conditions. Although conditions at the camp were benign, many vocal migrants were eager to move on to the United States and did not understand the delay.*



ing the general if he did not comply with their demands. Approximately 50 migrants breached the northwest corner of the concertina wire, apparently planning to start their journey to the United States then and there by walking out of Camp McCalla and Guantanamo and proceeding through Cuba. Some even packed their meager belongings and were carrying them in bundles and satchels.<sup>31</sup>

As the situation quickly deteriorated, some of the migrants began throwing garbage and rocks, one object striking General Walls in the head. He was not injured, but his cover had been knocked off. He replaced his headgear and moved on, his entourage forming a protective ring around him. The general remarked to the sergeant major he would be happy when the U.S. Army military police (MPs) arrived. Sergeant Major Berry said they were already there and pointed to the rear, where some 10 meters away the MPs stood wearing riot gear with face shields already down. Some MPs had dogs with them. (Finding a large, shaggy but threatening Belgian Shepherd in their path, one group of Haitian "escapees" had simply turned around and gone back to the camp shortly before the general's arrival on scene.) An Army chaplain, who arrived to lend a hand, fell to the ground after a full carton of milk hit him in the groin. Another soldier was bitten by a Haitian and evacuated. In the words of the official message announcing the disturbance to Norfolk, the JTF reported the "Haitians employed tent poles, cots, cot cross bars [the pieces of wood that stretched the canvas tight on the cots], gallon water jugs, and broken pieces of asphalt as weapons."<sup>32</sup> The migrants also used the cots to breach the lines of concertina wire by laying them across the rings of wire to form a bridge of sorts over the razor-sharp barbs.

The melee eventually ebbed and the riot was contained. Reinforcements arrived from various units, including the base and the barracks. Some were still wearing shower shoes and civilian clothes. In the end, no migrant made it out of the McCalla area.

However, confining the disturbance was not the same as defusing it. Within McCalla II, somewhere between 50 and 250 ringleaders fanned the flames and tried to spread the unrest to other compounds. They tore down all the general-purpose tents in their own compound and tried to cross into McCalla III. They were stopped by a group of Marines from the barracks and a detachment from the Service Support Group's 8th

Engineer Support Battalion who, along with Army MPs, formed a perimeter around McCalla II. That did not stop the malcontents from shouting across the wire to the migrants in McCalla III and

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*Within McCalla II, somewhere between 50 and 250 ringleaders fanned the flames and tried to spread the unrest to other compounds. They tore down all the general-purpose tents in their own compound and tried to cross into McCalla III.*

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attempting to persuade them to join in the protest. They also directed their attention to the Haitian women and children who happened to be in McCalla II. Some of the post-action reports indicated the women and children had been held hostage. While this may have been too formal a description for their situation, they certainly were at the mercy of the malcontents and subject to pressure from them. At close of business on 15 December, the JTF reported it would keep the perimeter intact and, in understated official language, added: "tensions are such [that] it is currently deemed not prudent to reenter the camp to ensure internal security."<sup>33</sup> At approximately the same time, General Walls asked for reinforcements from the mainland United States.<sup>34</sup>

On the evening of 15 December, a representative of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees spoke with the rioters, who expressed their desire to leave the "prison" camp and talk to representatives from the Haitian community in the U.S. The migrants promised to suspend the rioting for 48 hours if the U.S. Government showed signs of preparing to move them from Guantanamo to the mainland. At the same time, General Walls, who labeled the situation "extremely volatile," explored means of meeting the more legitimate demands—such as allowing migrants who already had been screened to proceed to the United States.<sup>35</sup> The general also made his message clear to the men in McCalla II. During a brief exchange, Walls told one of the malcontents that neither he nor, by implication, any of his cohorts were going to the United States because they were behaving irresponsibly. The general admonished him to change his behavior and asked if there were any questions. There were none.<sup>36</sup>

The events of the night of 15 December set no one's mind at rest. The migrants conducted what appeared to be a voodoo ritual. Some wrapped themselves in white sheets and walked to the four corners of their compound, which represented the four corners of the earth, to consult with the spirits. They then drew strength from the earth by lying down on the ground near what appeared to be a makeshift voodoo shrine. (A voodoo shrine typically includes representations of Christian and

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*While the battalion from Camp Lejeune was still in the air, General Walls' staff was drafting a fragmentary order for Operation Take Charge, designed to regain control of the camp and to restore order within it.*

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voodoo religious figures and other objects shrouded with symbolic meaning, such as candles or glass jars.) The general and his staff worried the next step might be a blood sacrifice of some sort. One officer thought some of the Haitians believed that a sacrifice would hasten the arrival of the "magical bird" that would take them to Florida.<sup>37</sup> Another officer remembered hearing about a threat by the malcontents to start throwing babies over the fence if their demands were not met within 48 hours.<sup>38</sup> Still, there was some semblance of order in the camp. Migrants armed with makeshift weapons conducted what appeared to be patrols around the perimeter of the compound. Once again, the JTF intelligence staff filmed the proceedings, in part to make a record, and in part to make it easier to identify the ringleaders.<sup>39</sup>

In the meantime, the reinforcements General Walls had requested were on their way. The responding unit was the air alert battalion from Camp Lejeune, which was at the time, 2d Battalion, 8th Marines, Lieutenant Colonel James C. Hardee commanding. Hardee's unit began deploying a total of 302 Marines and sailors from Company F and Company G and the supporting battle staff less than four hours after receiving the deployment order. The battalion was on the ground in Cuba by the early morning hours of 16 December.<sup>40</sup>

While the battalion from Camp Lejeune was still in the air, General Walls' staff was drafting a

fragmentary order for Operation Take Charge, designed to regain control of the camp and to restore order within it. The order outlined six phases and essentially called for the JTF to establish a series of progressively smaller cordons to divide the malcontents into ever smaller and more manageable groups.<sup>41</sup>

The order stated that, even before the first phase, the JTF would conduct deception operations intended primarily to keep the migrants occupied until reinforcements arrived. In Phase I, scheduled to begin at 0400 on 17 December, the most basic cordon and breach of militant defenses would occur. The external security units would establish a cordon around the camp while the internal security units would break into the compound and establish a cordon around the migrants in the southeast corner of the camp. In Phase II, the JTF would set up additional cordons and sweep the compound for stragglers. In Phase III, the MPs would safeguard and transfer families that had the bad luck of being located in McCalla II. The MPs also would remove anything from the camp that could serve as a weapon. Phase IV called for putting up new barriers. During Phase V, the remaining migrants would be screened and searched, followed by the withdrawal of assault forces during Phase VI. Lieutenant Colonel Ted W. Hashimoto, commander of the U.S. Army's 504th Military Police Battalion, Fort Lewis, Washington, was to take control of the internal security force while Colonel Blair would assume control of all Marines present, including the newly arrived 2d Battalion, 8th Marines.

When identified in the course of Operation Take Charge, ringleaders would be detained and held for removal to a segregation facility, Camp VII, which was a cross between a holding facility and a brig. But the order placed specific limits on the use of force. The emphasis was to be a show of force, with actual force to be used only when necessary. Specific guidance was tailored to various threats the members of the JTF might face. Most of the troops in the operation would carry only riot gear, such as shields and batons. Migrants who were slow to move during the operation were to be helped to their feet and encouraged to move where directed. If they still did not move, they were to be subdued, restrained with plastic flexicuffs, and left for the snatch team. Violent resisters were to be subdued, cuffed, and placed face down in a prone position. If migrants rushed the line, troops were to use shields to push them off and escalate to batons only if nec-



DVIC DN-ST-92-05451

*As camp life returned to normal following several days of disturbances, members of the U.S. Army's 82d Airborne Division Band perform for the migrants on Christmas Day 1991.*

essary. If groups of migrants broke through the line, the troops on the line were to remain in formation and allow the snatch teams to handle the intrusion. All things considered, it was a very carefully planned operation that left little to chance and clearly indicated the commander's intent of control and restraint.

When the time came for the operation to begin in the early morning of 17 December, the Haitians in the camp were nearing exhaustion. Many were actually asleep when 0400 rolled around. This was part of the JTF plan: to strike when the migrants were at the end of their tether. There is no question the Haitians were taken completely by surprise, and it was not a pleasant surprise. Grim-faced Marines, some holding rifles with fixed bayonets, encircled the camp. Marine engineers wearing flak jackets and helmets and armed with breaching tools moved swiftly to make gaps in the wire through which the Army MPs, equipped with riot gear, entered the compound. The stunned migrants offered no resistance, and the first—and potentially most difficult—phase of the operation was over in nine minutes.<sup>42</sup>

The JTF immediately proceeded to Phases II and III. It took some 30 minutes to transfer families to McCalla IV, which cleared the way for the

removal of all cots, tents, poles, and tent stakes. The Phase IV construction of a new barrier around McCalla II began within five hours of the start of the operation. All the male migrants in the camp were carefully searched and screened before being either returned to the camp or moved to Camp VII. The process included a check against the data collected on video by cameramen from the J-2 during the unrest. Whatever the destination, each migrant received two blankets and a cot—albeit a cot without wooden crossbars. As General Walls noted in his message to Norfolk, life in McCalla II would only return to normal once “migrants show a willingness to obey basic camp rules.”<sup>43</sup>

The air alert battalion from Camp Lejeune continued to play a significant role, especially in reinforcing the exterior perimeter of McCalla II while the new barrier was being erected. When releasing the battalion on 23 December to return to Camp Lejeune, General Walls wrote the group had “conducted the joint operation with all the professionalism and spirit that U.S. Marines are known to possess.”<sup>44</sup>

On the same day, the Commandant of the Marines Corps, General Carl E. Mundy, Jr., came to see what his Marines had accomplished.



General Mundy recognized the recent efforts of all Marines at Guantanamo and discussed how Operation GTMO might end. The same message that announced the Commandant's impending arrival discussed plans to repatriate migrants to Haiti, stating the JTF was to begin to prepare migrants for repatriation.<sup>45</sup>

The plan showed the same refrain that had persisted throughout the operation. The preference, especially at the senior levels of command in Norfolk and Washington, was for the operation to end as soon as possible so units of the JTF could move on to other work. That point of view was especially important for small Services such as the Marines, which found its resources drained significantly by the operation. But as time went on, it became clear the types of challenges Marines faced at Guantanamo would become part of the operational realities in the post-Cold War era.

### *Anticlimax and Repatriation*

New Year's Day 1992 came and went without any resolution of the situation. At the end of

December, there were some 7,000 Haitian migrants at Guantanamo. A month later, that number had swelled to more than 11,000. Then, on 31 January, the Supreme Court vacated lower court stays that had kept President George H. W. Bush's administration from forcibly repatriating migrants to Haiti. The day following the court action, JTF officers spread the word among screened-out migrants and asked for volunteers to go home on the first boats. Even if no one volunteered, there was no doubt the U.S. would repatriate screened-out migrants. "For the most part, they took it very calmly," General Walls commented to reporters, adding the migrants "understand that [the court's decision] allowed for involuntary repatriation."<sup>46</sup>

The JTF was soon loading migrants onto Coast Guard cutters bound for Port-au-Prince, where they disembarked under international supervision in accordance with carefully crafted agreements between the Haitian and U.S. Governments, as well as various international organizations. The goal was to protect the returning migrants, and arrangements were made for United Nations and Red Cross representatives to monitor the process along with Haitian and U.S. officials.<sup>47</sup>



DVIC DN-ST-92-05828

*Among the prominent visitors to Camp McCalla was the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Gen Colin L. Powell, shown here in February 1992 listening to Marine GySgt Ronald Antoine as he interprets for one of the migrant leaders, Pastor Edme Lexidan.*



DVIC DN-ST-93-00308

*At Port-au-Prince, where Coast Guard cutters had dropped them off, repatriated Haitian migrants wait for transportation back to their villages and an unknown reception.*

While most screened-out migrants went peacefully, often relieved the boredom and uncertainty of life at Camp McCalla had come to an end, there were a few dramatic moments, especially when reporters were on hand. "Kill me now," wailed one migrant, flailing his arms. "If I go back to Haiti, they will kill me. ... No! I don't want to go back to Haiti!"<sup>48</sup>

To keep order on the cutters, the JTF deployed Marines in their traditional role as shipboard security detachments. Prominent among the Marines selected for this duty were teams from the 2d and 3d Platoons of the Fleet Anti-Terrorist Security Team (FAST) Company, Atlantic, based in Norfolk, Virginia.<sup>49</sup> Marines from the barracks at Guantanamo sometimes rode the ships in 10-man detachments, but whenever the FAST Marines were present, the mission of the barracks Marines was simply to provide pier-side security at Guantanamo.<sup>50</sup>

The seagoing Marines faced a unique set of challenges in their work. The experiences of the Marines and Coast Guard crew of the cutter

*Tampa* (WMEC 902) on one of the later runs from Guantanamo to Port-au-Prince offer a vivid illustration of those challenges. After being embarked at Guantanamo, many of the 96 migrants on board were belligerent; claiming they had been told the destination was Miami, not Port-au-Prince. They went on a hunger strike—a more or less pointless gesture since the trip to Haiti lasted a mere 12 hours. When the ship docked in Port-au-Prince in a light rain around 1100 on 29 April, all the migrants refused to go ashore. As members of the press looked on, one of the women started to scream, as if in great pain. At the same time, the ship's company began to carry the migrants' possessions ashore. At this point, about 65 migrants left the ship to regain their possessions.

Through a linguist attached to the JTF, the ship's officers negotiated with the remaining migrants, who said they would rather die on board the *Tampa* than as victims of the military regime ashore. The negotiations eventually reached an impasse, and the ship's company shifted gears, preparing to use a semblance of force by charging the ship's fire hoses. That threat enabled the Coast Guard crew to escort one of the migrants off the ship. When he cried out to onlookers that they "use force," one of the Haitian policemen on the pier countered ominously, "We have force here, too." But the tension was broken. There was even a ripple of laughter, and the rest of the migrants filed ashore without incident. Two of the migrants went so far as to bend down and kiss the dock. By 1440, the last busload of migrants had left the dockyards.<sup>51</sup>

Representatives of the American Embassy at Port-au-Prince who were at the pier later reported that most of the migrants with whom they had spoken said they were glad to be home, and it was only a few malcontents who had caused the trouble. The embassy did not rest at that, and in the coming weeks, looked hard for signs of retribution against the returnees, but found none.<sup>52</sup>

Simply repatriating the Haitians at Guantanamo did not end the operation. It seemed for every Haitian the Coast Guard deposited on the pier at Port-au-Prince, another set sail, hoping to be picked up by the Coast Guard and be taken to the Navy base in Cuba where they could vie for a chance of becoming a political refugee and going to the United States. If anything, the influx of migrants grew in the spring of 1992, and Camp McCalla often came close to capacity, which was still 12,500, despite repatriations of more than 1,000 migrants per month.





DVIC DN-ST-92-05826

*A Marine talks with Haitian migrants at Camp McCalla. Many Marines were on friendly terms with their charges, but Joint Task Force rules forbade any conduct that went beyond a strictly professional relationship, let alone fraternization.*

As time went on, members of the JTF became more adept at running the camp. From interception at sea, through processing and screening, to subsistence and immigration or repatriation, the operation had become largely trouble-free. This was possible because of the solid groundwork laid by General Walls and his troops.<sup>53</sup> \*

\* Water—its sources, use and disposal—was a primary concern for Marine engineers in Operation GTMO. Most of the Haitian migrants had never had such free access to clean, potable water. They bathed in it, washed their clothes in it, and drank it—24 hours a day! This created a challenge in the form of controlling runoff, the “gray water” of soap residue and dirt. The engineers welcomed the arrival of an Air Force “ditch witch,” which enabled the rapid digging of drainage ditches to the edge of the steep cliff, which was Camp McCalla’s western perimeter. From there the water dropped into Guantanamo Bay. An Israeli-made reverse-osmosis purification plant produced all of the water at Guantanamo. The capacity of the plant was large enough for the relatively small numbers of migrants in Operation GTMO. Rationing water was never an issue in 1991, but it was to become a critical issue a few years later. (Maj Theodore R. McKeldin III, Notes on Operation GTMO, Dec00, GTMO/Haiti Collection, MCHC)

Operation GTMO always had been intended as a temporary expedient, not as an alternate means of processing potential immigrants. It occurred to policy makers in Washington that, in at least one sense, the camp at Guantanamo was part of the problem because its very existence appeared to attract many migrants who might otherwise have stayed home. As a result of that view, the Bush administration decided in late May 1992 to try a different approach. By an Executive Order dated 24 May, the President directed the Coast Guard to rescue and repatriate migrants directly to Port-au-Prince without an intermediate stay at Guantanamo.<sup>54</sup> A few days later, the administration announced it would phase out the tent city on the base to keep from enticing Haitians to flee their homeland.<sup>55</sup> It seemed the administration had found a solution to the problem through direct repatriation coupled with camp closure, thus removing the incentive for a Haitian to leave home.

The administration’s approach had the desired effect, and the number of migrants at



Guantanamo began to dwindle as no new migrants arrived. All that remained were migrants scheduled for departure, either to return to Haiti or, for the lucky minority, to start a new life in the United States. By 6 June, the number of migrants had fallen to 8,035 and would drop to only 2,003 by 21 June. On 14 June, the joint task force com-

Lejeune worked hard to make Camp McCalla a memory by dismantling and storing tents, wire, and other equipment. Camp McCalla was closed on 10 July.<sup>56</sup>

The number of members assigned to the joint task force continued to shrink as the migrants departed. By 18 August, there were only 268



DVIC DF-ST-99-06023

*A group of Haitian migrants stand outside their tent at Camp McCalla. Time appears to hang heavy on them. The French word on the tent flap, "maleur" (usually spelled a little differently), is translated as "unhappiness."*

mander distributed the redeployment order. The order called for the dismantling of Camp McCalla and the consolidation of remaining migrants at Camp Bulkeley. When the migrant population dropped close to 1,000, which it did by 30 June, the JTF shifted its flag to Camp Bulkeley and relieved the Marine component of its responsibility for that camp. This freed many Marines to do other work or to return to the United States. Before returning home, Marines from Camp

members of the JTF caring for 293 migrants at Camp Bulkeley. Those 293 Haitians were in legal limbo. Most had been screened and would have been free to travel but for one major obstacle: about 230 of them were HIV-positive. The rest were their family members. Under U.S. law, it was nearly impossible for anyone who was infected with the virus to enter the country.<sup>57</sup>

There followed almost a year of stalemate, with the migrants behind wire at Camp Bulkeley and a



DVIC DN-ST-99-06028

*Migrants go about their daily routine at Camp McCalla in the summer of 1992. Many made the best of an increasingly frustrating situation, while others displayed outright anger at their fate.*

rump JTF caring for them. A composite Marine MP company from Camp Lejeune provided security at Camp Bulkeley for much of that time. When MP platoons rotated, barracks Marines stepped in for them. The quick reaction force also was dispatched whenever there was a call for reinforcements.\* Two Marine officers commanded the JTF during this period, Brigadier General Richard I. Neal, from 22 June to 18 August 1992, and Colonel Lawrence R. Zinser, from 15 December 1992 to 11 March 1993.<sup>58</sup>

In 1992, the quick reaction force deployed several times. The most notable deployments occurred in July and August when violent protests broke out among the migrants who, bored and restless, wanted the U.S. Government to resolve their status one way or the other. Airing concerns at regularly scheduled town meetings failed to relieve tensions. There was, after all, little the JTF could do about policies laid down in Washington. During the disturbance on 17-18 July, the migrants destroyed a fire truck and injured 14 Air

Force security policemen severely enough that they required treatment at the local naval hospital. The injuries were incurred in part because security policemen had exercised so much restraint when facing the migrants.<sup>59</sup>

A month later, on 29 August, there was an even more intense disturbance. This time the migrants burned seven SEAhuts (Southeast Asia huts, a temporary barracks used extensively during the Vietnam War) to call attention to their plight. They got attention, but not the kind they wanted. Once again, as in December 1991, the commanding officer of the Marine Barracks, now Colonel John T. Murray, a bluff Irish-American described by one of his subordinates as a Marine's Marine, organized a task force to restore order. In a scaled-down version of Operation Take Charge, Colonel Murray quickly organized 450 to 500 Marines and sailors into an effective force, which was able to restore order in the camp without a single Haitian or U.S. casualty.<sup>60</sup> Nevertheless, the JTF still had to foot the \$12,500 bill for damage caused by the migrants.<sup>61</sup>

In the aftermath of the disturbances, further quality-of-life improvements were instituted to transform the camp into a temporary community. There were upgrades in plumbing and electricity

\* Quick reaction forces ranged from squad-sized to whatever size force was needed to contain the situation safely. The forces comprised well-equipped Marines who could deploy within minutes to quell any disturbance.

and migrant participation in the camp's administration was increased. In a related move on 21 September, the JTF closed Camp VII, the segregation facility for malcontents, and opened Camp Bulkeley's gates from 0800 to 2000. There really was nowhere for the migrants to go, but it was a welcome gesture.<sup>62</sup>

The payoff was that, as the stalemate dragged on into 1993, migrant protests became somewhat less violent. The next protest, which began at 1300 on 29 January after the migrants had conferred with lawyers from the United States, was a hunger strike, which was monitored closely by

medical personnel. The hunger strike lasted through February and into March and attracted the attention of dignitaries like the Reverend Jesse L. Jackson and Rhode Island Senator Claiborne Pell. Jackson vowed to join the hunger strike if the administration did not relent and allow the Haitians to enter the United States. But Congress, which continued to vote by wide margins to ban immigration by anyone who was HIV-positive, tied the administration's hands.<sup>63</sup>

There followed a variety of peaceful protests, a "break-out" attempt by 10 migrants (who landed in the base brig), and the burning of 12 more



Sketch by Capt Burton E. Moore, Jr., (Marine Corps Art Collection)

*A portrayal of Marines and refugees entitled "The Old Gunny is not Pleased!" Combat artist Capt Burton Moore depicted the 29 June 1992 event where Haitians were denied access to one of the holding compound buildings at Camp Bulkeley and the resulting confrontation with known trouble makers.*



camp shelters. As lawyers and courts in the U.S. continued to ponder the migrants' fate, the month of May saw another, shorter hunger strike—this one only 12 days—and a rock-throwing incident on 30 May. Events finally turned in the migrants' favor. Some of the migrants entered the United States through various loopholes in the law, and on 8 June a U.S. district judge in New York ruled in favor of allowing the remaining migrants to

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*At the end of the day, the statistics for Operation GTMO alone told a dramatic story. The JTF had processed more than 30,000 migrants, 10,791 of whom had entered the U.S. while some 23,833 were repatriated to Haiti.*

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enter the U.S. as parolees.<sup>64</sup> It was an empty victory for many of the migrants infected with the AIDS virus. Years later, they still had not regularized their status or fit into society. Their relationship with the established Haitian communities in New York and Miami remained ambivalent at best, and they were almost as isolated as they had been at Guantanamo.<sup>65</sup>

Apparently exhausted by the process, the administration did not object, and promised to remove the remaining migrants from Guantanamo within two weeks. Armed with this decree, the JTF lost no time in preparing for its deactivation. By 23 June 1993, the command was down to 60 troops and happy to turn Camp Bulkeley back over to the Navy base. The JTF was formally deactivated and relinquished control of its headquarters facilities in the early morning of 30 June. The last of its members started for home the next day, leaving the most frustrating part of Operation GTMO behind them.<sup>66</sup> These events coincided with diplomatic initiatives to return President Jean-Bertrand Aristide to power and end the ongoing crisis in Haiti.

At the end of the day, the statistics for Operation GTMO alone told a dramatic story. The JTF had processed more than 30,000 migrants, 10,791 of whom had entered the U.S. while some 23,833 were repatriated to Haiti. The cost of the operation was recorded as \$58,463,000.<sup>67</sup>

What were the implications of Operation GTMO for the Marine Corps? One was straightforward: that migrant operations were not an anomaly, but a mission for the 1990s. General Walls commented this was the kind of mission that only

the military could execute on short notice—with its capability for a quick, orderly, coordinated air and ground response to a humanitarian crisis.<sup>68</sup> It also called for a degree of force—or at least the threat of force—applied with skill and restraint to preserve order.<sup>69</sup> While Operation GTMO was something of a departure from the missions of the Cold War, a Marine looking back at the history of the Corps can find many of the elements of Operation GTMO in earlier operations: ambiguous situations—a strange mixture of humanitarian, police, and military operations—that called for creativity, flexibility, and good small unit leadership.

The related conclusion that migrant operations were a harbinger of things to come was evident in the after-action reports. The JTF engineer officer, for example, formally suggested that Marine Corps civil affairs officers design and maintain off-the-shelf plans for the construction of small, medium, and large camps for varying periods of time. Other suggestions stressed the usefulness of military occupational specialties in migrant operations, such as a strong intelligence staff, which a commander needed to monitor the camps, and an independent combat service support organization, as opposed to a smaller logistics section, or J-4, within the joint staff. But perhaps the most important lesson for Marines was “jointness.” No one service could go it alone in migrant operations, and it turned out that jointness was neither as difficult nor unpleasant as some Marines had feared.<sup>70</sup> Although the JTF was a pick-up team and, as such, had an inherent handicap, many of the Marines who went to Guantanamo Bay had previously worked together at Camp Lejeune. That familiarity allowed them to quickly establish a working infrastructure for the humanitarian operation.

There also was a deep sense of personal satisfaction for Marines who had served in the JTF, many of whom would remember Operation GTMO as one of the highlights of their careers. Marines traditionally respond well to a challenge, especially under the right leadership. The work at Guantanamo was hard and the hours long, but along with the other members of the JTF, the Marines created something out of nothing, and that was very satisfying. Adding to that sense of satisfaction, the accomplishments of the operation were obtained while contributing to a humanitarian cause. Most Marines in Operation GTMO were doing more than just following orders, they were genuinely committed to helping others in need.<sup>71</sup>

## Chapter 2

# Operation Sea Signal

### *Processing Haitian Migrants off Jamaica*

Although Operation GTMO eventually sputtered to an end and its joint task force disbanded, the underlying tensions in the region persisted. The illegal regime in Haiti did not loosen its grip on power despite international pressure, which included an ineffective embargo that continued to make the poor even poorer and more desperate without weakening the wealthy elite the embargo was designed to punish. In July 1993, the United Nations brokered an agreement, known as the Governor's Island Accord, whereby the Haitian military would cede power peacefully to ousted President Jean-Bertrand Aristide. However, little came of the accord after an embarrassing confrontation in October when an advance party of United Nations peacekeepers on board the *Harlan County* (LST 1196) opted not to land at Port-au-Prince in the face of a threatening demonstration. Meanwhile, the Cuban economy continued to deteriorate in step with speculations about Cuban leader Fidel Castro's health and the durability of his regime. These factors provided ample potential for new waves of migrants in the Eastern Caribbean in late 1993 and early 1994.

2d Force Service Support Group (2d FSSG) at Camp Lejeune, North Carolina, was, in a sense, the successor organization to JTF GTMO—not only because the cadre of that JTF originated from the unit, but also because a service support group comprised the expertise and resources required for migrant operations. As such, it was logical for 2d FSSG to hold many of the GTMO records and be the institutional memory of the operation. It also made sense that 2d FSSG would be tasked with planning for future joint refugee operations. Under the overall command of U.S. Atlantic Command (USACOM), as Commander in Chief, Atlantic (CinCLANT) was now known, 2d FSSG worked with the Navy base at Guantanamo to prepare and maintain contingency plans for

migrant operations. To that end, a lengthy 7- to 10-day conference was held at Camp Lejeune in early 1994 to discuss potential migrant operations.<sup>1</sup>

No Marine was surprised in April 1994 when various commands at Camp Lejeune were warned of a rising tide of Haitian migrants. But the administration's policy was hazy at best, making it impossible to simply pull an operational plan off the shelf and implement it. What did emerge clearly from Washington was a general reluctance to repeat Operation GTMO—that is, to maintain



Department of Defense Photo (USMC)  
*BGen Michael J. Williams commanded Joint Task Force 160, which in many ways was the successor of Joint Task Force GTMO. Described as a man who was "cool in the hot seat" at Guantanamo, he later attained four-star rank as Assistant Commandant of the Marine Corps.*



DVIC DN-ST-89-02605

*A starboard view of the USNS Comfort (T-AH 20) as it traveled through the Panama Canal. In 1994, the hospital ship was pressed into service to assist as a screening platform for Haitian migrants. The ship's profile reflects its original design as a tanker.*

refugee camps surrounded by barbed wire on an American base. The goal was to avoid the lengthy stalemate JTF GTMO experienced when faced with HIV-positive Haitians, not to mention the bad press from photos of heavily armed Marines and soldiers confronting angry migrants across billowing rolls of concertina wire. As the tide of new migrants began to flow, the procedure was to keep them moving in an orderly fashion, either to the U.S. or back to Haiti, but not to pitch camp.<sup>2</sup>

In April and May, the outlines of the operation began to emerge. By mid-May, U.S. Marine Corps Forces, Atlantic, had issued a kind of warning order to Headquarters II Marine Expeditionary Force (II MEF) at Camp Lejeune stating that, like his predecessor, President William J. Clinton had decided that "genuine Haitian refugees fleeing by boat ... [would] not be directly returned to Haiti." Instead, the migrants would be screened at "a facility in the region" or "on vessels anchored off shore." The exact location would depend on the outcome of diplomatic initiatives.<sup>3</sup>

Even before the plan took final shape, Atlantic Command directed II MEF to provide a joint task

force commander and a Marine component for the nascent Joint Task Force 160 (JTF 160). On 24 May 1994, then Brigadier General Michael J. Williams became commander, JTF 160, and Lieutenant Colonel (colonel select) Douglas C. Redlich became commander, Marine Forces 160 (MarFor 160). Under his command was Lieutenant Colonel John R. Allen, the head of 2d Battalion, 4th Marines. JTF 160 soon received a set of "be prepared to" missions, which included providing shipboard security for migrant processing, establishing a facility for migrant processing on Grand Turk Island, and maintaining a presence at Guantanamo to support such initiatives. By early June, elements of JTF 160 were on the ground or on ships somewhere in the theater.<sup>4</sup>

Like General Walls before him, General Williams was a fortuitous choice. Originally from Baltimore, Maryland, he was a graduate of the U.S. Naval Academy who became a Naval Aviator and was to become Assistant Commandant of the Marine Corps. He brought to the job a combination of compassion, common sense, and determination. A story about the general and the operation in *People* magazine was aptly titled "Cool in



the Hot Seat.” Reporting that General Williams had remained “unflappable” sitting on a “tinder-box” of thousands of refugees, the article pointed out this was not his first effort to create something out of nothing; during the Gulf War, he had turned a stretch of desert wasteland into a working air base.<sup>5</sup>

The initial focus for General Williams was ship-board processing. To serve as the processing center, the Navy offered the USNS *Comfort* (T-AH 20), an enormous tanker that had been converted into a hospital ship. After a tortuously complicated set of negotiations, Jamaica agreed to permit the *Comfort* to anchor in her waters while processing

migrants. However, the Haitians were to remain on board ship at all times. In concept, Coast Guard cutters would intercept boatloads of migrants in the Windward Passage and transport them to the *Comfort* at anchor near Kingston. On the *Comfort*, the Immigration and Naturalization Service would conduct medical screenings and interviews. The Haitians were to quickly be screened-in for immigration to the United States or screened-out for repatriation to Haiti. If screened-in, the migrant would fly to Guantanamo for further processing. Migrants that were screened-out would be returned directly to Haiti by Coast Guard cutter or, if the cutters were





DVIC DN-ST-98-02144

*An aerial view of the Windward Piers at Guantanamo Bay showing the chartered vessels Mediterranean Sky (left) and Ivan Franko. A former Russian troopship, the Ivan Franko was soon known among Marines as a dirty, substandard option for billeting.*

overloaded, would wait on the Ukrainian cruise ship *Gruziya*, which the JTF had leased for the operation at a cost of \$30,000 per day. *Gruziya* was a well-run ship, accustomed to meeting the demands of European and American passengers. She would have served the JTF well, but her contract expired before the JTF began to operate, and her successor, the *Ivan Franko*, would prove to be much less capable of meeting the demands of the operation. A company of Marines from 2d Battalion, 4th Marines, and the battalion's battle staff, including Lieutenant Colonel Allen, would be on the ships to maintain order.<sup>6</sup> \*

There was nothing wrong with the operational concept. It was straightforward and fit the mission. But there were flaws in the details and the execution, and those flaws became apparent soon after the first migrants arrived on board the *Comfort* on 16 June. The assumption was that 500

migrants could be processed each day, a number that proved wildly optimistic. The ship was configured for handling trauma patients rather than for diagnosing infectious diseases, from which many of the Haitians suffered. Medical personnel had to screen for diseases such as tuberculosis, and the limited number of x-ray machines created a bottleneck. Another problem was finding a place on the ship to house patients with infectious respiratory ailments. The ship's self-contained heating, ventilation and air conditioning system made it difficult to isolate air-borne infections. In fact, the very nature of the ventilation system made it highly probable that air-borne infections would spread throughout the ship. It was a no-win situation: migrants had to be taken below deck to be examined for respiratory infections. Once there, the mere act of breathing could put any infection into the circulated air of the ventilation system and rapidly spread it throughout the ship. Eventually, someone found a portable x-ray machine that worked outdoors. The machine was set up on the flight deck and put to work under less than optimal conditions.<sup>7</sup>

\* Maj John L. Shissler III noted that American intelligence tracked the movements of the *Ivan Franko* to see where the Soviets might be sending troops. It was one of the ironies of the post-Cold War period that she was now "on our side." (Shissler intvw)





DVIC DM-ST-97-01595

*LtCol John R. Allen, commanding officer of the 2d Battalion, 4th Marines, gives a guided tour of the Comfort to special presidential envoy to Haiti, the Honorable William Gray. The tour demonstrated the route a Haitian migrant would take when delivered for screening.*

There were related problems of disposing potentially infectious human waste, and of producing enough fresh water to accommodate both the migrants and the members of the JTF. General Williams entered a virtual catalogue of problems in his diary, starting with the observation that

"[n]othing maritime is easy." He noted that sheltered anchorages for super tankers and large ships like the *Comfort* pose unique difficulties for the types of small craft needed to ferry migrants to and from their destinations; big ships and little boats did not mix well. To further complicate matters, the same anchorages typically did not have the same services as regular ports, which usually offer services such as water taxis, barges, sewer and water connections, and floating supplies.<sup>8</sup>

As a result, migrant camps sprouted on the *Comfort's* weather decks, principally the helicopter pad. Using a hodgepodge of crates, pallets, tents, camouflage netting, and portable toilets, the task force erected shelters for the migrants. A special enclosure was erected to house migrants showing signs of tuberculosis, 12 percent of the total population. The enclosure was surrounded by ad hoc nylon fencing and guarded by a Marine who stood upwind from the migrants and warned anyone who approached of the potential danger. Temporary communities took shape and leaders emerged. To Allen, it looked like the infamous Civil War prison camp at Andersonville. But he and the Haitians made it work.<sup>9</sup>



Photo courtesy of LtCol John R. Allen

*A tent camp for Haitian migrants was set up on the helicopter flight deck of the Comfort. It was a hot, austere, and boring place.*





Photo courtesy of LtCol John R. Allen

*The 2d Battalion, 4th Marines, provided meal service on the flight deck of the Comfort. The individual serving the meal is himself a migrant who volunteered to assist the Marines.*

A studious Marine who had first made a name for himself commanding the rigorous Infantry Officer's Course at Quantico, Virginia, Allen was a devotee of the Marine Corps' *Small Wars Manual*, a guidebook written earlier in the century for small unit leaders in the jungles of Central America facing unusual challenges ranging from civil unrest to guerrilla warfare. The manual was based on the assumption that small wars "are conceived in uncertainty, [and] ... demand the highest type of leadership directed by intelligence, resourcefulness, and ingenuity." That concept helped Colonel Allen recognize the value of working with the migrant community leaders. When he appeared on deck, he would make a point of showing respect for the leaders by sitting and eating with them in their communities. Lieutenant Colonel Allen also ensured the Marines shared some of the hardships with the migrants. For example, Marines maintained a presence

among the migrants during the heat of the day, which was intensified by the steel deck, and during the routine tropical downpours.<sup>10</sup>

There were additional unusual challenges. One being the *Ivan Franko*, the only option for housing some of the Marines along with migrants who had been screened-out, was a filthy former Soviet troopship. Everyone on the *Ivan Franko* lived in fetid squalor under far worse conditions than existed on the *Comfort*.<sup>11</sup>

In late June, accusations of murder on the high seas began to surface. The story, which unfolded bit by bit, involved a boat filled with Haitians who, like many others, hoped to get to Florida. During the voyage, food supplies—mainly flour mixed with seawater—on the boat dwindled and a gang of migrants took it upon themselves to reduce the number of people on board. One woman reported the men tried to throw her husband overboard. When she resisted, crying des-

perately, the gang moved on in search of another victim. Another man, who was from a different village than most of the other migrants on the boat, reported he had kept a low profile to avoid the gang. All told, the gang allegedly murdered seven migrants. With the help of military lawyers, eight suspects were identified and confined until late July. The JTF ultimately sent the suspects back to Haiti for trial under the laws of that nation on the grounds the murders had occurred on a Haitian vessel.<sup>12</sup> \*

In early July, the 2d Marine Division took steps to limit the potential for violence at sea, at least on board U.S. ships. The division began by deploying small detachments of Marines to Navy and Coast Guard ships to provide security during Operations Able Manner and Able Vigil, the code-names for the interdiction of migrants at sea, which lasted through August.<sup>13</sup>

As the operation continued, it became clear the Jamaican option was not working. There were simply too many Haitians. JTF 160 already had made the decision to send some migrants directly to Guantanamo, even before screening, when the lines on the *Comfort* were too long. At about the same time, the Clinton administration concluded the policy of rescuing and interviewing migrants was apparently encouraging Haitians to become sea-borne migrants. As such, the policy was abruptly changed to stem the flow of migrants, just as the Bush administration had done a few years earlier. The new policy stated that migrants

rescued at sea could opt either for return to Haiti (where they could, in theory, apply for a visa at the American Embassy) or go to a "safe haven," not further defined but supposedly a refuge of some sort outside Haiti. Migrants would be allowed to stay at the safe haven as long as the Cedras regime persisted.<sup>14</sup>

Faced with the new policy and the continuing flow of migrants, General Williams decided not to receive any new migrants on the *Comfort*, and on 6 July he moved his flag to Guantanamo, where he had to deal with 108 would-be illegal Chinese immigrants. The Chinese migrants had been caught in the Coast Guard's nets and briefly put in the JTF's charge, a bizarre additional burden for the already harried task force.<sup>15</sup>

Joint Task Force 160 began to flow resources only to Guantanamo, and not to Jamaica. Once the Coast Guard ships and C-130 aircraft stopped transporting migrants to Jamaica, everyone in the JTF was ready for the *Comfort* to raise anchor, sail to Guantanamo, and unload its migrants at the

\* When a cutter with migrants arrived alongside the *Comfort*, the typical routine was for Luis A. Moreno, an officer with the U.S. State Department, and LtCol Allen to board. Speaking through an interpreter, they would brief the migrants, who tended to be buoyant and hopeful and often cheered as Moreno and LtCol Allen outlined the routine on the *Comfort*. But the mood was noticeably subdued on one of the cutters, prompting Moreno and LtCol Allen to ask for an explanation. The interpreter already had heard parts of the story and told the colonel one migrant boat had been overcrowded and some of the men had decided to throw "excess" migrants overboard. At one point, the interpreter gestured to a woman sitting alone in the helicopter shelter on the flight deck clutching her baby and rocking back and forth. "She was next," he said. LtCol Allen asked the interpreter if he knew who the perpetrators were, and when he said yes, LtCol Allen called for the reaction force, which was waiting on the *Comfort*. Dressed in helmets, body armor, and riot gear, the force came streaming onto the cutter. After briefing the noncommissioned officer in charge of the detail, LtCol Allen pointed out the first suspect and the Marines laid hands on him. The effect was electric. The previously subdued migrants leaped to their feet, pointed to the others the interpreter had named and began cheering when they were led away. (LtCol John R. Allen memo to author, 5Mar00, hereafter Allen Memorandum)



DVIC DM-ST-98-02127

*A corporal from Company G, 2d Battalion, 4th Marines, carries a young Haitian migrant off the Comfort. The child was one of the last migrants to leave the ship.*





DVIC DM-ST-98-02126

*A Navy chief warrant officer, who was a Deployed Mass Population Identification and Tracking System (DMPITS) expert, checks rosters received from the Comfort as migrants shift to the control of Joint Task Force 160 ashore. The system was a vital component of JTF operations. Having evolved since Operation GTMO, it produced the databases and the plastic bracelets, which enabled the JTF to track individual migrants.*

Navy base. However, the Jamaican government said the *Comfort* could not leave Jamaican waters because the U.S. Government committed to use Jamaican facilities for a specific purpose and period of time. The State Department was nervous about offending Jamaican sensibilities and was slow to resolve the deadlock. This made the situation on the *Comfort* very difficult because it left approximately 1,000 Haitians marooned on the ship, and the longer the deadlock dragged on, the angrier the migrants became.<sup>16</sup>

Lieutenant Colonel Allen soon had a riot on his hands. One very hot day around noon he was summoned to the flight deck to find two files of Marines in full riot gear facing an unruly crowd. Four Marines reinforced them with shotguns waiting in reserve. Two Haitians were delivering heated speeches to the group. Using the proven technique of separating the leaders from the crowd, Allen ordered his Marines to “snatch” the troublemakers. A burly 220-pound body builder stepped forward, put one of the troublemakers in a bear

hug, and wrestled him to the steel deck. The Marines then scuttled him out of sight.<sup>17</sup>

The action sent a shock wave through the crowd. Not only did it deprive them of their leader, but it sent a message the Marines meant business. In response, many of the Haitians simply fell to the deck and cried in frustration. Nothing they tried seemed to work. Allen followed up with a humanitarian “combined arms” team made up of psychological warfare specialists, chaplains, and civil affairs officers, all of whom helped to contain the situation.<sup>18</sup> \*

\* Since there is no easy Haitian translation for “Marine,” members of Joint Task Force 160 originally used the French word for soldier when addressing the Haitian migrants. But the Haitians did not understand exactly who the Marines were, so the U.S. servicemen switched to the word “Marine” itself, and the migrants reacted with respect. They remembered the Marine constabulary, which had policed Haiti some 60 years earlier. Soon, all migrants knew it was Marines who rode the “the ghost ship,” as they called the white-painted *Comfort*. (Allen intvw)



After a few more days of stalemate, there was a solution of sorts. A senior Jamaican diplomat attended a ceremony on board the *Comfort* on 20 July. He praised the joint humanitarian contributions of the Haitian and American governments to resolve the plight of the migrants. Even though the diplomatic impasse between Jamaica and the U.S. had not clearly been resolved, the JTF treated the ceremony as closure and the *Comfort* simply pulled anchor and sailed to Guantanamo. Once there, the Haitians resisted disembarking, saying they wanted to stay in the care of their familiar Marine protectors rather than facing the unknown soldiers waiting on the pier. Marine officers and Red Cross officials eventually persuaded the migrants they had to disembark. But before they left, they presented Lieutenant Colonel Allen with a hand-lettered certificate of appreciation signed by the camp leaders attesting the Marines had accomplished their work.<sup>19</sup>

Soon after their arrival at Guantanamo, Allen and his Marines staged an unusual ceremony. As part of a long-planned reorganization, their battalion was to be re-designated 2d Battalion, 6th Marines, part of a famous regiment that had fought at Belleau Wood and been the military

home of the legendary Spanish-American War hero Sergeant John H. Quick. On 23 July, Lieutenant Colonel Allen and the regimental commander, Colonel Richard A. Huck, led a route march from the pier where the *Comfort* had docked to Cuzco Hills, where Sergeant Quick had earned the Medal of Honor for signaling the fleet while under fire. With Quick's sword at hand, Colonel Huck furled 2d Battalion, 4th Marines' battle colors and replaced it with 2d Battalion, 6th Marines' colors. A few days later, Allen left Company F at Guantanamo with JTF 160 and led the rest of the battalion back to Camp Lejeune for what would prove to be only a short respite from migrant operations for his troops.<sup>20</sup>

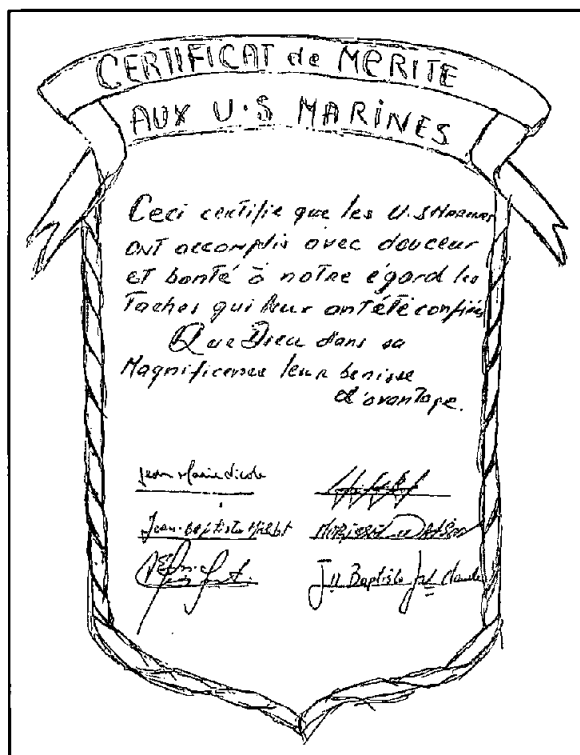
### *The Camp at Grand Turk*

The most exotic sidelight in the history of Marines in the Caribbean in the 1990s was the plan to process Haitian migrants in the Turks and Caicos Islands, a dependent territory of the United Kingdom occupying a glistening stretch of ocean between the Bahamas and Haiti. Within the territory, JTF planners focused on Grand Turk Island. It was an unusual place for most Marines.

