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The Director of Central Intelligence

Washington, D. C. 20505

INTERAGENCY INTELLIGENCE ASSESSMENT
30 October 1983

PRELIMINARY ASSESSMENT OF CUBAN AND SOVIET INVOLVEMENT IN GRENADA

I. Key Judgments and Exploitation Considerations

We must emphasize that this paper is preliminary because thorough exploitations of documents, interrogation of prisoners and defectors, a technical examination of the Point Salines airfield and its facilities, and a careful inventory of weapons must be finished before we can reach final conclusions. Available intelligence and documents exploited to date establish that:

- The Soviet Union, Cuba, and North Korea had embarked on major military assistance programs to Grenada.
- The Soviet Union and North Korea signed agreements with Grenada committing themselves to the delivery of some \$37.8 million worth of military equipment including artillery and small arms, anti-aircraft armament, and armored personnel carriers.
- This also involved the dispatch of some 40 Cuban military advisors, a commitment to send smaller numbers of Soviet military advisors (and perhaps some North Koreans) and the military and security training of Grenadian personnel in the USSR. [redacted]

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The military equipment and the advisory presence appear intended to bolster Grenadian defenses. In view of Bishop's expressed concerns about a possible invasion, it is reasonable to believe that the captured arms stocks inventoried to date were intended to ensure internal security and to defend Grenada against attack -- particularly in view of apparent plans to expand the size of the Grenadian armed forces. [redacted]

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We are aware of statements by US personnel in Grenada that the quantities and types of weapons in Grenada are beyond what would have been considered necessary for Grenada's defense. Some of the arms may have been intended for use as a stockpile from which arms could be transshipped to revolutionary governments elsewhere in the eastern Caribbean. Similarly, some arms could have been prepositioned for contingency use by Cuban forces, but specific confirmation of either of these potential uses is lacking in the documents exploited to date. [redacted]

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The use of identifiable Soviet arms to support guerrilla movements would be uncharacteristic. For example, insurgents in El Salvador are not supplied with Soviet-made weaponry. Moreover, we doubt that the weapons found in Grenada were stockpiled for use in an invasion of neighboring island states because Cuba and Grenada would be deterred by anticipated US responses.

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If it turns out, however, that the quantities of weapons are considerably in excess of those enumerated in the bilateral military assistance agreements with the USSR and North Korea, then we must consider that some of the arms stocks in Grenada were intended for use elsewhere in the region.

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The CIA, DIA, and NSA now estimate that the Cuban presence in Grenada probably never exceeded 800 and that fewer than this number will be returned to Cuba. State/INR believes that the total Cuban presence may well be higher -- in the range of 800 to 1,000. As of 30 October, US forces in Grenada had reported 659 Cubans had been captured, and about 60 had died in combat.

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Statements that one thousand or more Cubans were in Grenada and that three to five hundred Cubans have fled into the hills to continue the fight are not supported by the available evidence. A report that the Cubans intended to transfer as many as 6,800 Cuban personnel to Grenada in an effort to take control of the island was a misinterpretation of a captured document that referred to efforts to expand the Grenadian army and militia to a force of 6,800.

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Recent events in Grenada suggest several conclusions regarding our assessment of the situation in Central America, and especially in Nicaragua:

- There may well have been more arms deliveries to Nicaragua than we have observed: Estimates of arms delivered usually tend to be conservative because they are based on only a limited ability to monitor such shipments.
- Similarly, the Grenadian experience underscores the importance of viewing most estimates regarding the number of Cuban military and civilian personnel overseas as rough approximations due to the dearth of hard intelligence and Cuba's ability to reduce or augment such force levels substantially in only a short period of time.
- Many of the estimated 5,000 to 6,000 Cuban civilian personnel in Nicaragua -- and especially the 2,000 construction workers -- should be counted as potentially well-trained and disciplined combatants.

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- Despite their domestic economic problems, the Soviets, Cubans, and other Soviet allies are prepared to make a substantial financial commitment to provide military equipment and training to defend their investments in client states such as Grenada and Nicaragua. In the wake of recent developments in Grenada, the commitment of additional military personnel, weapons, and equipment to Nicaragua and Cuba would not be unexpected, but the introduction of high performance jet aircraft to Nicaragua is considered unlikely.

