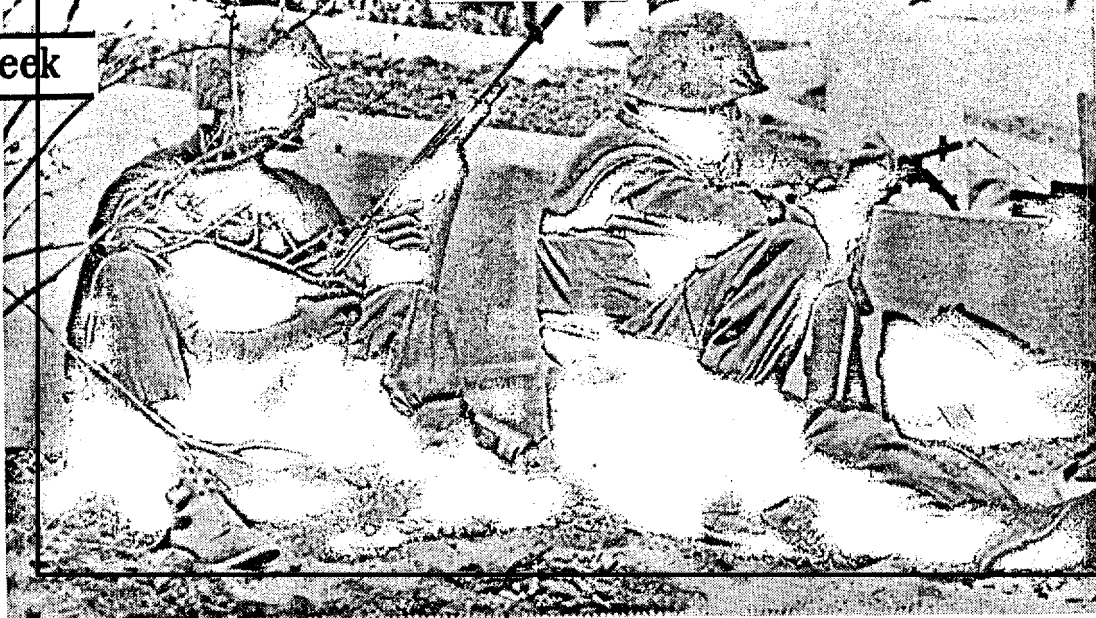


MAY 10 1965

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Newsweek



Associated Press

U.S. Marines in Santo Domingo: The origins are economics, history, human pride, and passion

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## Power—and the Ticking of the Clock

Ten thousand miles separate South Vietnam from Santo Domingo, but the U.S. combat troops who marched into the bullet-scarred Dominican capital last week did so in the performance of precisely the same political mission that sends U.S. Marines at Da Nang out on patrol against the Viet Cong guerrillas. That mission is the exercise, wise and correct, hopefully, of the enormous U.S. power to protect its own security and what it conceives to be that of its friends, allies, and the common interest.

Time has yet to prove the decision to use this power in the Dominican Republic wrong or right. But events themselves march apace with the ticking of the clock. Decisions must be made, or not made—and the refusal, or failure, to make a decision is, inexorably, a decision itself.

In this instance, President Johnson first sent in 556 Marines "in order to protect American lives . . . [and] nationals of other countries." Then, as evidence of Communist control and manipulation of the revolt increased, Mr. Johnson decided to make clear his determination to prevent a Communist take-over. He weighed the inevitable wrath and resentment of other Latin American nations against the embarrassment (or worse) of another Castro in the Caribbean—and clearly decided that the first would be the lesser of two evils.

Throughout the week, Moscow and Peking bitterly denounced the U.S. move into Santo Domingo, but their stricture had a ring more of formality than of threat. The Latin American reaction, when it came, was not the

sharp nor so broad as expected. Had the lesson of Cuba finally got home?

There seemed little question but that the President's decision to intervene in the Dominican Republic—like the earlier decision to fight in Vietnam, of which it is a corollary—will come in for sharp and heated comment from his critics at home. They include influential intellectuals (NEWSWEEK, May 3) who have recently been arguing that the U.S. is trying to be all-powerful everywhere at once, and that it cannot "play policeman to the world." The record of U.S. power exercises since World War II, however, seems to contradict this contention. In Greece, Berlin, Korea, and Lebanon, the U.S. has used its power with wisdom and restraint—in the common interest of its own and its allies' security, and thus far with a reasonable measure of success. In the process, four U.S. Presidents—Truman, Eisenhower, Kennedy, and Johnson—have used their awesome power of decision to underscore the abiding truth of Balzac's phrase, said of marriage, but no less true of politics: "Power is not revealed by striking hard or often, but by striking true."