About eight-miles long and one-mile wide, Grand Turk is, in the words of one Marine, an "austere paradise" at the eastern end of a string of low-lying limestone islands dotted by extensive marshes and mangrove swamps.<sup>21</sup> Only 2 percent of the territory is arable, which gives the visitor an idea of its severity. One of the territory's principal cash crops was salt, evaporated from seawater intentionally trapped on land that was at or below sea level.

The capital of the territory was Cockburn Town, which reminded the same Marine of the Combat Town training area at Camp Lejeune, a set of partially completed houses that generations of Marines have fought over. Cockburn Town had little to offer apart from a scattering of concrete buildings, some of which appear to be permanently under construction. Among the buildings were one or two hotels, including the Kitina Hotel, which had a relaxed, barefoot charm. There also were a number of dive shops that served the many divers who found paradise in the deep clear water. Three to four hundred meters offshore was a 7,000-foot deep wall for divers to explore, which made the absence of luxury ashore almost irrelevant.

The Turks and Caicos Islands were one of Britain's few remaining dependencies and had a



Courtesy of LtCol John R. Allen

A hand-lettered "Certificate of Merit," written in French and signed by six Haitian migrants, was presented to the Marines on the *Comfort*.



civil service run largely by the British. Remnants of the Colonial Service, the civil servants were largely white and included a governor appointed by the Queen. The islands' largely black population dominated the legislature. While there was little ethnic tension on the islands, there were occasional brief outbursts of violence with racial overtones, such as when poor black citizens expressed frustration with prosperous and sometimes overbearing white bar owners in the summer of 1994. While that attitude created some anticipation among Marines, they generally found all of the islanders to be more than friendly. The locals could not do enough for their military visitors, literally opening their homes and businesses to them.<sup>22</sup>

Partly because it was a British dependency—the British government being generally receptive to American overtures and the local government remembering the benefits of having one of the lend-lease American bases on Grand Turk—the U.S. Government, with Joint Task Force 160 at the forefront, conceived the contingency plan to process Haitian migrants on Grand Turk. When it became clear the Jamaican option, by itself, would be inadequate, the Grand Turk option took on new luster.<sup>23</sup> On 3 June, the Clinton

administration applauded the general declaration by the government of Turks and Caicos Islands that it would allow the U.S. to process migrants on its territory, and the JTF soon dispatched officers to the island on a reconnaissance mission.<sup>24</sup>

From 6 to 8 June 1994, Major Brian J. Vincent, executive officer of JTF 160's Marine component, visited potential sites on Grand Turk. He first surveyed, and rejected, a truly desolate 405-acre tract that had been a salt flat in the 1950s and 1960s that the island government had proposed. Then, despite the limited port facilities and small airfield, Major Vincent saw potential for an ashore migrant support facility (AMSF) for as many as 2,500 migrants at the southern tip of the island. Even so, the chosen site was unprepossessing: a 52-acre patch of rocks, scrub brush, and tangle weed that was far from level.<sup>25</sup>

When Major Vincent reported his findings to MarFor 160 headquarters, which had been established at Guantanamo Bay, the staff discussed various courses of action and began to draft operations plans and orders. One draft directed a small task force to deploy to Grand Turk rapidly "to construct, support, sustain, and provide security for the AMSF." Along with the ashore migrant support facility, the task force would operate a

migrant processing center, dividing migrants into the now familiar categories of unscreened, screened-in, and screened-out. The order defined success as the "secure, peaceful, and orderly processing of Haitian migrants."<sup>26</sup>

A red-letter date for the Grand Turk operation was 19 June 1994, when MarFor 160's commander, Lieutenant Colonel Redlich, also became commander, Joint Task Force Grand Turk Island, and a colorful, popular Sergeant Major, Royce S. Restivo, became the senior noncommissioned officer of the small JTF. In one of the many reorganizations that would occur during this deployment, the JTF absorbed much of MarFor 160 headquarters, along with Company C, 8th Marines, which had been attached to 2d Battalion, 4th Marines. The principal Army component on Grand Turk was the 401st Military Police Company. There also were a number of small but vital detachments from other Services, including the 56th Air Transportable Hospital from the Air Force and some very hard-working Seabees from Naval Mobile Construction Battalion 74.<sup>27</sup>

Within hours of his appointment, Lieutenant Colonel Redlich flew to Grand Turk to conduct his own site survey. He was another in the line of

energetic, hands-on, common sense Marine leaders working on migrant operations during these years, and he wanted to see for himself exactly what had to be done. Assisting in the start-up phase was General Williams' lawyer, Lieutenant Colonel John M. McAdams, Jr., a problem solver and the kind of lawyer the Marines needed. General Williams was thinking of McAdams when he quipped, tongue in cheek that "you don't want to get too close to your lawyer, but you never want to deploy without him."<sup>28</sup>

One of the first steps was to reach a detailed understanding with the local government, which had some reservations about having Haitian migrants on the island for any length of time. The prospect of more illegal or semi-legal Haitian migrants was troubling to them given the location of the islands. Haitian migrants, albeit in small numbers, had been coming ashore for years. The population of the island was about 3,000, and now the U.S. Government wanted to house as many as 2,500 Haitians in a camp on Grand Turk. The islands' government also had its own agenda. In return for its cooperation, the Turks and Caicos Islands wanted the U.S. military to undertake a number of civil engineering projects, such as the



Photo courtesy of LtCol John M. McAdams, Jr.

*Cockburn Town was the capital of Turks and Caicos Islands, a British overseas territory where JTF 160 planned to conduct migrant operations. Note the sign for the Supreme Court of the territory over the staircase. There was definitely a kind of island charm about the local government.*





DVIC DM-ST-08-02128

*Robert Hall, the Minister of Immigration, Labor, and Public Works of Turks and Caicos, signs the memorandum of understanding between the United States and the island territory which would allow JTF 160 to construct and operate a camp for migrants. A U.S. State Department representative, Richard Devine (left), and the local Chief Minister, Charles Misick, look on.*

renovation of the abandoned U.S. Navy base at the northern tip of Grand Turk and improvements to a pre-existing facility for Haitians.

Although a basic memorandum of understanding between the governments of the United States, United Kingdom, and Turks and Caicos was signed on 18 June, a number of issues remained unresolved. For example, it was unclear whether the proposed site for the migrant facility was on private or public land, and the local government attempted without success to involve the JTF with a local citizen in this long-standing dispute. Another issue was whether the American servicemen should be armed. The chief constable, a retired British policeman who had not fired a shot in anger in some 30 years of active service, successfully argued for stringent safeguards on the issue. Even though it was not a smooth process—in mid-July parts of the memorandum would be renegotiated—Lieutenant Colonel Redlich found the overall task of dealing with the local government to be an enjoyable and challenging departure from his normal routine.<sup>29</sup>

With the legalities more or less settled, the mini-JTF could turn to the business at hand. It was

an enormous undertaking for the 700 to 800 Marines, sailors, airmen, and soldiers who served on Grand Turk. Since the islands had little or nothing to offer in the way of infrastructure or goods and services apart from salt—and there was a limit to the amount of salt the JTF needed—a phenomenal amount of equipment and supplies had to be imported.

Once the Navy made the essential deliveries, the Seabee construction crews began their work. They cleared and graded more than 50 acres and started to build an infrastructure for the camp. There were other tasks which planners might have taken for granted at other locations, such as providing for water purification and desalinization, and establishing a field kitchen and dining facility that could feed more than 3,000 people.<sup>30</sup>

There was a race against time in June and July, and the advance elements of the joint task force worked at a nearly superhuman pace. The basic question remained: would the camp on Grand Turk be ready soon enough to take the overflow from Jamaica, or to replace the Jamaican effort altogether? This was important because the policy-makers still wanted to avoid a sequel to the

open-ended Operation GTMO. The rear echelon of the JTF at Guantanamo could support the operations on Grand Turk or in Jamaica, but it was better not to use Camp McCalla or Camp Bulkeley for large numbers of migrants.

In late June, like Redlich before him, General Williams visited the island to judge the situation for himself. His first impression was that he had somehow landed in Lonesome Dove, an expeditionary air base in the Gulf War named for the forlorn Texas cow town in a Larry McMurtry novel. "For most of the hours of the day," McMurtry had written in *Lonesome Dove*, "and most of the months of the year, the sun had the town trapped deep in the dust, far out in the chaparral flats, a heaven for snakes and horned toads. ... There was not even a respectable shade tree within ... miles."<sup>31</sup>

But through the dust, General Williams was able to see the outlines of the facility taking shape. "There are almost no buildings on the island ... [but] ... [f]irst steps are taken. ... [Seabees] are there pushing dirt."<sup>32</sup> By the time he was ready to leave the island, General Williams was satisfied Lieutenant Colonel Redlich would push the right issues. To maintain the pressure, Redlich

and his staff moved to Grand Turk from Guantanamo on 26 June.

Nevertheless, doubts about Grand Turk persisted, especially in the general's mind. The general questioned Redlich about the status of the camp and was told a barebones facility could be in place by 29 June, but only if the mission's much-needed airlift resources were diverted from Guantanamo. General Williams once again noted that Grand Turk did not appear to be a workable solution for large numbers of migrants. "[It] is more expensive per capita than *Comfort* since it is not expandable and will require a huge logistics effort." Given the scale of that effort, this was a significant understatement. His interim conclusion was that "[w]e are [simply] delaying the inevitable"—that is, housing and processing migrants at Guantanamo.<sup>33</sup>

It was during the next few days that General Williams became acutely aware of the continuing problems in Jamaica, and of the hundreds of Haitian migrants often literally just over the horizon waiting to be rescued. That led to more discussions about alternatives for processing the migrants in a variety of places as diverse as Surinam, Guantanamo, Panama, and later, St.



Photo courtesy of LtCol John M. McAdams, Jr.

*Ready for business but wanting for customers, the migrant camp, which Marines and Seabees worked so hard to construct on Grand Turk, sits idle in the summer of 1994.*

Lucia, not to mention tiny and remote Dominica. There also was talk about a long-term bilateral agreement with the Bahamas.<sup>34</sup>

Given the continuing uncertainties of the situation, neither the Grand Turk nor the Jamaica operation ended as the Guantanamo operation shifted into a new and higher gear. General Williams decided to give himself the maximum amount of flexibility by formalizing the system of maintaining three subordinate joint task forces—

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*As General Walls had noted two years earlier, the military used concertina wire for fences because that is what it had, not because it was the material of choice.*

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the one at Guantanamo, which was becoming the main effort after all, as well as the JTFs on Grand Turk and off Jamaica. Each subordinate commander would have the freedom to conduct operations as he saw fit, while General Williams would reserve for himself issues of resource allocation and overarching policy.<sup>35</sup>

A few days later, on 9 July, General Williams was unhappy to learn the facility on Grand Turk was not going to open on time. (The target date was 12 July.) On 10 July, he was equally unhappy to learn the Turks and Caicos government did not want any Haitian migrant to spend more than seven days on the island. General Williams concluded this limitation would make Grand Turk more of a liability than an asset, since it meant migrants would have to go from there to other intermediate destinations—just the kind of situation the general wanted to avoid.<sup>36</sup>

The scale, complexity, and cost of the work on Grand Turk weighed heavily on the debit side of the ledger. Lieutenant Colonel Redlich's troops had been continuing their Herculean efforts to meet the challenge of turning the chaparral flats into a working camp on schedule. On 26 June, there were only four general-purpose tents ready for migrants. Six days later, there were 145 such tents neatly arranged in 10 separate compounds. Continuing to work at full speed, the Seabees eventually constructed 11 elaborate concrete latrines, complete with running water and underground pipes leading to a treatment plant. When the final tally was made, the Seabees had laid a

staggering total of 10,000 feet of pipe to meet all of the camp's plumbing needs. Subsequent reports referred to the latrines as "the finest engineering achievement of the JTF."<sup>37</sup>

As if they had not already done enough, the Seabees continued the work of constructing and maintaining roads in and around the migrant facility, which meant harvesting, transporting, and compacting more than 5,000 cubic yards of coral. All members of the JTF pitched in to lay 40,000 linear feet of concertina wire to fence the individual compounds from one another. As at Guantanamo, the intent was not to create a prison, but to create and maintain administrative units. As General Walls had noted two years earlier, the military used concertina wire for fences because that is what it had, not because it was the material of choice.

Looking offshore, the Navy and Coast Guard addressed the island's hydrographic problem, which made it difficult and dangerous for deep draft and V-hulled vessels to approach. Without a solution to this particular problem, the Coast Guard could not deliver migrants to the AMSF, which was the prerequisite for the entire exercise. If migrants could not come ashore, all the other work was for nothing. In short order, the two Services agreed on the installation of a 200-foot extension of the existing pier by adding two 100-foot floating barges. The Navy's Underwater Construction Team 1 ultimately performed the work, sinking chains and moorings to anchor the barges.

One of the final steps to ready the camp for occupancy was for virtually all hands to go on line and sweep the area, picking up any foreign objects that could injure the migrants, or that migrants could use to injure their custodians in the event of a disturbance. Some of the lessons of Operation GTMO were clearly not forgotten. When it was over, *The New York Times* stated the cost of erecting the tents and repairing the infrastructure of Grand Turk was \$18 million.<sup>38</sup> The result of all this hard work was that, on the evening of 11 July, Redlich and assorted local dignitaries gathered in the glare of a dozen mobile military light generators, not too different from stage lights, and declared the camp "complete."<sup>39</sup>

But complete did not mean operational and ready to receive migrants. The local government had yet to ratify the requisite enabling legislation, and there was still no sign of the representatives of the various civilian agencies of the U.S.





DVIC DN-ST-98-02147

*Guantanamo Bay's Camp Phillips, which had a capacity of approximately 2,000, served as billeting for many members of JTF 160. It was far from sumptuous, but it was better than other encampments. There was a degree of comfort, with some air-conditioned spaces, recreational opportunities, a messball, and a bathhouse.*

Government who would actually determine the migrants' status. (JTF 160 existed to run camps, not for deciding who was qualified to immigrate to the United States.) The small task force on Grand Turk entered the first of many weeks of uncertainty and waiting after the intensive work of making the camp ready. Although there was a certain sense of anticlimax, the time was not uneventful.

The highlight of the first week of waiting was a story about the camp in the London-based tabloid *The Evening Standard* with the sensational headline, "I Find Secret Invasion Base." Possibly convinced he had found a staging area for the invasion of Haiti, visiting British journalist Howard Smith wrote the story. He studiously avoided talking to anyone in an official capacity who might have set him straight.<sup>40</sup>

The JTF attempted to remedy the situation by establishing a link with the British Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FO), and by granting Smith an exclusive two-hour interview (of course, there were no other journalists clamoring for a

story about Grand Turk). During that interview, Redlich's public affairs officer stressed the humanitarian mission of the small base, but it was a pointless effort. The headline on Smith's next story, published on 14 July, read "The Marines That The FO Says Do Not Exist." In part, the story exposed the work of the public affairs officer. As Smith wrote: "Marine Lieutenant Pete Mitchell, acting as spokesman, had launched a charm offensive to calm fears about the role of the base." Three days later, Smith left the island, never to return, although he did make one call to Lieutenant Mitchell for an update. In the words of the command chronology: "he was given a cordial, although, we are certain, frustratingly unsubstantive response."<sup>41</sup> \*

On 11 July, the Commandant of the Marine Corps, General Carl E. Mundy, Jr., and the Commander of Marine Forces, Atlantic, Lieutenant

\* The press officer who gave Smith a complete briefing and tour of the facilities was 1stLt Peter J. Mitchell.

General Robert B. Johnston, a familiar face from Desert Storm where he served as General H. Norman Schwarzkopf's chief of staff, appeared at Guantanamo Bay and requested to visit the operations at Grand Turk and Jamaica. The whirlwind tour of the entire joint task force included a "windshield" tour of Grand Turk. Accompanied by the Sergeant Major of the Marine Corps, Harold G. Overstreet, the Commandant gathered the Marines on Grand Turk in a box formation in their spacious galley tent and told them he was awed by their accomplishments. The Commandant was quick to add they needed to stay flexible, since the future of the camp remained uncertain. Despite that message, Marine morale remained high; the Marines' sense of accomplishment and the Commandant's praise were genuine. General Williams also had consistently conveyed the same

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*Back at Guantanamo, General Williams reflected on the camp and its future. "Camp is ready," he wrote, "but we made a dustbowl when we cleared it. It will be awful for migrants. Still no word on whether we'll use the place. ACOM wants to put it in caretaker [status]."*

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message. Recording the Commandant's visit in his diary, the general noted he was "proud of the troops and their work."<sup>42</sup>

Back at Guantanamo, General Williams reflected on the camp and its future. "Camp is ready," he wrote, "but we made a dustbowl when we cleared it. It will be awful for migrants. Still no word on whether we'll use the place. ACOM [U.S. Atlantic Command] wants to put it in caretaker [status]."<sup>43</sup> Caretaker status was shorthand for holding Grand Turk in reserve in case other facilities could not handle the flow. For planners, the erratic flow of migrants was puzzling: on one day, 1,000 new migrants arrived and on the next there were none. But the overall numbers appeared to be dropping.

A few days later, as Lieutenant Colonel Redlich prepared to acknowledge the local government's enabling legislation, which was finally ready for signature, General Williams asked him to prepare for two contingencies: migrant processing and caretaker status. Reflecting on the kind of "mis-

sion creep" that occurred on Grand Turk—first there was a concept, then a survey, followed by initial efforts which in turn called forth further efforts, costing money and manpower bit by bit until the sum total was large, even prohibitive—the general noted: "I think I have been caught up in the emotion of the place: we built it, we'll use it. [But] if the migrant flow doesn't pick up, we don't need the place. [In any case] we ought to preserve the ability to open it."<sup>44</sup> In a message to Grand Turk, he stressed his decision did not reflect a lack of confidence in Redlich and his troops. On the contrary, he went on record as being "immensely proud" of them.<sup>45</sup>

It was more than a little ironic that, at the camp on Grand Turk on 19 July, the day after General Williams had told Redlich to prepare for caretaker status, a group of dignitaries gathered in a temper tent—an innovative expeditionary tent that was usually air conditioned—to celebrate another milestone in the history of the on-island facility. The dignitaries included representatives from the Department of State, their British counterparts from the Foreign Office, and of course the press, though without Mr. Smith of *The Evening Standard*. Their purpose was to watch the Chief Minister of Turks and Caicos, Oswald O. Skippings, sign the Immigrant (Haitian Migrant Temporary Detention) Notice of 1994, which occurred with suitable fanfare. Redlich then offered a tour of his domain, which included a demonstration of the capabilities of the deployable mass population identification and tracking system, a computerized system for keeping track of the migrant population through the use of irremovable bracelets with embedded bar codes that were now an accepted and important part of migrant operations. Grand Turk was finally open and ready for business, but there were no customers.<sup>46</sup>

Much of the pressure on Grand Turk eased, but members of the task force did not sit idle. Some of the troops, especially the Marine infantry detachment from 2d Battalion, 4th Marines, and a group of Army military police, used the time to train, focusing on civil disturbance contingencies and preparing to run a migrant camp. Others found new missions. Captain Suzanne Ainsworth, USAR, of Civil Affairs Direct Support Team 53, was a licensed veterinarian. Together with other volunteers, she launched an animal health campaign, which included emergency surgery on a cat that had somehow been impaled on a giant fishhook. The surgery occurred on a table outside



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*HC3 Jeff Mueller of the 2d Force Service Support Group's medical battalion gives a Haitian child her required shots at Camp McCalla. Two tents were set up to administer the three immunizations.*

a local restaurant with improvised instruments. Another of her projects was the castration of local stallions. Grand Turk was overpopulated with wild horses and donkeys, which roamed the island freely, posing threats to motorists and eating the little bit of greenery that managed to push its way through the rocky soil.<sup>47</sup>

The JTF's Roman Catholic chaplain, Commander Joseph R. Lamonde, USN, was similarly active, finding and ministering to a number of outcasts on the island. These included a handful of Haitian and Cuban migrants who had almost literally washed ashore and had remained in legal and social limbo. The six Cuban migrants were held in the detention facility at the northern end of the island. They had no legal status or prospects for a better future. Father Lamonde, sometimes accompanied by Captain Ainsworth in her civil affairs capacity, visited them often, providing spiritual nourishment and health and comfort items. There was another project that bears mention. Lieutenant Colonel Redlich was lucky enough to have among his officers an excellent command historian, the cheerful, energetic, and athletic Captain Franz J. Gayl, who served as operations officer on Grand Turk. Captain Gayl used the time to give life to an unusually complete and colorful command chronology, turning the normally dry recitation of facts into a document that transports the reader to the island and lets him feel the dust and sweat and pride of accomplishment.<sup>48</sup>

When the day's work was done, there was some unusual liberty, especially for those who liked the water. The local boatmen would bring their boats onto the beach, and a Marine could literally step out of his uniform and into a marine

adventure of a different kind. Even the liberty on land was not bad—a few beers and a simple meal at a friendly establishment like the Kitina.<sup>49</sup>

By late July, Joint Task Force Grand Turk Island was definitely on a downward glide path. Phases I and II of the contingency plan for caretaker status began on 25 July. The air transportable hospital was redeployed, along with a number of personnel. This caused some distress to the government of Turks and Caicos, which sought reassurances the U.S. Government would complete the program of public works per the agreement. The local officials were even ready to agree the AMSF could be used as a safe haven and allow migrants to stay on island longer than seven days.<sup>50</sup>

But there was ample room for migrants at Guantanamo, and the migrant facility on the island continued to ramp down. The approach of Tropical Storm Chris, which appeared headed for Grand Turk in mid-August, accelerated the final phases of the withdrawal. There was a surge of C-130 cargo aircraft and the USS *Whidbey Island* (LSD 41) appeared off shore, fortuitously empty. Through more hard work, the ship's company and the rump JTF loaded most of its remaining assets and personnel, which numbered about 150 at this point, onto the ship.<sup>51</sup>

In the end, the storm did not hit the island, but the U.S. Government kept most, if not all, of its promises to the government of Turks and Caicos. Various facilities were upgraded, and even the request to remove the elaborate plumbing facilities the Seabees had built was fulfilled. When the last U.S. serviceman left, there was only an empty, dusty plain where the camp had been.<sup>52</sup>

The story of the small but accomplished JTF was almost over. When there was a surge in the numbers of Cuban migrants during August, planners in Norfolk briefly considered ordering a return to Grand Turk. But after all that had happened, General Williams deemed this a "nutty idea." Thankfully for him, it did not go very far. By 30 August it was almost forgotten. His professional life full enough with one large migrant camp, General Williams breathed a sigh of relief and noted in his diary: "Heard that the TCI [Turks and Caicos Island] camp may not happen. Be still my heart."<sup>53</sup>

### *Back at Guantanamo Bay*

Guantanamo remained a flurry of activity while events in Jamaica and on Grand Turk unfolded. In



May, Marines from the barracks were busy preparing Camp Bulkeley for possible use by Haitian migrants. They also administered the camp for a handful of migrants who came ashore at Guantanamo before the JTF took charge in late June. Guantanamo then became the temporary home for the Marine support components of JTF

Guantanamo was directed primarily by the Army component of the JTF under the command of Colonel Michael Pearson. The Army's job was to establish and operate the processing center for screened-in Haitians at Camp McCalla. Marines provided the external security outside the confines of the camps. Company C, 1st Battalion, 8th



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*This scene at Camp McCalla in the summer of 1994 is reminiscent of similar scenes two year earlier. Like their predecessors, the new wave of Haitian migrants adapted to camp procedures. Here they wait behind concertina wire for daily supplies.*

160, including Combat Service Support Detachment 160 (CSSD-160) and elements of 2d Battalion, 4th Marines. From a deserted hangar at the north end of McCalla Field, these units worked to support fellow Marines in Jamaica and, later, on Grand Turk. The living conditions were rudimentary at first, consisting of tents pitched in the dusty sand around Camp Bulkeley. Later, when the Air Force added a modicum of civilization to the JTF, the units moved to air conditioned, air-transportable accordion shelters at Philips Park, a more habitable community much closer to Mainside than the isolated Camp Bulkeley at the far reaches of the base.<sup>54</sup>

While General Williams was in Jamaica,

Marines, temporarily attached to 2d Battalion, 4th Marines, trained continuously for that mission.<sup>55</sup> The barracks Marines' primary mission was protecting the base and they remained the security force of last resort at Guantanamo. They were authorized to use deadly force to protect vital installations from external threats, which once again included migrants, and any assistance they could lend to General Williams' JTF was secondary. The JTF, of course, viewed the Marines' mission priorities in reverse, a difference that would surface in the coming months.

The Army's processing center for screened-in refugees at Camp McCalla became more important as the operation in Jamaica waned and the



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*LtCol Rodney L. Johnson, commander of the U.S. Army's 720th Military Police Battalion, talks to Haitian migrants who jumped the concertina wire of Camp McCalla to stage a peaceful protest rally.*

responsibility for processing all refugees shifted to Guantanamo Bay. By late June, General Williams was referring to Guantanamo as “a major center” in its own right and a place that could accommodate up to 12,500 migrants at any one time, a previously unexpected figure.<sup>56</sup> Guantanamo became a safe haven in early July following a change in the Clinton administration’s policy, which gave rescued migrants only two options: return to Haiti or go to a safe haven. Migrants could stay at a safe haven until the dangers at home had abated, however long that took. Even with the change of policy, the Navy and Coast Guard still were rescuing 2,000 to 3,000 migrants per day. Those not wanting to return to Haiti became guests of the JTF for an indefinite period.<sup>57</sup>

General Williams established a migrant policy at Guantanamo based on a common sense set of priorities that followed the theory of psychologist Abraham H. Maslow’s hierarchy of needs—that is, you do not care about shelter until you have enough to eat, you do not care about recreation until you have shelter, and so forth. Once the migrants had been rescued from drowning, the first priorities would be simple: food and water, shelter, and a cot. Those were Williams’ indispen-

sable minimums for every migrant. Once those needs were satisfied, refinements such as sewage and bathing, bare necessities anywhere else, were addressed. These presented a real challenge for the base because of antiquated water and sewage systems. In one of his messages to Norfolk, Williams said he would “set up makeshift camps without facilities,” adding that conditions, which had never been particularly good, were “becoming very austere for the migrants.”<sup>58</sup>

The desperate struggle to stay ahead of the flow of migrants continued throughout the first half of July. Members of the JTF worked 14-hour days, seven days a week, performing myriad tasks from pitching camps to patrolling perimeters to emptying portable toilets, often in stifling heat. The resulting living conditions did not improve for some time. As one reporter described it: “The migrants live in more than 1,500 tan and green tents that carpet an old runway and the tarmac alongside, consuming most of the available flat space. ... Each tent is crammed with cots, and rolls of concertina wire wind through the vast encampment dividing the refugees into seven communities of 2,000 to 3,000 each.”<sup>59</sup>

It was difficult just to feed everyone on time,



let alone to provide the appropriate Caribbean food. In one of the nearby hangars, U.S. officials sat behind rows of desks explaining to refugee after refugee the options of returning to Haiti or living in a safe haven, possibly in another country in the region. (The administration's diplomatic initiative to find other countries willing to assist continued.) Not surprisingly, relatively few, about 30 percent according to one estimate, opted to return home. To the migrants, anything seemed better than living in their impoverished homeland under military rule.<sup>60</sup>

Often adding to the burden of running the operation was the stream of visitors who came to Guantanamo, not always to help. Although the JTF had an open door policy and left the press to draw its own conclusions, one reporter pressed General Williams to admit he was running "a concentration camp."<sup>61</sup> Very senior officers, including the incumbent Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General John M. Shalikashvili, and the Commandant of the Marine Corps, General Mundy, came in droves and offered both support and criticism.<sup>62</sup>

General Shalikashvili increased the heat on the

JTF by speaking in terms of handling 28,000 migrants, which represented another massive upward shift in numbers. Adding to the pressure of such high-level scrutiny, General Williams discovered a few days later that one of his own officers was jumping the chain-of-command and calling the White House directly with problems. The officer was immediately relieved. Along similar lines, a well-meaning but misdirected offer from a lawyer at a nationally recognized law school offered to send 50 lawyers to Guantanamo to work with migrants. The JTF, pointing out that its problems did not stem from a shortage of lawyers, politely rejected the proposal.<sup>63</sup>

Throughout the process, General Williams and his subordinates worried about the security of the camps. They remembered the challenges and migrant demonstrations General Walls had faced and wanted to avoid similar outbreaks, especially since the current operation was so much larger and more complex. Fortunately, the initial disturbances were relatively minor: complaints about the food, some heated words and arm-waving about inaction by the U.S. Government, and a threat to go on a hunger strike if the U.S. did not



DVIC DN-ST-98-00709

*Surrounded by military police in riot gear, migrants chanted and danced to deliver their message. There was no violence.*





DVIC DM-ST-97-01836

*The “disruptive” Haitians are surrounded by military police from the 402nd and 64th Military Police Companies, loaded onto buses, and taken to an isolation camp where they were closely monitored.*

invade Haiti.<sup>64</sup> As time went on, conditions did improve somewhat. In the second half of the month, there actually were days when the migrant population did not increase. The numbers hovered around an increasingly manageable 20,000, and the JTF was able to make progress in turning the camps from makeshift shelters into small communities complete with village economies, a semblance of self-government, elementary schools, preventive medicine programs, and, ultimately, a Creole-language radio station and newspapers. The migrants themselves learned how to run the kitchens and helped cook the food to their own taste, which eliminated one obstacle.<sup>65</sup>

Near the end of the month, the JTF and the barracks Marines met to define their respective roles in case of a disturbance, an ever-present possibility despite the improving conditions. As General Williams commented in his diary, there was “no question that it will get ugly if we can’t continue to show continuous improvement.”<sup>66</sup> His comment applied mostly to living conditions on the base, but he also considered a solution to the political stalemate and ambiguous immigration policy as one of the needs of the migrant popu-

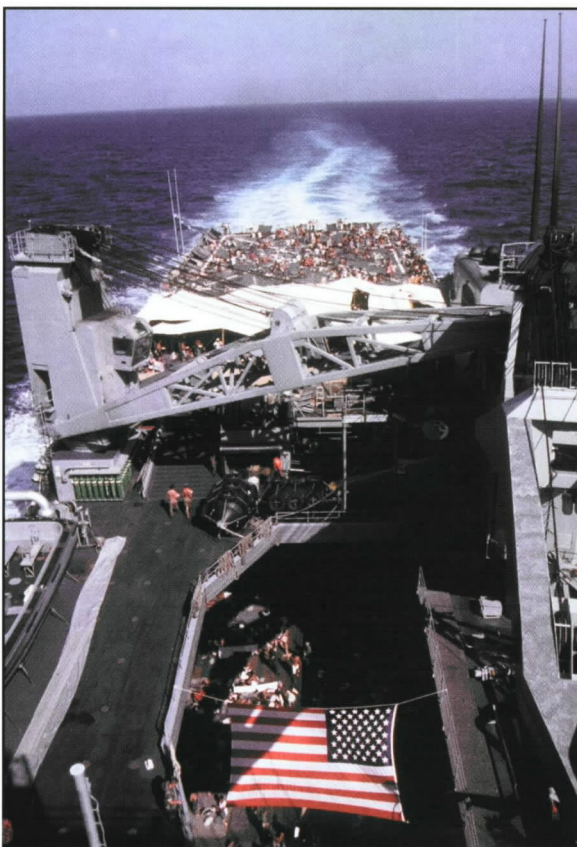
lation. After all, the U.S. Government was essentially detaining a large group of Haitian migrants in a hot, boring place for an indefinite period.

Two days after General Williams made his prediction, there was a peaceful protest in the camps. Army troops contained the disturbance without much difficulty, but it was a harbinger of things to come.<sup>67</sup> On 1 August, there was a more threatening disturbance during which migrants brandished, but did not use, a variety of homemade weapons. According to intelligence officers, Haitians leaders, particularly Jean-Claude Petit, were organizing the migrants and focusing their efforts in Camps 1 and 3. General Williams noted the “camps [are] clean, but political activists are intimidating [the] rest of the population.”<sup>68</sup>

Pressures came to a head on the morning of 13 August when several camps “came out of the wire” in a near riot. More than 100 of the migrants who escaped dove into the bay next to Camp McCalla and began to swim to the leeward side of the base thinking they were swimming to Cuba, from which they might have a better chance of making it to the United States. The barracks reacted by deploying to quell the disturbance. Marines,

fully camouflaged and heavily armed with bayonets fixed on their rifles, lined the leeward shore along the fence that separated the base from Cuba. The sight of the barracks Marines terrified the unfortunate migrant swimmers, most of whom turned around and started to swim back to Camp McCalla, which was no small feat considering the camp was a mile away and they were swimming against the current. As they came ashore, security forces from both the JTF and the base put plastic flexicuffs on the wrists of the escapees and returned them to custody. The incident was over by 1300. General Williams was satisfied with the performance of his troops, noting they had done "a fantastic job of keeping their cool under tough circumstances." But the apparent overreaction by the base and the barracks during the incident lead the general to seek to "clarify [the] boundary between [the] base and [the] JTF." <sup>69</sup>

The camps were quiet the following day, but there was a challenge from another quarter. The



DVIC DM-ST-94-02618

*Loaded with more than 2,600 Cuban migrants picked up at sea in the waters between Cuba and the Florida Keys, the dock landing ship USS Whidbey Island (LSD 41) heads for the camps at Guantanamo Bay.*

Norfolk-based U.S. Atlantic Command asked General Williams to explain what caused the unrest. He wrote a somewhat wry unofficial answer in his diary, which states the unrest was "the proximate result of putting 15,000 people on a hot runway in Cuba for two months in the summer."<sup>70</sup> Three days later, Williams and his staff faced yet another challenge as the first hurricane of the year began to form in the Atlantic. Although hurricanes generally bypassed Guantanamo, the potential danger was real, and many staff officers turned their attention to contingency planning for bad weather. If the hurricane struck the base, the JTF could be faced with a very bad situation. The plan, in a nutshell, was to find hardened shelters for as many migrants as possible, and to evacuate the rest, assuming that Atlantic Command could surge enough shipping and aircraft to Cuba to do the job in time. General Williams reflected it was "a good plan, but there [was] ... no way to make it anything but ugly."<sup>71</sup>

Fortunately, the weather did not create a significant problem. However, a storm, albeit a figurative storm, did strike the base. It was as though the JTF was on a training exercise and the controllers were pushing to see how well the force could perform. Just when it seemed the JTF was gaining on the challenge posed by the Haitian migrants, there loomed the mind-numbing specter of thousands of Cuban migrants.

### *Stressing the System with Cuban Migrants*

Partly in response to a degree of unrest at home, and partly to rid himself of malcontents, Cuban President Fidel Castro decided in mid-August not to detain would-be Cuban migrants determined to float to Florida. Accompanying his decision was a press campaign stating the United States was encouraging illegal immigration by enforcing the trade embargo and allowing all arrivals to stay, whether they came with a visitor's visa on a chartered airplane or simply waded ashore in the Florida Keys. This might not have been the Immigration and Naturalization Service's description of its policy, but it did reflect reality: few Cuban migrants had ever been turned away. But, as if to spite Castro, the Clinton administration changed that policy. Janet Reno, the Attorney General, broadcast a message to the people of Cuba who were contemplating migration, saying, "You will not be processed—not be processed—for admission to the United States." She added, in





DVIC DN-ST-98-00715

*While the Cuban migrants were enroute to Guantanamo, Marines worked hard to set up tents to house them. The JTF also erected tents to house the personnel who would care for the Cuban migrants once they arrived.*

a phrase that likely gave General Williams pause, "You are going to Guantanamo."<sup>72</sup> \*

No one in Cuba seemed to believe the message at first, and a cottage industry sprouted on Cuba's north shore: non-recreational rafting. The refugees assembled a bizarre assortment of rafts, often by lashing together inner tubes, lumber, and a wide variety of other materials to create moderately seaworthy products. Some of the rafts had sails; recycled motors powered others. Many had nothing but makeshift paddles. Asked by an American reporter about his intentions, a Cuban migrant on the beach pointed to his raft and said,

\* More than one commentator noted the inconsistency between U.S. policy on Haitian migrants (who were usually encouraged to return home) and Cuban migrants (almost all of whom were welcome to stay in Florida once they arrived). In this case, however, the Clinton administration wanted to control the flow of Cuban migrants to prevent a recurrence of the so-called Mariel Boatlift of 1980, when Castro had allowed a large number of undesirables to leave Cuba and make their way to Florida. See, for example, J. A. Pitts, "Migrants Resettlement Operations" (Miami: SouthCom Unpublished Manuscript, Supplement Nr. 2 to U.S. SouthCom History, 31Jan98).