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II. Captured Documents

The recent acquisition of documents captured in Grenada reveals the existence of secret military agreements between the Grenadian Government and the Soviet Union, North Korea, and Cuba. These treaties make clear that about one and a half years after the takeover by Maurice Bishop's New Jewel Movement, the Soviet Union and its allies demonstrated their commitment to solidifying a Marxist-Leninist regime in Grenada by playing a major -- although largely clandestine -- role in equipping and training the Grenadian armed forces. The weapons promised by the Soviet-aligned countries presumably were primarily destined for the Grenadian army and militia.

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Three separate military agreements between Grenada and the Soviet Union detail Soviet commitments to provide gratis nearly \$25.8 million in military equipment between 1980 and 1985. During a visit by Maurice Bishop to North Korea in April 1983, he signed a military assistance agreement calling for Pyongyang to provide Grenada \$12 million in weapons and ammunition in 1983 and in 1984. An undated agreement between Cuba and Grenada concerning military training obligated the Castro government to provide 27 "permanent specialists" and 12 to 13 specialists for short periods through the end of 1984.

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The USSR began its military relationship with Grenada in October 1980 when Soviet officials met with Grenadian Army Commander Hudson Austin in Havana to sign an agreement calling for \$5.85 million in military deliveries to Grenada. The treaty, labeled Top Secret, specified that the Soviets hoped to "strengthen the independence of Grenada" and that deliveries would be made by sea to Cuba, with the onward transfer of equipment to be arranged by Grenada and the Castro government. The promised equipment consisted of artillery and small arms, anti-aircraft armament, ammunition, communications gear, and vehicles. It included specific items such as 1,500 7.62 millimeter carbines, 1,000 7.62 millimeter sub-machine guns, and 18 ZU-23 anti-aircraft mounts. The agreement called for Grenadian military personnel to be trained in the use of the new equipment in the USSR at Soviet expense.

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In February 1981 a protocol to the original Soviet-Grenadian military agreement was signed in Havana obligating the USSR to provide equipment worth some \$6.65 million. Among the most noteworthy items were eight BTR-60 armored personnel carriers and two BRDM-2 armored reconnaissance and patrol vehicles. By July 1982, the date of the third Soviet/Grenadian military agreement, Moscow promised additional military deliveries worth \$13.4 million over the period 1982 to 1985. Major items included 50 additional armored personnel carriers, anti-tank guns, and anti-tank grenade launchers. [REDACTED]

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Like the Soviet treaties, the secret North Korean military agreement with Grenada, signed in Pyongyang in April 1983, stressed the need to strengthen the defense of Grenada. Major items to be provided by North Korea in 1983 and 1984 included 1,000 7.62 millimeter automatic rifles, 50 RPG-7 grenade launchers, 6,000 uniforms, and two boats for Grenada's Coast Guard. [REDACTED]

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III. Captured Weapons and Equipment

The reports of weapons captured in Grenada are preliminary, listing types of arms but incomplete on numbers. (See TAB A.) Most of the equipment recovered is for infantry; no field artillery or tanks were cited. Virtually all arms inventoried to date are of Communist manufacture, although two British-manufactured Bren machine guns and some Marlin 30-30 rifles have been noted. The quantities and types are consistent with those listed in the bilateral military agreements. The types of larger weapons captured are consistent with those the Intelligence Community had reported to be in Grenada prior to hostilities. (See TAB B.) There was never a definitive listing for small arms believed to be on the island. [REDACTED]

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IV. Estimates of Cuban Personnel

On 28 October the Cuban Government announced the presence of 784 Cubans in Grenada, providing a detailed enumeration of their functions. [REDACTED] As of 30 October 1983, US forces in Grenada had reported that 659 Cubans had been captured and about 60 more were killed in combat. [REDACTED]

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Intelligence Community analysts estimate that the actual number of Cubans likely to be identified for repatriation to Cuba will probably range around 750 because:

- Some Cubans will elect not to return to Cuba.
- Castro may have ordered others to stay behind to harass the multinational forces on the island or to perform acts of sabotage or other intelligence functions.* [REDACTED]

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*State/INR accepts the premise of this estimate but notes that the number repatriated may well be higher.