There is no foreseeable end to the chronic turmoil that besets much of the Caribbean. Economics, history, and human pride and passion will see to that. There is also no foreseeable end to the responsibility the U.S. must bear there. Cuba saw to that.

It was these political realities that prompted the U.S. to move swiftly and

bloody revolt in the Dominican Republic, the proud but chaotic little nation (population 4 million) that occupies the eastern half of the island of Hispaniola. In the four years since assassins freed the Dominican Republic of the tyranny of dictator Rafael Leonidas Trujillo, the government in Santo Domingo has known one free election, eight different governments, and at least half a dozen assorted coups and countercoups.

Last week's revolt got off to a faltering start, but before it was over more than 2,000 Dominicans had been killed or wounded, and U.S. Marines and Army troops had been landed in a Latin American nation for the first time in three decades.

**The Rebels Act:** The revolt began shortly before 3 p.m. on a quiet Saturday, when eighteen soldiers and civilians, led by nominal supporters of exiled President Juan Bosch, stormed Radio Santo Domingo in the heart of the capital. They promised the overthrow of the military-backed triumvirate headed by Donald Reid Cabral, the return from Puerto Rico of Bosch, and urged Dominicans to turn out in the streets and demonstrate. Simultaneously, the rebels seized two government arms depots outside Santo Domingo and began distributing arms and ammunition to their immediate supporters.

The first call to revolt brought little response. Dominicans had been through it all before, or so they thought at the time. A few hours later they hear Radio Santo Domingo announce that the station had been retaken, and the rebels

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der or die." And that seemed to be that. But it wasn't. At dawn the next day, a detachment of rebels stormed the National Palace, overpowered the guards, and ousted Reid. The rebels retook the radio station and announced that the ex-President of the Congress would be Chief of State pending Bosch's return from Puerto Rico. "We want," said Col. Francisco Caamano Deno, a rebel leader and a confidant of many Dominican and Cuban Communists, "to return to the people what was taken from the people." In Puerto Rico, white-haired ex-President Bosch did his best to rise to the occasion. He would return, he said, "within the hour."

By now, the rebels totaled about 1,000 men, mostly soldiers like Caamano. Not all the Dominican military units were willing to join in. But scores of pro-Bosch partisans, finally convinced that the revolt was in earnest, and hundreds of youthful hooligans, known locally as "tigers," joined the rebel forces. Arms were passed freely to all comers. They poured out into the streets of the capital, shooting at random, looting, and occasionally pausing to link arms with bands of citizens and shout, "Viva Bosch!"

**Counterattack:** Almost from the outset, the rebels were opposed by the navy and air force and, more important, by Gen. Elias Wessin y Wessin. The burly, black-browed son of a Lebanese immigrant, Wessin y Wessin had helped overthrow Bosch in the first place (in 1963) because he was convinced that Bosch's well-meaning but lackluster liberalism was setting the country up for a Communist take-over.

The air force began strafing rebel positions intermittently Sunday afternoon. One prime target: the two-lane Duarte Bridge over the Ozama River. Rebel soldiers at the bridge fired back at the planes; some used mirrors to try to blind the attacking pilots by reflecting the bright tropical sun into their eyes. Now, at his military center at the sprawling San Isidro army base 20 miles east of Santo Domingo, General Wessin y Wessin prepared his infantry and armor for the attack on the rebels' ground positions within the city. There, anarchy was in full cry, and slowly the dead began to pile up at the city's morgues and hospitals.

In Washington, the progress of the coup was watched closely from the first day. The State Department's Dominican desk telephoned U.S. Ambassador W. Tapley Bennett, who had arrived in the capital for consultations only two days before. Tap Bennett, an incisive, quietly brilliant Georgian, had been recalled to discuss the Dominican Republic's worsening economic and political situation. Bennett returned to Santo Domingo, arriving scant hours before the U.S. Air