"Of course, I would rather go in an airplane, but this is the way Cubans get to the United States."<sup>73</sup> That is how thousands of migrants set sail from Cuba's north coast. Most would be intercepted at sea by the Coast Guard and the Navy and taken to Guantanamo, perhaps not the last place on earth they wanted to go, but probably a close contender for that distinction.\*\*

Told to prepare for up to 10,000 Cuban

\*\* It did not take long for the JTF to learn just how much the Cubans did not want to go to Guantanamo. Rescued by the frigate USS *Clark* (FFG 11) in late August, some 500 Cubans told the crew they would resist, by force if necessary, landing in Cuba. LtCol Douglas C. Redlich tasked LtCol John R. Allen's battalion, 2d Battalion, 6th Marines, with defusing the situation. LtCol Allen planned a show of force on the pier and sent one of his officers, Capt William R. Costantini, along with Chaplain Joseph R. Lamonde of Grand Turk fame, in a Boston whaler out to meet the ship and report on the situation. Once on board the *Clark*, Lamonde changed into his cassock and clambered into the upper works of the ship, literally appearing to the migrants from on high in his flowing black robe. The tactic worked. The migrants shifted from anger to respect and listened to the priest who, through his presence of mind and grace under pressure, averted what might have been an ugly fight. (Allen Memorandum)





DVIC DN-ST-97-01840

*More than 600 Cubans on board the Guided Missile Cruiser USS Vicksburg (CG 69) arrive at Guantanamo Bay on 23 August 1994. They were the first to arrive after the U.S. Navy assumed the responsibility of transporting Cubans from the U.S. Coast Guard.*

migrants, General Williams rapidly redeployed his forces, deciding in short order that Camp McCalla would house the Haitian migrants, who would come under control of the Army component of the JTF. Lieutenant Colonel Redlich's Marines, who had been preparing the overflow site on nearby Grand Turk Island, would care for Cuban migrants in and around the inhospitable Camp Bulkeley a few miles away. The Marines soon became the core of Joint Task Group Bulkeley with the same commander and the same mission and reinforcements from other Services.

General Williams' policy was to keep the Haitians and the Cubans apart while making every effort to treat the two groups equally.\* To meet the demands of the two-pronged mission,

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\* Although Camps McCalla and Bulkeley were miles apart, the Cubans' presence did not escape the Haitians' notice. Before long, the Haitians were protesting that Cubans were receiving better treatment. Gen Williams' response was to bus Haitian representatives to the Cuban camps and let them see for themselves that the newcomers were, in fact, worse off, living in dusty camps without plumbing, and eating MREs (meals ready to eat—the latter day combat meals). (Williams intvw)



DVIC DN-ST-98-00730

*LCpl Charles Criscione from Company F, 2d Battalion, 6th Marines, passes out bottled water to Cuban migrants waiting for Deployable Mass Population Identification and Tracking Systems bracelets.*

the joint task force would have to grow dramatically. General Williams' initial estimate, which proved to be conservative, called for the addition of about 3,800 military personnel. Those already on board would have to pull double duty until reinforcements arrived. After finishing their regular jobs, they put up tents and surrounded them with concertina wire to create camps. When the Cubans began to arrive, virtually everyone, including new arrivals and old hands, worked around the clock to unload the ships and keep pace with the flow.

The first loads of migrants came ashore at 0300 on 22 August. Their numbers exceeded 9,000 by 25 August and grew to 14,000 by 27 August. Even when the flow slackened on succeeding days, the JTF continued to build an infrastructure for a possible total of 45,000 and then 60,000, a staggering

new number put into play by Atlantic Command. To make room for the migrants and generally reduce the strain on the resources at hand, Norfolk ordered the evacuation of non-essential Guantanamo base civilians and dependents by the end of the month.<sup>74</sup>

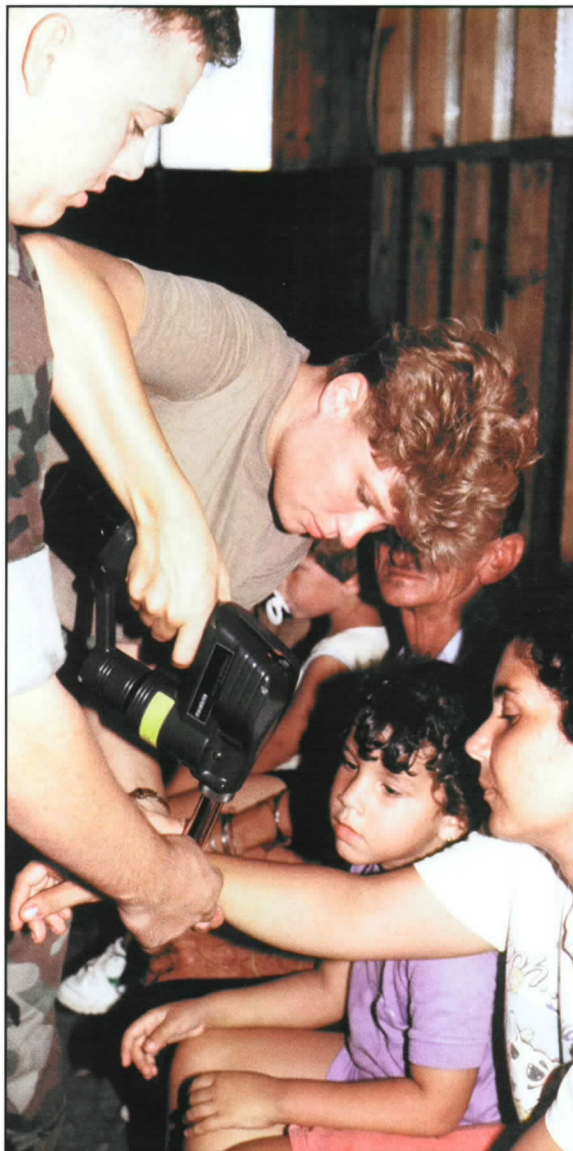
The arrival of large numbers of Cubans changed the security equation and added some troublesome new questions. Was there now both an internal and an external threat? Did the Cuban government somehow intend to coordinate aggression from the fence line by instigating a breakout from one or more of the camps? For the newly arrived commander of the barracks, Colonel John M. Himes, this was a definite possibility, and he requested reinforcements to enable him to fight effectively on two fronts: to hold the fence line and to protect the base's vital installa-



tions from rampaging migrants. To hold the fence line, Colonel Himes deployed his troops forward, shifting the emphasis from manning guard towers to a kind of mobile defense with active patrolling. The shift in tactics would, Colonel Himes thought, make it easier to cope with the influx of Cubans over the land border while minimizing the dangers to migrants who tried to make their way to freedom through the Cuban and American minefields along the fence line. Accordingly, most barracks Marines moved to the field for a workweek under austere, near-wartime conditions. If they were able to return to the barracks on the weekend, they would spend the time on standby in the event migrants took advantage of a slightly relaxed routine on Saturday or Sunday.<sup>75</sup>

The barracks did not simply wait for the worst-case scenario to occur, but exercised for the contingency. On 10 and 17 August, Colonel Himes conducted tactical exercises with troops of the barracks' migrant defense operations plan, finalized in late July. The exercises, one for Camp McCalla and another for Camp Bulkeley, were realistic, though somewhat pessimistic in assumptions. The plans assumed JTF security forces had been unable to contain hordes of migrants, some of whom were preparing to set fire to General Williams' headquarters while the remainder were streaming toward the heart of the base. The objective was to cut migrants off before they reached any vital installations. Every Marine rehearsed until he knew his role by heart, as well as the all-important rules of engagement.<sup>76</sup>

General Williams, meanwhile, saw things differently. While the Marine barracks was on a near-wartime footing, JTF 160 was on a humanitarian mission in an ambiguous situation with ill-defined threats. For General Williams, the security missions of the barracks Marines and the JTF were distinct, and it concerned him to hear Colonel Himes say his troops were authorized to use deadly force. The general wanted to ensure everyone understood the authorization was tied strictly to the defense of certain vital installations on base, not to containing any disturbance by migrants that might pose a threat to the base later on. He did not want anyone to use excessive force against the migrants, and thereby create an international incident. Nor did he see a heightened external threat. Rather, the general continued to focus on the kind of internal disturbances he (and Generals Walls before him) had already faced, and he rejected the suggestion the JTF should assume responsibility for the security of



DVIC DN-ST-98-00731

*LCpl Sabata Mixon and SrA Jennifer Brown use a rivet gun to attach an identification and tracking bravelet to a Cuban child. Young or old, all Cuban migrants received bracelets.*

the base and of the camps.<sup>77</sup> \* Although the base, the barracks, and the JTF would continue to exchange liaison officers and discuss contingency plans, General Williams intended to rely primarily on JTF assets for security. This meant its Army

\* Gen Williams outranked the base commander, a Navy captain who also commanded the JTF's small Naval Force (NavFor), which was made up largely of base personnel. In that capacity, he reported directly to the general. Playing the two roles was, at times, difficult for the captain because the base's long-term interests often clashed with those of the JTF, which was a short-term but very demanding tenant capable of ruining a lot of real estate.



and Marine components, soon to be augmented by the rest of 2d Battalion, 6th Marines, under Colonel Allen, which had performed so well in Jamaica and would become the core of Joint Task Group Bulkeley's external security element. It also meant the general did not intend to rely on guns and wire alone. As he commented on 27 August, "I can lower frustrations by 50 percent if I can get showers and adequate water for the people."<sup>78</sup>

Most of Lieutenant Colonel Allen's battalion had spent the intervening weeks back at Camp Lejeune. Allen and his staff, especially his operations officer, Major John E. Stone, knew they might have to re-deploy to the Caribbean for another migrant operation. With that prospect looming, they used the time at Camp Lejeune to evaluate the lessons learned on the *Comfort* off Jamaica and to study the history of an uprising at a U.S. Army prisoner of war camp that held Chinese soldiers during the Korean War. Major Stone concluded that the rules of engagement for civil disturbances had to be "ironclad." Like the barracks Marines, everyone in 2d Battalion, 6th Marines, had to know how much force could be used and when to use it. Since it was likely the JTF would deploy the battalion over a wide area, the small unit leaders needed to be comfortable applying the rules of engagement and making decisions on their own.<sup>79</sup>

Within hours of its return to Guantanamo on 26 and 27 August, the battalion faced the first in a long series of challenges. Men of 2d Battalion, 6th Marines, waited on the pier to escort Cuban migrants to the rifle range, an overflow camp north of Camp Bulkeley that was literally built around them overnight. This became Camp Mike. Under the command of First Lieutenant Thomas M. Mirande, the Marines did a superb job not only of building the camp in the physical sense, but of making it into a working community. In the days to come, the payoff for Lieutenant Mirande's good work at Camp Mike would be realized, as it became one of the few camps where there were no uprisings.<sup>80</sup>

Apart from Camp Mike and Camp Bulkeley proper, Joint Task Group Bulkeley built, maintained, and ran two other camps. One of the camps, the Radio Range, was located nearby along the coast and comprised a long-range radio antenna farm. The other camp was a few miles north at the golf course.

By now the process was becoming routine for General Williams' troops. They erected concertina

wire around the individual camps, each holding 2,000 to 3,000 migrants living in general-purpose tents, and built cyclone fences around groups of camps. Small trailers with water tanks, known as water buffaloes, and portable toilets were brought in while the camps waited for better plumbing. The evolution was successful in large part because the migrants organized themselves and pitched in to help. But it was still difficult to overcome the inherent limitations of the place.<sup>81</sup> When General Williams inspected the Radio Range, he found the camps were built on "two to three feet of dust" and commented the Cubans at the golf course were in "the least harsh place."<sup>82</sup>

General Williams also noted the presence of a number of troublemakers among the migrants, including what he called the "gang bubbas," a hardcore criminal element that traveled with the van of the migrants, perhaps by Cuban government design. According to one estimate, this lot made up five percent of the migrant population. Immigration and Naturalization Service agents, who watched them disembark, already knew some of them. A few were on first name terms with the agents from previous encounters such as the Mariel Boatlift incident when Castro emptied mental hospitals and prisons in a challenge to the President James E. Carter, Jr., administration more than a decade earlier. Others were recognizable from their tattoos; one of the more interesting JTF documents was a field guide to deciphering the meaning of Cuban tattoos. Immigration officers recommended those with certain tattoos be identified and segregated. The JTF agreed and instituted a requirement for all young males to strip to the waist for a tattoo check. If tattooed, they were segregated from the rest of the population.<sup>83</sup> In the days to come, General Williams maintained the policy of trying to separate the good guys from the bad guys, especially since many of the bad guys were very assertive and tried to take over some of the camps. It was a policy that made eminent sense.<sup>84</sup>

By the beginning of September, there were some 20,000 Cubans from all walks of life—from white-collar professionals to blue-collar workers to criminals—in the Marine area of operations at Guantanamo.<sup>85</sup> The JTF met the demand for food and water most of the time, but in Major Stone's words, "it was a logistical nightmare."<sup>86</sup> When the JTF was unable to keep everyone fed and watered, the Cubans reacted. There might be a few placards, some chanting, and threats to property or personnel. In response, the Marines would

deploy a reaction force and contain the demonstration by talking and working with the migrants. On 6 September, for example, a crowd of 500 Cubans started throwing rocks at soldiers in one of the camps and then vandalized a nearby vehi-

cle. The arrival of a reaction team from the external security force quickly stabilized the situation. It was a generally successful approach as long as the Cubans believed their patience would eventually earn them passage to Florida.<sup>87</sup>

## Chapter 3

# Crisis

### *Out of the Wire at Guantanamo*

Joint Task Force 160 devoted significant resources not only to containing disturbances, but also to predicting and preventing them. Military intelligence specialists from all Services spent long hours every day inside the camps, typically working in two-man teams that included at least one linguist. They had specific requirements, which usually centered on force protection—was anyone planning a demonstration, a breakout, or a violent act of any kind? Information collection methods were straightforward. Typically, the teams would approach one of the camp leaders and engage him in conversation, ask questions and then follow up on any leads. The migrants were cooperative most of the time, and the information they shared went into reports to JTF headquarters where analysts pored over the information and presented conclusions to the staff. This process helped minimize disturbances. In one case, the intelligence specialists found indications a group of migrants, upset over an impending move from one camp to another, planned to seize members of the JTF and hold them hostage. With this information in hand, the JTF made the easy decision to increase security for the move, which, in the end, occurred without incident.<sup>1</sup>

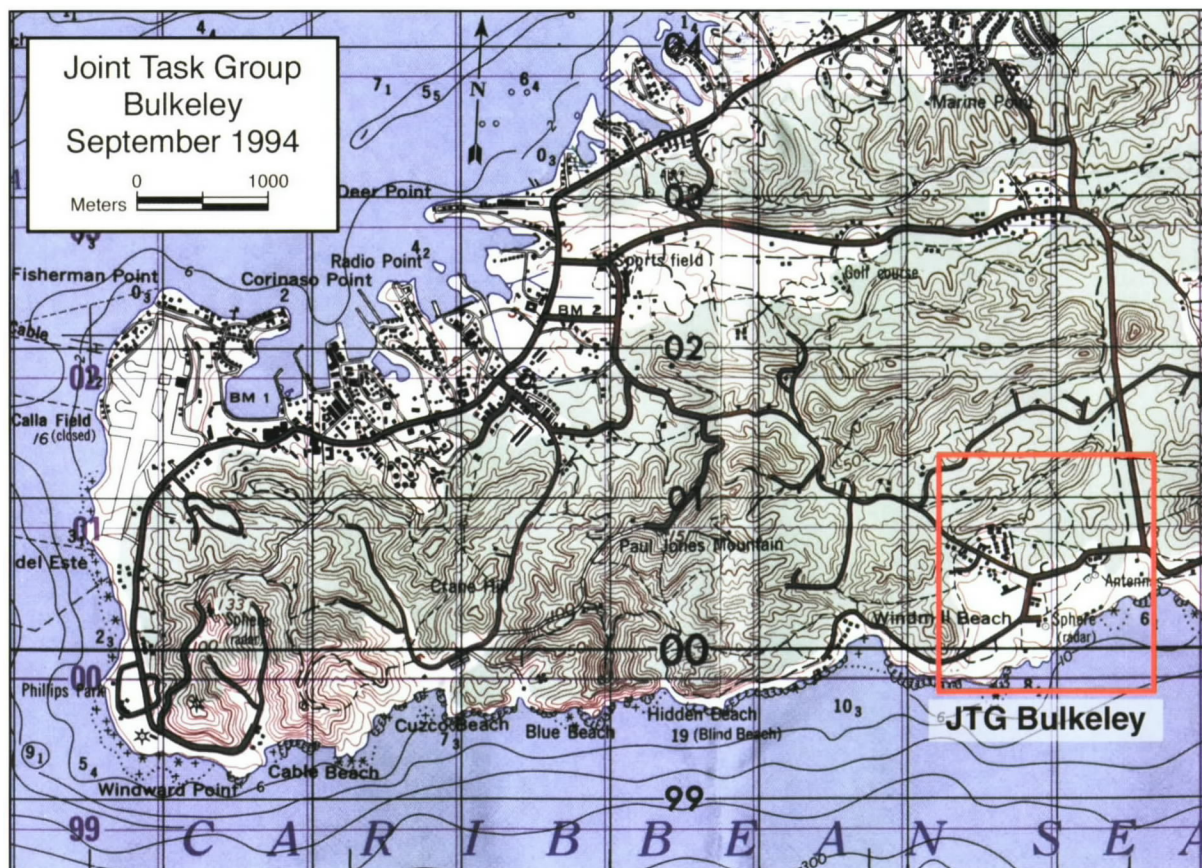
The intelligence specialists, along with the infantrymen or military policemen (MPs) who patrolled the camps, also uncovered evidence of less dramatic problems. For example, migrants often pointed out the troublemakers among them, such as those who were making weapons or planning crimes. Weapons included gaffs, crossbows, and shanks (primitive knives). Some of the weapons had relatively innocent purposes. The crossbows, for example, were designed to hunt banana rats, a small animal that looked like an opossum but tasted like chicken and was a delicacy for the Cubans. Other weapons were intended to harm members of the JTF or other migrants.

Some migrant women, fearful of being raped, carried shanks in their brassieres. Once again voicing his concern about criminal migrants, the commander of JTF 160, Brigadier General Michael J. Williams, commented in his diary on 7 September: "Lots of crime in the Cuban camps, even in the



Photo courtesy of LtCol John R. Allen  
*The Cuban migrant camps were situated in the southeastern corner of the Guantanamo Bay naval base. The road out of the camp leads to Mainside, a few miles to the northwest through uninviting scrub brush hills. To the south are steep cliffs dropping off into the sea, and not far to the east is the boundary with Cuba.*





family camp. We need to work harder to get the bad guys out of the camps and into detention."<sup>2</sup> \*

Another option intended to relieve tensions at the camp was to move some of the migrants out of Guantanamo to other safe havens. This policy, never clearly defined by the Clinton administration, was even murkier to the migrants. Nevertheless, a fair number of migrants volunteered to go to safe havens in Panama and elsewhere, apparently on the assumption that some movement, especially off the island, was better than none. The process did not move swiftly at first, but it was underway by 6 September.<sup>3</sup>

Meanwhile, the JTF was facing a water crisis. Despite the delivery of thousands of tons of bottled water, an ever-expanding capacity for producing drinking water by reverse osmosis and the Navy base's own impressive efforts, demand for potable water continued to outpace supply as more Cubans poured in to the base. In the tropical heat of mid-summer, which in Guantanamo

tended to be a dry heat, the lack of water created a figurative tinderbox waiting for a match.

Washington provided the flame when the administration reaffirmed the safe haven policy, stating the American government would continue to offer migrants a safe haven from political and economic persecution but would not allow them to enter the United States. Those who did not like the policy were free to return home to Cuba or Haiti.<sup>4</sup>

General Williams knew the announcement meant trouble. Apart from the policy on repatriation, there was nothing new. All the migrants had heard it before, but most were unwilling to believe it and continued to nourish the hope the administration would make some kind of exception for them. JTF officers believed that Radio Marti, a Florida-based radio station controlled by Cuban exiles that operated with the support and approval of the U.S. Government, made a bad situation worse by hammering the message home in excited terms.<sup>5</sup>

Some of the migrants apparently concluded the U.S. and Cuban Governments had agreed on a policy of forcible repatriation. They were correct only in that the two governments were working

\* A related issue was how to treat mentally unstable and potentially dangerous migrants who, in the end, were sedated and kept apart from the general population. See BGen Williams intvw, 19Aug94 (Office of the Command Historian, USACom, Norfolk, Virginia).



on an agreement whereby the Cubans would stop the migrants from setting out to sea while the U.S. would realign its immigration procedures.<sup>6</sup>

While the first disturbances were more about water, the safe haven policy soon became the umbrella under which all discontentments merged. On 9 September, this discontentment erupted on several fronts and presented the JTF with a rapid-fire series of challenges. First, migrants being held at Magazine Number 121, an obsolete ammunition bunker complex, commandeered a water buffalo and used it as a battering ram to knock down the surrounding fence. The quick reaction force from 2d Battalion, 6th Marines, responded and contained the disturbance without force.<sup>7</sup> Two more breakouts followed in short order. The first involved 120 migrants at the golf course and the other 200 migrants at Camp Bulkeley. In both incidents, Marines were able to persuade migrants to return to their camps. A short time later, 500 migrants at the Radio Range breached the wire with picnic tables and headed toward nearby Camp Bulkeley. They began throwing rocks at members of the JTF, who tried to restrain them, and the quick

reaction force deployed once again and blocked the way to Camp Bulkeley. Chaplains then moved in and succeeded in calming the migrants.<sup>8</sup>

It had been a day of relatively small incidents strung one after another. For individual Marines and the command staff, the events of the day had been tiring but manageable. The next day, 10 September, would play out to be a much more challenging time. Marines on the front lines and their commanders were about to be tested for stamina, the ability to manage potentially explosive situations and their personal willingness to enter the fray. If mismanaged, the incidents of 10 September could have resulted in death or injury, led to a crisis between Cuba and the United States, and done significant damage to a commander's career. It was one of those days when senior officers earned their "extra pay."

The USS *Whidbey Island* (LSD 41), known to many from its recent assist at Grand Turk, steamed into port with approximately 2,500 migrants on board, but the migrants could not be unloaded. The JTF was too busy reacting to serious disturbances. The first was on the golf course, which was tactically controlled in large part by



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*An aerial view of the golf course camps looking toward Mainside and the heart of the base. Chapel Hill is at the upper right close to the bay. The hills separating the Bulkeley/Radio Range area from the golf course and Mainside are clearly visible on the left.*

Army units under Joint Task Group Bulkeley. That there was a serious disturbance on the golf course came as something of a surprise since the family camps in that area were typically more stable and quiet, especially compared to the camps for single males. The location of the golf course also made this disturbance more ominous since it was much closer to Mainside than Camp Bulkeley, which was located a few miles south on the other side of uninviting, cactus-covered hills.

The disturbance began in the early afternoon around 1300 when 2,000 to 3,000 migrants gathered at the wire and breached the outer ring of concertina. Word of the breach spread quickly, and within minutes, Lieutenant Colonel Douglas C. Redlich, in his capacity as commander of Joint Task Group Bulkeley, was at the site unhappily watching the Cubans stream out of the camp. One of his officers, Captain Franz J. Gayl, the officer who had chronicled the operation on Grand Turk, characterized his attitude as "doggone it." Captain Gayl also was struck by the migrants' purposefulness. It was almost as if the mob's leaders had carefully planned the outing. They were heading directly for the main area of the base and there was no milling around or confusion.<sup>9</sup>

Lieutenant Colonel Redlich concluded the migrants were determined to be heard. He was willing to listen to migrant demands, but he preferred it happen within the confines of a camp. He quickly decided to halt the flow of migrants from the golf course and ordered the Army military police units to seal the breach. The result was a short, unpleasant confrontation with migrants, who wanted to leave the camp. But the thin line of MPs held and migrants on the wrong side of the fence eventually returned to their tents.<sup>10</sup> That still left some 3,000 migrants outside the fence, and they continued toward Mainside and a battalion of waiting Army troops. But that unit was unable to halt the flow and the migrants went through and around their formation.<sup>11</sup>

By then, Colonel John M. Himes, the barracks commander, was standing on top of John Paul Jones Hill, the high ground that overlooked the golf course and allowed the colonel to monitor all radio traffic on the base. He had seen the Cubans streaming out of their camps and decided to "react the barracks Marines," which meant to recall his companies from the fence line separating the base from Cuba and deploy them against the migrants. Mindful of his mission to protect the vital installations of the base, Colonel Himes ordered his troops to set up positions to channel

the migrants in a safe direction away from Mainside.<sup>12</sup>

Lieutenant Colonel John R. Allen, in command of most of Redlich's external security forces from 2d Battalion, 6th Marines, had a similar experience. He was reconnoitering the high ground between Camp Bulkeley and the golf course when he spotted the dust cloud raised by the escaping Cubans. He then moved close enough to see the migrants breaking down the fence and streaming out of the camps. His action was to call the local Army battalion commander on the radio for help, but that officer had already committed his reserves and was about to be overrun. Allen then called Redlich and General Williams and told them he would use his troops to help cordon off the area and provide a reserve.<sup>13</sup> \*

In the meantime, the commander of Rifle Security Company Windward, Captain Neal F. Pugliese, together with two junior officers and about 100 Marines, had deployed around the McDonald's, a landmark located on Sherman Avenue, a main artery which led to the Mainside area and the Navy base headquarters. One of the Marines in that force recalled the approaching mob looking like the front view of a marathon starting line. The Marines were surprised to see base civilians and dependents going about their normal business as if it were just another day in small-town America. Captain Pugliese put his troops on line in riot formation and began to advance, quickly closing the distance between the two groups. Some of the Cubans were almost jogging, with the more vocal migrants egging the crowd toward the Marines in riot gear. Many of the Marines from the fence line still wore camouflage face paint, and all of them were carrying M16 rifles with fixed bayonets, though magazines had not been locked in the weapons. They had augmented their defenses with "Dragon's Teeth" and tetrahedrons, slightly more forbidding versions of the cones that road crews use to channel traffic on construction sites. One of the platoon commanders, First Lieutenant Robert P. Salasko, worried that one or more of the Marines might lose his nerve; the odds were, after all, about 30 to 1. He soon discovered his worry was misplaced. All of the Marines were eager to move forward. When the officers ordered the riot step, the

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\* The internal security forces were responsible for what happened within any particular camp, while the external security forces were responsible for what happened outside the confines of the camps.





Photo courtesy of LtCol John R. Allen

*Marines protect their installation from Cuban migrants at the Radio Range in mid-September. Here, a reaction force blocks an exit.*

Marines “trooped and stomped” towards the migrants with energy and determination.<sup>14</sup>

There was some pushing, shoving, and shouting when the leading edge of the mob hit the Marine line. Using tactics they had learned and rehearsed, Marines identified the crowd’s leaders and dispatched snatch teams to neutralize them, which meant pulling them from the crowd, binding their wrists with plastic flexicuffs, and depositing them on the ground. The Marines continued to move forward, sometimes stepping over and around the cuffed troublemakers. The migrants responded with a barrage of rocks and more pushing and shoving. A migrant then grabbed a Marine’s rifle. True to his training, the Marine reacted by giving the migrant a butt stroke, followed by a downward slash. With stab wounds to the upper arm and the flesh outside the rib cage, the migrant fell bleeding to the ground.<sup>15</sup>

The sight of blood had an immediate impact. Some of the migrants began running from the Marine “white sleeves,” so called because the Marines rolled the sleeves of their camouflage utilities out, showing lighter colored material, while the Army did the reverse. Other migrants

turned passive. Medical personnel stepped in to evacuate the injured migrant to the naval hospital, where he made a complete recovery from his wounds.<sup>16</sup> But a number of migrants continued to advance, racing for a small bridge across an intermittent creek to the north, which led to the patch of high ground known as Chapel Hill. There was more pushing and shoving, and the Marines bayoneted two more aggressive migrants, inflicting superficial wounds. The Marines cuffed at least one of them hand and foot and left him, subdued, on the ground. The migrants who were still standing reacted by launching another barrage of rocks. The Marines again snatched and cuffed the apparent ringleaders. The migrants finally admitted defeat, shouting, “*No mas*, white sleeves! No more!” and the violence ebbed.<sup>17</sup>

Captain Pugliese decided to let the situation cool and ordered the Marines to fall back and allow the migrants to continue moving laterally toward Chapel Hill. Hundreds of migrants took the opportunity and climbed up the hill to the church on top. Somewhat isolated by dense brush and water, this was not key terrain. Colonel Himes later remembered hoping that letting the

migrants occupy "holy ground" would calm them.<sup>18</sup>

Realizing they were being isolated but unwilling to give up, a large group of male migrants spotted a gap in the Marine encirclement and tried to break out in the direction of Camp McCalla. A particularly alert squad from Company G, 2d Battalion, 6th Marines, standing a few hundred yards away, watched and analyzed the Cubans' movements and saw where they could cut them off on a small incline. On their own initiative, in 100 degree heat, the heavily laden Marines double-timed to the top of the slope, arriving there seconds before the migrants. There was a violent hand-to-hand struggle with both sides trading blows and suffering minor injuries. But the Marines quickly achieved violence supremacy and forced the Cubans to fall back.<sup>19</sup>

After closing the break in the fence, Lieutenant Colonel Redlich had returned to his humvee and simply watched the progress of the crowd. He saw the migrants settle around the church, gathering in a huge semicircle in the garden in front of a concrete patio attached to the building. The crowd started to chant slogans. Redlich took a chance and stepped up onto the patio to address the crowd. The Cubans apparently understood he was not the commanding general, but that he had something to do with day-to-day discipline. They would not let him speak, greeting him instead with jeers and making it clear they wanted to hear from the commanding general.<sup>20</sup>

Redlich then drove to JTF headquarters at Camp McCalla to get General Williams, who readily agreed to go to the hill occupied by the migrants. After the two officers devised a strategy for dealing with the crisis, General Williams said he really had to talk to the migrants. It was now between 1600 and 1700.<sup>21</sup>

The Cubans cheered when the general arrived and walked briskly to the patio, wearing his everyday utility uniform, unarmed and escorted only by Lieutenant Colonel Redlich, Captain Gayl, his driver, and JTF 160 Sergeant Major Douglas E. Berry (who was still sergeant major of the 2d Force Service Support Group at Camp Lejeune and had been with General Walls three years earlier when that officer had faced rioting Haitian migrants). While a number of migrants waved homemade banners demanding visas, liberty and family reunification, migrants in the front ranks called for silence. An interpreter conveyed the migrants' demands to General Williams, which included: immediate U.S. press coverage of their

plight; immediate messages to Washington conveying their demands; clarification of the rumor, apparently stemming from the Radio Marti broadcast, that the JTF would forcibly repatriate migrants to Cuba; representation by Cuban-American lawyers; and permission to remain on Chapel Hill until Washington responded to their demands for expedited immigration processing.<sup>22</sup>

What General Williams told the migrants in reply was the truth, without embellishment. The first promise was easy. He would provide Washington with full information about the volatile situation at the camp. Speaking through an interpreter, he told the migrants he would convey their message to the policy-makers and make sure they were heard. Next, he promised that within two days the migrants would be able to meet face-to-face with the media, a statement consistent with his "full and open disclosure" media policy. William made a point of reminding the Cubans he was a military man and his job was to follow orders, not make policy. He understood their plight. In a way he and his troops were prisoners of the same situation. They had the same kind of living quarters as the migrants—perhaps somewhat better, but not much so—and they would be there as long as the migrants.<sup>23</sup>

This message, conveyed in General Williams' low-key, even-handed style, brought the house down. There were a few migrants who looked very hostile and seemed intent on driving him from the podium. They made Captain Gayl, who was a large, muscular officer, very nervous, and he made sure he stayed between them and the general. But most of the Cubans were wildly enthusiastic, cheering and applauding Williams as if he had promised deliverance instead of telling them there was only so much he could do for them. Seeing their reaction, General Williams decided to capitalize on the situation and invited the migrants to walk back to the camp with him.<sup>24</sup>

Literally thousands agreed, and in the gathering twilight, the general led his unusual flock off the hill and back to the golf course roughly one mile away. During the walk, friendly migrants moved close to the general to touch him, pat him on the back and shake his hand, shouting "*Viva el General!*" and "You are our General." A few disapproving Cubans picked up rocks and golf balls along the route and appeared inclined to throw them at the Marines. This situation worried one young Marine platoon commander to the point of ordering his troops to intervene, but General Williams signaled the lieutenant to hold his posi-

tion and casually picked up one of the balls himself, putting it in his pocket. His action, and the admonitions of fellow migrants, probably kept the troublemakers from following through with plans to throw the objects.<sup>25</sup>

Marines from 2d Battalion, 6th Marines, shadowed the column of migrants on both sides. Lieutenant Colonel Redlich, who walked alongside General Williams, ordered the Marines to stow their bayonets, invert their rifles and stay a reasonable distance from the crowd. Captain Gayl concluded: "the scene resembled a 1960s-era civil rights march more than anything else."<sup>26</sup>

Once in sight of the camp, General Williams and his tiny staff mounted a small knoll and invited the column to form a circle around him. He thanked the migrants for returning peacefully to the camp with him and repeated the promises he had made on Chapel Hill. He and Redlich then led the migrants through the front gate, and after receiving several dozen more handshakes, they left the area.<sup>27</sup>

For hours after General Williams' departure, migrants continued to straggle into the camp. Unfortunately, many appeared to be carrying cloth satchels filled with rocks. A few hundred migrants stayed on Chapel Hill, staging a kind of sit down protest. Williams decided simply to leave them where they were and build a camp around them. His troops strung wire around the bottom of the hill while a group of angry troublemakers shouted obscenities at them. Although security officers took note of their identities, the JTF took no action against the sit down strike. Since the general gave the order not to feed the migrants on Chapel Hill until they returned to their camps, the demonstration fizzled to an end when hunger overcame anger.<sup>28</sup>

But this was far from the end of the JTF's troubles. Things had not been quiet in the Camp Bulkeley/Radio Range area during the golf course crisis. Some 5,000 migrants in those camps had decided they were tired of confinement and threw picnic tables across the wire or simply demolished fence posts and gates and walked out of their camps. There was little violence, although there was some looting of food and equipment. Some of the hotheads appeared to be preparing for the inevitable confrontation with the security forces by arming themselves with steel rebar clubs and rocks and telling liaison officers they were ready to fight and die for their freedom. As the sun set on the area, Captain Gayl remembered, "Radio Range Road closely resembled

Havana's version of the Boardwalk" as thousands of migrants strolled outside the wire. Tongue in cheek, he called it the "camps without walls" phase of the operation.<sup>29</sup>

Given the disparity in numbers and the challenges at the other end of the base, there was little the JTF could do. Major John E. Stone, 2d Battalion, 6th Marines' operations officer, took 40 Marines and tried to impose a modicum of control on part of the area in the early evening. He remembers the eerie scene, backlit by searchlights, as he deployed his Marines across one of the roads in the area. Soon a sea of migrants, many shouting and talking excitedly in Spanish, washed in and around his position, wedging the

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*Some of the hotheads appeared to be preparing for the inevitable confrontation with the security forces by arming themselves with steel rebar clubs and rocks and telling liaison officers they were ready to fight and die for their freedom.*

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Marines in a gap between two of the camps. His troops looked to him for guidance, and in his head, Major Stone quickly ran through everything he had learned in his years in the Marine Corps. Neither prepared to use deadly force to stop the migrants, nor willing to back down and leave the migrants with the impression the Marines could be intimidated, it was a quintessential "What now, Lieutenant?" moment.<sup>30</sup>

During the tense standoff between the shouting migrants and the vastly outnumbered Marines, some of the migrants at the rear of the crowd found another way around the Marine position by simply proceeding behind one of the camps. Once the remaining migrants realized there was a way out, they quickly withdrew from the situation. The major was relieved his dilemma had resolved itself. At this point, he was quite willing to let the migrants walk off into the night.<sup>31</sup>

Lieutenant Colonel Redlich appealed for calm and order through the camp spokesmen.<sup>32</sup> His security forces protected his command post as well as the air transportable hospital, which was sandwiched between migrant camps, and nearby Camp Quick, where Lieutenant Colonel Allen's Marines had pitched their tents. He had decided,





Photo courtesy of LtCol John R. Allen

*The “camps without walls” phase of the operation: ignoring camp boundaries, Cuban migrants roam the Radio Range area at will.*

wisely as it turned out, to place his command post in Camp Quick, which the Marines proceeded to protect with extensive wire obstacles and riflemen on the perimeter with loaded M16s tipped with bayonets. Other security forces maintained blocking positions between the Camp Bulkeley area and Mainside.<sup>33</sup>

Then came 11 September, not a good day. At 0626, the JTF staff notified the barracks the golf course might erupt again and positioned forces in and around the Mainside areas to contain any renewed threats to base facilities. But nothing happened on that front. At 0815, a report came in of tension building at the chapel, but not much happened there either.<sup>34</sup> Then, less than two hours later, approximately 3,000 migrants with a spearhead of troublemakers and homemade banners left Camp Bulkeley through the remains of the camp’s west gate and headed north on Magazine Road toward the naval ammunition magazines. Initial reports indicated the migrants wanted to link up with their compatriots at the golf course, news that had an electrifying effect on the staff of the JTF who envisioned that scenario as their worst nightmare come true.<sup>35</sup>

Word of the impending crisis spread quickly along radio networks and phone lines. Colonel Himes drove to the high ground between Camp Bulkeley and the golf course. From there he could see the migrants streaming toward him and he directed a platoon of his Marines under Captain Pugliese to cut them off. Since Pugliese and his Marines were a few miles away, they first had to find transportation. The captain decided to commandeer one of the refurbished school buses the base used for its transportation system. The bus driver, a Jamaican civilian, refused, telling the captain he had to make his scheduled run. Pugliese found a way to make it clear he would not take “no” for an answer, and the bus driver decided it would be best to do what the captain wanted.<sup>36</sup>

A few minutes later, as the bus rounded a corner in the sandy hills dotted with cactus plants and abandoned ammunition bunkers, the Marines once again found themselves facing thousands of migrants heading their way. Captain Pugliese deployed his troops, who looked as fearsome as they had the day before with rifles and riot gear, across the road between two small hills and put out wire barriers on the flanks. Seeing the

Marines, the migrants shouted, "It's the white sleeves!" and slowed to a halt. They then sat down and said they would not move until their demands had been met.<sup>37</sup>

A stalemate developed and lasted until Lieutenant Colonel Allen appeared, seemingly out of nowhere, along with Lieutenant Colonel Randy Garver, an Army MP officer who had been a corporal in the Marine Corps at Khe Sanh and "spoke the same language" as his Marine counterparts. Allen and Garver were alone without any troops since both of their battalions were still committed to containing the disturbances at the golf course. For some four hours in the hot sun, the pair of officers tried to persuade the migrants to return to their camps. In the end, they told the crowd, less politely, it was their choice: they could return to the camp on their own, or they could wait until the Marines forced them to return at gunpoint.<sup>38</sup> Colonel Himes had arrived at the same conclusion and ordered his troops to prepare to use tear gas. The barracks Marines had donned their gas masks at about the same time as General Williams arrived on the scene with a visiting member of the National Security Council, who was more than a little concerned about the repercussions and the safety of all U.S. personnel on the scene. Williams briefly addressed the migrants, but this time they did not respond.<sup>39</sup>

The standoff continued as the hot day wore on. The Cubans did not move, but the Marines did not use any tear gas.<sup>40</sup> In the late afternoon, Major Stone led a platoon-size reaction force of Marines, mostly from Company E, 2d Battalion, 6th Marines, and under the command of Captain William R. Costantini, in search of a terrain feature he could use to cut the Cuban column in two. The migrant column was now strung-out in segments between Camp Bulkeley and the platoon from the barracks along Magazine Road. Once again, the uninviting hills to the left and right of the road boxed the migrants into a narrow channel, making it difficult for them to leave the road and go around the Marines. Major Stone and Captain Costantini worried the migrants would sit down on the pavement, which would have made it difficult to resolve the situation in their favor. Not unlike Colonel Joshua L. Chamberlain of the 20th Maine when his ammunition ran out at Gettysburg and the only other options were surrender or retreat, Major Stone ordered Captain Costantini to fix bayonets and advance.<sup>41</sup>

Amazingly, the 40 or so Marines started to drive the crowd of thousands back toward the

beach. Troublemakers in the crowd reacted with a hail of rocks, but the Marines deployed their snatch teams, catching and cuffing more than a few of the rock-throwers before continuing their advance. At one point, it looked as though the retreating migrants might stampede and trample the migrants still coming out of the camps and heading toward the clash. Seeing this, the major directed Captain Costantini to slow the advance of his Marines. The men responded expertly to Costantini's commands. Easing the rate of advance allowed the migrants to retreat without panicking into the outer perimeter of the Radio Range complex of camps. Costantini's men literally slammed and locked the gate behind them. The Marines then turned and advanced in the direction of the migrants caught between them and the barracks Marines. Despite the enormous disparity in numbers, this was too much for most of the migrants, who quickly decided to return to their camps. The troublemakers spent the night in administrative segregation, separated from the general population.<sup>42</sup>

As if to keep the JTF on its toes, in the late afternoon of 11 September, Haitian migrants at Camp McCalla staged a demonstration, which, thankfully, turned out to be a relatively minor affair.<sup>43</sup> But the day's work was still not done. Once again, an unexpected challenge arose for the weary Marines and their comrades in arms. When Lieutenant Colonel Allen returned to the command post at Camp Bulkeley, Lieutenant Colonel Redlich handed him a message warning of an imminent tropical storm. Instead of relaxing with a well-deserved hot meal, all the Marines of 2d Battalion, 6th Marines, turned to preparing the camps for the storm. They lashed tents to the ground, cleared away loose debris, and did what they could to ready the camps for bad weather. Redlich and Allen asked the migrant leaders to forget their differences and work together in the common cause. Many of the Cubans complied with the request, but a significant few did not. When the troublemakers started to stone a detail from Company G, Allen ordered all his troops to return to the safety of Camp Quick and let the Cubans fend for themselves when the storm struck.<sup>44</sup>

Unfortunately, the darkness and the confusion made it possible for migrants to loot the now-abandoned air transportable hospital, removing an assortment of equipment such as rebar, scalpels, syringes, and tent poles, all items with excellent weapon potential. It appeared there was

an armory tent where the Cubans were taking the material and honing their weapons. The storm, when it came during the night, was relatively mild, with winds not exceeding 30 miles per hour.<sup>45</sup>

### *Back Behind Wire*

Prospects were bleak when the Marines awoke on the morning of 12 September. Lieutenant Colonel Allen remembered feeling "very low" because the JTF had lost control of the situation the day before. But he soon told his operations officer he was determined to retake the camps and reestablish control. Allen discussed his plan with Lieutenant Colonel Redlich, who approved it and placed him in tactical command of all security forces at Camp Bulkeley, a force comprising five U.S. Army and Marine infantry units and four Army MP companies. Around 1000 a rapid planning process began for Operation Clean Sweep, which was to be launched at 1700.<sup>46</sup>

In the meantime, another water shortage blossomed into a crisis. One of the causes of the shortage was migrant sabotage to the pipelines. The response was to shut off water to Camp Bulkeley until plumbers could repair the damage. This did not sit well with the migrants in the blistering heat, who thought the outage was retribution for two days of demonstrations. More than 800 migrants left their areas at Camp Bulkeley and gathered on the road to the Radio Range between the command post for the complex and Camp Quick. There they erected a blockade of concertina wire and camp cots. The migrants declared their intention to maintain the blockade until the JTF restored water to them.<sup>47</sup>

The response was restrained. While a quick reaction force stood by inside the gate to Camp Quick, the JTF called for additional water trucks. But it would take hours for the trucks to arrive. Agitators, meanwhile, began to harangue the crowd, which swelled as time went on. A group of migrants decided to pass the time by assaulting Army MPs, who cuffed and detained two of the most violent and vocal migrants. The MPs sent one of the migrants immediately to the Magazine 121 detention area. For some reason, the other remained under guard behind the command post. A rumor he had been abused spread like a brush-fire on a dry hillside. As a result, the mob attacked the small wooden house that stood in a clearing by itself. Mostly, the migrants threw rocks at the thin line of soldiers and Marines defending the



Photo courtesy of Col Douglas C. Redlich  
*LtCol Douglas C. Redlich (right), commander of Joint Task Group Bulkeley, with his executive officer, Maj Brian J. Vincent, stand on a hill overlooking the Cuban migrant camps. LtCol Redlich played a leading role in JTF 160, establishing the camp on Grand Turk Island, which was never used, and then participating in the operations to reestablish order when the Cuban migrants rioted in September 1994.*

headquarters. In all, there was a lone platoon of Army MPs, along with the officers and noncommissioned officers of the staff for Camp Bulkeley.<sup>48</sup>

Captain Gayl, who was assigned to the command post, was the right man in the wrong place when the violence began, caught literally between the command post and the Cubans along with one other officer. With one riot shield between them, the two tried to take shelter from the barrage of rocks, which quickly began to shatter the shield. The two officers dashed, one after the other, back to the command post, almost literally between the shower of rocks. Miraculously unhurt, they joined the defenders, who included Sergeant Major Royce S. Restivo. As the mob surged forward, sometimes striking the MPs' shields with their fists and bodies, Sergeant Major Restivo rotated between the MP positions outside the command post, filling gaps and motivating the defenders.<sup>49</sup> It was, to say the least, an exhilarating event.