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Intelligence Community analysts do not totally exclude the possibility that hundreds more Cubans may still be operating in the hills given the fluidity of the tactical situation. Earlier assertions that the Cuban presence numbered 1,000 or more probably reflect:

- The acceptance at face value of claims by two captured Cubans that there were 1,100 Cubans on the island.
- The tendency of US forces to be surprised by the military effectiveness of the Cuban construction workers, leading to inflated estimates of their numbers.

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The discrepancy in the 26 October Intelligence Community estimate of 400 to 500 Cubans in Grenada and current higher estimates of Cuban personnel (see TAB D) can be attributed to some combination of the following factors:

- Lack of information on the number and scope of technical assistance programs resulting in a slightly lower estimate of the number of Cuban advisors.
- Lack of information on the extent of the military assistance programs. Instead of the 10-12 estimated Cuban military advisors, more than 40 were identified.
- Our assumption that an equal number of construction workers probably were rotated back to Cuba after approximately 200 additional workers were dispatched to Grenada last January.
- The possible arrival of a replacement group of construction personnel aboard the Vietnam Heroico in early October. The sudden crisis could have caused the Cubans to keep the workers that were supposed to be replaced on the island until the situation improved.

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- The less likely, but possible, clandestine infiltration in October of several hundred additional Cuban personnel -- now identified as construction personnel, but possibly regular forces or Ministry of Interior personnel -- aboard either the Cuban merchant/training ship, the Vietnam Heroico; a Cuban chartered Panamanian vessel, the Kranaos; or a Cuban bulk cargo carrier.* [REDACTED]

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We have received at least two reports of troops and materiel being off-loaded at St. Georges, but none have been confirmed. It is highly unlikely that a substantial number of Cuban personnel were airlifted into Grenada undetected during the last month. [REDACTED]

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V. Cuban Intentions**

Since Maurice Bishop and his followers overthrew the regime of Eric Gairy in March 1979, Grenada has served as a focal point for efforts by the Cubans to expand their influence in the eastern Caribbean. Havana had taken the lead in trying to make the island a showcase of Cuban-aided development policy, and it trained in Cuba over 500 members of Grenada's security forces as well as providing substantial amounts of military equipment. [REDACTED]

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Intelligence reports show that military shipments to Grenada via Cuba had increased substantially since mid-1982. A large shipment of military equipment was delivered clandestinely to Grenada in late August 1982 which probably included several BTR-60 armored personnel carriers and some anti-aircraft batteries. [REDACTED]

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Other intelligence reporting has noted that Grenada:

- Served as a intelligence collection center and clearing house for contact with regional leftists.

*The Vietnam Heroico can carry between 240 and 1,500 personnel, depending upon how much cargo it is carrying. We know that the ship loaded sugar, 500 tons of cement, and other cargo in Mariel harbor before departing Cuba for Grenada on 1 October. The cargo manifest and destination were declared on 29 August, and it took one month to complete the loading. We believe that the declared cargo was delivered. We do not know what the Kranaos was carrying or where it came from. It has been in St. Georges since about 12 October. Other ships have been noted in St. Georges, but we do not know their history. [REDACTED]

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**For a chronology of Cuban statements and actions in Grenada from 7 to 30 October 1983 see TAB F. [REDACTED]

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- Was a major propaganda distribution center for Cuba (in part by utilizing a 75-kilowatt radio transmitter that began operations in early 1982).
- Served as a training center for leftists.
- Could be a future refueling point for Cuban military transport flights to Africa when the Point Salines airport opened as scheduled in March 1984.
- Could provide a staging base for the rapid deployment of Cuban troops to other countries in the region such as Suriname and Guyana.