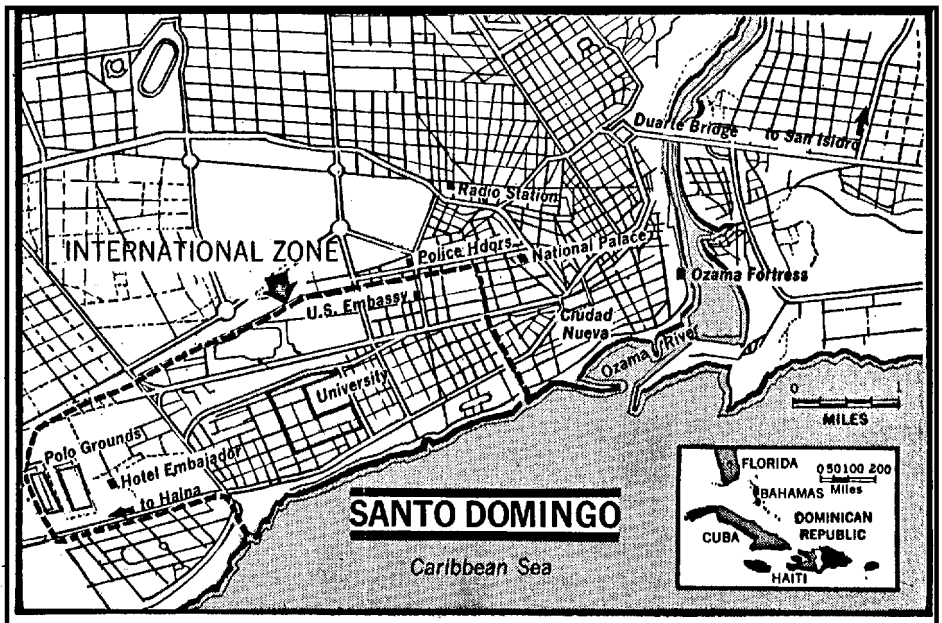
CPYRGHT **CHALK UP ANOTHER SNIPER'**

*Just after 2 o'clock last Friday morning, some 2,500 infantry paratroopers of the 82nd Airborne Division of Fort Bragg, N.C., began disembarking at Gen. Elias Wessin y Wessin's headquarters at San Isidro, 20 miles outside Santo Domingo. At 8 that morning, NEWSWEEK Associate Editor John Barnes approached San Isidro in a single-engine red-and-white Piper Cherokee from San Juan, Puerto Rico. His on-scene report:*

The air-base control tower wouldn't give us permission to land, but the pilot, former U.S. Air Force jet pilot John A.

stomach bulged out over his belt. He wore a crucifix over his sweaty army fatigue shirt and he had a bust of John F. Kennedy on his desk.

There is not a doubt in the general's mind that the revolt was started by Communist army officers. "It used to be that our soldiers shouted 'Viva la patria!'" he said. "Now, those who went with [rebel chief] Col. Francisco Caamano shout 'Viva Fidel!'" But with the help of the American troops who are releasing our own men for fighting, we can end this soon." After the fighting is over, Wessin y Wessin said, "we will make a date for elections." Whatever



Open city: Machine guns on the roofs, snipers in the bougainvillea

Franciscus of St. Louis, put down on the strip anyway, in the middle of eighteen U.S. transport planes. The base was teeming with American troops, hundreds of them guarding the airstrip with anti-tank guns, mortars, and bazookas.

An armed guard of Dominicans immediately took me to Air Force Col. Pedro Bartolomé Benoit, the small, retiring nominal head of the new governing junta. "The fighting isn't going as well as I would wish," he confessed, "but it is improving. The rebels still hold 3 square miles in downtown Santo Domingo." He predicted that the fighting would only end "when the city has been recaptured house by house."

In his command-post office nearby on the base, Gen. Wessin y Wessin bleakly announced as I entered that he had not slept since the revolt began six days before. He is a short, pudgy man whose

the date, he added, "my opinion is that Juan Bosch can never return."

From San Isidro to the center of town, the road was guarded by U.S. and Dominican troops. Along the banks of the muddy Ozama, where rebels fought the government tanks, I counted 60 bodies rotting in the hot sun. The center of the city, securely in rebel hands, is a human fortress of men, women, and children armed with weapons (including tanks) taken from the main Dominican ammunition dump. Windows in the center of town are boarded up, and makeshift barricades block the streets. On the river nearby, overlooking the port, stands the Ozama Fortress, originally a police stronghold; just before I arrived the rebels stormed and captured it. A few police escaped by jumping the ramparts and swimming across the river; those who surrendered were butchered

on the spot. In Santo Domingo, gunfire rattled incessantly.