At this point, the reaction force, Marines from Company G, 2d Battalion, 6th Marines, arrived and waded into the crowd from the rear while migrants in front of the command post appeared ready to make a rock-throwing all-out charge using picnic tables as battering rams. One of the MPs took the initiative and counterattacked, driving his squat, modernistic humvee into the picnic tables and forcing the migrants back, if only



briefly. They reacted by turning their attention to vandalizing nearby vehicles. Two courageous members of the command post staff ran forward in a vain attempt to thwart their efforts, which led to a frenzied response by the migrants. A renewed—and greater—hail of rocks fell on the defenders, who retreated on order, to positions inside the command post. Seemingly out of nowhere, an Air Force policewoman appeared with her guard dog and positioned herself inside the commanding officer's empty office, ready to order her dog to bite the first migrant to invade that space. Moments later, rocks started to crash through the windows and litter the floor. It then occurred to Major Brian J. Vincent, now executive officer of the staff at Camp Bulkeley, to release the detainee still being held in the command post. This placated most of the rioting migrants, many of whom simply ebbed away.<sup>50</sup>

The defenders then telephoned Redlich, who was discussing Operation Clean Sweep with General Williams at his headquarters on McCalla. Redlich authorized the use of pepper spray, and General Williams promised immediate water

relief. Moments later, the reaction force from 2d Battalion, 6th Marines, succeeded in clearing the roadblock and literally fighting and clubbing its way through a still very hostile crowd to the command post. The siege was over. Six Marines had incurred minor injuries. Lieutenant Colonel Allen visited the injured Marines at his battalion aid station, and seeing their injuries reinforced his determination to set things right.<sup>51</sup>

As the crisis at the command post ended, the JTF was applying the finishing touches to the plan for Clean Sweep. Around 1400, Redlich returned to his headquarters and prepared to deliver a warning to all Cuban camp leaders before launching the operation. He directed they come to his office at 1500 to hear the warning, which had been carefully drafted and translated into Spanish to minimize the potential for misunderstandings. Redlich's points were simple: the migrants had disappointed him and General Williams by taking advantage of their good will; they had violated rules and regulations designed for the safety and security of all; further assaults against U.S. persons or property would not be tolerated; and finally,



Photo courtesy of LtCol John R. Allen

*On 12 September 1994, well-equipped Marines stepped off to conduct Operation Clean Sweep, subduing unruly Cuban migrants in one camp after another. Riot control techniques demonstrated a strong presence, which prevented further escalation.*



DVIC DN-ST-98-02142

*Marines encountered strong hostility from Cuban migrants at Camp Hunt on 12 September during Operation Clean Sweep, which aimed at reestablishing order in the area.*

any migrant not within their assigned camps at 1700 that evening would face apprehension and indefinite administrative segregation.<sup>52</sup>

The migrant leaders found the tone of Redlich's decree out of character for him and somewhat ominous. The word spread quickly among the Cubans, and by 1655 the quiet before the storm had settled on Guantanamo. Radio Range Road was strangely empty, clear of all but the most hard-bitten migrants, who jeered and cursed at any soldiers or Marines who happened to be in sight. Meanwhile, just out of plain sight at Camp Quick, the assault force was forming like Roman legionnaires, carrying shields and batons, wearing shin guards, helmets and face protectors. With the companies of 2d Battalion, 6th Marines, in the lead, the final composition of the force included two battalions of the 2d Air Defense Artillery Brigade (USA), four companies of the 716th Military Police Battalion (USA) under Lieutenant Colonel Garver, two psychological warfare teams with loudspeakers, eight teams of military working dogs, and elements of other groups, including a detachment of elite surveillance and target acquisition Marines armed with shotguns.<sup>53</sup>

The plan was to establish two parallel lines—one along the cliffs to seaward, the other along Radio Range Road—and advance the lines toward each other like a vice with the Cubans and the camps in between. If the lead companies tired, other companies were to leapfrog forward to maintain the impetus. As each camp was uncovered, Marine engineers and MP detachments were to peel off to repair breaks in the wire, begin searching for contraband and reestablish internal security.<sup>54</sup>

The men of 2d Battalion, 6th Marines, built up a full head of steam waiting for the order to deploy. Then, just before 1700, they began to tap their riot batons and nightsticks in unison against the ground and their shin guards, beating out an ominous tattoo that echoed down the line of camps. All but the most obtuse migrants knew that times were about to change. Then, at precisely 1700, the task force threw plywood boards over the perimeter of Camp Quick and breached the wire to begin the advance. It was, Captain Gayl remembered, an awe-inspiring sight to see the long lines of Marines stepping off in perfect formation, fully equipped, with company guidons flapping in the hot breeze and waning sunlight.

Although it was a little unfair to the soldiers who marched with the Marines, Captain Gayl thought of the scene in the movie "The Wind and the Lion" when the Marines marched across the desert behind an enormous eagle, globe and anchor flag to rescue Candice Bergen.<sup>55</sup>

Initially, all went very well and the migrants melted out of the way and back into their camps, obeying the commands relayed by the psychological warfare detachments over their mobile loudspeakers. Hundreds of migrants simply watched in stunned silence from the perimeters of their camps. Then rocks started to fly from within some of the camps. The troublemakers apparently thought the assault force did not plan to enter the camps and they could act with impunity. They quickly found out they were wrong. True to his plan, Lieutenant Colonel Allen ordered his commanders to go into the camps and retrieve the rock-throwers, which led to scenes of Marines and soldiers breaching the wire, chasing their targets through mazes of tents and clotheslines to finally tackle, cuff and drag them out of the camps and on to the side of the road subdued and in shock. There they waited for buses to take them to administrative segregation. If anything, these actions deepened the silence among most

Cubans. But as time went on, cheers and applause for the soldiers and Marines broke the silence. Most Cubans did not care for the troublemakers any more than Allen did.<sup>56</sup>

The assault force encountered particularly strong hostility at Camp Hunt, an all-male camp. Hundreds of angry migrants, perched on and around the portable toilets lining the perimeter of the camp, jeered at the Marines and soldiers and threw rocks, first at the forces on the seaside of the camp and then shifting their focus to the threat from the landward side. For a time, the hail of rocks was so thick that every member of the battalion command group was hit at least once. A platoon of Marines from Company E, 2d Battalion, 6th Marines, stormed and breached the gate to the camp and formed on line. The 39 Marines routed the migrants, who fled by the hundreds toward the rear of the camp.<sup>57</sup>

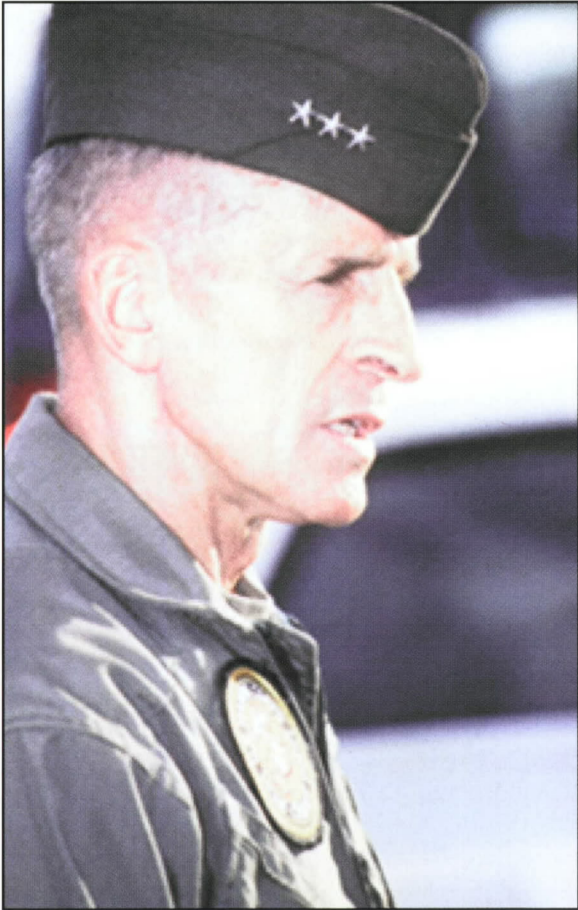
A similar drama occurred outside Camp November, near the end of the mile-long line of camps. The migrants pulled concertina wire across the road to create an obstacle. The first Marines to the obstacle were from Company F, 2d Battalion, 6th Marines. They paused, some of them resting on one knee, tired and thirsty after more than an hour of tremendous exertion in the



Photo courtesy of LtCol John R. Allen

*Cuban migrants who resisted the Marines in Operation Clean Sweep found themselves restrained with flexicuffs and loaded on board trucks on their way to administrative segregation.*





DVIC DM-ST-97-00168

*LtGen Robert B. Johnston, Commander, U.S. Marine Forces, Atlantic, was one of the main force providers for Joint Task Force 160. He is shown here during a visit to Guantanamo Bay in December 1994.*

heat. The inevitable barrage of rocks began and the Marines raised their shields in self-protection. There was a flurry of activity while the company commander talked to some of his men. Two Marines then broke from the ranks and ran toward the camp where they threw themselves on their shields and then onto the wire. The company ran over their backs into the camp, chasing the stunned troublemakers into the arms of the air defense soldiers who had established blocking positions from the rear.<sup>58</sup>

The operation was a complete success and ended between 1900 and 2000. Order had been restored without casualties on either side. There were a few bruises and broken lips, but no injury serious enough to require hospitalization. Allen's troops had not been afraid to use force, but had done so with discipline and restraint. Between 120 and 200 migrants were detained and removed

to administrative segregation. The Marines and soldiers were both exhausted and elated after the days of frustration and some humiliation.<sup>59</sup>

The next day, 13 September, started much the same: two impressive columns of Marines and soldiers ran sorties from Camp Quick in the morning to conduct the second phase of Clean Sweep. But now the pace was much more deliberate and there was little resistance. The Marines and soldiers surrounded the camps one by one and faced outboard, effectively isolating them. Army MPs then entered the camps and searched them systematically, paying particular attention to tents and individuals that had aroused suspicion. Using ground and aerial photography, the JTF had kept track of individuals who regularly incited the crowds and of unusually popular and active tents. The MPs found more than one makeshift armory where skilled craftsmen had been fashioning a variety of weapons: knives out of banding wire, machetes from scrap iron and aluminum and pikes from tent poles and 16-penny nails.<sup>60</sup>

During Operation Clean Sweep, most migrants abided by Lieutenant Colonel Redlich's amnesty policy, which was broadcast over loudspeakers. If they voluntarily surrendered contraband weapons, they would not go to administrative detention, which they knew was not a pleasant place to be. Administrative detention already was home to a variety of sociopaths and criminals. As a result, MPs found weapons in many places. Some migrants had pitched their weapons over the concertina wire to avoid any association with their tents. Others had piled the weapons neatly in common areas. Security forces hauled the weapons by the truckload to an enormous dump behind Camp Quick. When it all was over, the MP commander, Lieutenant Colonel Garver, estimated his men had confiscated more than seven tons of weapons.<sup>61</sup> It had been another hot, long and exhausting day. But it also had been another satisfying day.

The unrest at Guantanamo Bay was more than a passing interest to Atlantic Command and its Marine component in Norfolk. On 11 September, the commanding general of Marine Forces, Atlantic, Lieutenant General Robert B. Johnston, called General Williams to offer the assistance of an air alert battalion from Camp Lejeune along with the 8th Marines regimental staff, under Colonel Jennings B. Beavers II, a plain-spoken Missourian, and an energetic general officer, Brigadier General Raymond P. Ayres, Jr. The idea was for General Ayres to form a joint security

group and take over external security for the entire base, including the barracks and the fence line. The regimental staff would run a combat operations center for multiple battalions, a capability the JTF did not possess. Relieved of that burden, General Williams and his troops would be free to focus on internal security to handle whatever happened inside the camps. Although he would have preferred not to have yet another general officer on board Guantanamo—there already was a Navy admiral under him in the JTF—General Williams thought the plan was a “great idea: ... [the] disturbances ... really pointed up ... [the] need for a single security manager for the whole place.”<sup>62</sup>

Within hours, the air alert battalion, 1st Battalion, 2d Marines, under the command of the well-respected Lieutenant Colonel Dennis J. Hejlik, had mustered and was enroute. The reinforcements landed at Guantanamo Bay over the following two days. By the time General Ayres and Colonel Beavers had assembled their staff and troops, order had been reestablished and the pace was much slower than it had been a few days earlier. During a meeting on 14 September, General Williams reaffirmed the distinction between external and internal security, which

would remain the responsibility of the camp commanders, and devoted his energies to making the newcomers understand the mission. By now General Williams knew exactly where the line ran between persuasion and cooperation on the one hand and force and compulsion on the other. His fear was that the newcomers might have arrived with different ideas about the need to use force.<sup>63</sup>

On 15 September, 2d Battalion, 6th Marines, came under the operational control of Colonel Beavers, now officially commanding officer, External Security Forces, also known as the Joint Security Group. The new organization conducted a successful security sweep of the golf course camps and worked with internal security forces to build (or rebuild) the infrastructure of the camps. In the calm after the riots, Lieutenant Colonels Redlich and Allen were able to make the rounds to all their camps and tell the Cubans they were not in a position to make any more demands. But, the two officers added, they were still free to work with the JTF to improve living conditions, which was the planned third stage of the pacification operation.<sup>64</sup>

For his part, General Williams was guardedly optimistic. He hoped the large shipment of Cubans unloaded on 15 September was the last. It



DVIC DD-SD-99-03701

*Haitian migrants with their meager belongings line up to be processed for return to Haiti during Operation Uphold Democracy. All those going home went voluntarily.*





DVIC DM-ST-97-00101

*While some Cuban migrants attempted to return to Cuba, others waited patiently as the American government determined their fate. In an attempt to alleviate the boredom, Cpl Manuel Terg and a group of Cuban migrants sort out cargo tie down straps awaiting shipment.*

seemed the Cuban-American agreement to curtail rafting and improve immigration might take hold. As such, he looked forward to devoting his time and energy to improving conditions within the camps, which for him was still an excellent way to prevent unrest.<sup>65</sup>

On 19 September, the focus shifted briefly back to the Haitian camps. U.S. forces landed in Haiti on 19 and 20 September, which created a stir at Camp McCalla.\* The JTF arranged for as many Haitians as possible to watch the CNN news broadcasts on the eve of the invasion. The camps were deathly quiet. The next day, there was a ceremony of remembrance for the Haitians who had died during the military dictatorship. More than 100 Haitians, dressed in white, chanted and marched through the compounds.<sup>66</sup> The Haitian camps were not so peaceful the following day. A number of migrants threw rocks at JTF soldiers and airmen out of frustration. While the day of liberation had come for their homeland, they could not go anywhere and many of them felt they were truly in limbo.<sup>67</sup> Fortunately for those who wanted to go home, the JTF was soon able

to offer voluntary repatriation back to Haiti, which began on 24 September.<sup>68</sup> The question of involuntary repatriation—of Haitians who were ineligible to go to the United States but refused to go home—would not be settled for many months.

During the same period, the Cuban camps were largely quiet. It was hard to believe the same players had staged the dramatic unrest a few days earlier. But the absence of angry crowds did not mean the absence of dangerous problems. General Williams wrote in his diary that one of his main concerns was the absence of a workable policy for the voluntary repatriation of Cuban migrants. He noted that one U.S. policy said Cubans who wanted to go to the United States needed to go home to apply for a visa, while another policy kept them at Guantanamo. The Haitians who had tired of the uncertainty and boredom of life in the camps were free to go home, but what about the Cubans who felt the same way?<sup>69</sup>

Many impatient Cubans did not wait for the U.S. Government to make up its mind. Since they had learned the hard way that it was pointless to challenge the American security forces directly, they adopted other tactics. Secretive groups of

\* Detailed in Part II.



troublemakers formed small units, breached the wire at night and disappeared into the darkness before anyone could react. Not surprisingly, most of these migrants were single males. Their apparent goal was to return to Cuba by either walking through the minefields or swimming. The later option typically involved jumping from the cliffs near the fence line, swimming out to sea and then homeward. Both propositions were dangerous, and the whole situation was unacceptable to the JTF. First, no one on the JTF staff, let alone the base or the barracks commander, was ready to tolerate something akin to small, hostile paramilitary units roaming the base.<sup>70</sup> Second, the JTF could not accept the risk of widespread injury or death, either on the fence line or through drowning.<sup>71</sup> Colonel Beavers felt it was his personal responsibility to tighten security to make it more difficult for the migrants to bring harm upon themselves or the security forces.

One measure instituted by Colonel Beavers was to group single males in Camp November near the beach and the fence line with Cuba where the risks in swimming home were reduced, although still real. Then there was a tactical package designed to discourage and defeat outbreaks, especially on the landward side. The routine of perimeter foot patrols augmented by local quick reaction forces changed. The patrols were simply too slow or too few and far between to do the job. Instead, the joint security group built guard towers and put Marines and soldiers in them. Although the group retained a heavily armed, centrally controlled mobile quick reaction force for large-scale disturbances, the local reaction forces now took the form of platoon-sized patrols in the backcountry where they established patrol bases. The camouflaged and armed patrols operated on a variety of routes covering many of the most likely avenues of escape from the camps. Every so often, the patrols would bounce off the wire, coming close enough to a camp to make themselves conspicuous for a few minutes, then disappearing back into the darkness. The migrants were left to wonder where they had gone. The routine, with its combination of psychological effect and presence on the ground and in the towers, seemed to work. While it is impossible to know how many Cubans were deterred by these measures, the number of incidents reflected in situation reports dwindled.<sup>72</sup>

By late September, the situation was secure enough to allow increments of 2d Battalion, 6th Marines, which had done its share of the hard

work and then some, to return home. This meant some of the battalion's Marines had spent more than 110 days deployed in the thick of migrant operations. On 24 September, 2d Battalion, 6th Marines, turned over its riot control gear to 1st Battalion, 2d Marines, which took over as the "white sleeves" battalion. To make it clear the new troops on the block were every bit as determined and capable as their predecessors, 1st Battalion staged a show of force at the Bulkeley and Radio Range camps. The Marines marched slowly around the camps in a column of two, partly to conserve energy and thus be able to look fit and ready in the withering heat, and partly to give the impression of a larger force. It worked. Once again, the jeers and catcalls which greeted the first of the grim-faced, heavily-armed Marines faded to total silence, broken at times by cheers as the procession continued.<sup>73</sup>

Before he left Guantanamo, Lieutenant Colonel Allen prepared a memorandum entitled "Migrant Security Environment and Lessons Learned" for the External Security Forces commander. The memorandum began with his general observations on migrant operations: that security was a state of mind and a combined arms effect. It was not simply a matter of force, but a result of all of the efforts of the JTF, which ranged from housing and feeding the migrants to implementing the administration's immigration policy, which combined to make the migrant feel secure or insecure. The next major point was that, even though the Marines had embarked on a humanitarian operation, they needed to think in terms of low intensity conflict, like the Marines who had written the classic *Small Wars Manual*. Next, he analyzed the various threat groups in the Cuban migrant population—from agent provocateurs to criminals to members of a religious cult called "Palo Mayombe" to troublemakers or young, bored, excitable male malcontents. He stressed the need to deploy intelligence resources early to gather information about these groups, which was mostly a matter of debriefing them and those who worked with them and collating the results.<sup>74</sup>

Allen next addressed the concept of "seeing the elephant" (a metaphor from the American Civil War for the baptism of fire in combat). For a Marine or soldier, the elephant was enormous in the first riot. The confusion, the crowds and the emotions were overwhelming, making it hard to know what to think tactically, how to analyze the tactical problem or even how to do the right thing. The commanders tended to fall back on



DVIC DM-ST-96-00362

*Gen. John J. Sheehan, Commander in Chief, U.S. Atlantic Command, on one of his official visits to Guantanamo Bay in 1994. Joint Task Force 160 fell under his operational control.*

frontal tactics, which meant lining troops up in riot formation and facing the crowd, “absorbing the mass and weight of the migrants against the line of riot shields.” When this happened, the troops took casualties from rocks, tent stakes, or homemade weapons.

Allen stressed that as long as the elephant was large, the frustration level among the troops would be correspondingly high. It was incumbent on commanders to take the emotional temperature of their troops and, if necessary, to provide outlets to prevent outbursts of brutality. The outlets could take the form of training exercises, platoon or company school circles, or intervention by chaplains or psychologists. The colonel noted separately that he had been very lucky to have U.S. Navy Lieutenant Michael A. Colson assigned to his battalion as chaplain; Lieutenant Colson, who had worked with refugees for years in Africa before joining the Navy, was a master at defusing

tensions and even making the troops laugh about their experiences.<sup>75</sup>

Once the elephant had shrunk, it was easier for small unit commanders to think through the problems they faced and develop more effective tactics. The key was the use of controlled violence. Surprise was paramount. The security forces would need to spot and mark troublemakers—those who seemed to be sparking the violence, whether from the front or from another quarter. Then the security forces needed to “up the violence ante” quickly and decisively, dispatching snatch teams to seize the troublemakers, subdue them and make them disappear. Snatch teams might come from the front, sides or rear of the crowd, and more than one snatch team might be active at the same time. The effect was as much psychological as physical. Snatch teams made every member of the crowd feel vulnerable because the protective sense of anonymity, being lost in the crowd, was gone. This was usually enough to deflate a demonstration. Deprived of its leaders and its momentum, the crowd would generally break up.

The memorandum emphasized a collateral point about the need for active, aggressive intelligence collection during demonstrations, especially with video cameras. Collection served to target additional troublemakers, detect new and different weapons and identify hotbeds of unrest within camps. Videotapes also were useful to critique and improve the performance of the troops following an operation. Another important collateral point regarded the need for internal security forces to remain active during demonstrations to identify and contain potential problems early on.

After reviewing the brief phase of escape and evasion by determined single males after 13 September, Allen emphasized the key to success was to think in terms of low intensity conflict and to continue to analyze the threat, remaining alert to changes and adapting to meet those changes. In the version of the memorandum that appeared in the *Marine Corps Gazette* in February 1995, Allen asked the rhetorical question: if he had established “violence supremacy” earlier on, would the general breakdown of order have occurred? He answered his own question, writing that “increased but controlled violence” might have prevented the problem. Some argued later it was wrong to focus on the need for violence supremacy because the real issue was the shortages of food, water, and sanitation. Allen countered such arguments stating, you cannot hand

out loaves of bread when people are throwing rocks at you.<sup>76</sup>

### *Quality of Life at Guantanamo*

The next phase of the operation was anti-climactic. It was not one of crisis upon crisis, but a time when Joint Task Force 160 made considerable progress on two fronts: improving the quality of life for migrants while tightening security. The quality of life initiatives aimed first at solving basic problems: better plumbing, better food and the like. The work was more difficult because the JTF was competing with the occupation of Haiti for resources, but after a while the adjutants and the logisticians came through. Reinforced and resupplied, the JTF was able to start the process of meeting migrants' higher needs, such as arranging phone and mail service and building schools and sports centers. Some 140 chaplains worked to meet spiritual needs. One interesting refinement was the establishment of shelters for battered or threatened women. Regrettably, a number of migrants expressed their frustrations by abusing their female companions. As time went on, more Cubans became involved in these initiatives, especially when it came to helping with building projects. Most Cuban migrants were active, restless, energetic persons—otherwise they would not have ventured to sea in the first place—and it was not difficult to channel their energy.<sup>77</sup>

There also was some relief for the JTF in that substantial numbers of Cuban migrants opted for

safe haven in Panama, thereby relieving the pressure on the facilities at Guantanamo. By mid-October, some 5,000 migrants had gone to Panama. Ultimately, a total of roughly 8,600 made the trip.<sup>78</sup>

With time to focus on security, 1st Battalion, 2d Marines, quickly settled into the routine and the Joint Security Group prepared for many possible contingencies. The group determined the proper ratio of security forces to migrants was one infantry battalion to 10,000 migrants, and Colonel Beavers learned for himself that the best defense was to contain disturbances before they escalated. There now were platoon- and company-sized reaction forces prepared for multiple missions, which they rehearsed at least once a week. One mission was, of course, riot control. Another plan was for a hostage/barricade contingency. Finally, there was the destructive weather plan: what to do in case of a hurricane.<sup>79</sup>

The JTF continued to build more watchtowers, and work started on a very secure holding area for troublemakers at an isolated part of the base. Ultimately named Camp X-Ray and run by Air Force Security Police, it boasted state-of-the-art security features and was virtually escape-proof. Although Camp X-Ray was not a prison, many of its inmates were hard to handle and the regimen was strict. For example, the policy was to select only the most mature and stable airmen to work at the facility because they would face abuse from the inmates that ranged from insults to assaults. As such, every member of the security team needed excellent self-control.<sup>80</sup>

Another security initiative sprung from an idea originating with General Ayres: that General Williams make contact with his Cuban counterpart to discuss the issue of Cuban escapees. Williams endorsed the idea, and in early October, the Joint Chiefs of Staff agreed to work the issue of military-to-military transfers through the base's northeast gate.<sup>81</sup> As a result, there was direct contact between the Cuban and American commanders by the spring of 1995. Usually it was the JTF commander who met his Cuban counterpart, but at least once it was the commander in chief from U.S. Atlantic Command, General John J. Sheehan. The commanders elaborated a protocol for the orderly repatriation of small numbers of migrants (approximately 200 in one representative six-month period) through the northeast gate. The migrants who went home through the gate included both voluntary and involuntary returnees. Barracks Marines, who were responsible for con-



DVIC DM-ST-97-00177

*Prominent visitors to Guantanamo Bay Naval Base never stopped coming. The Honorable Ted Stevens, Senator from Alaska and chairman of the Senate Appropriations Committee, talks with BGen Raymond P. Ayres, who succeeded BGen Michael J. Williams as commanding general of Joint Task Force 160.*





DVIC DN-ST-98-00744

*1stLt Virgilio Gonzalez of 1st Battalion, 2d Marines, instructs Cuban migrants about American customs. Since it appeared that many, if not all, would eventually continue on to the United States, the joint task force held classes to prepare them for life in their new country.*

ducting the operations, took elaborate precautions.<sup>82</sup>

The Marine commander picked his most physically intimidating Marines to escort the migrants to what was literally a line in the sand, one that someone had painted white. If a migrant did not want to go home, or had been a troublemaker, he might be shackled hand and foot. On a few occasions, bodies of migrants who had died of natural causes were repatriated in caskets. An American military officer, a translator and a State Department representative officiated at each transfer. As the American detachment approached the line, a corresponding detachment of Cubans, who were typically young and looked undernourished, did the same. The American officer would read a short statement and the migrant would then step back into Cuba and his previous life. If the migrant looked like a troublemaker, the Cubans might take hold of him physically. Neither side carried or showed weapons. But watching the transaction from a camouflaged position in the brush were Marine spotters and snipers, along with a small reserve standing ready to intervene at a moment's notice in case of trouble. The Cubans

almost certainly had a similar standard operating procedure; the Marines noticed the number of bushes on the Cuban side of the line changed according to the operational scenario of the day. But for the most part, the two sides treated each other with respect and the transfers were trouble-free. At times, relations were almost amicable. One day a Cuban soldier tripped a mine while clearing brush on the Cuban side of the line, injuring himself and a comrade. Although they could not cross the line, Marines rushed forward with battle dressings, which other Cubans reached over to accept. The Cubans thanked the Marines for the medical gear and later sent word the two soldiers had survived.<sup>83</sup>

Over time, the hard work paid off. With only a few exceptions, the camps stayed quiet. After September 1994, the situation was so calm that inbound Marine replacements, who had heard about the past riots and trained hard to suppress future riots, were surprised to find the biggest challenge was often boredom.<sup>84</sup>

In early October, General Williams learned an Army officer would replace him. Within a few days, the word changed, and the new decision

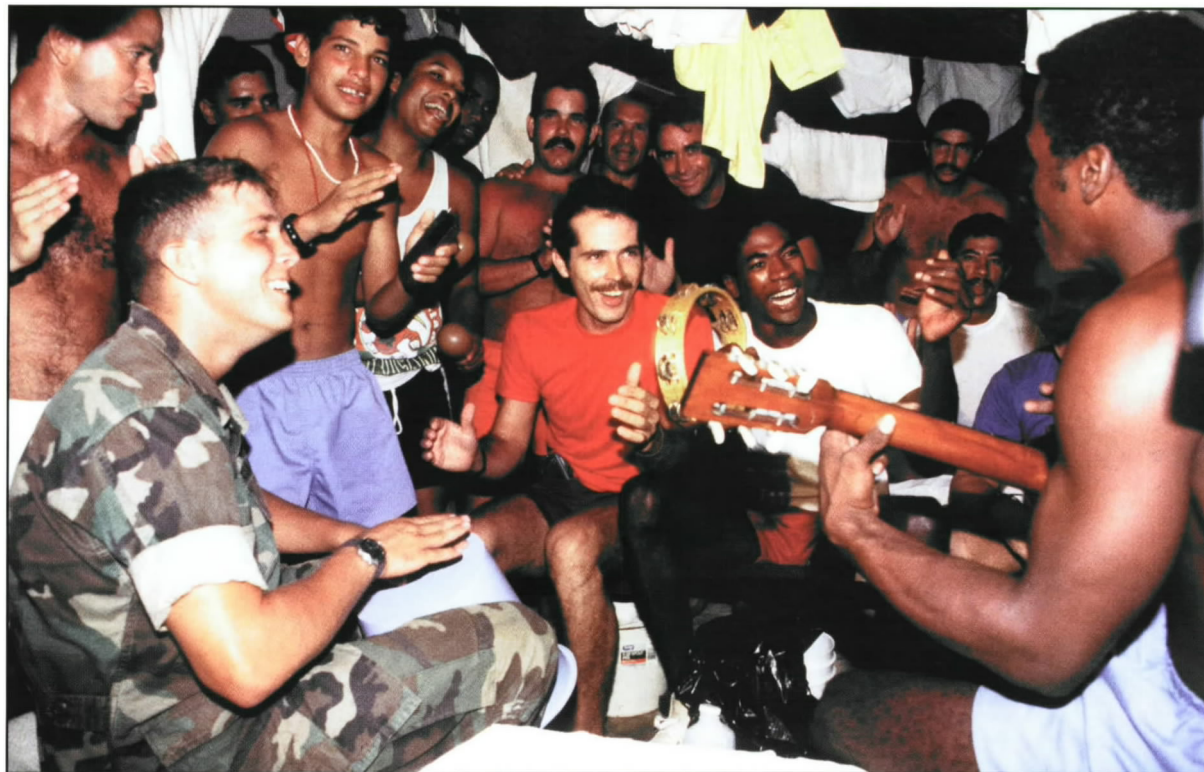
was that General Ayres would replace General Williams, who would return to Camp Lejeune and resume his duties as the commander of 2d Force Service Support Group. When the formal turnover occurred on 17 October, Williams reflected on the recent past, saying he was "extremely proud of the...men and women, military and civilian, of Joint Task Force 160." From their initial mission of processing Haitian migrants in Kingston, Jamaica, to their "present mission of caring for over 40,000 Cubans and Haitians at Guantanamo Bay, JTF personnel ... [had] demonstrated professional competence, compassion, and a willingness to work together."<sup>85</sup>

General Ayres agreed. When he took command, he saluted the JTF's "tremendous improvements" in sheltering and caring for migrants. He also noted he had inherited "the most interwoven JTF" he knew of.<sup>86</sup> He soon learned for himself just how interwoven the command was; he saw that the 7,000-plus service personnel thought of themselves first as members of a group with a common mission rather than as soldiers, sailors, Marines, or airmen. He noted further that the representatives of the various civilian agencies, both

government and non-government, worked hand-in-hand with their military counterparts in the same spirit.<sup>87</sup>

One of the biggest threats in October and November was that seasonal rains would make the golf course and some of the beach camps virtually uninhabitable. The JTF moved to consolidate and weatherproof camps. Many of the tents became "hardbacks" with wooden floors and walls. But the JTF was unable to carry out its plan to move Cubans to the hardstand at Camp McCalla, which had obvious advantages in wet weather.<sup>88</sup>

The reason was that many Haitian migrants were not ready to go home. The flow of Haitians ready to follow the American occupation forces back to Haiti had slowed to a trickle. Some of the remainder said they wanted to wait until President Jean-Bertrand Aristide returned to Port-au-Prince. After he did return in mid-October, others said they wanted to wait until he asked for them. Since American policy included a built-in bias against forcing anyone to return home, the JTF did what it could to promote the idea it was safe for the migrants to go home. One initiative was to find



DVIC DF-ST-98-00783

*A Cuban migrant in Camp Kilo plays the guitar as a Marine sings along. Members of the joint task force interacted with migrants in various settings, but like the members of Joint Task Force GTMO two years earlier, were required to keep relationships on a professional footing.*



out where their homes were, and then collect information and first-hand testimony about conditions in Haiti to give the migrants an idea of what they could expect to find at home. But there were not many takers, and, as of mid-November, there were still some 6,000 Haitians in the camps. The principal exception was a group of 992 Haitian migrants who were selected and trained for public security functions to help replace the corrupt police forces in their home country. Once trained, they were eager to get to work.<sup>89</sup>

The Cubans' situation was more complicated. For those who decided to go home rather than stay in limbo at Guantanamo, getting home remained a difficult proposition. Apart from the handful escorted to the northeast gate, migrants trying to get home found a long wait getting on a flight to Havana. For the impatient ones—approximately 1,000 between September 1994 and March 1995—there still was the fence line and the beach.<sup>90</sup>

On 6 November, for example, 85 migrants escaped from Camp November. Forty made it across two strands of concertina wire, down the nearly vertical cliffs to sea and through the half mile of surf and strong currents to Cuba. But the majority of the 25,000 Cubans decided to stay in the camps. They were certain the American policy would change and they would eventually make their way to the United States. For them it was heartening to watch the Clinton administration loosen its policy by stages. The adjustment made in October 1994 allowed very young and unaccompanied, elderly, or sick migrants to go to Florida (which meant there was a stream of migrants who feigned illness).<sup>91</sup> Then, on 10 November, the administration redefined young, which now meant any unaccompanied migrants under 17, and on 2 December 1994, some families with dependent children became eligible for parole.<sup>92</sup> Most migrants concluded it was only a matter of time until the policy eroded completely, and, although there were still some tense moments to come, they generally settled down to wait patiently.

### *Trouble in Panama*

By late 1994, a different group of Marines was facing many of the same migrants—and the same problems—a few hundred miles away in Panama. They formed the Marine Corps Security Force (MCSF) Company, the successor to Marine Barracks, Panama. Roughly 120-strong, their

home was the large, elegant headquarters of the barracks at the U.S. Naval Station Panama Canal, called Rodman Naval Station, which was near the Pacific entrance to the canal. Their job was to provide security for Rodman, as well as for other naval installations in the Canal Zone, including the Naval Security Group Activity on Galeta Island some 60 miles away on the Atlantic Coast.