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Castro was personally close to Maurice Bishop and strongly supported his regime. Havana probably was aware of the frictions between Bishop and Coard before Bishop's trip to Eastern Europe, but seems to have expected that such differences could be smoothed over. The event which apparently precipitated Coard's power play was Bishop's rejection of Coard's proposal to assume the senior party post, with Bishop becoming the head of state. The Cubans would have preferred that Bishop remain in full control, but probably would have acquiesced to a power-sharing arrangement if circumstances so dictated. Havana, in fact, may have been planning to send a delegation to St. Georges to help negotiate a suitable compromise after Bishop was placed under house arrest, but the mission probably was aborted by the news of Bishop's execution. On balance, the evidence points strongly against an interpretation that the Cubans helped engineer Bishop's downfall. This was underscored by Havana's public reaction to the news of Bishop's execution and their cautious treatment of the new government in subsequent days.

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Castro almost certainly interpreted the US decision to deploy a naval task force to Grenada as a sign an invasion was seriously being contemplated, if not underway. He apparently responded by dispatching Colonel Tortola Comas to Grenada on Monday, 24 October, to organize the resistance. Shortly thereafter, Cuban military elements on the island were instructed to improve their defenses.

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Castro's instructions that same day to Cuban personnel on the island to resist an invasion probably were motivated by the belief that to do otherwise would deliver the wrong signal to Washington and thereby tempt the United States to intervene militarily in Nicaragua. A decision not to resist would also have unnerved the Sandinista regime which is depending on Havana to help defend it from external attack. In addition, a meek surrender would have badly damaged Castro's credibility as a world revolutionary leader by giving the appearance of knuckling under to US military pressure.

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VI. Soviet Intentions*

The USSR apparently wanted to consolidate a Marxist regime in Grenada as a model and a source of influence over other east Caribbean countries. We have had reports that it was channelling some money through Grenada to leftist groups on nearby islands. Its willingness to provide free weapons to Grenada contrasts sharply with its usual policy of expecting eventual payment from its Third-World recipients, indicating the value Moscow placed on having a foothold in the region. We believe Soviet interest in using the Point Salines airfield for naval reconnaissance was marginal at best. [REDACTED]

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Moscow seems to have preferred a low profile in Grenada. The purpose of this would have been to deflect criticism and avoid alarming nearby countries over Soviet involvement, instead using the regionally more acceptable Cubans for a leading role. The secret military agreements' provision for Soviet weapons to be delivered to Cuba and transshipped from there show a desire to disguise a Soviet role. So does the delay by Moscow in establishing an embassy in Grenada until a year and a half after agreeing to supply it with weapons. [REDACTED]

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We lack any evidence that the USSR was behind the dispute within the Grenadian leadership that led to Bishop's death.

- Nonetheless, the Soviets were aware of the extreme economic difficulties into which Grenada was falling, and they might have feared that their own unwillingness to provide significant economic aid could weaken Grenada's orientation toward the USSR and Cuba.
- Both Moscow and Havana might have been concerned by Bishop's efforts to improve relations with the United States last summer, but we cannot establish a Soviet role in Bishop's demise. [REDACTED]

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The events in Grenada, and the related expulsion of the Cuban Ambassador from Suriname, are likely to affect Soviet thinking about the Caribbean-Central American region in several ways:

- Moscow will intensify its efforts to build up Caribbean Communist and other far left parties by supplying funds and advice. The goal will remain a long-term hope of Communists' benefitting from economic problems, overpopulation, and other strains with continued Soviet advice to consolidate their own parties and build solid bases of public support.
- The USSR will continue and probably increase efforts militarily to harden Cuba against possible US attack.

*For a chronology of Soviet statements and actions in Grenada from 7 September 1979 to 27 October 1983 see TAB G. [REDACTED]

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- Moscow will continue to enhance the ability of the Sandinistas to defend their regime, but it will seek to avoid a major public role by, for instance, not sending identifiable Soviet military personnel or shipping major weapons directly on Soviet ships.

- The Soviets will be more careful about an armed confrontation with the United States in the region as a result of the US's willingness to use force in Grenada. The Soviets still are not likely to authorize Cuban shipments to Nicaragua of high performance jet fighters, and they will reinforce their admonitions to Cuba against undertaking actions that might lead to a Cuban confrontation with the United States.

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