At San Carlos Church, beyond the U.S. Embassy, six priests are being held as hostages; the rebels have mounted machine guns on the roof. An escaping priest reported that the bodies of three Dominican Air Force men hang in Independence Park, labeled with "traitor" placards. They happened to be on leave when the revolt started, and the rebels strung them up. There are stories of firing-squad executions by rebel bands who shouted the Castro slogan "Al paredon!" (to the wall) and triumphantly bore the head of at least one victim through the streets. Looting appears to have been extremely widespread.

**Friendly Rebels:** The rebels don't deny these and other atrocity stories; they are particularly friendly to American reporters and urge us to "tell them we are not Communists." One rebel insisted: "We are people fighting against Wessin y Wessin, who has killed many of us and deprived us of food and water." Artisans, shopkeepers, well-dressed professional people including lawyers and doctors are fighting alongside soldiers and the mobs in what they—and Bosch—call "the constitutional forces." Always before, city mobs have easily been cowed by police. But the other day, when armed rebels faced the *cascos blancos*—white-helmeted riot police, trained in Los Angeles—several hundred police were reported massacred.

On Friday afternoon, I followed an armed personnel carrier and tank convoy of U.S. Marines as they fanned out from their polo-grounds beachhead beside the Embajador Hotel to carve out an International Zone for refugees [map]. As we moved cautiously into a quiet residential suburb with neat, bright-colored homes surrounded by flower gardens, rebel snipers suddenly opened fire from laurel trees and housetops. The Marines returned the fire. They are eager to finish the job, and probed far into the center of the city. One of them was killed with a bullet through his chest as he stepped around a corner.

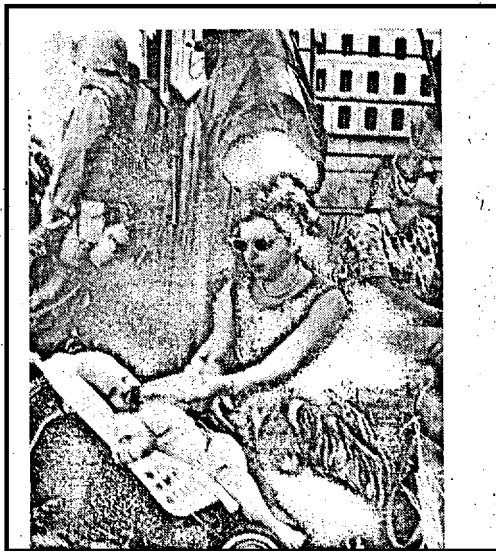
**Cease-Fire:** Later, as I arrived in front of the sprawling white U.S. Embassy, a Marine nonchalantly strolled out from behind a blood-red flowered bougainvillea bush, spat on a finger, and announced: "Chalk up another sniper." Marines have taken up key positions on the roof; rifle fire is continuous around the embassy. Nearby I met the Papal Nuncio, Msgr. Emanuele Clarizio, just after he negotiated the cease-fire which began officially at 5:45 p.m. Friday. A tall, distinguished man in white vestments, he was talking with a rebel cap-



UPI  
Street scene: Marine under fire

tain and a captain from the junta forces in the middle of the street, and was full of hope that the fighting would soon stop.

Several hundred American and foreign refugees with children and crying babies spent Friday night in the lobby of the Embajador, sleeping on floor and benches and being fed U.S. Army K rations by Peace Corps workers. There is no electricity and little water. The shooting echoed through last night, and now (Saturday) the embassy is still under intermittent attack from snipers. Ambassador Bennett says Colonel Caamano's brother Fausto admits rebel forces no longer control many bands of fighters. But the cease-fire is not being honored by either side and it looks at the weekend as if junta chief Benoit will indeed only recapture the center of the city "house by house" and bullet by bullet.



Associated Press  
Refugee zone: Evacuees wait

bassy there came under fire for the first time. At first, in Washington as in Santo Domingo, the reading was that the revolt would be short-lived, and that General Wessin y Wessin's forces would carry the field in a matter of hours.

**Enter the Navy:** He didn't. On Monday, Wessin y Wessin tried to send his tanks across the Duarte Bridge, and was repulsed twice. From offshore, the tiny Dominican Navy supported the general's attacks with shells and flares. At the U.S. Embassy, Bennett and his staff prepared for the evacuation of as many of the 2,000 U.S. citizens in Santo Domingo as wished to leave.