The Marine company began to focus on migrants in July when its commander, Major Gilbert Desroches, received a call from Southern Command (SouthCom), the unified command which flew its flag in Panama and had long been a preserve of the U.S. Army. The call was somewhat unusual. Under normal circumstances, Desroches had no direct contact with SouthCom. (He reported to the officer-in-charge, Commander in Chief Atlantic Fleet, Detachment South, Captain Arthur N. Rowley III, USN, the senior naval officer in Panama who was also the base commander at Rodman.) It turned out SouthCom was not interested in the billet Major Desroches held, but rather in his background: Desroches was born in Haiti and spoke Creole. SouthCom wanted him to join a group of officers enroute to Guantanamo,



DVIC DN-ST-8902617

*A narrow road runs alongside the south side of the Panama Canal, near the Gaillard Cut. The only access to the migrant camps in the Empire Ranges was along a similar road. Given the terrain, a small number of Marines were able to stop hundreds of rampaging Cuban migrants from marching to Panama City in December 1994.*





Department of Defense Photo (USMC)

*Nicknamed "The Big House," this elegant white building was the headquarters for Maj Gilbert Desroches' Marine Corps Security Force Company at Rodman Naval Station in the Panama Canal Zone.*

where they would try to learn how to set up camps for migrants. It was contingency planning in case anyone sent Haitian migrants to the Canal Zone. Desroches' impression was that SouthCom was trying to avoid creating anything like prison camps for migrants in Panama. On 7 July 1994, Desroches flew to Guantanamo and walked through the Haitian camps with the delegation from Panama.<sup>93</sup>

At the same time, other SouthCom officers were walking the terrain in Panama to evaluate possible campsites. Eventually, they developed plans for four camps that would stretch more or less in a line running northwest from a part of the Canal Zone known as the Empire Ranges on many maps. Between the ranges and Rodman, in an area known as Rousseau, a fifth camp was planned as an induction and processing center. Before he left for Cuba, Major Desroches authorized his executive officer, Captain John W. Capdepon, to send Marines to Rousseau to help build the camp even though their company, as such, was unlikely to have a formal relationship with any joint task force for migrant operations in Panama that SouthCom might establish.<sup>94</sup>

The work at Rousseau was, in the short term, in vain. The Panamanian government recanted and decided not to allow Haitian migrants into the country. Many of the new installations were torn down shortly after they had been put up.<sup>95</sup> For a while, the focus shifted away from migrants. Then, in late summer, it appeared increasingly likely that a large group of migrants would come to Panama after all. Guantanamo was now overflowing, not with Haitians but Cubans. Fortunately for General Williams and his joint task force, the new Panamanian administration of Ernesto Perez Balladares had taken office and was more receptive to the idea of allowing migrants to come to Panama for up to six months provided they stay in the Canal Zone. On 6 September, the first of some 8,600 Cubans flew by military air to Panama, which many of them clearly preferred to Guantanamo. Although no closer to Miami, at least it was not Cuba.<sup>96</sup>

It was one thing to tell a migrant he was going to Panama, whose name conjures up images of a cosmopolitan city and an exotic international seaport. It was quite another to deposit him at a camp in a forbidding, isolated part of the country



Photo courtesy of U.S. Army South

*Cuban migrants, many with their faces covered, demonstrate at the fence of a Canal Zone camp in December 1994. These protests quickly turned violent.*

and ask him to wait for the U.S. Government to define its immigration policy. The Cubans soon discovered the four camps on the western shore of the canal were in dense, hilly terrain that had been used for live fire exercises. There were up to 2,500 migrants under canvas in each camp, which was ringed by chain link fences. While the camps themselves were on open terrain covered by tents, there was triple canopy jungle between the sites. It was impossible to see from one camp to the next. A narrow road connected the camps and led back in the direction of Rodman, roughly eight miles away. The road, which was never straight for long, twisted up and down the hills and was barely wide enough for two automobiles to pass one another. Even the roadside was uninviting. Where the jungle yielded to the roadbed, there was deep, dense elephant grass with razor-sharp blades.<sup>97</sup>

Despite their formal independence from Joint Task Force Safe Haven, the command subordinate to SouthCom that was now responsible for the

new camps, the Panama Marines suspected they might one day become involved in migrant operations. Major Desroches had come away from Guantanamo with an idea of the kinds of challenges his troops might face. He sat down with his officers to brainstorm. They looked at various contingencies that might involve Marines and developed responses.<sup>98</sup>

The contingencies the Marines foresaw were variations on the theme of civil disturbance, a contingency already familiar to them. In the spring of 1994, they had trained to respond to any threats to naval facilities that might grow out of the Panamanian presidential election set for early May. Although civil disturbance training was normally a quarterly requirement, in the month before the election the Marines exercised almost daily, conducting a variety of drills committed to a kind of playbook.<sup>99</sup>

At first, the Marine security force's only role in Operation Safe Haven was in a contingency plan to serve as the reaction force for Camp 3, which



was run by a Navy officer and happened to be closer to Rodman than the other camps. On their own initiative, the Marines stepped up their preparations for civil disturbances, just in case. Just as at Guantanamo, there was the traditional emphasis on developing squad leaders who might find it necessary to act on their own. Given the company's dispersion, the largest unit that rehearsed together was a platoon. But Major Desroches and Captain Capdepon made preparations to commit the entire company if necessary, including the platoon of sailors from Rodman who had volunteered to train with the Marines and to reinforce them in a crisis. When augmented by the sailors, the Marine Corps Security Force Company officially became known as the ground defense force.<sup>100</sup>

All the preparations focused a great deal of attention to detail. In October and November, Desroches persuaded a somewhat reluctant JTF Safe Haven to permit his small-unit leaders to familiarize themselves with the terrain around

Camp 3. The Marines calculated vehicle loads and transit times to and from the camps. In accordance with SouthCom rules of engagement, the Marines would deploy in riot gear, available largely thanks to the unofficial initiatives of a good supply sergeant. In November, there were indications trouble might be brewing in the camps, which made the training seem all the more relevant.<sup>101</sup>

On 7 December 1994, the ground defense force's hard work paid off. At around 1700, the Marines received a telephone call from Camp 3, relaying a report there was a riot in Camp 1. Even though the Marines were not responsible for that camp, Major Desroches staged a recall. The Pacific Marines were told to prepare to deploy, and the Atlantic Marines were placed on stand-by. At 1708, JTF Safe Haven officially requested help from Rodman's reaction force. The Marines were to deploy to Camp 1 in full riot gear, which included a flak jacket, riot control helmet with facemask, body shield and baton. This was a



Photo courtesy of U.S. Army South

*As passions became more heated during the demonstrations, many migrants jumped the fence and reeked havoc on the areas outside their own camps.*





Photo courtesy of U.S. Army South

*U.S. Army military police deploy near one of the camps. Rocks thrown at the military police litter the foreground. When order was restored, far more U.S. servicemen had been injured than migrants.*

heavy load at the best of times in a temperate climate, let alone the steaming humidity of Panama.<sup>102</sup>

Desroches ordered the Pacific platoon to mount its vehicles—some eight humvees—and follow him to Camp 1. Soon after leaving Rodman, the Marines found complete chaos on the road to the camps: a monumental traffic jam of vehicles crammed with soldiers and airmen in riot gear. But the Marines persisted, clearing a path for themselves. After the slow drive, they dismounted some 100 to 150 meters from the gate of the camp. They did so smartly, quickly getting into formation and moving forward.<sup>103</sup>

It was nearly sunset and raining, but the Marines could see signs of a serious disturbance. The main gate had been torn down and the landscape was littered with vandalized vehicles and fence parts. There was an Air Force officer holding a bloody bandage to his head. Some 200

Cubans had commandeered a food truck and used it to break down the gates of the camp. They then shattered windshields on nearby vehicles. Approximately 40 troops were injured in the ensuing scuffles.<sup>104</sup>

An Army officer ran forward to meet the Marines. He cautioned them about aggravating the situation, saying JTF troops had just succeeded in calming the Cubans. Captain Capdepon asked the officer to stand aside and the Marines continued to advance. Some of the Cubans inside the camp noticed that Marines had arrived and they started to heckle the “white sleeves,” familiar to them from Guantanamo. Major Desroches then heard from the JTF Safe Haven commander, Brigadier General James L. Wilson, USA, who ordered the Marines to help establish a perimeter around the camp.<sup>105</sup>

When the Marines moved forward to establish the perimeter, the Cubans inside the camp

became extremely agitated and launched a hail of rocks. At approximately 1845, General Wilson decided it would be better to use the Marines as a reserve and ordered their withdrawal.<sup>106</sup>

A few hours later, the Marine security force was shifted to Camp 3 to respond to reports of unrest at that camp. But all was quiet when the company arrived. Nevertheless, the JTF ordered Major Desroches to leave a platoon-sized unit at the camp overnight just in case. After making sure his troops were fed and sheltered, Desroches returned to Rodman with his headquarters platoon for the night.<sup>107</sup>

By 1000 the next day, 8 December, the JTF radio networks were alive with chatter. Radio traffic from the soldiers at the checkpoints on the road to the camps was animated, especially that from the checkpoint in the vicinity of Gaillard Cut, the steepest and rockiest portion of the Canal. Major Desroches and Captain Capdepon ascertained a large group of Cubans was about to break out of Camps 1 and 2. The Marine Corps Security Force detachment that had remained overnight at Camp 3 under the command of First Lieutenant Jay A. Rutter received orders to deploy to Camp 1, about one mile to the northwest, away from Rodman. Lieutenant Rutter's Marines found some 800 Cubans had left the camp and were heading southwest toward the Pan-American Highway and Panama City.<sup>108</sup>

Major Desroches was now in a difficult position. His troops were in separate groups. Lieutenant Rutter's platoon was detached; the Atlantic platoon was at its post; and the remainder was with him at the barracks. He decided the first order of business was to unite his forces. He ordered Captain Capdepon to activate a contingency plan to transport the Atlantic platoon by helicopter from the northwest. Word then came that Camp 2 was about to erupt. Around 1030, Captain Arthur Rowley's headquarters at Rodman authorized Desroches to order a "react."<sup>109</sup>

Wearing their uncomfortable and cumbersome riot gear, the headquarters Marines now mounted their humvees and moved out towards Gaillard Cut, taking with them an empty bus. Desroches led the way in a sedan, which he had filled with tear gas grenades, the company's weapon of last resort. The major's intent was for Lieutenant Rutter's Marines and the Atlantic platoon to meet him along the way. Members of the Auxiliary Security Force, sailors trained to reinforce the MCSF in an emergency, were to follow later. A link was established with the headquarters of the

squadron whose helicopter had already picked up the Atlantic platoon. The squadron promised to tell the pilot where to land.<sup>110</sup>

The small convoy soon stopped at a landing zone along the road to wait for the Atlantic platoon. Flying at about 1,000 feet, a helicopter soon appeared. Captain Capdepon went into the zone to guide the bird to a landing, but he was ignored. The helicopter continued on its way toward Rodman until, suddenly, it banked hard and landed directly in front of him. Captain Daniel R. Kaiser, the Atlantic platoon commander, emerged and greeted Capdepon, whose emotions had gone from distress to relief in short order. Kaiser explained they had been on their way to Rodman until he had recognized Capdepon waving his arms in the landing zone. It turned out the squadron headquarters had not relayed the message to the pilot.<sup>111</sup>

Now only Rutter's Marines remained missing. The problem was Major Desroches could not communicate with the lieutenant and did not know where he was. Desroches and Rutter earlier had agreed to meet at Camp 3, but Rutter was now outside Camp 1, on his own, out of touch with his parent command and not under any other commander on the chaotic scene. Rutter decided to rejoin the rest of the company at all costs, and around 1100, he started to move his humvees toward Rodman.<sup>112</sup>

It was a nerve-wracking trip. The Marines found themselves on the road with the crowd of angry migrants moving in the same direction. The migrants stoned the humvees throughout most of the journey. Soon, Desroches and Capdepon could hear Rutter calling them on the radio, saying the Cubans were "all over" his troops, and urgently requesting permission to use tear gas. But, thanks to one of those small mysteries only communicators understand, Rutter could not receive transmissions. Lacking permission, he told his troops not to fire any tear gas.<sup>113</sup>

At one point during their journey, Rutter's Marines met a truck coming toward them. It was filled with a group of Air Force security policemen, who had decided on their own to drive to Camp 1 to volunteer their services. They were enthusiastic about joining forces with the Marines, who were equally enthusiastic about the reinforcements. Turning their truck around, they fell in behind Rutter's humvees. In the end, the crowd parted to let the Marines through. Perhaps it was because the Marines were traveling in the same direction, or perhaps it was because Rutter

ordered the drivers not to stop, no matter what. The small formation moved out ahead of the crowd. Before long, Rutter's vehicles almost literally bumped into the rest of the company when he drove around a corner just past the very difficult terrain at Culebra. The time was 1135.<sup>114</sup>

Within an hour and a half, the Marine Corps Security Force Company had succeeded in uniting its widely dispersed forces, no small feat considering the circumstances, which had not favored the Marines at first. The junior leaders, especially Lieutenant Rutter, had exercised both initiative and restraint. Because they had trained together for such a long time and could almost sense what their brother officers were thinking, the subordinate commanders literally and figuratively took the right turns.

Rutter wasted no time informing Major Desroches and Captain Capdepon there were 800 to 1,000 Cubans only a few hundred yards behind him. He guessed they were on their way to Panama City to continue their demonstration in

front of the American Embassy and recommended the company make a stand on a one-lane bridge between the Marine force and the Cubans at the foot of a piece of high ground known as Contractor's Hill. Desroches and his First Sergeant, Harry B. Vanmatre, quickly reconnoitered the area and decided to stop the Cubans there. The elephant grass along the road and under the structure was nearly impassable, leaving the Cubans no choice but to try to cross the bridge. Lieutenant Rutter again urged Desroches to order the use of tear gas, but the major said it was not yet time.<sup>115</sup>

A few minutes later, as the Marines moved to the bridge, the 258th Military Police Company, 519th Military Police Battalion, approached the Marine security force from the rear and offered its assistance. Major Desroches accepted. At about the same time, General Wilson, the JTF Safe Haven commander who was in touch by radio, designated Desroches the commander of this tiny joint task force and told him to stop the Cubans,



Photo courtesy of U.S. Army South  
*A group of U.S. Army military police watches as smoke rises from one of the camps during the riots.*



either through negotiation or by force. He authorized the use of tear gas.<sup>116</sup> \*

Desroches saw the first Cubans were now almost upon him. He ordered the Marines to establish a blocking position on the friendly side of the bridge with one platoon on line forward, and another on line behind them. Air Force security policemen and Army military police formed a tactical reserve. A few Cubans then came close enough to talk to the Marines. Spanish-speakers in the company told them the Marines did not intend to harm them and urged them to return to the camps. This had little effect.<sup>117</sup>

Around 1140 the fight began. When the migrants started to arm themselves with sticks and rocks, the Marines moved forward and seized the far end of the bridge, pushing members of the crowd out of the way. Some of the Cubans began to throw sticks, rocks and at least one Molotov cocktail at the Marines, all without noticeable effect. Many, if not most, of the Cubans simply watched their more aggressive countrymen take on the Marines.<sup>118</sup>

At around 1145, the Cubans attacked in earnest, this time riding an 18-ton dump truck, which they had found nearby and coaxed to life. The truck was traveling at approximately 30 miles per hour. The major had just enough time to order his troops to open the lines to let it through, reforming them after it had passed. Though not rehearsed, this maneuver was perfectly executed. Then another unrehearsed maneuver saved the day: the airmen rammed the dump truck with their five-ton truck, bringing it to a halt. They and the MPs then went to work, energetically subduing the 30 Cubans who had ridden on the truck, putting them in flexicuffs and arraying them face down on the ground.<sup>119</sup>

Less than 10 minutes later, the Marines faced another truck. This time it was a water tanker an enterprising Cuban had hot-wired. There was one Cuban riding on top of the truck holding on to a rope like a cowboy on a bucking bronco. The Marine formation collapsed its lines again and the truck passed by. Then, to his horror, Captain Capdepon noticed some of the recently detained Cubans were still on the roadway along with a number of airmen who had their backs to the oncoming truck. Almost literally in the last second

before disaster struck, an airman leaped onto the running board of the truck and grabbed the steering wheel, sending the tanker skidding away from its deadly path. It hit the back of the dump truck and bounced off into the ditch. When the truck stopped, the Cuban on top flew off into the elephant grass as if he had been launched from a catapult. The Air Force police in the road turned around and experienced, in rapid order, surprise, horror, and relief.<sup>120</sup>

It was a hot and humid day, with the sun high in the sky. It was so hot Major Desroches and Captain Capdepon decided to rotate troops out of the frontline to prevent heat casualties. Desroches refused offers from Army truck drivers to block the bridge because he did not think a vehicle would stop the crowd. Two events then occurred almost simultaneously: rock-throwing Cubans drove the Marines back toward the friendly side of the bridge and, against the major's orders, a humvee driven by a soldier approached the bridge from the friendly side, honked and drove through the Marines, who instinctively stepped out of the way when they heard the horn. Realizing he was now in no man's land between a crowd of angry migrants and the Marines, the Army driver stopped the vehicle, jumped out, and ran back to the bridge. A Cuban driver took his place, other Cubans jumped on the vehicle, and they drove straight at the Marines. Once again, the formation opened to allow the vehicle to pass. But this time the driver swerved, injuring three Marines and two soldiers. One of the Marines, Sergeant Irvin N. Howard, took the full force of the fender in his chest.<sup>121</sup>

Luckily, the Marines were able to divert a passing helicopter and evacuate the casualties. Major Desroches suspected from the number of helicopters overhead that his bridge was now the focus of effort, and thought to radio one of the helicopters to ask if the Cubans were attempting to outflank his position. The pilot verified that Desroches only had to worry about the crowd in front of him. It was roughly at this time the Auxiliary Security Force from Rodman arrived at the bridge and reinforced the Marine Corps Security Force, transforming the command into the ground defense force, a slight shift in terminology.<sup>122</sup>

But there was no respite for the Marines. Within a matter of minutes, the Cubans were back at their front, this time behind a road grader that was advancing on the bridge. The Cubans stopped some 30 meters away. A few Cubans

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\* Maj Desroches used additional troops that appeared, which later included an Army infantry battalion, as a reserve and told them to establish a detention area 500 yards behind the bridge.

approached and Desroches told them to return to their camps. That group walked away from the bridge, but a much more belligerent group rushed by them, throwing rocks and firebombs at the Marines. Desroches ordered a counterattack with tear gas. The initial result was disorder on both sides. Some of the Marines, who were still pulling on their gas masks when the canisters plumed, started gagging and vomiting. The Cubans threw at least one gas grenade back at the Marines. Now both sides were engulfed in tear gas and backed away from the bridge, leaving the major, his executive officer and the first sergeant standing alone on the bridge.<sup>123</sup>

Momentarily angry, the major shouted at his Marines to get back on the bridge, in good order. Together with Captain Capdepon and the first sergeant, he reformed the company on the bridge before the Cubans realized what was happening. The escapees soon saw a line of Marines, fully masked and ready. One of the Marines, Lance Corporal Jesus G. Palomo, could not get his mask to work, but stayed at his post with an undershirt over his face. For a period of about 10 minutes, the crowd stayed about 200 meters from the bridge, leaving the grader between. The major then asked if there were any farm boys present who knew how to drive the grader. First Sergeant Vanmatre volunteered and started forward on his own. Capdepon quickly moved some troops forward to support him. The first sergeant was able to start the grader and drove it to the friendly side of the bridge while the Cubans continued to retreat in the direction of the camps. It was now a few minutes past noon.<sup>124</sup>

The Cubans stopped some 500 meters away. During the interlude, General Wilson radioed he was sending a contingent of Panamanian special police to support the ground defense force at the bridge. He added that a U.S. Embassy officer was also on his way to speak to the Cubans. When he arrived, the defence force advanced to within 100 meters of the Cubans. While Spanish-speaking Marines announced their intentions, a squad of Marines escorted Desroches and the embassy officer forward. It was a tense moment. In the words of the situation report, the defense force "remained at the ready" to rescue the major and the diplomat. The noise of the circling helicopters did not lessen the tension. Nor did the appearance of the Panamanian special police, who were armed with shotguns. Preferring to avoid bloodshed, the major declined their offer of assistance.<sup>125</sup>

The stalemate was broken when most of the Cubans decided they had enough of the heat and the tear gas and, after speaking to the embassy officer, agreed to return to the camps. A handful of their compatriots who did not agree with that decision tried to swim the canal. Desroches called for transportation, and buses shuttled the migrants back to their camps between 1400 and 1600.<sup>126</sup>

General Wilson ordered the ground defense force to re-deploy to Camp 1, which made for a welcome change of pace. The Marines and sailors from Rodman were elated. They had stopped the riot, but they also were more than a little tired, hungry, and thirsty. Food and water was the first order of business. But at 1650 they had to call on their reserves of energy and discipline when General Wilson ordered them to return to Camp 2 to assist JTF forces in regaining control of that camp.<sup>127</sup>

The ground defense force arrived at the open ground in front of the camp and found hundreds of American servicemen apparently waiting for orders. The Marines heard someone shout, "They're here. Let them through!" The crowd parted for the defense force, which first double-timed, and then, feeling the effects of the heat and effort, slowed to quick time. The Marine-Navy unit now found itself in the center of the frontlines facing the camp gate along with 258th Military Police Company, an Air Force quick reaction force and an Army infantry company.<sup>128</sup>

Desroches found an Army major who appeared to be in charge and asked him what the plan was. He said he did not know but would find out. When the official response came, it was: "Push the Cubans back into the camp." A military police officer called on his troops to charge, and the mass of American servicemen surged toward the camp. The migrants began throwing rocks at them.<sup>129</sup>

To Major Desroches, the sky looked "black with rocks." Captain Capdepon took a rock hard on his chest and noticed that other rocks were shattering shields around him. Nevertheless, the Marines continued to advance. Along with Lieutenant Rutter, Captains Kaiser and Capdepon stood behind the first rank, riot batons horizontal, keeping the Marines and sailors aligned and moving forward. After Capdepon took another rock, which literally set him back two feet, he ordered two of his Marines from the company's softball team to "return fire" by pitching rocks back at the migrants. He then noticed his men were taking rocks not only from the front, but also from the



Photo courtesy of U.S. Army South

*Debris left over from the riot at one of the camps in Panama. Compared with all the migrant disturbances that occurred in 1994, the events in Panama ranked highest for violence.*

side. The reason soon became apparent: the ground defense force was in an isolated position ahead of the other American units. But the small force was lucky. In short order, a handful of Army MPs came up in a humvee and fired birdshot (crowd control shotgun rounds packed with small, non-lethal pellets) at the Cuban rock-throwers, who fell back. The Army major then passed the word for everyone to fall back. Desroches countered that the Marines were at the front gate of the camp and the Cubans would give up the fight, especially if the MPs fired more birdshot. But his suggestion fell on deaf ears and everyone had to fall back to the positions on the perimeter of the camp. Seven Marines had injuries worth noting, ranging from a broken finger to chemical burns from tear gas and numerous knee injuries from rocks. The Cubans had learned to aim the rocks below the riot shields. Four of these Marines were hospitalized.<sup>130</sup>

During the hiatus that followed, the ground defense force needed to address command relationships. The Marines had deployed on orders relayed through their parent command at Rodman, and were now feeling the effects of

“mission creep.” Should they stay with JTF Safe Haven or return home to the Navy base? An Army officer then announce they had been placed under the operational control of the 92d Military Police Battalion. Major Desroches asked for confirmation from higher authority, and proceeded to the nearby headquarters for Safe Haven. There he learned SouthCom’s commander in chief, General Barry R. McCaffrey, had used his authority to attach Desroches’ ground defense force to the JTF for the duration of the crisis. On the afternoon of 9 December, the reinforced company of Marines and sailors became part of Task Force 92, formed around the 92d Military Police Battalion, itself reinforced with U.S. Army Rangers and infantry. The new task force was ordered to regain control of Camp 2.<sup>131</sup>

The men of the ground defense force were able to focus on their own needs for a few hours. They had come to the field literally without a change of socks. When it was clear they could not return to Rodman for supplies, Desroches ordered the company gunnery sergeant, Claude G. Lashley, to procure 100 pairs of socks. Apart from requisitioning them from the Army, a traditional



Marine Corps method of obtaining supplies, the only other alternative that sprang to mind was the Marine Corps Exchange at Rodman, whose manager, Mr. Herman Rijfkoel, was a former Marine. He understood the situation and did not hesitate to send the socks along with a variety of health and comfort items.<sup>132</sup>

In the meantime, the planning for the operation at Camp 2 continued. Desroches tasked his commanders with analyzing possible courses of action. After a thorough chalk talk, the Marines came up with a number of suggestions, which the major presented to the MP battalion commander who, in turn, presented them to General Wilson. Some of the ideas became part of the plan, which was finally approved a few hours before H-Hour, set for 0400 on 11 December. It was a "hurry up and wait" kind of day. The timing and last minute changes meant the Marines and sailors needed to rehearse in the middle of the night. For a while there had been little to do; now there was a sudden need to rehearse. But the ground defense force did what was necessary.<sup>133</sup>

The concept of the operation was simple. The Army Rangers and infantry would breach the wire around the camp and cordon off the blocks of tents most likely to the migrants who had fueled the unrest—the single males. The defense force would clear the migrants from one block of roughly 18 tents, each of which housed some 13 migrants. One group of Marines and sailors would enter the front of the tent while another group waited at the back to snare any evaders.<sup>134</sup>

During the rehearsal, it occurred to the Marines there was no lighting in the tents and it would be impossible for them to see what they were doing, let alone tell the difference between hostile and compliant Cubans. Since there were not enough flashlights for everyone, around midnight the call went out to Mr. Rijfkoel, who once again did not hesitate to help. This time he sent a load of small yellow flashlights, enough for each member of the defense force to tape one to his helmet. The new gear was not regulation, but it worked.<sup>135</sup>

Major Desroches told his men to prepare for two contingencies. In the first, the Marines and

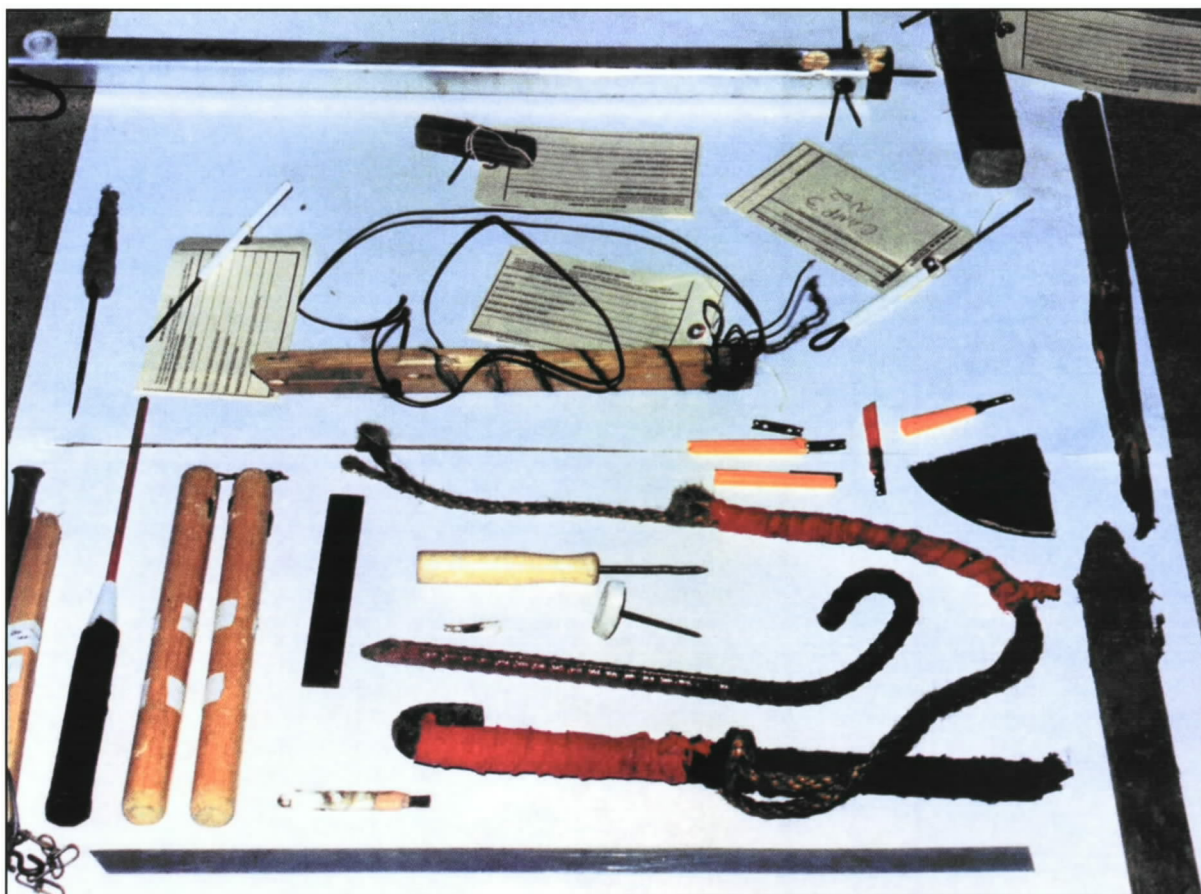


Photo courtesy of U.S. Army South

*Homemade weapons seized from the Cuban migrants in Panama. Some migrants were ready to escalate the intensity and violence of their protests.*



DVIC DA-SC-97-01366

*After the protests, no one was taking any chances with the Cuban migrants in Panama. Soldiers of the 160th Military Police Company from Fort Lewis, Washington, prepared for Operation Safe Passage, which transferred the migrants from Panama to Guantanamo Bay.*

sailors would have to overcome resistance. In the second, and equally likely contingency, they would have to guard against using too much force against sleepy, dazed migrants with no interest in resisting the inevitable. This was good guidance.<sup>136</sup>

When the time came for the operation, the entry teams encountered little resistance. Armed only with batons and flashlights, the ground defense force went through the breach at 0402, and by 0415 had secured all of the tents in its sector. Only a few overeager Marines needed to be reminded not to use their batons on the legs of migrants who were too slow to leave their tents. Overall, some 250 Cuban males were flexicuffed and removed from the camp.<sup>137</sup>

When the tents were empty, the MPs and the defense force searched them thoroughly for contraband while Spanish-speaking soldiers from a psychological warfare detachment explained the situation to the Cubans still in the camp. By 1600 on 11 December, Task Force 92 left Camp 2, its mission accomplished. A similar, and unremarkable, evolution occurred the next day between

0500 and 0700 at Camp 3. Not only were the Marines, soldiers, and sailors practiced, but the migrants at Camp 3 were as compliant as they had always been.<sup>138</sup>

A few hours later, at around 1000, the Commandant of the Marine Corps, General Carl E. Mundy, Jr., appeared at the JTF Safe Haven base camp. Although the visit had been scheduled well before the crisis, the timing could not have been better. The Commandant came from visiting wounded Marines. When he addressed the formation, he praised the defense force for its part in the crisis. General McCaffrey then presented the Joint Service Commendation Medal to Major Desroches for his actions at the bridge on 8 December. The citation credited the major and, by extension, his Marines and sailors with playing a pivotal role in containing a potentially explosive situation. It was a proud moment for the small force.<sup>139</sup>

By 15 December, Major Desroches was anxious to return to his normal duties, which he felt had been somewhat neglected. Finally, around noon that day, the JTF agreed to release the defense





DVIC DF-ST-98-02240

*U.S. Army military police escort a Cuban troublemaker out of the aircraft that carried him from Panama to Guantanamo Bay. Those known to have rioted in Panama were put in handcuffs and leg restraints for the trip and then placed in administrative segregation upon their arrival to limit their potential to incite additional unrest.*

force, and the reinforced company returned to Rodman. The staff noted with relief and pride that, of the final total of 11 Marines injured during the disturbances, nine had already returned to full duty.<sup>140</sup> According to SouthCom news releases, the total number of injured migrants and servicemen was in the neighborhood of 250, of whom 220 were American servicemen. Most of the injuries were minor. It appears the only deaths occurred when migrants tried to swim the canal.<sup>141</sup> \*

Life more or less returned to normal. But the accomplishments of individual Marines and sailors were not forgotten. In mid-January 1995, Desroches organized an awards ceremony at Galeta Island. Lance Corporal Palomo, the Marine who had used an undershirt for a gasmask, was recognized for his steadfastness at the bridge with a Navy Achievement Medal. Sergeant Roderick L. Davis, who had conducted much of the training in November, received the same award. Six other members of the company received certificates of

commendation, and 17 received meritorious masts. Like virtually all Marines who participated in Operation GTMO and Operation Sea Signal, the members of the company later received the Humanitarian Service Medal in addition to a Joint Meritorious Unit Award.<sup>142</sup>

JTF Safe Haven's reaction to the disturbances was to dramatically increase the security of the camps. Reinforcements from the 82d and 101st Airborne Divisions flew to Panama, and the chain link cyclone fences around the camps were topped with barbed wire. The JTF then added a second barrier of concertina wire and guard towers. Troops outside the fence wore full riot control gear and carried shotguns.<sup>143</sup>

The Cubans still had to leave Panama within six months under the agreement with the Panamanian government, but there was nowhere for them to go apart from Guantanamo, where they did not want to go. When it came time to move them in February 1995, the preparations were elaborate. The operation was planned to the last detail, right down to restroom stops and the confiscation of razors and cigarette lighters just before departure. "If they want to smoke ... our

\* According to Pitts, *Migrant Resettlement Operations*, p. 23, there were two confirmed Cuban fatalities.



soldiers will have to light up for them," said one Army officer.<sup>144</sup>

Despite the size of the force already available, General McCaffrey insisted the Marines participate in the operation. So Major Desroches and his staff prepared a contingency plan to block any run-away migrants—especially anyone who might commandeer a vehicle in the vicinity of Rodman, an important intersection along the route.<sup>145</sup>

When the time came, soldiers carrying riot batons lined the walkways at Howard Air Force Base, and for every 100 migrants on each aircraft, there were 50 soldiers guarding them. Those proportions were reversed for the approximately 280 Cubans suspected of being troublemakers. They boarded the aircraft wearing handcuffs and leg irons.<sup>146</sup> One group of Cubans went by sea on a tank landing ship, closely guarded by Guantanamo Marines.<sup>147</sup>

A few months later, on 5 June 1996, the Marine Corps Security Force Company was disbanded as part of the Panama Canal Treaty to return the Canal Zone to Panama by 2000. At the ceremony, Captain Arthur Rowley, the Navy base commander, credited the ground defense force with playing a major role in restoring order and preventing bloodshed during the disturbances, especially during the confrontation at the bridge. If anything, Captain Rowley understated the company's

achievement. The Marines had been both prepared and flexible. They succeeded because of good small unit leadership and because they had conducted so many rehearsals. They were intimately familiar with the mission, the terrain, and the equipment. That familiarity allowed them to go beyond their scripted roles. As Captain Capdepon put it, they had rehearsed so much they had developed an instinctive sense for what needed to be done. If the Cubans had faced a less disciplined and resourceful formation, the result could have been bloodshed and a major embarrassment for the U.S. Government.<sup>148</sup> \*

### *Endgame at Guantanamo*

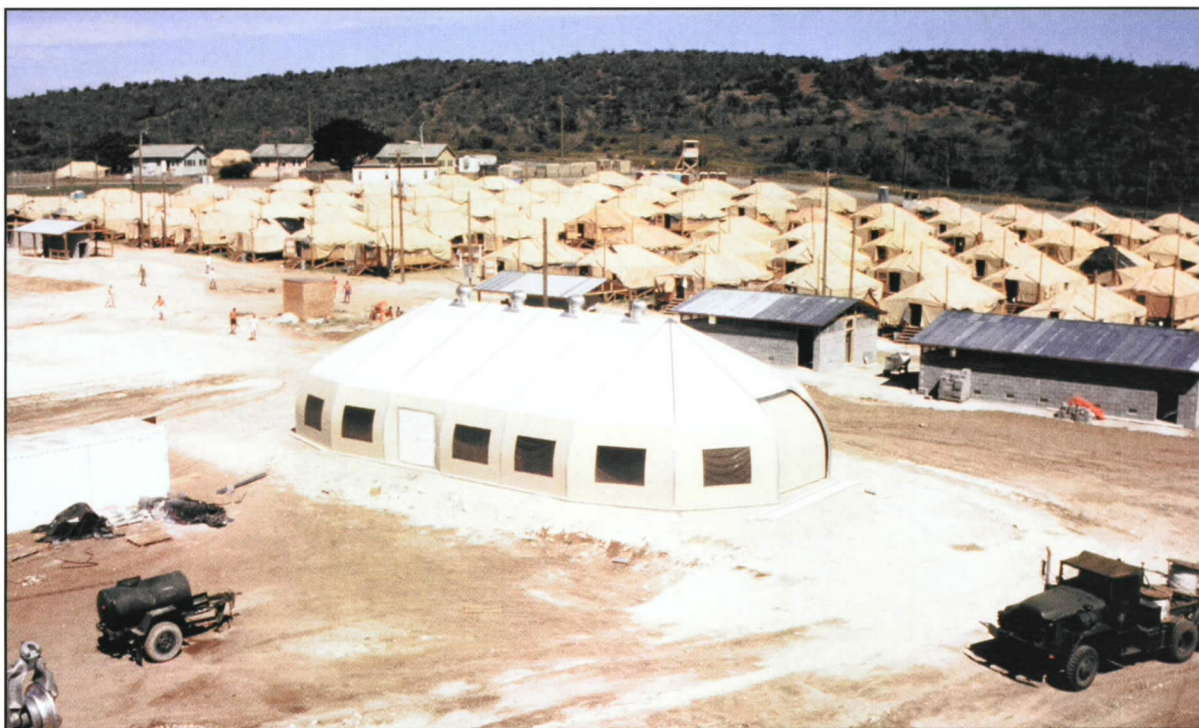
The most significant event between January and March 1995 was the reintegration of the migrants from Panama into the camps at Guantanamo. Their reception at Guantanamo was almost as unfriendly as their farewell from Panama had been; no one at either end was taking any chances. Some 120 of the worst trouble-

\* The absence of Marines in Panama was soon felt, and SouthCom asked for some Marine infantry to replace the Marine Corps Security Force Company. In response, 2d Marine Division rotated companies through Panama to perform security operations, at least through the first half of 1996. (See 2d MarDiv ComdC, 1Jan-30Junl 96 [MCHC]).



DVIC DF-ST-98-02246

*All Cuban migrants were closely watched upon their arrival at Guantanamo Bay from Panama, as well as when boarding transportation from one side of the naval base to the other.*



DVIC DN-ST-98-00611

*Rows of hardback tents for Cuban migrants quickly sprang up at Camp Bulkeley. In the foreground, a new galley is under construction. U.S. Navy Seabees and Cuban migrant carpenters worked together to improve the quality of life at the migrant camps in the spring of 1995.*

makers from Panama went straight into the ultra-secure facility at Camp X-Ray.<sup>149</sup>

But the Cubaris returning from Panama had lost their fire, and like the rest of the migrants, settled down to wait quietly for the U.S. Government to decide their fate. One Marine commander noted the group that had caused the most trouble in Panama, that from Camp 1, were the most disciplined and orderly at Guantanamo.<sup>150</sup>

As time wore on, both for the migrants and the leaders of Joint Task Force 160, the troubles in Panama and Guantanamo receded into the past. Lieutenant Colonel Redlich, the Marine commander who had personally waded into the angry crowd in September, had left for home in October and was replaced by Colonel Douglas O. Hendricks. General Ayres and Colonel Beavers, who had come to Guantanamo specifically to deal with the riots, had rotated home in December 1994 and February 1995, respectively. No one replaced Colonel Beavers as the concept of the security group had lost its urgency. Colonel Hendricks simply took on the additional duty of joint security group commander.<sup>151</sup>

In March, Colonel Kevin E. Leffler, a Marine aviator, took Colonel Hendricks' place at Camp Bulkeley. He presided over a period characterized

by expenditures to improve the quality of life—some \$35 million spent between March and May—and by what he called “deinstitutionalization.” Although the administration of the camps was not trouble-free, it was far more tranquil than at any time in the past. The camps were now evolving into small, self-governing towns. When Colonel Leffler arrived, he was told the Cubans wanted to keep the concertina wire strung between camp compounds because they were territorial. After he had been there a while, he asked the camp representatives what they thought of the wire. It was clear they did not like it, and Leffler authorized them to remove it, but not the outer cyclone fences. To his surprise, the Cubans did the job themselves within 24 hours without any of the equipment military engineers use. They even rolled it neatly for future use.<sup>152</sup>

With the concertina wire gone and the gates open during the day, the migrants could visit other camps, swim, fish, or just walk around the area as long as they remained orderly and returned to their own camps to eat and sleep. Many of the Cubans held jobs of one sort or another—working in the mess hall, distributing supplies, or performing maintenance. As the last Marine commander at Camp Bulkeley, Colonel



Michael R. Lehnert, later commented: "We encouraged work. I never used a soldier [or Marine] for a job if I could employ a migrant. This kept the migrants busy, left them with a sense of control over their own destiny, and improved relations with the military."<sup>153</sup>

There was both a U.S. military and a migrant infrastructure. The camp commander, who was typically a company commander, interacted with a migrant *jefe*, or headman, but the commander always had the last word. He was the de facto mayor and justice of the peace of a small town of a few thousand. He had what amounted to a police force of infantrymen and the authority to impose a certain modicum of discipline, to include extra duties or brief periods of restriction and administrative segregation for infractions of the rules such as fighting, hoarding, or smoking indoors. To preclude discrepancies in punishments from one camp to the next, there was a handbook of sorts on discipline that applied to all camps.<sup>154</sup>

It was a heady experience for many young Marines. Although some of their conventional infantry skills may have atrophied, they learned much about a different kind of leadership and civil affairs. At least a few remembered this was as much a part of Marine tradition as making amphibious landings or guarding Navy bases, and with a little bit of creativity, they could almost always find ways to train for their primary mission wherever they were.<sup>155</sup> \*

The Cubans came to agree, grudgingly at first, the Marines were doing a good job. Many Cubans who were being transferred from the golf course camps to the Radio Range did not want to go. They said they did not want to work with the white sleeves. Even before leaving Cuba, they had known of the Marine Corps and believed it exist-

\* There were some conventional infantry training opportunities on base and resourceful battalion commanders rotated their troops out of the camps to take advantage of them and maintain most of their skills.



Photo courtesy of the author

*By the fall of 1995, an "era of good feelings" had set in at Guantanamo Bay. Most of the Cubans knew they would eventually go to the U.S. Some were moved to express their gratitude, as in this monument depicting a migrant and incorporating an American flag.*





Photo courtesy of the author

*Many Cuban migrants used their time at the camps to learn English. Some even used the walls of their tents as blackboards to practice grammar and compose uplifting slogans.*

ed only to kill and destroy. Colonel Leffler met with the *jefes* to allay their fears and take them to the new camp sites to show them how much better life was at the Radio Range. Eventually, everyone moved willingly.<sup>156</sup>

By May the end was predictable. On 2 May, Attorney General Janet Reno announced another policy change so broad that virtually all of the migrants who were then at Guantanamo would go to the United States. They would count against the annual Cuban immigration quota as though they had applied for visas in Havana, but any future migrants trying to make their way to the United States would be returned to Cuba. The few remaining tensions subsided immediately and the operation entered a kind of golden phase of good feeling. The issue now became one of deciding who would go when. Joint Task Force 160 used a lottery system to assign immigration dates to individual Cuban migrants. On the assigned day, the migrants in a given camp would assemble in a large tent, and the incumbent JTF commander,

Rear Admiral Michael D. Haskins, would draw lots for the happy migrants. Although some migrants still had many months to wait—the last Cuban migrant arrived at Homestead Air Force Base in Florida on 31 January 1996—most migrants viewed the process as fair and quietly waited their turn. When the day came for the last 127 Cuban migrants to go to Florida, there was a small celebration on the apron. While a group of some 50 soldiers, civilians, and migrants watched, they waved plastic American flags and hugged and kissed each other happily. The very last migrant to leave, an attractive young woman with a toothy grin named Margarita Uria Sanchez, carried a poster that read “End of the 94-96 Exodus.”<sup>157</sup>

In the intervening months, the Haitian migrants had continued to leave Guantanamo in trickles. Some were paroled into the United States, a few hundred were involuntarily repatriated, but most were ferried home voluntarily. The last Haitian migrants left in October 1995, a few weeks after the closure of Camp McCalla and a few days

before the disestablishment of Joint Task Group Bulkeley, which had been under the command of Colonel Lehnert, who had succeeded Colonel Leffler as the commander of MarFor 160. Since the parent command, JTF 160, was shrinking, it made sense to downgrade the billet of its commander, and on 3 November 1995, Colonel John C. McKay became the last commander of the humanitarian task force.<sup>158</sup>

This was the quietest period, as the migrants departed and troops began rotating home. But there was a great deal of equipment that had been loaned to the JTF. The challenge became one of finding the original owners or disposing of the equipment, no easy task since the organization had been a joint task force and because the staff had turned over so many times. While major

items went back to the mainland, no one in the U.S. military wanted the lesser items, such as the large quantities of wood used to build the camps. It was eventually loaded onto barges for shipment to Haiti, a deforested country with a dire shortage of wood. By 11 April 1996, the process had ended and the last remaining members of JTF 160 marked the end with a short ceremony at the command post overlooking Camp McCalla.<sup>159</sup> \*

When the Marines looked back on their experiences on the joint task force in Operation Sea Signal, three themes emerged. One was the benefit of synergy. It was even clearer than it had

\* Another ceremony formally deactivating the JTF occurred on 2 February 1996. However, the rear party continued to work after that date. (USACOM, "Migrant Camp Operations," p. iv)



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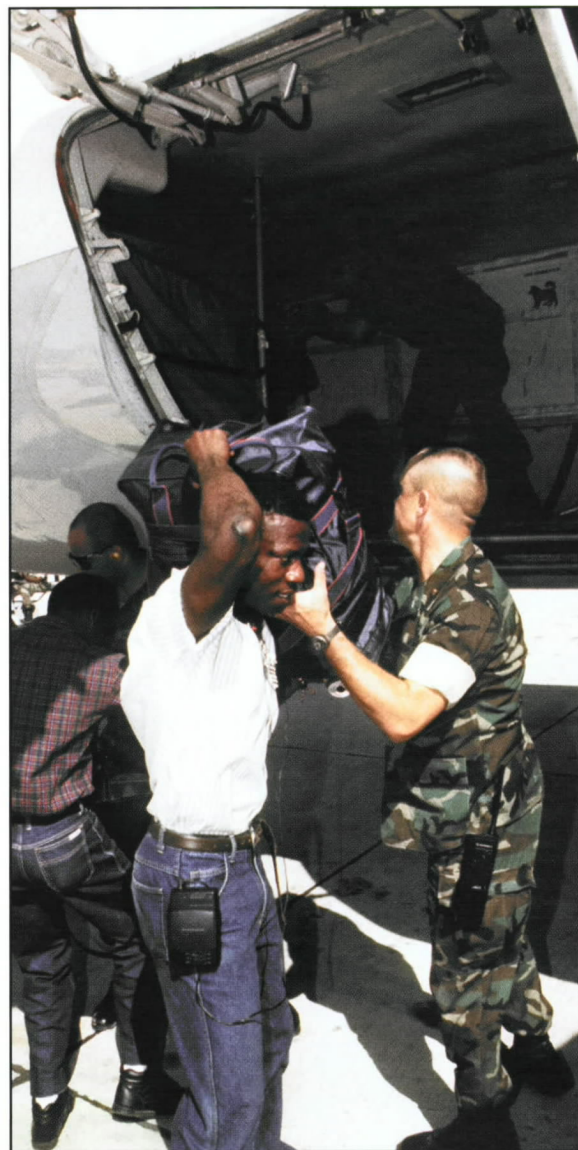
*The USCG Boutwell (WHEC 719) leaves Guantanamo Bay for Port-au-Prince to repatriate Haitian migrants from the camps run by Joint Task Force 160. The ocean of tent roofs at Camp McCalla can be seen here in the foreground and one of the guard towers overlooking the camp is visible on the right.*



been in Operation GTMO that no one Service could have accomplished the task on its own, in part because of the drain on personnel and equipment (especially on the Marine Corps' 2d Force Service Support Group, which gave up many of its key personnel to JTF 160), but also because each Service brought a particular set of skills and/or equipment to the operation. These were capabilities that reside almost exclusively in the military. It is difficult to imagine a predominantly civilian response to the challenges that General Williams faced, especially the initial challenges. The carefully trained and disciplined Marine infantrymen made a significant contribution. Although establishing and running migrant camps was not their primary mission, their core skills were compatible with this secondary mission, especially after they received some additional training in riot control and rules of engagement. The Army contributed MPs, who were ideally suited to the operation, as well as civil affairs units. This was perhaps the most notable Marine shortcoming, the only Marine civil affairs teams being in Marine Corps Reserve units. Those members, while capable and well respected, were simply too few and their deployments too short. Virtually every Marine admitted to benefiting from the cross-fertilization. At the end of the day, their uniforms were still Marine green even though their orientation and mission had been purple.\*

A second theme was that, even though it had worked well, the joint task force had been a "pick up" team whose members had to learn how to work together. Would it not be better to stand up a contingency JTF whose staff officers would establish working relations and procedures before they deployed? In 1996, at Camp Lejeune, the

\* For a thorough discussion of this topic, see Maj Gilbert Desroches, USMC, "Refugee Operations: Incapacitating the U.S. Military" (Quantico, VA: Marine Corps Command and Staff College thesis, 1995). Maj Desroches discusses the erosion of primary skills when combat units are committed for long periods of time to humanitarian operations, and calls for added funding prior to employing forces in such operations to safeguard that funding, which is required to maintain combat skills training. His argument does not, of course, apply to units whose primary skills are directly relevant to humanitarian operations, such as MPs, civil affairs, or engineering units. Addressing a similar subject, an Army after action report made the excellent point that "training for war and training to a wartime METL [Mission Essential Task List] allow units to be prepared to conduct operations other than war. The opposite is not true." (U. S. Atlantic Command, "Operation Uphold Democracy: U.S. Forces in Haiti" [Norfolk, VA: U.S. Atlantic Command, 1997], p. 10)



DVIC DF-ST-98-01862

*Haitian migrants, with the help of Joint Task Force 160 personnel, load their belongings on board the aircraft that will take them from Guantanamo Bay to the United States.*

Marine Corps embarked on just such an experiment.<sup>160</sup>

The last theme was that of personal and professional satisfaction. Some Marines went to Sea Signal with reluctance. They had not joined the Marine Corps to work in the arena of civil affairs, or to run what looked from the outside to be a World War II prison camp. Some commented the operational tempo in August and September 1994 had been too high. The short-handed force had been overloaded with too many tasks, and it was not an experience they wanted to repeat. But, like the Marines in Operation GTMO, many, if not

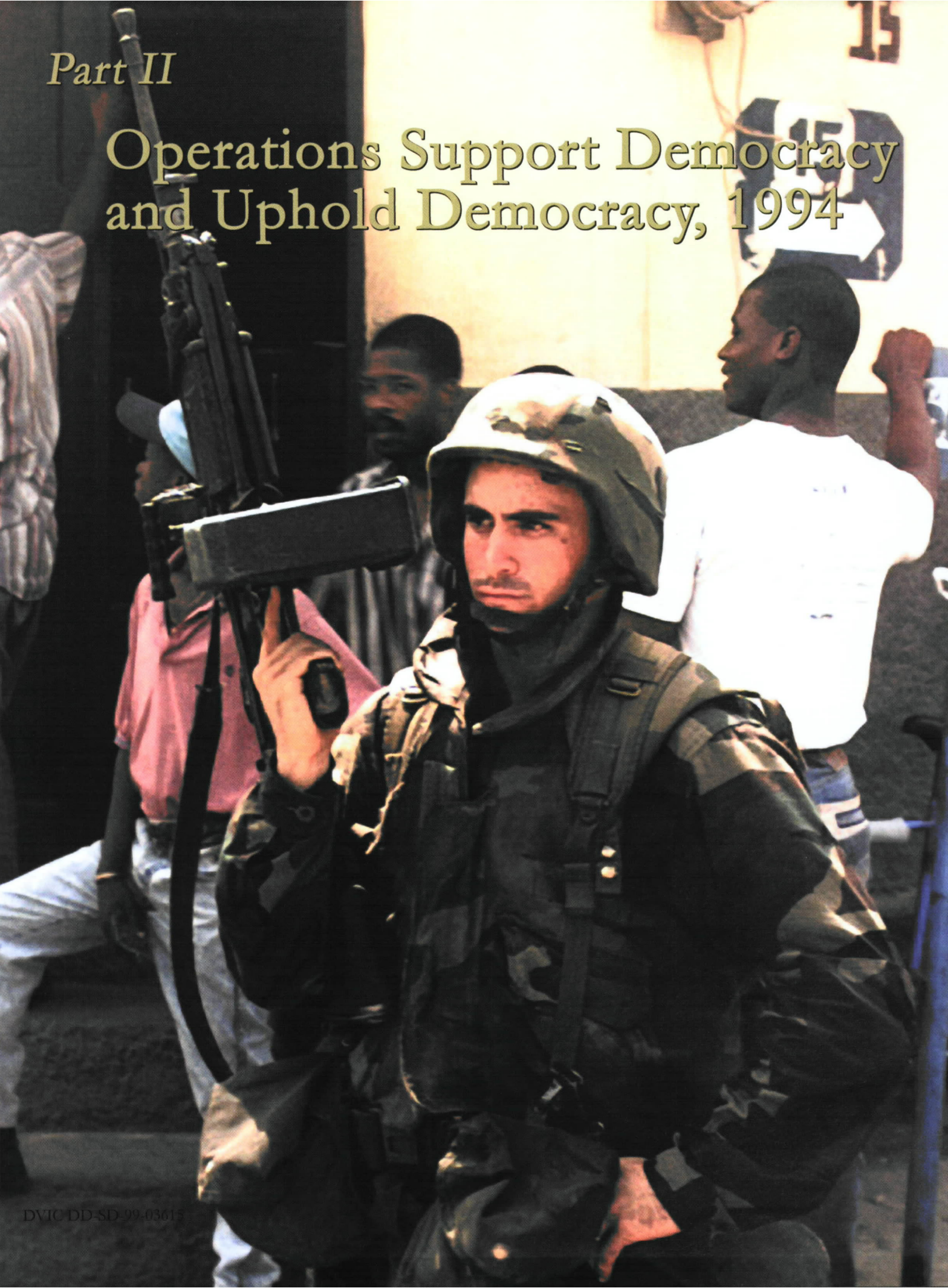


most Marines in Sea Signal remembered the operation as one of the highpoints of their careers. Some simply enjoyed the daily challenges, while many liked contributing to a humanitarian cause. They had helped to save the migrants, keep them safe, and get them back on their feet. As Major

John L. Shissler III of the JTF staff commented, if it had not been for Sea Signal, many migrants would have ended up on the bottom of the ocean. Others simply took satisfaction in a job well done—whether it was riot control or civil engineering or camp administration.<sup>161</sup>

*Part II*

# Operations Support Democracy and Uphold Democracy, 1994





## Chapter 4

# Preparing to Invade Haiti

Throughout the crisis caused by the flood of migrants, the United States, the United Nations and the Organization of American States debated what action, if any, to take against the Haitian military, which had precipitated the crisis by overthrowing President Jean-Bertrand Aristide. The aim for most was to restore Aristide to power, although enthusiasm for that goal waxed and waned. Imposing an economic embargo had been an easy, though not very effective, first step that committed no one to further action. In late June 1993, the U.N. had bolstered the long-standing U.S. embargo with an embargo of its own, which included a ban on all petroleum and arms sales to Haiti. It was only a few days later that representatives of the Aristide government and the Haitian military met separately with U.N. officials and

hammered out the Governor's Island Accord to restore Aristide to power by 30 October 1993.

But that agreement collapsed when one of its major elements, the U.N. mission to rebuild and reorient the infrastructure of the Haitian army and police, failed. To pave the way for that mission, an advance team of American and Canadian troops, which included military engineers from Company B, 8th Engineer Support Battalion, 2d Force Service Support Group from Camp Lejeune, set sail in early October on the USS *Harlan County* (LST 1196). Arriving in Port-au-Prince on 11 October, the *Harlan County* was met by what appeared to be an angry crowd chanting anti-American and anti-U.N. slogans. The U.S. and U.N. commanders decided not to force their way ashore, but to stand off from the harbor and, ulti-







DVIC DN-SC-96-00060

*The destroyer USS Spruance (DD 963) patrols off the coast of Haiti in the summer of 1994. A rigid-bull inflatable boat from the destroyer's boarding party is on its way to inspect a merchant ship. Under the United Nations embargo of the Caribbean nation, all shipping was subject to inspection for contraband.*

mately, to order the ship home. The U.N. fell back to a policy of economic sanctions.<sup>1</sup>

The remainder of 1993 and the first half of 1994 was a time of indecision and diplomatic maneuvering. In the spring of 1994, the Joint Chiefs of Staff directed the Norfolk-based U.S. Atlantic Command (USACom) to develop plans to land U.S. forces in Haiti. For that purpose, USACom activated Joint Task Force 180 (JTF 180), built around the Army's XVIII Airborne Corps and commanded by Lieutenant General Henry H. Shelton, USA. By mid-summer, tough talk was added to the mix. In early July, the tough talk included a show of force by the 24th Marine Expeditionary Unit, Special Operations Capable (MEU (SOC)) under Colonel Martin R. Berndt, who would become known to the public for his role in rescuing downed U.S. Air Force Captain Scott O'Grady in the former Republic of Yugoslavia in 1995. A composite of 3d Battalion, 6th Marine, Medium Helicopter Squadron 266, and MEU Service Support Group 24, this unit had just returned from a 180-day deployment to the Mediterranean and the Indian Oceans, which had included seven weeks ashore in Somalia helping to safeguard the withdrawal of American troops from that desolate and war-torn country. With less than three weeks home to get reacquainted with their friends and families, the orders came for them to pack their bags and return to their ships, the USS *Inchon* (LPH 12), *Portland* (LSD 37),

*Trenton* (LPD 14), and *Spartanburg County* (LST 1192). Pentagon spokesmen explained, somewhat sheepishly, there was simply no one else ready to go on short notice. This was cold comfort for many young Marines, sailors and their families, but they did their duty. One Marine, Sergeant Jeffrey Glenn, put it simply and directly: "I was disappointed. But you know, I gotta go." In typical Marine fashion, though some were more enthusiastic than others, all remembered there was a reason the Marine Corps laid claim to the "First to Fight" slogan. This was, in the words of one MEU officer, First Lieutenant Douglas M. Powell, for real. "It gets your blood pumping. This is what you sign up for."<sup>2</sup>

Exactly what was the mission? What did putting pressure on the Haitian government mean in practical terms? Colonel Berndt said his primary mission was to be ready to evacuate American citizens from Haiti, known in the jargon as a non-combatant evacuation operation. But he was quick to add: "We have a list of capabilities as long as your arm. My job is to be ready for anything."<sup>3</sup>

To exercise and demonstrate their capabilities, the 24th MEU conducted a two-day landing and evacuation exercise on the Bahamian Island of Great Inagua in mid-July. As *The Washington Post* put it dryly, "administration officials called attention to the action, apparently as part of Washington's effort to unnerve the Haiti's military

leaders and pressure them into leaving.”<sup>4</sup> A few weeks later, in early August, there was another exercise at the Naval Air Station at Roosevelt Roads in Puerto Rico, where 1,000 Marines stormed ashore to secure the airfield and prepare to evacuate civilians.<sup>5</sup> Imaginative platoon commanders found ways to augment the training with exercises on board ship, such as when Marines on the *Spartanburg County* worked their way through live fire shooting drills on the flight deck.<sup>6</sup>

But being the force in readiness in this show of force primarily meant, “doing gator squares” in the stifling heat off the coast of Haiti. The slang referred to amphibious, or “gator,” ships steaming in fixed patterns. The average Marine was more than willing to invade Haiti. But after nearly eight months overseas, the Marines wanted very much to go home if the alternative was waiting on station day in and day out.<sup>7</sup>

The Joint Chiefs of Staff received the message and acted on it. Replacements having set sail, the 24th MEU returned to Morehead City, North Carolina, on 16 August, where Secretary of Defense William J. Perry met them. He told the Marines he had come “to get some first-hand flavor for the stresses and strains that come from extra long deployments” and wanted “to assure [the returning Marines and sailors] that the decision to send them out again after two weeks was

not made lightly.” The press photos show Marines listening politely to the secretary’s message. But no doubt their minds were elsewhere.<sup>8</sup>

Replacing the 24th MEU was Special Purpose Marine Air-Ground Task Force Caribbean (SPMAGTF Carib), built around the headquarters of the 2d Marines under Colonel Thomas S. Jones, a Vietnam veteran who had commanded 1st Battalion, 6th Marines, during the Gulf War. For more than a year, 2d Marines had figured in contingency planning for Haiti and the Caribbean. The regiment had even sent troops to stand by at Guantanamo for operations in Haiti. In the second half of July, Haiti became more than a plan on the shelf for the regiment. Colonel Jones received word his staff would form the nucleus of a SPMAGTF to replace the 24th MEU, and on 20 July, SPMAGTF Carib, destined to play a role in the overlapping Operations Support Democracy and Uphold Democracy to restore the legitimate government of Haiti, officially came into being at Camp Lejeune.<sup>9</sup> \*

The 1,900 Marines and sailors of the SPMAGTF included 2d Battalion, 2d Marines, formed into a battalion landing team (BLT) under Lieutenant Colonel George S. “Steve” Hartley; Marine Medium Helicopter Squadron 264 (HMM-264) under Lieutenant Colonel Anthony J. Zell; and Combat Service Support Detachment 29 (CSSD-29) under Major Lance R. McBride. Included in the battalion landing team was a provisional rifle company, Battery B, 1st Battalion, 10th Marines, which left its howitzers at Camp Lejeune—no one thought conventional artillery would be of much use in Haiti—and Company B (-), 2d Light Armored Reconnaissance Battalion, along with its vehicles, which might be needed for at least two reasons. In a noncombatant evacuation, the objectives might be a few miles apart, and the Marines might need the added transportation. Another point in some planners’ minds was a recent and painful lesson from Somalia when members of the U.S. Army’s elite Delta Force and Rangers had been unable to fight their way out of the back streets of Mogadishu without suffering heavy casualties. Light armored vehicles might have saved lives, but there had been none in country.<sup>10</sup> Yet another important decision about



DVIC DD-SD-03666

*SPMAGTF Carib commander Col Thomas S. Jones stands in front of the flag of 2d Marines, which was flown in Haiti some 60 years earlier.*

\* While the distinction between “Support Democracy” and “Uphold Democracy” is often blurred in literature, Support Democracy refers to the pre-invasion/pre-occupation phase, especially maritime interdiction, while Uphold Democracy refers to the planning for and implementation of the invasion and occupation of Haiti.



DVIC DN-SC-96-00058

*An air cushioned landing craft (LCAC 46) speeds along the beach at Vieques Island, Puerto Rico, as Marines conducted a two-day landing exercise in preparation for the landings in Haiti.*

the composition of the SPMAGTF came when Colonel Jones argued to add air-cushioned landing craft (LCACs) to the table of equipment because they were faster and more flexible than the more traditional and sturdier utility landing craft. In the end, the task force had both types of landing craft at its disposal.<sup>11</sup>

The principal difference between the 24th MEU and SPMAGTF Carib was not so much in its organization but in its capabilities. Colonel Jones held the reasonable belief he would not need to conduct special operations in Haiti. It was far more likely his task force would conduct some sort of conventional landing. Jones also wanted an organization robust enough to conduct sustained operations ashore, as opposed to quick incursions, the forte of the MEU(SOC). As the regimental operations officer, Major Thomas C. Greenwood, pointed out, the traditional purposes of a regimental headquarters had always been to plan and conduct landings and, if necessary, fight on shore for the duration. The staff of 2d Marines also had worked together for more than a year, an advantage many MEU staffs did not possess.<sup>12</sup>

Initially, Colonel Jones and his planners thought primarily in terms of conducting a non-combatant evacuation, either in Port-au-Prince or in the country's second city, Cap-Haïtien, on the north coast. Like Port-au-Prince, Cap-Haïtien

boasted a seaport and an airfield, infrastructure with obvious military significance. Jones later commented that some planners thought there might be as many as 5,000 to 10,000 American citizens needing evacuation.<sup>13</sup> But a peacetime evacuation of civilians was still not the only contingency. The plans for hostilities continued to evolve, and Colonel Jones and Major Greenwood traveled to Fort Bragg, North Carolina, to talk with officers from the XVIII Airborne Corps, which would form the nucleus of JTF 180 and assume overall control of an invasion of Haiti.<sup>14</sup> The possibility of "forcible entry," the euphemism for invasion, was very much on Jones' mind when his command set sail on 13 August in the USS *Wasp* (LHD 1) and *Nashville* (LPD 13), forming a small amphibious ready group.

The incoming SPMAGTF and the outgoing MEU passed each other close enough for Colonel Jones and his staff to fly over to the *Imchon* for a briefing by Colonel Berndt. The MEU turned over its operation plans to the newcomers, who proceeded to emulate their predecessors by conducting a series of no less than four major and two partial landing exercises, mostly on the Puerto Rican island of Vieques, but also at Guantanamo and Great Inagua. Jones used a building block approach, doing the first landings in daylight without troops, then with troops and then at



night. When the exercises had ended, the SPMAGTF had rehearsed a variety of contingencies through D + 1 (the day following the landing), including a simultaneous landing from landing craft over a beach and from helicopters onto an airfield, and a landing at 0300 with no moon at low tide. Jones believed in night operations, when the darkness would leverage his combat power and denigrate that of the opposition. In each of the exercises, the staff learned something useful and refined its procedures.<sup>15</sup>

SPMAGTF Carib received mixed signals from higher headquarters through mid-September. Colonel Jones still reported to Norfolk, but he stayed attuned to developments at Fort Bragg. At one point, the word was "be prepared to conduct all three missions," the three being two noncombatant evacuations, one in Port-au-Prince and one in Cap-Haïtien, followed by a forcible entry at a "to be determined" location. Part of the problem was each staff had its own focus. USACom, which had been rescuing migrants, literally for years, still tended to think in terms of helping civilians, while JTF 180 planners from XVIII Airborne Corps were more focused on preparing for an invasion and had less interest in an evacuation.<sup>16</sup>

As time went on, it seemed likely the Marines would form part of an invasion by JTF 180 rather than conducting an evacuation of noncombatants. Colonel Jones adopted an approach that made each plan a variant of the other, which gave him a great deal of flexibility. The two plans began with simultaneous air and sea landings to secure both a seaport and an airport while neutralizing

any threats. In both cases, it was a matter of getting as much combat power ashore as quickly as possible. This became easier to do when the amphibious task force gained the temporary use of the USS *Asbland* (LSD 48), which had been engaged in migrant operations in Cuban waters. With the *Asbland*, more Marines could go ashore at the same time. The difference between the two plans lay in what would happen after the initial landing and, of course, in the rules of engagement. Whatever happened, it was generally accepted the Marines would withdraw soon after the situation ashore had stabilized.<sup>17</sup>

By mid-September, the Marines were focusing their efforts on preparing to seize Cap-Haïtien, as Port-au-Prince had definitively become the province of the Army, which had ostentatiously loaded troops and helicopters onto an attack aircraft carrier. With his reconnaissance assets, including the sophisticated capabilities of the Army's Bell OH-58D Kiowa Warrior helicopters temporarily based on the fast frigate USS *Oliver Hazard Perry* (FFG 7), Colonel Jones had an excellent idea of the lay of the land and the challenges that awaited him. Cap-Haïtien was a congested town of some 65,000 persons, laid out in a grid along a crescent-shaped waterfront roughly three kilometers long. There were hills directly behind the town, hemming it between the high ground (the highest was 718 meters) and the beach. The airport was a short distance from the harbor, inland and to the south. Jones thought the area bore some resemblance to Beirut and some resemblance to Vietnam. The once graceful



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*Marine amphibious assault vehicles storm the beach at Vieques Island with smoke masking the landing force behind them. A tank landing ship is partially visible in the background.*



DVIC DN-SC-96-00066

*Secretary of Defense William J. Perry addresses members of SPMAGTF Carib and the crewmen of the USS Wasp (LHD 1) on 17 September 1994, a little more than 24 hours before the scheduled invasion of Haiti. The Commandant of the Marine Corps, General Carl E. Mundy, Jr., stands to his left.*

French and Spanish colonial-style buildings, now mostly rundown, and the narrow cobblestone streets in the old town must have reinforced that impression. Not far from the city center were overcrowded neighborhoods of half-finished cinder block dwellings.<sup>18</sup>

Jones decided to split his ground forces from Battalion Landing Team 2d Battalion, 2d Marines, into three elements. One, which became Task Force Irish, would land by surface and seize the town itself. The second, Task Force Hawg (a reference to Harley-Davidson motorcycles), would conduct a helicopter-borne assault to seize the small airport, which could accommodate the Marines' cargo planes, the Lockheed Martin C-130 Hercules. The third element, Company E, 2d Marines, was the reserve, to be held on board the *Wasp* until needed. Bell AH-1W Super Cobra gunships and an Air Force Lockheed Martin AC-130 Spectre, which could fill every square foot of a football field with lead in a few seconds, would stand by if anyone needed close air support.<sup>19</sup>

Colonel Jones also decided he would be the mission commander. It would be difficult for Lieutenant Colonel Hartley, the BLT commander, to oversee the disparate parts of the ground operation with the assets at his disposal. Jones, on the other hand, had a regimental staff at his disposal. Hartley, therefore, became the commander of Task Force Irish, while his executive officer, Major Herman C. Broadstone, became commander of Task Force Hawg.

What was the threat picture? The ragtag 7,000-man Armed Forces of Haiti, formally known as the *Forces Armées d'Haïti*, included the army and the police, along with a tiny navy, and had a miserable reputation. *The New York Times* described it as "poorly armed and seasoned only in terror."<sup>20</sup> But no one knew for sure what threats awaited Marines ashore. The memory of the U.S. Army's bad experiences in Somalia against irregular forces was still very fresh; there, whole neighborhoods seemed to rise up against the "invaders," launching disorganized but sometimes deadly

attacks with everything from rocks to crew-served weapons in a maze of crowded streets and alleys not too different from those of Cap-Haïtien.<sup>21</sup> Would elements of the Haitian Army actually fight on the beaches? Would some brave soul aim the machine guns at the airport at the Marine helicopters and open fire? Or, perhaps more likely, would a few hardcore Haitian soldiers or their paramilitary auxiliaries, the infamous *attachés*, use hit-and-run tactics against the Marines, trying to snipe and ambush? It did not help that the Haitian forces in the north, those around Cap-Haïtien, were reputed to be more disciplined and prepared than their counterparts in the south around the capital.<sup>22</sup> Their commander, Lieutenant Colonel Claudel Josephat, had a reputation for being both relatively effective and ruthless. According to one account, he led an operation in April 1994 against a reputed insurgent leader, "burning entire villages to the ground [and] razing schools and crops."<sup>23</sup>

It was hard to know what to tell young Marines who had trained for combat, in some cases for years. Colonel Jones had purposefully waited to publish the U.S. Atlantic Command rules of engagement for the operation because they seemed to change hourly. On 15 September, he decided the time had come, and he carefully prepared his Marines for an ambiguous situation. He repeatedly told his subordinate commanders they could and should use force decisively if necessary, adding that he would not second-guess their battlefield judgment. But he also urged them to weigh the consequences of their actions and remember the Marines really wanted to capture the "hearts and minds" of the Haitian people. Securing that objective was the best guarantee of the Marines' own security.<sup>24</sup>

Jones reminded his Marines the last time the Marine Corps had occupied Haiti and run the paramilitary *gendarmérie*, it had not been a uniformly positive experience. He wanted this intervention to be for the good. While some Marines had covered themselves with glory fighting bandits in the 1920s when the Marine Corps certainly helped to modernize the infrastructure of the country, there had also been allegations of brutality by Marines and a famous incident in 1929 near the town of Les Cayes where a Marine contingent opened fire on an unruly and threatening mob, killing and wounding 34.

For 2d Battalion, 2d Marines, the landing would be a homecoming of sorts. It was at Cap-Haïtien during the Marine occupation of Haiti the

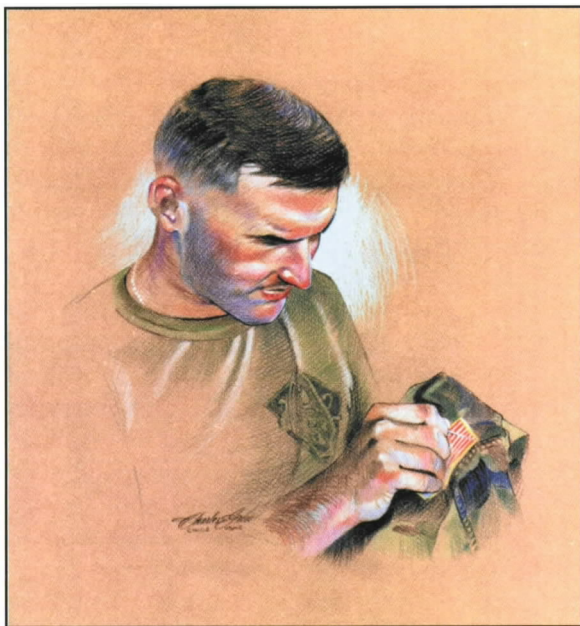
battalion had flown its colors for the first time.<sup>25</sup>\*

While the word on what was about to happen was hazy at best, preparations continued on 16 and 17 September. Perhaps the wildest rumor on 16 September was that the Secretary of Defense and the Commandant of the Marine Corps were going to fly to the *Wasp* on a McDonnell-Douglas/British Aerospace AV-8B Harrier jump jet and address the troops. The rumor was partly true. On the morning of 17 September, there still was no confirmation of D-Day or H-Hour, but it was confirmed that Secretary of Defense William J. Perry and General Carl E. Mundy, Jr., were on their way, although not in a Harrier. By the time they arrived in the afternoon, it had been confirmed the landings would occur on 19 September, although there also was news a last minute mission by former President Jimmy Carter, accompanied by the former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Colin L. Powell, and

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\* The smallest Marine presence in Haiti in recent memory was the 1959 to 1963 U.S. Naval Mission to Haiti, under the command of Colonel Robert Debs Heintz, Jr. About 70 strong and mostly Marines, the mission grew out of contacts between General Lemuel C. Shepherd, Jr., and Haitian dictator François Duvalier, who had known each other during the first Marine occupation of Haiti when Duvalier appeared to stand for progress. The mission worked hard to do its job, trying to modernize the armed forces of Haiti. Colonel Heintz believed the Haitian military could literally build the nation if it were professionalized. But it was a thankless task. The Haitian government wanted the appearance of collaboration with the United States and little else. When Heintz left Haiti, his outgoing brief to the chief of staff of the Haitian armed forces was brutally frank, with none of the window dressing so common in diplomatic exchanges or end-of-tour reports. Apart from the frustrations of working with unwilling counterparts, there were charges the mission was helping to prop up the Duvalier regime, as when political columnist Drew Pearson wrote about Haiti in *The Miami Herald* on 30 August 1959. Wasting no time, Heintz replied to the column in a letter to Pearson on 2 September 1959 in his take-no-prisoners style. Heintz wrote that he saw his mission as one of helping Haiti, "not...any incumbent regime." From Heintz's point of view, the Marines involved in the mission had always taken pains to uphold Marine traditions in general and the traditions of the *gendarmérie* in particular. This emerges clearly from documents such as Heintz's 24 August 1959 request to Washington to allow his Marines to wear the field hat still worn by Marine drill instructors. As he explained: "the primary reason for this request is the long-standing association in the mind of the average Haitian of the field hat with the U.S. Marine officers who trained its armed forces from 1915 to 1934. It is the policy of this Mission to foster in every way a sense of continuity between the highly successful past efforts of the Marine Corps in Haiti and the present objectives and operations of this Mission. (Heintz Papers, MCHC; see also Charles T. Williamson, *The U.S. Naval Mission to Haiti: 1959-1963* [Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1999])





Sketch by Capt Charles G. Grow

*A few hours before the landing, Marines were required to put down their combat gear and pick up their sewing kits to stitch American flags on their uniforms. The Marine sewing is Capt Thomas C. Smith, the commander of Company G, 2d Battalion, 2d Marines.*

Senator Sam Nunn were on their way to Port-au-Prince to find an alternative to invasion.<sup>26</sup>

Secretary Perry and General Mundy addressed the troops briefly and conferred with Colonel Jones. Paying particular attention to the rules of engagement, Jones outlined his concept of operations for Secretary Perry, who appeared to like what he heard. In the evening, a media pool arrived on board, and the various Navy and Marine Corps staffs briefed reporters and answered questions while their troops continued to prepare for combat.<sup>27</sup>

The tension continued to build on 18 September. In the morning, mission commanders held briefings, and in the afternoons there were concrete preparations for the landings. In the kind of last minute "brown side out, green side out" change familiar to all infantrymen, someone high in the chain-of-command decided all U.S. ground personnel should wear U.S. flags on their right shoulders and one-inch reflective patches on top of their helmets and on their left shoulders to make it easier to identify them, especially from the air. As a result, the warrior elite spent part of the day sewing.<sup>28</sup>

During the afternoon, the skipper of the *Wasp*, Captain Robert C. Chaplin, USN, spoke to the

ship's company over the ship's public address system. He announced that "we will be putting the Marines ashore tonight in Cap-Haitien. This will not be practice. This will be the real thing." "Anchors Aweigh" and the "The Marine's Hymn" were then played. After the evening meal, Captain Chaplin followed up with another announcement, confirming that "we have just received the execute order. ... May God be with us all." Colonel Jones announced that H-Hour would occur at 0001 local time on 19 September.<sup>29</sup>

The tension was now palpable. There was no horseplay and little bravado. In the time-honored tradition of the Corps, small unit leaders gathered their men to pass the word in straightforward terms, telling them exactly what they needed to do and when they needed to do it. Quiet and focused, Marines checked and rechecked their gear, and after drawing ammunition, staged it neatly where they would wait to be called to board landing craft or helicopters. Some Marines pulled out camouflage sticks and began covering exposed skin, creating elaborate patterns that, with their camouflage utilities, would make them nearly invisible in the right terrain. When there was nothing more to do, many Marines wrote letters home, just as Marines have done for decades before amphibious landings against the chance, however slight in this case, they might die in combat. Around 1900, Marines in the initial serials started to migrate to the staging areas, ready for last minute instructions and perhaps a few minutes of sleep on top of their gear. Around sunset, Navy SEAL (Sea, Air, Land) teams attached to the amphibious ready group slipped into the water ready to spend the night reconnoitering the beaches and marking the landing lanes.<sup>30</sup>

At 2000, an hour before Jones planned to call the first Marines to fall in on the hangar and well decks, there was a stunning turn of events. Captain Chaplin announced over the address system there was an indefinite delay. The troops were now on a "12- to 24-hour tether," meaning they might go ashore later than planned. More information trickled in shortly after. The Carter-Powell-Nunn mission had, at the last minute, succeeded in averting an invasion by convincing the Haitian military regime to step down and allow President Aristide to return to power. The landings would still occur, albeit on a revised schedule and without opposition. There was now to be some sort of vaguely defined cooperation with the Haitian army. It did not exactly sound like peace, but it would not be war.<sup>31</sup>

## Chapter 5

# Landing at Cap-Haïtien

The letdown on 18 September was tremendous. The Marines had trained hard and were emotionally and physically ready to fight. For many, this was to be their baptism of fire, and now they were told there would be no fighting. There were some very vocal expressions of disappointment and dismay. Speaking for many, one Marine said he felt “sold out.” Another railed behind the nation’s political leadership. Then they began the process of undoing many of their preparations for the invasion of northern Haiti, securing their gear for the night and taking off their camouflage paint, a lengthy and unpleasant process akin to scrubbing your face with a dishrag 20 or 30 times. When they were done, the troops

watched Eddie Murphy’s “Beverly Hills Cop” over the ship’s internal television system.<sup>1</sup>

The following day, 19 September, was another full of frustration. The Marines learned they would not land at Cap-Haïtien until the Army component of Joint Task Force 180 had landed at Port-au-Prince; the operations in the north became contingent on the results of the operations in the south. On the USS *Wasp* (LHD 1), Marine commanders were able to watch the progress of those landings on the Cable News Network. They saw U.S. Army helicopters taking off from the deck of an aircraft carrier to ferry troops ashore, a sight that made some Marines grind their teeth. After all, amphibious landings



Photo courtesy of Maj John T. Quinn II

*Downtown Cap-Haïtien as viewed from the sea. Although appearing small and quaint, it was Haiti’s second most important city. Behind the old town, and on its flanks, there were newer buildings.*

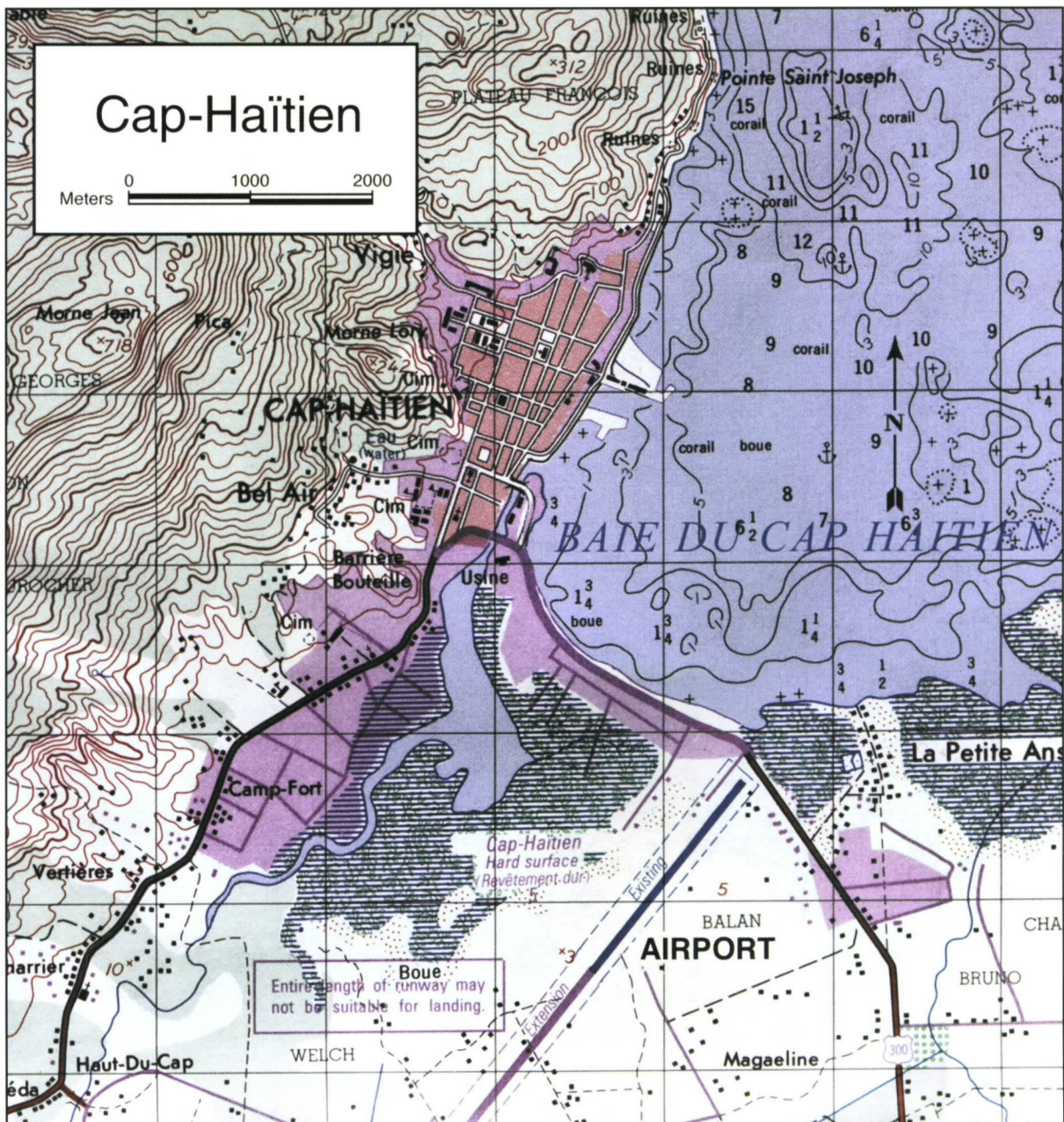


were the Marines' *forte*, not the Army's. Nevertheless, the official word from Headquarters Marine Corps was the operation in Haiti was not setting a precedent. As a spokesman noted: "this operation does not require a robust forcible entry or the unique capabilities only available in [the] Marine Corps."<sup>2</sup>