By now Washington's crisis machinery was in full gear. President Johnson had been notified of the revolt almost as soon as it began. In the U.S. Navy's Pentagon war room, the maps and charts on Vietnam were moved to one side, and the maps on the Caribbean and the Dominican Republic rolled to the center of the stage. Throughout the day, the President met with State, CIA, and Pentagon officials. By Monday nightfall, Ambassador Bennett had advised the President he wanted to evacuate Americans, and the aircraft carrier U.S.S. Boxer hove to off the Dominican port of Haina, 8 miles from Santo Domingo.

On Tuesday morning, Tap Bennett issued the evacuation order in Santo Domingo. "We were given twenty minutes' notice," said New York Attorney Charles Carroll. "We could take one suitcase. Everything else had to be left behind. At 5:30 a.m., there were 1,000 Americans in the lobby of the Embajador Hotel. Then a group of Dominican civilians drove up. They shouted, 'Everyone line up against the wall.' Then they began firing machine guns. I hit the dirt along with everyone else." But no one was hurt. The Dominicans were firing at their opponents on the hotel's roof. Ambassador Bennett, meanwhile, had managed to arrange a temporary cease-fire, and by that afternoon some 1,100 Americans had been evacuated by launch and helicopter to the Boxer.

**Across the Bridge:** The fighting raged unabated. Wessin y Wessin's troops finally forced the Duarte Bridge, and fought into the center of the capital. Bosch's deputy fled the National Palace for the Colombian Embassy, but rebel forces fought on, entrenching themselves in Ciudad Nueva, a low-cost public housing project downtown. By nightfall, unofficial reports placed the Dominican dead at more than 400.

Wednesday was the day of decision—in Santo Domingo and in Washington. While the fighting continued, Wessin y Wessin swore in a new military junta headed by Air Force Col. Pedro Bartolomé Benoit. The U.S. Embassy evacuated 200 more Americans, and

surance that U.S. lives and property (total investments of \$110 million, chiefly by Alcoa, the Southern Puerto Rico Sugar Corp., and United Fruit) would be protected. But the new junta could promise nothing. That afternoon, Tap Bennett got on the telephone to Washington to recommend that the Marines be sent in. "Even while the Ambassador was talking," an Embassy aide recalled later, "small-arms fire came in, shattering the windows, and the Ambassador was yelling, 'Duck, or you'll get your heads cut off by the glass!'"

President Johnson had already decided to follow his ambassador's recommendation. Though the fog of war prevented any definitive attempts at classifying all the rebels who fought on—the pro-Bosch officers by now had sought asylum—both Defense Secretary McNamara and the CIA's new boss, Adm. William F. Raborn Jr., believed there was clear danger that the Communists were ascendant. Some OAS ambassadors heard reports from their embassies in Santo Domingo that Castro-style uniforms were being worn by rebel leaders. At 8:45 p.m. Wednesday, President Johnson went on national television to announce his decision to send the Boxer's contingent of 556 Marines in to protect the lives of U.S. and other foreign nationals.

**Rape and Pillage:** Throughout the next day LBJ conferred constantly. An emergency session of the Organization of American States met at the Pan American Union and ultimately sent in a five-nation peace mission. From Santo Domingo, snippets of intelligence trickled to Washington; leaders of three Communist factions were identified among the leaders of the rebel street fighters. The beleaguered city was now without water or electricity. There were reports of rape, pillage, and mass executions. The dead lay in the streets.

That afternoon, a State Department briefing for reporters was postponed, put off repeatedly into the night, then canceled at 3:15 a.m. Soon after 2 a.m. Friday, the White House announced that 2,500 combat troops of the U.S. 82nd Airborne division had been landed in the Dominican Republic. Friday night, Mr. Johnson went on television again. "There are signs," the President said, "that people trained outside the Dominican Republic are seeking to gain control. Thus the legitimate aspirations of the Dominican people ... are threatened ... Loss of time may mean that it is too late ..."

But in Santo Domingo, the rebels fought on. At a conference held between Wessin y Wessin's troops and the rebels, Papal Nuncio Msgr. Emanuele Clarizio and Ambassador Bennett finally obtained agreement on a cease-fire. But the agreement was broken, apparently by both sides. U.S. casualties stood at four or five killed and nearly two score wounded as the week ended.



Juan Bosch (right) in San Juan

But the President was determined to bring peace to the Caribbean at any cost. As estimates of rebel fighting strength rose to 15,000, U.S. units moved out on the attack; the Pentagon sent in 6,000 more U.S. troops and set up an occupation-like U.S. Dominican Command. That put total military strength in the taut little island at some 10,000, or almost one-third of the number of Americans already committed to Vietnam.