Adding to the sense of frustration, the Marines had to wait nearly the entire day for any definite word about their role in the operation. Would they land at all, or simply go home? Most Marines and sailors in the amphibious ready group seemed to think Special Purpose Marine Air-Ground Task Force Caribbean (SPMAGTF Carib)

had been on station, ready to invade, far too long to steam away without going ashore in Haiti and playing a role in the operation. After all, the task force had prepared for both "hard" (opposed) and "soft" (unopposed) entries. Colonel Thomas S. Jones' operations officer, Major Thomas C. Greenwood, observed that, according to the dictates of operational doctrine, it would have made good sense to land simultaneously at Port-au-Prince and Cap-Haïtien.<sup>3</sup>

Being a seasoned commander, Colonel Jones knew the situation was one of those proverbial leadership challenges, especially for the young officers and noncommissioned officers who were







DVIC DD-SD-99-03594

*Members of the 1st Battalion, 10th Marines, offload from a Navy air cushioned landing craft (LCAC 9) at Cap-Haïtien. It is little wonder the citizens were impressed by these unusual forms of transportation.*

platoon and squad leaders. He spent much of the day making the rounds to his subordinate commands, talking to his men and combating what he recognized as the “play me or trade me” syndrome. While he shared their disappointment, he did not want them to be demoralized. He said later he was glad the Marines had the luxury of a “buffer day” to adjust their attitudes and reorient their thinking while they waited for a decision from the commander of JTF 180, Lieutenant General Henry H. Shelton. It was a measure of good small-unit leadership and the overall discipline of the force that the Marines successfully made the adjustment when the word came around 1800 that they would indeed make a soft landing at Cap-Haïtien on 20 September as part of JTF 180 in Operation Uphold Democracy.<sup>4</sup>

The adjustment was to a more ambiguous situation, which was reflected in the new rules of engagement that were quickly printed on orange cards and issued to each member of the landing force. Under the original rules of engagement, a Haitian carrying a weapon was a legitimate target if he was not putting it down or in the process of

surrendering. The emphasis now was on self-defense. The Marines could expect to encounter armed Haitians, but they could fire only to protect themselves. As Major Greenwood put it when he briefed the commanders: “We are not supposed to be out there killing people. We are ... taking all steps to create a strong, positive impression. These folks are not the enemy. Everyone we meet is an ally until they prove otherwise.” He noted that no one had fired any shots on 19 September during the landings in and around Port-au-Prince.<sup>5</sup>

At the same briefing, Greenwood declared that, apart from the rules of engagement, the landing plan had not changed dramatically, though the Marines would not be painting their faces or assaulting the same objectives. The Haitian army barracks, for example, was no longer on the list. The pace of the operation would slow as it was no longer necessary to push combat power ashore as fast as possible. The watchwords changed from “shock action” to “steady flow.” Nevertheless, the basic outlines of the operation were still the same. The Marines would land “but-

toned down" (ready for action with weapons loaded). The two task forces would simultaneously seize the port and the airfield and establish blocking positions at key intersections and bridges throughout the area, ready to stop traffic if necessary. There would also be outposts on the high ground in and around the city. Colonel Jones made a point of emphasizing he did not want the Marines to be isolated in their enclaves, as they had been in Beirut. Although the AC-130 Spectre would not support the operation—its capabilities were now clearly overkill—there still would be heavily armed Bell AH-1 Cobra helicopter gun ships on station. But no one expected any lethal opposition. The biggest threat was likely to be curious crowds that might get in the Marines' way, and they needed to be ready to control them through peaceful means. After securing the area, the Marines would conduct a civil-military operations evaluation of Cap-Haïtien's infrastructure and prepare to cede control to Army occupation troops in 10-14 days. The final issue was timing. Colonel Jones still would have preferred to land at night, but higher powers decided the landing would occur precisely at 0800 on 20 September.<sup>6</sup>

The *Wasp* sounded reveille at 0500, but many Marines had been up long before that hour. At 0530, the first serials were called away and Marines mustered on the hangar deck. Flight quarters were sounded and the troops loaded on to helicopters. In the bright, clear morning, the large Sikorsky CH-53E Super Stallion helicopters turned up at 0700, then lifted off and hovered. Next came the aging twin-rotor Boeing CH-46E Sea Knights. By 0740, the air armada, escorted by Cobra gun ships, had formed and was ready to cross the beach. The same was true of the old-fashioned, blunt-nosed utility landing craft launched from the USS *Ashland* (LSD 48), and of the amphibious assault vehicles (AAVs), which launched from the USS *Nashville* (LPD 13). The landing craft and AAVs circled in the water until they received the signal to proceed ashore on line with the LCAC hovercraft. At precisely 0800, the forces hit the beach while Colonel Jones watched from his command and control vantage on board a Bell UH-1 Huey helicopter. Another Huey flew low over the city broadcasting the message the Marines had come in peace. That message reached literally thousands of Haitians who left



DVIC DD SD-99-03779

*A Marine walks the perimeter of the Cap-Haïtien airport while another stands in his foxhole tented with a camouflaged poncho. Securing the airstrip was a vital link for incoming logistical support.*





Photo courtesy of Maj John T. Quinn II

*Marines guard one of the headquarters buildings of the Haitian army and police in downtown Cap-Haïtien.*

their homes to watch the spectacle.<sup>7</sup>

The landing went virtually without a hitch. The only problem was the LCACs landed before the small helicopter-borne advance party had been able to land and secure Blue Beach at the northern end of the port area to protect the thin-skinned inflatable hovercraft from any hostile Haitian soldiers, as well as the crowd of bystanders. But in the end it did not matter. Mounted in their amphibious assault and light armored vehicles, Company G, 2d Marines and Company B, 2d Light Armored Reconnaissance Battalion, the main components of Task Force Irish, rolled ashore in good order to a peaceful, friendly reception. The crowd burst into applause as the Marines emerged from their strange conveyances.<sup>8</sup>

The scene at the small airport south of town was not much different. In textbook fashion, the Marines of Task Force Hawg, in particular Captain Gregg L. Lyon's Company F and Captain Alvin W. Peterson, Jr.'s artillerymen of Battery B, 10th Marines, dashed off the helicopters and quickly established a tactical perimeter, facing outboard, ready for any threats. The Marines looked so professional that Major Greenwood, who was able to watch their deployment over a soundless closed circuit television feed from a circling aircraft, initially thought they were under fire. It was, he remembered, like watching a very realistic silent war movie. But he soon learned the only threat

was from Haitian children waving American flags, and then from a crowd of Haitians from nearby slums who gathered at the end of the runway, clapping and cheering.<sup>9</sup>

While the helicopters and landing craft returned to the ships to ferry the second and third waves ashore, Colonel Jones' staff prepared to phase control of the operation ashore, the landing having been controlled from the landing force operations center on the *Wasp* in accordance with Marine Corps doctrine. Major Greenwood made his way to the beach on an LCAC and was stunned by the level of poverty; garbage piled high throughout the town, crowds of curious onlookers, and the general air of chaos and confusion. Even so, within a little more than an hour, he and his Marines had set up a working command post and operations center in the port area (which was fenced off from the rest of the city and relatively secure), and took control from the landing force center on the *Wasp*.<sup>10</sup>

For its part, the Haitian Armed Forces in Cap-Haïtien reacted as much to the crowds as to the invaders. A number of Haitian soldiers and police tried to restrain the onlookers, and almost certainly threatened their countrymen for being too friendly to the Marines. "They pushed us and shouted at us to go home and leave the Americans alone," said one Haitian.<sup>11</sup> Dozens of armed Haitian soldiers milled around in the port area while the Marines tried to do their work, nei-



ther side sure exactly how to treat the other. One beaming Haitian soldier with the improbable name of Voltaire, who declared that it was "a fine day" because the Americans had returned and now "everything will be better," was curtly silenced by one of his officers.<sup>12</sup>

The situation being well in hand, the next order of business was to find the local commander of the Haitian Armed Forces and establish an understanding with him. Mounted in a handful of tactical vehicles and accompanied by a small security detachment, Colonel Jones, Lieutenant Colonel George S. Hartley, and Major Greenwood made their way in mid-afternoon through the congested streets to the Haitian military compound, a two-story colonial building bleached by the tropical sun on a pleasant tree-lined square in the old town near the waterfront. There they found the rough equivalent of a company of Haitian soldiers, armed with pistols and M1 rifles, milling around slowly and aimlessly. Jones and Hartley, along with a few Marines, dismounted and went inside the compound while Greenwood waited outside in the heat, keeping a careful eye on the Haitians and worrying about the security of his commander. It was, he remembered, an



Photo courtesy of Maj John T. Quinn II  
*SPMAGTF Carib commander Col Thomas S. Jones (right) takes time out to talk with one of the many journalists who covered the operation.*

eerie sensation as the minutes ticked by and there was no word on the talks between the two leaders.<sup>13</sup>

Inside the compound, the atmosphere was far less tense. One spokesman later said it was actually cordial. Colonel Jones thought Lieutenant Colonel Claudel Josephat, the Haitian in com-



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*Cpls Gregory Camp (left) and Joseph Cooper of the Scout Sniper Platoon, 2d Battalion, 2d Marines, watch the outskirts of Cap-Haïtien. During the operation, lookouts were posted on high ground 24 hours a day, keeping an eye on the situation in the town below, the tools of their trade at hand.*



Photo courtesy of Maj John T. Quinn II

*Marines from Company B, 2d Light Armored Reconnaissance Battalion, provide a checkpoint in Cap-Haïtien. The light armored vehicles had a psychological as well as physical presence.*

mand of the Military District of the North, had a good command presence and the insight to understand his position. Ticking off the items on his agenda, Jones told Josephat just how much combat power he had ashore, which had a visible effect on the Haitian officer. He declared his principle concerns were the security of his force and the security of the local populace. For him, the two were inextricably linked. Jones said he knew the Haitian army and police had "violated the security" of the citizens of Cap-Haïtien in the past. (He was almost certainly thinking of the incidents that had occurred earlier in the day.) Jones would not tolerate any further acts of intimidation and it would be up to Josephat to control his forces to prevent excesses. If that did not happen, the Marines would begin active patrols of the town. Jones made it clear the Marines did not intend to cooperate with the Haitian army in running joint patrols, but he did want the two sides to exchange liaison officers.<sup>14</sup>

Both Colonel Jones and Major Greenwood were satisfied with the outcome of the

encounter—Jones because Josephat had been agreeable and Greenwood because his commander had emerged from the compound in one piece. Nevertheless, the Marines did not let down their guard on their first night ashore. As Major Herman C. Broadstone, commander of Task Force Hawg, put it: "The concern now is the night. Even though everything ran smoothly today ... we still have to be concerned about renegade forces that might be hostile to [the] American presence. There's always the possibility of someone who doesn't listen to the Haitian commander and starts taking potshots at us." On the airport perimeter, the Marines dug foxholes and positioned their machine guns. Two-man sniper teams—one man with a sniper rifle and the other with a pair of high-power binoculars—carefully chose positions where they could look out over their surroundings and become so familiar with them they could react instantly to any changes that might mean danger. For most Marines, there was a 75 percent alert (three-quarters of the men awake) during the hours of darkness.<sup>15</sup>



The night was quiet, apart from the sounds of drumming and singing Marines throughout the area heard at odd intervals during the night. These were almost certainly happy sounds, although some Marines wondered if they were listening to some kind of sinister voodoo ritual.<sup>16</sup>

Tensions between the Marines and the Haitian army increased during the blisteringly hot days from 21 to 24 September. On the morning of 21 September, there was a small but typical drama at one of the main traffic circles guarded by a few Marines in two light armored vehicles, which did not look light with their eight sturdy wheels and protruding guns. There was a ring of portable concertina wire around the Marine outpost. When two armed Haitian soldiers waded through the inevitable crowd, two Marines armed with M16 rifles jumped down from their vehicles and walked to the edge of the wire to confront their Haitians counterparts. The crowd fell silent as the two sides eyed each other in silence. In the end, the Haitian soldiers simply turned around and walked away, which was a real crowd pleaser—the bystanders burst into cheers and applause. Simply by their presence, the Marines had protected them from the soldiers.<sup>17</sup>

In a similar incident, a Haitian policeman threatened one of his countrywomen with his

weapon and nearby Marines had to train their weapons on him before he backed down. Throughout the day, Haitian civilians approached Marines with reports that Haitian police and soldiers were harassing, beating, and detaining ousted President Jean-Bertrand Aristide supporters. The Marine task force took concrete action when the reports were confirmed after another instance of Haitian crowd control.<sup>18</sup>

In the late afternoon, a U.S. Army psychological operations group attached to the SPMAGTF drove slowly through the northern part of the town broadcasting through loudspeakers an appeal for law and order in Creole to calm the situation. Hundreds of Haitians fell in behind the detachment's two humvees, which became sort of an electronic pied piper. It was a happy crowd until Haitian policemen with "batons the size of ax handles" waded in and started beating anyone they could reach. The Army detachment was too small to take any action apart from driving quickly from the area and to the SPMAGTF command post, which was still in the port area but now at a slightly better location. The Army noncommissioned officers reported to Major Greenwood, who in turn took them to Colonel Jones.<sup>19</sup>

Jones was incensed and dispatched troops to find Josephat and bring him to the command



DVIC DD-SID-99-03595

*In addition to static checkpoints, there were roving patrols. Here, Marines from Battery B, 1st Battalion, 10th Marines, patrol the road between the port of Cap-Haïtien and the Haitian military headquarters in the old town.*





Photo courtesy of Maj John T. Quinn II

*Marines stand outside the command post of Company E, 2d Battalion, 2d Marines, on 22 September. The company's mission that day and during the following days was to patrol crowded parts of the city and monitor Haitian police stations.*

post. But he was nowhere to be found—it turned out later he had left the city to confer with his superiors in the capital—and Jones had to make do with two of Josephat's subordinates. He made it clear the Marines would not tolerate any further excesses by Haitian police or soldiers. If Haitian officers could not control their men, the Marines would do it for them. According to one account, when he finally spoke with Josephat himself, he added if he and his officers "did not get it right," the Marines could wind up shooting at Haitian soldiers.<sup>20</sup>

To reinforce his words with actions, and to restrain his Haitian counterparts, Jones decided to increase the Marine presence around Haitian military and police installations. Marines would establish patrol bases in the city and patrol up to and around those installations. This was a departure from the initial policy of keeping Marines mostly at their positions at the airport, the port, and at various key points throughout the city.

The bulk of the patrolling fell to Company E, 2d Marines, commanded by Captain Richard L. Diddams, Jr., which had been moved to the port area. At midday on 22 September, the company set out on a patrol of the city, which began around 1100 and took most of the afternoon.

Heavily laden in the 100-degree heat, the Marines stepped off in a tactical formation. But crowds of Haitians soon engulfed the troops and changed the formation such that the Marines were almost touching one another as they moved slowly through the shouting, waving, and dancing Haitians.<sup>21</sup>

Captain Diddams made a round of the local police stations with his company. At the first stop, the crowd instinctively backed 50 feet away when the Marines halted in front of the building. Diddams went in and told the police through a translator the Marines had come in peace as part of the negotiated settlement, but added they would not tolerate further acts of violence by the police. The Marines then inventoried the Haitians' weapons and emerged from the building to even louder and more ecstatic cheers from the crowd.<sup>22</sup>

Diddams repeated much the same routine at the next two police stations, where he encountered a more hostile reception. At one location, a policeman emerged when the captain approached and blocked the entrance. Diddams asked, "How are you doing?" The policeman just shook his head in reply. Someone in the crowd yelled a warning and one of Diddams' lieutenants moved his platoon closer to the captain. Diddams

remembered later that, expecting violence, the crowd "went wild." But the policeman backed down, and with hand gestures, invited the Marines inside to inventory their weapons.<sup>23</sup>

In the late afternoon, Diddams moved his company to a Catholic school a few blocks west of the center of town, which was to be the company's base for the next few days. Around sunset, the company was treated to an unusual kind of sunset parade. Singing and dancing Haitians carrying live chickens along with placards to welcome the

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*The last significant event of the day was the dissemination of a report, based on human intelligence collected by a counterintelligence team, that a clash with the Haitian army was "inevitable."*

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Marines and proclaim their support for Aristide filled the bleachers at the nearby soccer field. At one point in the celebration, they simultaneously raised the American flag and sacrificed the chickens. The Marines were puzzled by the ceremony until their translator explained it was to symbolize the rebirth of their country.<sup>24</sup> The last significant event of the day was the dissemination of a report, based on human intelligence collected by a counterintelligence team, that a clash with the Haitian army was "inevitable."<sup>25</sup> \*

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\* The following is an excerpt from 2d Battalion, 2d Marines' Intelligence Log: 22 Sept. 1994: There was an increase in pro-Aristide and pro-U.S. demonstration. There was also an equal increase in police brutality to civilians. ... Two Haitians were received by the BAS [Battalion Aid Station] claiming to have been beaten by local police. One man had injuries that indicated he was bludgeoned and the other had a bullet wound entering and exiting his right thigh. ... Occasional reports were received from civilians that the police were telling the crowds that the U.S. troops were in Haiti to dominate the country. Civilians paid no attention to the police claims. By this time it had also become clear that Marine positions were being actively surveilled. Marine STA [Surveillance and Target Acquisition] teams in the port facility observed individuals in buildings adjacent to the Marine position studying U.S. activity with binoculars. On the evening of the 21st [the previous day] a vehicle approached Golf Company's perimeter, turned off its lights and stopped. The two passengers got out and stood in place, watching the Marines within the perimeter. At 1415 a Marine from Golf Company approached an individual videotaping the Marine activities. Upon approach the Haitian fled. Civilians in the area claimed he was a member of the Cap-Haïtien police (he was not in uniform). Civilians claimed to be no longer afraid of the local military and police due to the Marine presence. At 1945, a Division Reconnaissance team ... reported three shots fired from a semiautomatic weapon.

The next day was relatively uneventful. The port and airport were quiet, the biggest threats to the Marines at those locations being heat and boredom. Company E continued to patrol the town and encountered visibly hostile reactions from their Haitian counterparts. They heard from Haitian civilians that a number of *attachés*, the semi-official Haitian paramilitary auxiliaries, were in nearby buildings discussing what action they could take against the Marines, who later broke up a small rock-throwing incident between *attachés* and civilians.<sup>26</sup> The battalion intelligence officer collected additional reports of police misconduct, along with rumors that some Haitians planned to recruit and train a "patriotic resistance" group. Overall, relations between the Marines and the local authorities remained tense.<sup>27</sup>

On the morning of the 24th, the men of 2d Battalion, 2d Marines' 81mm mortar platoon were ordered to conduct an unusual mission: take their humvee to the flight line at the airport to meet a U.S. Army helicopter and pick up Lieutenant Colonel Josephat and two other senior Haitian officers. Josephat had returned from Port-au-Prince with his superiors and they wanted to talk to Colonel Jones. Even the Marines driving the humvee, who knew nothing about previous exchanges between Jones and Josephat, could tell the Haitian officers were uncomfortable during the drive from the airport to the command post.<sup>28</sup>

One of the senior officers was Brigadier General Henri Maynard, the inspector general of the Haitian army. The other was Colonel Martial Romulus, its operations officer. Romulus spoke English reasonably well and delivered the message, which had apparently been coordinated with his commander in chief, Brigadier General Raoul Cedras: the Haitian army acknowledged the friction between its forces and Marines in Cap-Haïtien, but now wanted to "reestablish" cooperation and conduct joint operations. Jones stopped the conversation and told them the Marines did not intend to conduct joint operations with the Haitian army. He repeated the same message he had delivered to Josephat and his subordinates: he would not tolerate any further acts of violence against the citizens of Cap-Haïtien by Haitian authorities. If Haitian officers could not control their own troops, Jones would. At one point, Colonel Romulus intimated the Haitian army was responsible for the security of Jones' Marines. Jones replied, "No," it was the other way around. The meeting did not last long and the Marines from the mortar platoon soon drove the visitors

from Port-au-Prince back to the airport. When he left Colonel Jones, Josephat looked even more uncomfortable than when he had arrived.<sup>29</sup>

Josephat returned by himself later that day to talk to Jones again and told him he would try his best to control his troops. Jones was left with the impression his Haitian counterpart was really saying he was losing control of his troops and the situation.<sup>30</sup>

Meanwhile, Company E was running platoon-sized patrols from its base at the Catholic school. The routes included the prison and other army and police installations. The 70 or so Haitians at the prison and the main army barracks were caught off guard by Marine patrols early in the day, which seemed to upset them. Later patrols found the prison and the barracks virtually deserted.<sup>31</sup> There was a certain irony in deserting the prison because of the proximity of Marines. With exceptionally thick plaster walls, it had been built during the 1920s as the Marine Barracks in Cap-Haïtien, and though it was now a virtual ruin, the building still bore signs of its former occupants. Late in the afternoon, Company E's Marines heard gunshots and received a report that a Haitian army major had fired five rounds over the heads of a crowd.<sup>32</sup>

Captain Diddams decided to establish a presence at two potential trouble spots during the night—the two police stations, designated Objectives 1 and 2, where he had faced a hostile reception from Haitian policemen on 22 September. He wanted a squad-size presence at each position by 1700 with a lieutenant or staff sergeant on the scene. He planned to rotate the squads every four hours. The initial result was a standoff at Objective 1, the block-long central police headquarters.<sup>33</sup>

On one side of the narrow street outside the headquarters, Haitian policemen played cards on the sidewalk or went about their business inside the building, where doors and windows were open. "On the other side of the street, their backs against a building wall, 14 Marines stood in full battle dress," weapons locked and loaded. They stood in the open, without any cover, where the two sides could face each other without involving any of the bystanders off to the sides. Several hundred Haitians stood at either end of the block, hurling insults at the Haitian policemen and cheering the Marines from behind cordons, which held them back.<sup>34</sup> The officer in charge was First Lieutenant Virgil A. Palumbo, a 24-year-old Naval Academy graduate who had completed the

demanding Infantry Officer Course at the Basic School and was Company E's most experienced platoon commander.

Diddams had a premonition about Objective 1, and around 1830 went to see for himself what was happening there. His translator told him the crowd of some 250 civilians was urging the Marines to shoot the police and conveying the rumor there were *attachés* in the neighborhood that were planning to attack the Marines. Diddams noticed the squad automatic weapon gunners were lying down next to their weapons, which were at Condition 3 (with the ammunition belts out of the guns). The Marines armed with M16 rifles were at Condition 1, with a round in the chamber and the weapon on safe. In accordance with the dictates of good tactical sense, the squad leader had already assigned fields of fire. Diddams decided the lieutenant, whose mission

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*The lieutenant reacted immediately by firing two rounds from his M16, one into the chest of each of the Haitians. As if on cue, the lieutenant's Marines followed suit and opened fire on the Haitians in front of them, who were scrambling—perhaps for cover, perhaps for their weapons.*

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was to control the police and the crowd, had the situation well in hand and went on to the battalion command post.<sup>35</sup>

Around 1900, there was a flurry of phone conversations in the station, followed by a heated argument among several of the Haitian policemen standing in or near the doorway directly across the street from the lieutenant, who was not more than 30 feet away. One of the Haitian policemen then reached for his pistol while another raised his Uzi sub-machine gun. Unfortunately for them, they were both looking directly at Lieutenant Palumbo while they were raising their weapons.

The lieutenant reacted immediately by firing two rounds from his M16, one into the chest of each of the Haitians. As if on cue, the lieutenant's Marines followed suit and opened fire on the Haitians in front of them, who were scrambling—perhaps for cover, perhaps for their weapons. Some Haitians may have fired at the Marines. In any case, the small space was filled with flying lead that killed eight Haitian policemen outright and wounded three others, two of whom died of





Photo courtesy of Capt Charles G. Grow

*Marines examine the bullet holes around the entrance to the police station where the shooting occurred between Company E, 2d Battalion, 2d Marines, and Haitian police.*

their wounds before they could be evacuated. One American, a Navy boiler technician named Jose Joseph who was there to translate for the lieutenant, was wounded in the leg. Although it seemed like an eternity to the Marines, the fire-fight probably lasted less than a minute, and perhaps even less than 30 seconds. When it was over, the Marines were in a state of stunned amazement. "It was," said Lance Corporal Jerry Acton, "like [the shootout at] the OK Corral."<sup>36</sup>

Along with a motorized reaction force that sealed off the area, Captain Diddams and the battalion commander, Lieutenant Colonel Hartley, hurried to the scene. Colonel Jones quickly decided his best course of action was to find Josephat and take him to Objective 1 to control his troops. He drove through the dark, narrow streets to the Haitian commander's house, a modest but attractive home near his headquarters, but could not find him. The colonel then joined Diddams and Hartley at the police station, where he could make out the pockmarked walls and the eight dead Haitians lying in the street.<sup>37</sup>

Virtually everyone in Cap-Haïtien heard the firing. Some Marines even reported seeing tracer

rounds; nothing was very far in the small city. Company E's 60mm mortars immediately started firing illumination rounds, followed by the battalion's 81mm mortars, lighting up the very dark

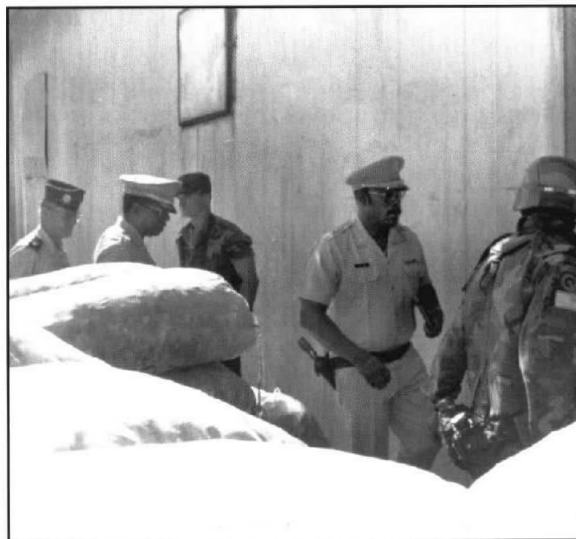


Photo courtesy of Maj John T. Quinn II

*Senior Haitian officers, anxious to reduce the conflicts, arrive at SPMAGTF headquarters on 25 September to discuss and defuse the situation.*

tropical night. There was still little, if any, electricity for lighting in Cap-Haïtien, a lingering result of the embargo. When Palumbo's Marines stopped firing, they looked for cover. In the flickering half-light of the illumination rounds, Lieutenant Palumbo saw what appeared to be an injured Marine. He ran to the form and discovered, to his immense relief, it was a bit of low-lying shrubbery.<sup>38</sup>

Meanwhile, Marines at Objective 2 reacted to the sounds of the gunfight by disarming the Haitian policemen they were watching. The Haitians were quick to surrender. A few minutes later, Company E's Marines at the school reported two or three incoming pistol or rifle shots, and one Marine at that compound fired his pistol at a Haitian who had pointed a shotgun in his direction. He missed and the Haitian disappeared into the night.<sup>39</sup>

Back at the police headquarters, the adrenalin started to ebb and the question became, what next? Should the Marines storm the objective or wait for daylight? There were still a number of Haitians inside the building; would they fire on the Marines? The decision was made to coax them out, and a translator set to work on a loudspeaker broadcasting appeals for surrender into the

night. At first, the wrong Haitians surrendered. Civilians who lived in the close quarters around the police station thought the message was for them and came out into the streets with their hands up.<sup>40</sup>

After about an hour of hard work, six Haitians emerged from Objective 1, one of them severely wounded. The other five were taken prisoner, but released a few hours later on Colonel Jones' orders. The wounded Haitian was medically evacuated to the USS *Wasp* and soon recovered enough from his wounds to tell reporters the Haitians at the police station had no intention of starting a firefight with the Marines, and that most of the Haitians there that night had not even been armed.<sup>41</sup> But when the Marines entered the building the next day they found more than 100 weapons, some loaded and ready to fire.<sup>42</sup> \*

The 25th was the kind of day most Marines detest: niggling inquiries from higher headquar-

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\* John R. Ballard mentions the initial uncertainty about the Haitian response to the incident. U.S. commanders wondered if other members of the Haitian army would seek to avenge the shooting. Ballard also concluded the shooting was justified under the rules of engagement and describes how the incident fit into the overall context of the operation. (Ballard, *Upholding Democracy*, p. 115)



DVIC DD-SD-99-03548

*The day after the incident at the police station was one of conferences with senior American officials. Here Col Thomas S. Jones (back to the camera) confers with LtGen Henry H. Shelton (left), commander of Joint Task Force 180, and the United States Ambassador to Haiti William L. Swing.*



ters and a large group of senior visitors who appeared to have come to second-guess the commander on the spot. The delegation, which flew to Cap-Haïtien from the capital in the morning, had a unique composition: the Haitian leader, General Cedras; the American Ambassador to Haiti, Mr. William Lacy Swing; and General Shelton. They descended on the SPMAGTF command post with their respective entourages wanting to discuss the events at Objective 1. During the talks they discovered the bodies of the Haitian policemen were at the nearby Combat Service Support Detachment 29 storage facility in body bags—the local hospital had refused to accept the bodies. General Cedras wanted to see the corpses. The bags were produced and unzipped for the general and his aides, who conducted a short, impromptu memorial ceremony.<sup>43</sup>

When he returned to the discussion at the group, General Cedras demanded the immediate relief and court martial of Colonel Jones “for atrocities.” General Shelton dismissed that possibility out of hand, and instead gave General Cedras a lecture on the United Nations resolution,

which legitimized the occupation and use of force. General Cedras had to content himself with venting his spleen on the Haitian soldiers present for, among other things, not being able to produce Lieutenant Colonel Josephat, who had simply disappeared and would not reappear for the duration of the operation.<sup>44</sup>

Before he left, General Shelton reassured Colonel Jones, saying the Marines’ actions had shown General Cedras the U.S. forces in Haiti were prepared to back up their words with actions. Perhaps the Haitians had learned their lesson. Nevertheless, Jones had to answer questions for the rest of the day, and to repeat over and over to reporters and callers from Norfolk and Washington that he was 100 percent behind Lieutenant Palumbo. He said he did not know who fired first, but he hoped it had been the lieutenant, who had been in a threatening situation and was paid to make difficult on-the-spot decisions. His life and those of his Marines had been threatened, and he had to act.<sup>45</sup>

Jones’ command post did not have the time to convert itself into an oversized public affairs



Photo courtesy of Maj John T. Quinn II

*While senior officers talked, the Marines continued to seize weapons from the Haitian army and police.*





DVIC DD-SD-99-0375

*Crowds of Haitian civilians follow Marines through the dusty streets of Grand Riviere du Nord. The mission was to secure Haitian army and police armories.*

office. All around were signs the Haitian armed forces were collapsing and the Marines needed to fill the void. Like Josephat, Haitian soldiers were shedding their uniforms and disappearing. The prison in the old Marine barracks was now completely abandoned, prisoners and all. Jubilant crowds started to ransack police stations and army barracks. When the Marines withdrew their cordon around Objective 1 at midday, Haitian civilians dashed in to stare at the bloodstains on the fading yellow walls and to remove everything of value. Next to the bloodstains, someone painted in Creole: "This is just the beginning of things to come."<sup>46</sup> A similar incident occurred at Haitian army headquarters—the crowds rushed in as the soldiers literally went over the hill. This was initially more worrisome because the Marines had not yet secured the armory. Colonel Jones led a detachment of his troops over to the compound to reestablish order, confiscate approximately 25 weapons from the crowd and remove hundreds of other weapons for safekeeping.<sup>47</sup>

Given the collapse of authority in his area of operations, Jones expedited a long-planned series of raids to outlying jurisdictions to secure Haitian army and police armories. The colonel himself led the first helicopter-borne raid, which departed a few hours behind schedule at 1430 on 25

September. When the reinforced platoon from Company F in its CH-53D Sea Stallion helicopters, escorted by Cobra gunships, reached its destination at Lembe some 20 kilometers southwest of Cap-Haïtien, the Marines received an incredible reception from the local citizenry. The Marines made their way through the jubilation to the local garrison, only to find its commander, who had a bad reputation, was nowhere to be found. To make matters worse, the armory was locked. Somewhat angry, Colonel Jones ordered his troops to break down the door. They found the armory nearly empty, with signs the bulk of the weapons had been moved. This ratified the decision to expedite the raids. Now even more displeased, Jones told the unfortunate Haitian corporal who had not fled that he had a choice: find the weapons or come with the Marines. Jones left it to the corporal's imagination as to what "come with the Marines" meant and his eyes widened. Within 15 minutes he produced his commander, who in turn agreed to produce the weapons. He came back 30 minutes later, empty-handed, saying he was afraid the Cobras would fire on him if they saw him load the weapons onto trucks. This was irritating, but it made sense. After being reassured about the Cobras, the Haitian departed again, and this time returned 45 minutes later with



DVIC DD-SD-99-03581

*Col Thomas S. Jones speaks with Haitian security forces during a weapons seizure at Grand Riviere du Nord.*

a large truckload of weapons, which were then loaded onto the helicopters. Jones left a few rifles and pistols for the Haitian authorities and flew back to Cap-Haitien.<sup>48 \*</sup>

There were similar raids on succeeding days. On 26 September, the operation went to the town of Grand Riviere du Nord (where, some SPMAGTF Marines remembered, the legendary Marine Herman H. Hanneken had been the captain of the *Gendarmerie*); on 28 September to Le Borgne and Petit Bord du Borgne; and on 1 October to the town of Ouaniminthe near the border with the Dominican Republic.<sup>49 \*\*</sup> The Marines found the situation at Grand Riviere du Nord to

be like that in Lembe, while Le Borgne and Petit Bord du Borgne were small outposts of five or six soldiers with 10 weapons. The crowds already had overrun the outposts, and by the time the Marines arrived on scene, everyone was subdued, perhaps because they already had used up all their energy. On the other hand, the last raid, at Ouaniminthe, was certainly not the least. The weapons cache there was the largest the Marines found at any location.<sup>50 \*\*\*</sup>

\* JTF 180 considered it important to reduce the number of weapons in general circulation in Haiti and worked aggressively to this end. (See Ballard, *Upholding Democracy*, p. 113, and Maj Forrest L. Marrion, USAFR, "Captured Weapons and the Weapons Buyback Program in Haiti, September 1994-March 1995, USACOM Special Historical Study," Norfolk, VA: Office of the Command Historian, n.d.)

\*\* Hanneken received the Medal of Honor in 1919 for leading a daring raid to find and kill the Haitian bandit leader Charlemagne Peralte.

\*\*\* As combat artist Capt Charles G. Grow recorded: "On 26 September, the SPMAGTF commander, Col Thomas S. Jones, and a platoon from Company F of BLT 2/2 flew to Grand Riviere du Nord to seize weapons at a military police company barracks. The low-level helicopter ride over the countryside was exhilarating. Huge crowds of cheering Haitians deafened the Marine platoon as it made its way from the soccer field to the yellow barracks in the center of town. Thousands of spectators watched and waved banners as the Marines emptied the building of weapons. A Toyota pickup truck was piled high with rifles and ammunition and escorted back to the LZ [landing zone]. The cache included many M1 Garands and '03 Springfields; the latter were likely left over from the 1915-1934 Marine intervention, judging by their age and condition. The day was a grand success." (Capt Charles G. Grow, "Combat Artist Preserves Haiti Service Scenes on Paper," *Fortitudine*, Winter 1994-1995, p. 13)





Sketch by Capt Charles G. Grow

*On 28 September, Marines from Company G, 2d Battalion, 2d Marines, are applauded by local citizens as they move through the streets of Petit Bord du Borgne.*

In the wake of the raids, the Marine task force inserted U.S. Army Special Forces A Teams into the larger towns of Lembe and Grand Riviere du

Nord to begin the lonely and difficult task of serving as outposts and trying to restore a semblance of order.<sup>51</sup> Now the SPMAGTF was free to devote more energy to resurrecting the infrastructure of Cap-Haïtien. The Combat Service Support detachment already had cleared some of the mounds of garbage and sewage from city streets and canals, removed derelict fishing vessels and small merchantmen which were blocking access to the port, and delivered supplies to the local hospital, where treatment and care was very basic. Jones wanted to turn on the lights in town. As he put it, the local population had given the Marines a great reception and he wanted to give them something tangible in return. And so, after a lot of hard work by Marine engineers under the direction of the SPMAGTF Carib's executive officer, Lieutenant Colonel John D. McGuire, the lights came on again in Cap-Haïtien on the evening of 29 September. It was, in the restrained words of Captain John T Quinn, II "a very popular measure."<sup>52</sup>

Even before turning on the lights, Lieutenant Colonel McGuire, the de facto civil-military operations coordinator on scene, had been looking for a charity or nongovernmental organization that could distribute food to the still very hungry population. He faced the same problem that SPMAGTF Marines and sailors had encountered when delivering supplies to the local hospital:



DVIC DD-DS-99-03613

*Marines in Cap-Haïtien stand ready to maintain order during a pro-Aristide demonstration scheduled for 30 September. However, as the picture suggests, the streets were largely empty because many townspeople were more interested in going to the SPMAGTF's food distribution centers.*





Photo courtesy of Capt Charles G. Grow

*The crowds at the food distribution points grew to where the SPMAGTF felt it necessary to position amphibious assault vehicles to maintain order.*

finding someone who was responsible and efficient but not associated with the abuses of the previous regime and not disposed to divert the supplies to their own needs. In the end, the Marines decided to establish and run their own distribution points.<sup>53</sup>

On 30 September and again on 1 October, two distribution points opened for business. The reaction to the giveaway was enthusiastic—so enthusiastic that, on 30 September, a large pro-Aristide demonstration in the heart of town fizzled as would-be demonstrators migrated to the distribution points. The relief operation went well and Haitians who wanted food lined up in an orderly fashion and waited their turn. But, there was one day at one of the distribution points when Marines could not control the crowds despite the use of pepper spray, and had to close early. First Lieutenant Daniel Q. Greenwood, 2d Battalion's 81mm Mortar Platoon commander, remembered that, after the site opened around 0900, the crowd of hundreds grew and extended in single file for four or five city blocks. The Marines of Battery B, 10th Marines, conducted crowd control in the streets around the compound and the 81mm platoon provided perimeter security. The situation deteriorated as the food ran out. Two-thirds of the

crowd received nothing. Several scuffles between Haitians broke out but were easily controlled by the Marines. Interpreters helped to disperse the crowd, and by 1400 the situation had returned to normal.<sup>54</sup> The result was the somewhat incongruous picture of grim and businesslike Marines with fixed bayonets guarding their relief effort from then on.

The next phase was turning the area of operations over to the Army and loading back onto the amphibious ships in accordance with the long-standing plan for the Marines to land, secure the area and depart, the classical equation for Marine operations. The process had begun as early as 25 September when advance elements of the U.S. Army's 2d Brigade, 10th Mountain Division, began to arrive in Cap-Haïtien. When the 2d Battalion, 14th Infantry, arrived on the afternoon of 1 October, loading began in earnest. It was complete by 1600 on 2 October. A few hours later, the special task force sailed for Roosevelt Roads for a thorough equipment wash down, another traditional Marine evolution after a landing on foreign shores and mandated by Department of Agriculture regulations to limit the spread of disease through parasites. After the better part of a week in port, the Marines reloaded their equip-

ment and boarded their ships again to return to Haitian waters, where they served as a floating reserve until 17 October. After a few more days of steaming, the amphibious ready group docked at Morehead City, North Carolina. Most of the Marines returned to Camp Lejeune and SPMAGTF Carib was deactivated.<sup>55</sup>

Reflecting on the operation in the months that followed, Colonel Jones and Major Greenwood, his operations officer, felt a justifiable sense of satisfaction with their accomplishments. First among Jones' reflections was that Marines had not had to land with guns blazing. While no one was able to muster much sympathy for the Haitian army, there would have been many civilian casualties in the small, congested city.

Both officers were satisfied with how the special task force had performed. Greenwood again emphasized his conclusion the operation had showcased the capabilities of a conventional Marine Corps regimental staff and of a SPMAGTF, with their ability to deploy and adapt to a variety of ambiguous situations in short order. This adaptability would be given form three years later when the Commandant of the Marine Corps,

General Charles C. Krulak, described future urban operations as the "three block war," where Marines "can expect to be providing humanitarian assistance in one part of the city, conducting peacekeeping operations in another and be fighting a lethal mid-intensity battle in yet a third part of the city."<sup>56</sup>

Since the SPMAGTF came with its own floating airfield and supply dump, air operations and logistics were almost completely trouble-free. Colonel Jones commented that, if there were any unsung heroes, they were Major Lance R. McBride of the Combat Service Support detachment and Major Mark C. Dobbs, the task force's logistics officer. Jones went on to say the successful landing at Cap-Haïtien had demonstrated the value of rehearsals and aerial reconnaissance, especially reconnaissance from the Kiowa Warrior helicopter. Once ashore, the various attachments—such as the psychological operations detachment, the linguists and the Special Forces, which kept their finger on the pulse of the outlying towns—had also proven their worth.<sup>57</sup>

Colonel Jones emphasized two intangible lessons. One was that "cooperation ... with the for-



Photo courtesy of Capt Charles G. Grow

*Marines from Companies E and F, 2d Battalion, 2d Marines, augmented the vehicle-mounted Marines. With fixed bayonets they stood behind billows of concertina wire. One Marine, forward of the line, and in an almost gentle gesture, tries to guide and restrain the crowd at the food distribution point.*





DVIC DD-SD-99-03600

*Their mission with Operation Uphold Democracy accomplished, members of Company F, 2d Battalion, 2d Marines, board a U.S. Navy air cushioned landing craft for the ride back to the USS Wasp.*

mer perpetrators of abuse and violence never work[s].” His point was that to “win the hearts and minds of the populace—essential in a Haiti-type scenario—U.S. forces cannot support the symbol of past repression.” And that was one of the most satisfying aspects of the operation. It was, Colonel Jones said, profoundly moving to see “literally thousands of men, women and children, tears streaming down their faces, chant and celebrate in sheer jubilation.” While they may not have understood the concept of democracy, they felt the “yoke of oppression” being lifted from their shoulders.<sup>58</sup>

But what impressed Jones the most about the operation was the performance of the small unit leaders, the lieutenants, sergeants and corporals. They had successfully confronted “uncertainty, disorder and ambiguity ... in emotionally charged ... and potentially deadly street[s] when decisions [had to] ... be made instantaneously,” when there was no time to find out what the captain or the colonel wanted to do. Guided by clear rules of engagement, they had acted with common sense, discipline, restraint, and decisiveness.<sup>59</sup>

Looking at Uphold Democracy from his van-

tage point as Commander in Chief, U.S. Atlantic Command, General John J. Sheehan, USMC, came to the same conclusion. The operation had demonstrated the value of detailed yet flexible joint force planning. But more than anything, it had been a platoon commander’s war, its success was tied more to the actions of lieutenants and sergeants than to the plans of generals or admirals. Like the refugee operations that started in 1991 in the Caribbean, it was the selection, education, and training of small unit leaders that determined the outcome of the operation long before any Marines embarked for Haiti.<sup>60</sup>

### *Epilogue*

After the Marines left Haiti, General Shelton’s Joint Task Force 180 continued to consolidate the gains of the occupation. In mid-October 1994, the military dictator, General Cedras, stepped down and left the country forever. His departure paved the way for the triumphant return of President Aristide, who remained as popular as the Haitian military had been unpopular. Five weeks after the initial landing, General Shelton and the XVIII



Airborne Corps redeployed to the United States, leaving Joint Task Force 190 in charge. Its commander, Major General David C. Meade, USA, was also commanding general of the 10th Mountain Division. That division formed the initial core of the remaining occupation forces which operated in Haiti for some five months before ceding control in March 1995 to a smaller multinational force subordinate to the United Nations Mission in Haiti. This multinational force also was American-led and included a U.S. contingent, which served in country until March 1996, when all but a handful of U.S. troops returned home. By then there was a new Haitian national police force on the

streets and the now-defunct Haitian armed forces were fast becoming an unhappy memory.

The after-action analyses written in 1997 and 1998 were guardedly optimistic about the future of Haiti. The United States-United Nations forces had created a "safe and secure" environment for Haiti to recover from years of oppression, nothing more and nothing less.<sup>61</sup> The analysts concluded that Operation Uphold Democracy and its successors had given Haiti "critical breathing space," a chance to recover from the embargo and create a working democracy. What happened next was up to the government of Haiti, not the U.S. military.<sup>62</sup>



# NOTES

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## Chapter 1 Operation GTMO

1. Capt Robert P. Salasko intvw, 11Nov95, hereafter Salasko intvw. Unless otherwise noted all original source material is located in the GTMO/Haiti Collection, Marine Corps Historical Center. There are a number of general sources on Guantanamo Bay and on Marines in the Caribbean. See, for example, Jack Shulimson, Wanda J. Renfrow, David E. Kelly, and Evelyn A. Englander, eds., *Marines in the Spanish-American War 1895-1899, Anthology and Annotated Bibliography* (Washington, D.C.: Marine Corps Historical Center, 1998). For Marines in Haiti, an excellent source is Robert Debs Heinl, Jr. and Nancy Gordon Heinl, *Written in Blood: The Story of the Haitian People, 1492-1971* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1978).
2. Anon., "Marines Prepare for Possible Haiti Evacuation," *Marine Corps Gazette*, Nov 91, p. 7.
3. MB Guantanamo Bay ComdC for 1991 (Marine Corps Historical Center, hereafter MCHC).
4. Ibid., Capt William R. McClintock, SC, USNR and Capt Alexander G. Monroe, USNR, *Operation GTMO, 1 1 October-1991-1 July 1993* (Norfolk, VA: Office of the Command Historian, U.S. Atlantic Command, 1997). Hereafter it is cited as "McClintock and Monroe Study."
5. Ibid, p. 18; BGen George H. Walls, Jr., 13Nov92 intvw (Oral History Collection, MCHC), hereafter Walls intvw.
6. USCinCLant msg 221621ZNov91 (Operation GTMO Collection, Marine Corps Research Center, Quantico, VA, hereafter MCRC).
7. Eric Schmitt, "U.S. Base Is To Assist Haitians," *The New York Times*, 28Nov91, p. A 6.
8. Col Gary A. Blair intvw, 25Feb94, hereafter Blair intvw.
9. MB Guantanamo Bay ComdC for 1991 (MCHC).
10. Col Peter R. Stenner intvw, 20Mar92 (GTMO Collection, Naval Historical Center, hereafter NHC).
11. SgtMaj Douglas E. Berry intvw, 13Apr96, hereafter Berry intvw.
12. BSSG 6 ComdC for 1991 (MCHC).
13. Walls intvw.
14. Ibid.
15. USCinCLant msg 221621ZNov91 (MCRC).
16. Walls intvw.
17. USCinCLant msg 250313ZNov91.
18. CJTF GTMO msg 291200ZNov91.
19. CJTF GTMO msgs 292900ZNov91 and 271650ZNov91; USCinCLant msg 300358Z Nov 91.
20. CJTF GTMO msg 111957ZDec91 (MCRC).
21. MB Guantanamo Bay ComdC for 1991 (MCHC).
22. Ibid.
23. USCinCLant msg 300358ZNov91.
24. Walls intvw.
25. Tab A to Appendix 8 to Annex C to CJTF OpOrd Clean Sweep, 161800ZDec91 (MCRC).
26. CJTF GTMO msg 111957ZDec91.
27. Anon, "Tent City Living Up to Its Name," *Jacksonville Daily News*, 14Dec91, p. 1A.
28. Ibid.; JTF, Operation GTMO, briefing book dtd Jan92.
29. Ibid.
30. JTF J-2, Operation Take Charge, video tape dtd Dec91.
31. Ibid.; Walls intvw; Berry intvw; MB Guantanamo Bay Comd for 1991 (MCHC); CO, MB Guantanamo Bay, Humanitarian Service Medal Input, 24Feb92 (MCRC); CJTF GTMO msg 160401ZDec91 (MCRC). The 16 December message contains an incomplete date/time group when referring to the first day of rioting, which all other sources put as 15 December.
32. Ibid. See also Maj Theodore R. McKeldin III, Notes on Operation GTMO, Dec00. Lt McKeldin watched the original breakout from the camp.
33. CJTF GTMO msg 160401ZDec91 (MCRC). See



- also: MB ComdC for 1991 (MCHC).
34. CJTF GTMO msg 160401ZDec91 (MCRC) refers to another message, CJTF GTMO 152300ZDec91, The Deployment of Additional Forces, which was most likely Gen Walls' formal request for reinforcements.
  35. CJTF GTMO msg 160401ZDec91 (MCRC).
  36. Berry intvw.
  37. Maj William L. Poggi intvw, 25Feb94, hereafter Poggi intvw; Walls intvw.
  38. Blair intvw.
  39. Ibid.
  40. Walls intvw; 2d Bn, 8th Mar ComdC, 1 Jul to 31Dec91 (MCHC); CG II MEF msg 162059ZDec91 (MCRC).
  41. CJTF FragOrd Take Charge, 16Dec91 (MCRC).
  42. Poggi intvw; CJTF GTMO msg 170900ZDec91.
  43. Ibid.
  44. CJTF GTMO msg 171600ZDec91 (MCRC).
  45. CJTF GTMO msg 201900ZDec91 (GTMO Collection, NHC).
  46. Sam Fullwood III, "Fear, Resignation at Guantanamo," *Los Angeles Times*, 3Feb92, p. A 14.
  47. Ibid.
  48. Ibid.
  49. FASTCo., MCSFBnLant ComdC for 1992 (MCHC).
  50. MB Guantanamo Bay ComdC for 1992 (MCHC).
  51. AmEmb PaP msg to SecState, 301832ZApr92; USCG Tampa msg 291850ZApr92 (GTMO Collection, NHC).
  52. Walls intvw.
  53. Ibid.
  54. Capt William R. McClintock, USNR, and Capt Alexander G. Monroe, USNR, "Clio Goes to GTMO," *Pull Together*, Spring/Summer 1993, p. 8.
  55. Al Kamen, "U.S. Phasing Out Tent City for Refugees at Guantanamo Bay," *The Washington Post*, 29May92, p. A 24.
  56. McClintock and Monroe Study, Executive Summary and Working Chronology, pp. 31-32.
  57. Ibid., esp. p. 34.
  58. See BGen Richard I. Neal intvw, 26Mar93 (NHC); hereafter Neil intvw; Col Lawrence R. Zinser intvw, 7May93 (NHC), hereafter Zinser intvw.
  59. McClintock and Monroe Study, p. 203; MB Guantanamo Bay, ComdC for 1991 (MCHC).
  60. Ibid.
  61. McClintock and Monroe Study, p. xii.
  62. Ibid., p. 206.
  63. Ibid., p. 212.
  64. Ibid., p. 217.
  65. Garry Pierre-Pierre, "Haitians Bear H.I.V. Alone, Waiting for Word on Asylum," *The New York Times*, 25May98, p. A 1.
  66. Ibid.; Zinser intvw. McClintock and Monroe Study, p. 219.
  67. Ibid, at Appendix I is a breakdown of costs.
  68. BGen George H. Walls, Jr., 22Mar92 intvw (NHC Oral Interview, Accession Number 937032).
  69. See Neal intvw.
  70. Marine Corps lessons Learned System, Numbers 31737-33346 and 31240-10665, both dated 29Mar92. See also Poggi intvw.
  71. See Poggi intvw, Walls intvw, and Tom Bartlett, "Operation Guantanamo," *Leatherneck*, Apr92, pp. 36.

## Chapter 2

### Operation Sea Signal

1. Maj John L. Shissler III intvw, 10Nov95, hereafter Schissler intvw.
2. Ibid., and MGen Michael J. Williams intvw, 14Dec95, hereafter Williams intvw.
3. MarForLant Fax to II MEF G-5 17May94.
4. Shissler intvw
5. Richard Jerome and Meg Grant, "Cool in the Hot Seat," *People*, 26Aug94, pp. 85-86.
6. LtCol John R. Allen intvw, 24Aug96, hereafter Allen intvw; Shissler intvw.
7. Ibid.
8. MajGen Michael J. Williams diary, entry for 22Jun94, hereafter Williams diary.
9. Allen intvw.
10. Ibid.
11. Ibid. and Shissler intvw.
12. Allen intvw and SJA Memorandum, Investigation into Possible Criminal Charges Against Three Migrants Accused of Throwing Overboard Seven Other Migrants, 28Jun94.
13. 2d MarDiv ComdC, Jul-Dec94 (MCHC). Able Vigil and Able Manner were not JTF 160 operations.
14. Williams diary entry for 5-6Jul94; Michael R. Gordon, "In Shift, U.S. Will No Longer Admit Haitians at Sea," *The New York Times*, 6Jul94, p. A 1.
15. Williams diary entry for 6Jul94; CJTF 160 Det Jamaica msg 061800ZJul94.

16. Allen intvw.
17. Ibid.
18. Ibid.
19. Copy in GTMO/Haiti Collection, MCHC. See also 2d Bn, 6th Mar ComdC, Jul-Dec 94 (MCHC).
20. Allen intvw.
21. LtCol John M. McAdams, Jr., intvw 6Dec96, hereafter McAdams intvw.
22. Col Douglas C. Redlich intvw, 12Apr96, hereafter Redlich intvw; and Captain Franz J. Gayl intvw, 11Dec96, hereafter Gayl intvw.
23. Williams intvw.
24. Steven Greenhouse, "Islands to Let U.S. Process Haitian Refugees," *The New York Times*, 4Jun94, p. A 4.
25. Gayl and Redlich intvws.
26. CJTF 160 msg 200253ZJun94.
27. MarFor 160 ComdC, pp. 9-10. This was an unofficial command chronology since MarFor 160, being an ad hoc group, was not required to submit an official chronology to HQMC.
28. McAdams intvw.
29. Ibid., Redlich intvw, MarFor 160 ComdC, p. 17.
30. MarFor 160 ComdC, pp. 19-20.
31. Williams diary entry for 22Jun94.
32. Ibid.
33. Williams diary entry for 24Jun94.
34. Williams diary entry for 27Jun94.
35. Williams diary entry for 4Jul94.
36. Williams diary entry for 10Jul94.
37. MarFor 160 ComdC, p. 18.
38. Eric Schmitt, "U.S. Shelves Plan to Transfer Haitians to Third Countries," *The New York Times*, 3Aug94, p. A 8.
39. MarFor 160 ComdC, p. 19.
40. Ibid., p. 29 and CJTF Grand Turk msg 151830ZJul94.
41. MarFor 160 ComdC, p. 29.
42. Ibid., p. 31 and Williams diary entries for 13 and 14Jul94.
43. Ibid.
44. Williams diary entry for 18Jul94.
45. CJTF 160 msg 201200ZJul94.
46. MarFor 160 ComdC, p. 34.
47. Ibid., pp. 26-28.
48. Ibid., and Gayl intvw.
49. Gayl and Redlich intvws.
50. Williams diary entry for 30Jul94.
51. MarFor 160 ComdC, p. 42.
52. CJTF Grand Turk msg 252215ZJul94; Williams diary entry for 17Aug94.
53. Williams diary entry for 8/30; see also entry for 8/25.
54. MarFor 160 ComdC, pp. 6-7.
55. Allen intvw; 2d Bn, 4th Mar ComdC 1Jan-30Jun94 (MCHC).
56. Williams diary entries for 28Jun94 and 1Jul94.
57. Williams diary entry for 6Jul94.
58. CJTF 160 Det Jamaica 0618000ZJul94.
59. Bradley Graham, "Tent City With No Exit Lands on a Runway," *The Washington Post*, 21Jul94, hereafter Graham, "Tent City."
60. Ibid.
61. Williams diary entry for 19Jul94.
62. Williams diary entries for 7Jul94, 8Jul94, and 13-14Jul94.
63. Williams diary entries 16Jul94 and 1Aug94.
64. Williams diary entries for 15Jul94, 21Jul94, and 22Jul94; Graham, "Tent City."
65. Ibid.
66. Williams diary entry for 28-29Jul94.
67. Williams diary entry for 30-31Jul94.
68. Williams diary entry for 1Aug94; see also Shissler intvw.
69. Williams diary entry for 13Aug94; Col John M. Himes intvw, 12Apr96, hereafter Himes intvw.
70. Williams diary entry for 14Aug94.
71. Williams diary entry for 18Aug94; Eric Schmitt, "U.S. to Charter Boats and Jets if Hurricane Nears Guantanamo," *The New York Times*, 4Sep94.
72. Ann Devoy, "U.S. to Double Refugee Capacity at Guantanamo," *The Washington Post*, 25Aug94, p. A 1.
73. Robert Suro, "Rafters are Driven by Misperception," *The Washington Post*, 25Aug94, p. A 21.
74. Williams diary entries for 26Aug94 and 3Sep94.
75. Salasko intvw; Maj Michael B. O'Hara intvw 97, hereafter O'Hara intvw; Himes intvw. All of these officers were stationed at the Marine Barracks.
76. Salasko intvw and MB Ground Defense/Security Force, Guantanamo Bay ComdC, 1Jan-31Dec94 (MCHC).
77. Williams intvw.
78. Williams diary entry for 27Aug94.
79. Maj John E. Stone intvw 19Mar97, hereafter Stone intvw; Col John R. Allen memo to author, 5Mar00.
80. Allen intvw.
81. Allen intvw; Stone intvw.
82. Williams diary entries for 29Aug94 and 1Sep94.
83. Allen intvw; Stone intvw; Redlich intvw.

84. See, for example, Williams diary entry for 6Sep94.
85. Stone intvw.
86. Ibid.
87. Williams duart entry for 6Sep94.

### Chapter 3

#### Crisis

1. Shissler intvw; CWO2 David E. Marquis intvw, 21Nov95.
2. Williams diary entry for 7Sep94.
3. Williams diary entry for 6Sep94.
4. Williams diary entry for 9Sep94.
5. Allen intvw; MarFor 160 ComdC, p. 46.
6. Ibid.
7. 2d Bn, 6th Mar S-1 document, Significant Events Timeline, 6Oct94, hereafter Significant Events Timeline.
8. Ibid. See also MarFor 160 ComdC, pp. 46-47.
9. Ibid., pp. 47-48; Gayl intvw.
10. Redlich intvw.
11. Himes intvw.
12. Ibid.
13. Allen intvw.
14. Salasko intvw; Allen intvw.
15. Salasko intvw; Hime intvw; Shissler intvw.
16. MarFor 160 ComdC, p. 48.
17. Ibid.; Salasko intvw.
18. Ibid.; Himes intvw.
19. MarFor ComdC, p. 48.
20. Ibid., p. 49; Gayl intvw; Redlich intvw.
21. Redlich intvw.
22. MarFor 160 ComdC, pp. 49-50.
23. Ibid.; Gayl intvw.
24. Ibid.
25. Ibid.; MarFor 160 ComdC, pp. 50-51.
26. Ibid.
27. Ibid.; Gayl intvw.
28. Williams diary entry for 10Sep94; MarFor 160 ComdC, p. 51.
29. Ibid., p. 52.
30. Stone intvw.
31. Ibid.
32. MarFor 160 ComdC, p. 52.
33. Stone intvw; Significant Events Timeline.
34. MB Guantanamo Bay, COC Log for 11Sep94.
35. Ibid.; MarFor 160 ComdC, p. 52; Significant Events Timeline. The MarFor 160 ComdC contains an apparent typographical error, placing some of these events on 12 September.
36. Salasko intvw.
37. Ibid.
38. Ibid.; Allen intvw.
39. Williams intvw.
40. Himes intvw.
41. Allen intvw.
42. Ibid.; see also Significant Events Timeline.
43. Williams diary entry for 11Sep94.
44. Allen intvw.
45. Ibid.; MarFor 160 ComdC, p. 53.
46. Stone intvw; Allen intvw.
47. Gayl intvw; MarFor 160 ComdC, p. 54. Once again, the date in the latter source is incorrect. The Williams diary and the Significant Events Timeline contain the correct date for the security sweep.
48. Gayl intvw; MarFor 160 ComdC, p. 56.
49. Ibid., p. 57; Gayl intvw.
50. MarFor ComdC, p. 57.
51. Significant Events Timeline; Allen intvw; MarFor 160 ComdC, pp. 57-58.
52. Ibid., p. 58.
53. Ibid., p. 60; Allen intvw.
54. MarFor 160 ComdC, p. 60.
55. Gayl intvw.
56. Allen intvw; Stone intvw.
57. Ibid.; MarFor 160 ComdC, p. 62.
58. Allen intvw; Stone intvw.
59. Allen intvw.
60. Ibid.; Significant Events Timeline.
61. MarFor 160 ComdC, p. 63.
62. Williams diary entry for 11Sep94.
63. Williams diary entry for 26Sep94.
64. Significant Events Timeline in Col John R. Allen papers; Redlich, Allen intvws.
65. Williams diary entry for 15Sep94.
66. Shissler intvw.
67. Williams diary entry for 20Sep94.
68. Williams diary entry for 24-25Sep94.
69. Ibid.; see also Williams diary entry for 28Sep94.
70. LtCol John R. Allen, "Humanity in Humanitarian Operations: How Much Violence is Enough?" *Marine Corps Gazette*, Feb95, pp. 14-21, hereafter Allen, "Humanitarian Operations."
71. Col Jennings B. Beavers II intvw, 12Apr96, hereafter Beavers intvw.
72. Allen, "Humanitarian Operations."
73. Beavers intvw.
74. Allen, "Humanitarian Operations" is the version of the memorandum that appeared in print. A copy of the original version, dated 29Sep94, is in the GTMO/Haiti Collection, MCHC.
75. Allen intvw.
76. Ibid.; LtCol Norman E. Hitchcock, "Update



- on Guantanamo Bay, 1994-1995," *Marine Corps Gazette*, Jun95, pp. 37-38.
77. USACom, Migrant Camp Operations: The Guantanamo Experience, 1996, hereafter USACom Migrant Camp Operations, JTF 160, Operation Sea Signal After Action Report, Coordinating Draft, 1Nov95, hereafter AAR.
  78. Williams diary entry for 8-9Oct99; MarFor 160 ComdC, p. 248.
  79. Beavers intvw; Salasko intvw; Capt Kevin P. McLernon intvw, 11Nov95, hereafter McLernon intvw.
  80. Unit Summary for JTG Bulkeley, AAR, p. 32.
  81. Williams diary entry for 28Sep94.
  82. History of JTF 160, AAR, p. 12; Salasko intvw.
  83. Salasko intvw.
  84. McClernon intvw.
  85. HQMC News Summary 42-94, transmitted as CMC WashDC msg 141530ZOct94.
  86. Ibid.; BGen Raymond P. Ayres, Jr. intvw, 14Nov94 (GTMO Collection, Naval Historical Center, Washington, D.C.)
  87. Ibid.
  88. Ibid.
  89. Ibid. See also: Maj Forrest L. Marrion, USAFR, Development of a Haitian Public Security Force September 1994-March 1995 (Norfolk, VA: Office of the Command Historian, n.d.)
  90. History of JTF 160, AAR, p. 12.
  91. Col John M. Kendall, USA intvw, 11Nov95.
  92. MarFor 160 ComdC, p. 248.
  93. Maj Gilbert Desroches intvw, 2Jan96, hereafter Desroches intvw. See also: Anon., "Officials in Panama Say They'll Accept 10,000 from Haiti," *The New York Times*, 5Jul94, p. A 7; John A. Pitts, Migrant Resettlement Operations, Supplement Number 2 to U.S. SouthCom Command History (Miami: U.S. SouthCom, 1998)
  94. Desroches intvw; Capt John W. Capdepon intvw, 24Feb96, hereafter Capdepon intvw.
  95. Ibid.; and Michael R. Gordon, "Panama Refuses Haitians," *The New York Times*, 8Jul94, p. A 1.
  96. Williams diary entry for 6Sep94; Desroches intvw.
  97. Capdepon and Desroches intvws.
  98. Ibid.
  99. Capdepon intvw.
  100. Maj Gilbert Desroches ltr, 28Jan97, hereafter Desroches ltr, 28Jan97.
  101. Ibid.; Desroches intvw; Col Paul R. Ottinger intvw, 27Jul00.
  102. MCSFCo Rodman Pm msg to MCSFBn Norfolk, VA 101450ZDec94, hereafter MCSFCo msg 101450ZDec94.
  103. Capdepon intvw.
  104. Desroches intvw and Eric Schmitt, "Cuban Refugees Riot in Panama," *The New York Times*, 9Dec94, p. A 1.
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  106. Desroches ltr, 28Jan97; Capdepon intvw; MCSFCo msg 101450ZDec94.
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# Appendix A

## Marine Units

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### **Operation GTMO**

- 2d Force Service Support Group
  - Detachments, Headquarters and Service Battalion
  - Detachments, Battalion Service Support Group 6
  - Detachments, 8th Engineer Support Battalion
- Marine Barracks Ground Defense/Security Force, Guantanamo Bay
- Battery H, 3d Battalion, 10th Marines (Nov-Dec91)
- Detachments, Fleet Anti-Terrorist Security Team Company
- 2d Battalion, 8th Marines (Dec91)
- Detachments, Command Element, II Marine Expeditionary Force

### **Operation Sea Signal (Jamaica and Guantanamo Bay)**

- 2d Force Service Support Group
  - Detachments, Headquarters and Service Battalion
  - Detachments, 2d Landing Support Battalion
  - Detachments, 8th Engineer Support Battalion
  - Detachments, 2d Maintenance Battalion
  - Detachments, 2d Supply Battalion
  - Combat Service Support Detachment 61
- 2d Battalion, 4th Marines/2d Battalion, 6th Marines (Jun-Sep94)\*
- Marine Barracks Ground Defense/Security Force, Guantanamo Bay
- Detachments, 2d Tank Battalion (Reinforcing Marine Barracks Ground Defense/Security Force)
- Command Element, 8th Marines (Sep-Dec95)
- Detachments, Command Element, II Marine Expeditionary Force
- Detachments, 2d Marine Air Wing
- Detachments, 2d Surveillance, Reconnaissance, Intelligence Group
- Detachments, Marine Corps Base, Camp Lejeune
- 1st Battalion, 2d Marines (Sep-Dec94)
- Detachments, 1st Battalion, 10th Marines
- Detachments, 3d Battalion, 10th Marines
- Detachments, 5th Battalion, 10th Marines
- Detachments, 2d Light Armored Reconnaissance Battalion
- Detachments, Headquarters Battalion, 2d Marine Division
- Composite Company, 23d Marines (Nov-Dec94)

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\* The designation for 2d Battalion, 4th Marines, was changed to 2d Battalion, 6th Marines, in July 1994.

Company E, 2d Battalion, 25th Marines (Sep-Oct94)  
Company F, 2d Battalion, 24th Marines (Oct-Nov94)  
3d Battalion, 2d Marines (Jul-Oct95)  
Detachments, 2d Combat Engineer Battalion (Jul-Oct95)  
3d Battalion, 6th Marines (Jan-Feb95)  
1st Battalion, 6th Marines (Sep-Dec95)

**Operations Able Vigil and Able Manner (Seaborne Interdiction of Migrants)**

Detachments, 2d Tank Battalion  
Detachments, 10th Marines  
Detachments, Headquarters Battalion, 2d Marine Division  
Detachments, 2d Light Armored Reconnaissance Battalion  
Detachments, 8th Marines

**Operation Safe Haven (Panama)**

Marine Corps Security Force Company, Panama

**Operations Support Democracy and Uphold Democracy (Haiti)**

24th Marine Expeditionary Unit  
3d Battalion, 6th Marines  
Marine Medium Helicopter Squadron 266  
MEU Service Support Group 24  
Special Purpose Marine Air-Ground Task Force Caribbean  
Detachments, Headquarters, 2d Marines  
2d Battalion, 2d Marines  
Marine Medium Helicopter Squadron 264  
Combat Service Support Detachment 29  
Battery B, 1st Battalion, 10th Marines  
Company B, 2d Light Armored Reconnaissance Battalion



## Appendix B

# Marine Commanders

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### Operation GTMO

Commanding General/Commanding Officer, Joint Task Force GTMO

BGen George H. Walls, Jr. (Nov91-Mar92)

BGen Richard I. Neal (Jun-Aug92)

Col Lawrence R. Zinser (Dec92-Mar93)

Marine Forces/Marine Barracks Ground Defense/Security Force, Guantanamo Bay

Col Gary A. Blair (91-92)

Col John T. Murray (92-94)

2d Battalion, 8th Marines

LtCol James C. Hardee

### Operation Sea Signal

Commanding General/Commanding Officer, Joint Task Force 160

BGen Michael J. Williams (May-Oct94)

BGen Raymond P. Ayres, Jr. (Oct94-Feb95)

Col John C. McKay (Nov95-Apr96)

Marine Forces (MarFor) 160\*

Col Douglas C. Redlich (May-Oct94)

Col Douglas O. Hendricks (Oct94-Mar95)

Col Kevin E. Leffler (Mar-Aug95)

Col Michael R. Lehnert (Aug-Nov95)

Joint Security Group JTF 160

BGen Raymond P. Ayres, Jr. (Sep-Oct94)

Col Jennings B. Beavers II (Oct-Dec94)

2d Battalion, 4th Marines/2d Battalion 6th Marines

LtCol John R. Allen\*\*

1st Battalion, 2d Marines

LtCol Dennis J. Hejlik

3d Battalion, 2d Marines

LtCol Joseph V. Medina

1st Battalion, 6th Marines

LtCol Jack K. Sparks

Marine Barracks Ground Defense/Security Force, Guantanamo Bay

Col John M. Himes

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\* The commanding officer, MarFor 160 was also commander, JTG Bulkeley from August 1994 to November 1995.

\*\* The designation for 2d Battalion, 4th Marines, was changed to 2d Battalion, 6th Marines, in July 1994.

**Operation Safe Haven**

Marine Corps Security Force Company  
Maj Gilbert Desroches

**Operations Support Democracy and Uphold Democracy**

Commanding Officer, 24th Marine Expeditionary Unit  
Col Martin R. Berndt

Commanding Officer, Special Purpose Marine Air-Ground Task Force Caribbean  
Col Thomas S. Jones

2d Battalion, 2d Marines, Special Purpose Marine Air-Ground Task Force Caribbean  
LtCol George S. Hartley

Marine Medium Helicopter Squadron 164, Special Purpose Marine Air-Ground Task Force  
Caribbean  
LtCol Anthony J. Zell

Combat Support Service Detachment 29, Special Purpose Marine Air-Ground Task Force Caribbean  
Maj Lance R. McBride

## Appendix C

# Chronology of Caribbean Operations

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Sep 1991	Haitian Armed Forces overthrow President Aristide.
Oct 1991	Haitian migrants set sail for Florida to escape political and economic oppression.
22-25 Nov 1991	Under command of BGen George H. Walls, Jr., JTF GTMO deploys to Guantanamo Bay to care for rescued migrants.
5-17 Dec 1991	Disturbances in migrant camps at Guantanamo Bay.
Feb 1992	JTF GTMO begins to repatriate migrants to Haiti.
24 May 1992	Administration announces that rescued migrants will be returned to Haiti while JTF GTMO continues to downsize.
Aug 1992-Jun 1993	JTF GTMO runs camp for HIV-positive Haitian migrants.
Jul 1993	U.S./U.N. initiative to restore President Aristide culminates in Governor's Island Accord.
Oct 1993	The USS <i>Harlan County</i> unable to disembark U.S./U.N. peacekeepers at Port-au-Prince.
Oct 1993	Governor's Island Accord considered as a dead letter in wake of the <i>Harlan County</i> incident.
Jan 1994	JTF 180 established under LtGen Henry H. Shelton to plan for invasion of Haiti.
18 May 1994	JTF 160 established under BGen Michael J. Williams to care for new seaborne migrants.
Mid-Jun 1994	Operation Sea Signal begins: Haitian migrants processed on USNS <i>Comfort</i> off Jamaica.
Jun 1994	MarFor 160 begins to construct camp on Grand Turk.
6 Jul 1994	General Williams shifts his flag from Jamaica to Guantanamo.
Jul-Aug 1994	Haitian migrants processed by ArFor 160 at Camp McCalla in Guantanamo.
Aug 1994	MarFor 160 returns from Grand Turk to process Cubans at Camp Bulkeley and other overflow camps in Guantanamo.
9 Sep 1994	First Cuban migrants break out of camps, disorder begins.
10-11 Sep 1994	Disorders continue and escalate.
12-13 Sep 1994	Order restored during Operation Clean Sweep.
Mid-Sep 1994	"Quality of life" and security upgrades begin at Guantanamo.
19 Sep 1994	Main effort of JTF 180 lands at Port-au-Prince, Haiti, in Operation Uphold Democracy.
20 Sep 1994	As part of JTF 180, Special Purpose Marine Air-Ground Task Force Caribbean lands at Cap-Haïtien, Haiti.
Sep-Oct 1994	8,600 Cuban migrants relocated to camps in Panama.
1-2 Oct 1994	SPMAGTF Carib withdraws from Cap-Haïtien, Haiti.
7 Dec 1994	Cuban migrants in Panama begin series of outbreaks.
8-15 Dec 1994	Marine Corps Security Force Company (Panama) plays pivotal role in restoring order.
Feb 1995	Cuban migrants return from Panama to Guantanamo.
Feb-Apr 1995	"Quality of life" phase continues in Cuban camps at Guantanamo.
2 May 1995	Announcement of new parole policy for Cuban migrants.
Aug-Oct 1995	Lotteries for parole into United States in Cuban camps.
Oct 1995	Last Haitian migrants at Guantanamo go to U.S. or return to Haiti.
31 Jan 1996	Last Cuban migrant departs Guantanamo for United States.
Feb-Mar 1996	Repatriation of JTF 160 equipment and personnel.
2 Feb 1996	Formal ceremony to disestablish JTF 160.



Mar 1996	Remaining U.S. troops return home from occupation duty in Haiti.
11 Apr 1996	Last members of JTF 160 cease work at Guantanamo.

## Appendix D

# Glossary of Terms and Abbreviations

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Able Manner	The Coast Guard/Navy operation to interdict and rescue Haitian migrants in the summer of 1994, augmented by shipboard security teams from 2d Marine Division.
Able Vigil	The extension of Able Manner in late summer 1994 when thousands of Cuban migrants set sail for Florida; also augmented by shipboard security teams from 2d Marine Division.
ArFor	Army Forces, here the abbreviation for the Army component of a JTF.
ARG	Amphibious Ready Group, a group of amphibious ships, with Marines embarked.
CinCLant	Commander in Chief, Atlantic, the parent command in Norfolk, Virginia, of Navy and Marine forces deployed to the Caribbean in 1991.
CSSD	Combat Service Support Detachment, the logistics component of a MAGTF.
CP	Command Post.
EPW	Enemy Prisoner of War.
flexicuffs	Lightweight plastic strips for use as temporary handcuffs.
FMFLant	Fleet Marine Forces, Atlantic, 1991 title for the Marine organization subordinate to CinCLant.
FSSG	Force Service Support Group, the designation for the major Marine Corps commands that provide logistical support to operating components.
GDF	Ground Defense Force, the MCSFCo when augmented by the platoon of sailors from Rodman Naval Station, Panama; the term was also part of the official title of Marine Barracks, Guantanamo Bay.
GTI	Grand Turk Island, one of the Turks and Caicos Islands.
GTMO	Operation GTMO, the operation to care for Haitian migrants at Guantanamo Bay from 1991 to 1993. Although an abbreviation, GTMO (pronounced "git'mo") was the official codename of the operation.
Humvee	High mobility medium wheeled vehicle, the official designation of the medium-sized tactical vehicle that replaced the jeep to carry personnel and light cargo. Humvee is the nickname for the official HMMWV abbreviation.
J-2	The intelligence component of a JTF staff.
J-3	The operations component of a JTF staff.
J-4	The logistics component of a JTF staff.
JTF	Joint Task Force, a task force with components from more than one Service.
JTG	Joint Task Group, a subordinate component of a JTF.
LantCom	Atlantic Command, until 1993 the title for the headquarters of the unified command in Norfolk, Virginia, commanded by CinCLant.
LCAC	Landing Craft, Air-Cushioned, the military version of the hovercraft.
LCU	Landing Craft, Utility, conventional landing craft for ship-to-shore movement.
MAGTF	Marine Air-Ground Task Force, a composite Marine unit task-organized for expeditionary operations, includes air, ground and support components.
MarFor	Marine Forces, the abbreviation for the Marine component of the JTFs.
MarForLant	Marine Forces, Atlantic, after 1993 the title used for the Marine component of the forces under Commander in Chief, USACom.
MCHC	Marine Corps Historical Center, Washington, D.C.

MCSFCo	Marine Corps Security Force Company, the formal title for the Marines at Marine Barracks, Panama.
MEF	Marine Expeditionary Force, here II MEF, the umbrella command subordinate to FMFLant and, later, MarForLant; 2d Force Service Support Group, 2d Marine Aircraft Wing, and 2d Marine Division were subordinate to II MEF.
MEU	Marine Expeditionary Unit, a Marine amphibious force package built around a battalion landing team, composite helicopter squadron and support detachment.
NavFor	Navy Forces, abbreviation for the Navy component of a JTF.
NEO	Noncombatant Evacuation Operation, usually a term for rescuing civilians.
ROE	Rules of Engagement, typically regulating the use of deadly force.
S-2	Intelligence component of a battalion or regimental staff.
S-3	Operations component of a battalion or regimental staff.
S-4	Logistics component of a battalion or regimental staff.
Safe Harbor	Interim codename for Operation GTMO.
Safe Haven	Codename for the operation to care for Cuban migrants in Panama in 1994 and 1995.
Safe Passage	Codename for the operation to return Cuban migrants from Panama to Guantanamo Bay in early 1995.
Sea Signal	Operation Sea Signal, the codename for JTF 160's operations to care for Cuban and Haitian migrants from 1994 to 1996.
SouthCom	Southern Command, the unified command based in Panama that covers operations in Latin America.
SPMAGTF	Special Purpose Marine Air-Ground Task Force, a type of MAGTF.
STA	Surveillance and Target Acquisition, Marines performing reconnaissance functions.
Support Democracy	Codename officially in use from Sep 1993 to Sep 1994 for operations to restore the legitimate government of Haiti; focus was on maritime interdiction.
TCI Uphold Democracy	Turks and Caicos Islands, a British dependency north of Cuba.
USACom	Codename officially in use from May 1994 to Mar 1995 for operations to restore the legitimate government of Haiti; covers invasion and occupation of Haiti.
	U.S. Atlantic Command, a designation for CinCLant in use after October 1993, subsequently changed to Joint Forces Command. Headquartered in Norfolk, Virginia, it was the parent command of JTF 160.



## Appendix E

# Citations

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### **JOINT TASK FORCE GTMO**

#### **CITATION:**

The Joint Task Force Guantanamo distinguished itself by exceptionally meritorious service from 22 November 1991 through 2 July 1993. During this period, the soldiers, sailors, airmen, Marines, and coastguardmen of Joint Task Force Guantanamo provided emergency temporary humanitarian assistance to Haitian migrants under extraordinary circumstances that involved international interest. The Joint Task Force off-loaded over 35,000 migrants from Coast Guard and Navy vessels and provided them shelter, security, nourishment, and medical attention. It also coordinated multi-agency operations to identify, process, and transport Haitians to the United States, back to Haiti and to other countries. With empathy and dedication to duty, the Joint Task Force professionally aided large numbers of migrants during a period of extreme tension, simultaneously serving United States immigration interests and furthering United States international policy. These difficult tasks were accomplished in a superior fashion over many months despite political and legal controversy, limited logistical support, overwhelming numbers of migrants, and the extraordinary nature of this non-doctrinal mission. By their exemplary performance of duty, the members of Joint Task Force Guantanamo have brought great credit to themselves and to the Department of Defense.

Given under my hand this 31st day of March 1994

John M. Shalikashvili  
Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff

**JOINT TASK FORCE 160**

**CITATION:**

The Joint Task Force 160, Guantanamo distinguished itself by exceptionally meritorious achievement from 20 May 1994 to 19 May 1995. During this period, the soldiers, sailors, Marines, airmen, and coast-guardsmen of Joint Task Force 160 provided emergency temporary humanitarian assistance to both Cuban and Haitian migrants under extraordinary circumstances that involved international interest. The Joint Task Force interdicted on the high seas, transported and off-loaded over 50,000 Caribbean migrants from Coast Guard and Navy vessels, and provided shelter, security, nourishment, and medical attention. It also coordinated multi-agency operations at various centers throughout the Caribbean to identify, process, and transport Cuban and Haitian migrants to the United States, safe haven locations, and back to Haiti or Cuba. With empathy and dedication to duty, the Joint Task Force professionally aided large numbers of migrants during periods of extreme tension, while simultaneously serving U.S. immigration interests and furthering U.S. immigration interests and U.S. national policy. These difficult and complex tasks were accomplished in a superior fashion over many months despite political and legal controversy, limited logistical support, overwhelming numbers of migrants, and the extraordinary nature of this non-doctrinal mission. By their exemplary performance of duty, the members of Joint Task Force 160 have brought great credit upon themselves and the Department of Defense.

Given under my hand this 23rd day of June 1995.

John M. Shalikashvili  
Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff

**MAJOR GILBERT DESROCHES, USMC****CITATION:**

Major Gilbert Desroches, United States Marine Corps, distinguished himself by exceptionally meritorious achievement while serving as Commander, Marine Security Force Company, Rodman Naval Station, Panama, on 8 December 1994. Major Desroches deployed his company to Empire Range, Panama, as part of a quick reaction force in support of Joint Task Force Safe Haven to help repel an uprising by a large group of detained personnel. Major Desroches and his Marines moved to the vicinity of Contractor's Hill where they were confronted by the advancement of approximately 500 riotous Cubans. Greatly outnumbered, Major Desroches quickly and expertly analyzed the situation and placed his company in a blocking position. Although Cubans in three commandeered vehicles attempted to breach the company's position, he exhibited exceptional leadership, discipline, and courage, enabling the Marines to effectively halt the Cuban advance. Major Desroches, with effective dialogue, calmed the outraged mob and convinced them to return to their camp. His exceptional initiative helped defuse a potentially volatile situation. The distinctive accomplishments of Major Desroches reflect great credit upon himself, the United States Marine Corps, and the Department of Defense.



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