Introduction

Even a cursory review of books and journal articles dealing with the Reagan administration’s decision to employ a full fledged invasion in response to the Grenada crisis of October 1983, yields a bounty of titles riddled with value judgement nomenclature. Themes grounded in terms such as moral, immoral, right, wrong, violation, justification, and rationalization are common. For purposes of staking out political positions or squaring a government action with personal beliefs, these value based constructs are to be expected. However, a scholarly examination of the history of United States foreign relations in the years leading to the end of the Cold War is based upon an understanding of strategic objectives and the degree to which policy decisions were consistent with stated objectives and, ultimately, their effectiveness in advancing these objectives. Therefore, the Grenada invasion, and more specifically the decision to go with the invasion option instead of other available options, should be examined against the broader foreign policy goals of the Reagan administration by evaluating two deceptively simple questions. First, how and why was the invasion option chosen as the U.S. response to the Grenada crisis when the use of full military force against a tiny Caribbean island carried with it the probability of negative perceptions and political repercussions. Second, to what extent was the decision to invade Grenada
consistent with the broader foreign policy goals of the Reagan administration? A high measure of consistency would serve to diffuse criticism of the decision as a reactionary use of force. The Grenada section in Russell Crandall’s book, *Gunboat Democracy: U.S. Interventions In the Dominican Republic, Grenada and Panama* largely supports the decision to invade, but takes that position more on the basis of political assessments that were partially of a default nature, meaning decisions that were made based on minimizing the risk of negative outcomes, as well as the intent to maximize one or more clearly defined positive outcomes. Crandall missed an opportunity from a historiographical perspective by not structuring his assessment based on the foreign relations context in which the crisis presented itself to U.S decision makers. Major decisions with respect to U.S. foreign relations are not triggered by events that are either temporally or physically unconnected to broader American national interactions.

**The Reagan Foreign Policy**

The election of Ronald Reagan in 1980 was, as Jeane Kirkpatrick put it, a “watershed event.”¹ Setting aside domestic political implications and party politics, the significance with respect to foreign policy is key to addressing major foreign relations moments that arose in the subsequent eight years. The Grenada crisis is a prime example.

---

From a methodological point of view, acquiring a historical picture of Reagan foreign policy priorities is aided by the clarity of statements made on the subject by candidate Reagan during the 1980 election contest, by President Reagan after the election and by the principle foreign policy advisors in his administration. Jeane Kirkpatrick and Secretary of State George Shultz were both central figures, not only because of their Cabinet status but also in terms of their relationship with the president.

During the campaign against incumbent President Jimmy Carter, the Reagan organization exacted a heavy price from their opponent by drawing attention to a record of weakness and miscues in the U.S national security arena.² It is both instructive and ironic that the speech in which President Carter enunciated what became known as the Carter Doctrine, a get tough policy in the Persian Gulf, was delivered in the final year of his only term. Moreover, Carter’s tough minded epiphany was inevitably viewed, both domestically and internationally, alongside the embarrassment of the Iranian hostage crisis. Public policy statements of key Reagan officials suggest that, not only did the perceived decline in American strength inure to their electoral benefit, but it also galvanized their determination to steer the country in another direction with respect to its standing in global politics.

Once elected, the conviction that American security had been badly degraded over the preceding fifteen years or so became the basis for Reagan’s determination to reassert western values through American strength, and to pursue foreign and domestic policies that would support this national security objective. Connecting the capacity to use force with the necessity that other states believe in American willingness to use that force was a priority on the first day of the Reagan Presidency:

“Our reluctance for conflict should not be misjudged as a failure of will. When action is required to preserve our national security, we will act. We will maintain sufficient strength to prevail if need be...we must realize that no arsenal or no weapon in the arsenals of the world is so formidable as the will and moral courage of free men and women. It is a weapon our adversaries in today's world do not have. It is a weapon that we as Americans do have.”

Leaving no doubt as to the component parts of the challenge facing America, Secretary of State George Schultz, who succeeded Alexander Haig as Secretary of State not long before the Grenada crisis, said, “the U.S. - Soviet relationship...remains a crucial determinant of the prospects for world peace...and so long as the Soviet system is driven by ideology...to aggrandize its power and undermine the interests of democracies, true friendship and cooperation will remain out of reach.” By this, the final decade of the Cold War, Soviet efforts to “aggrandize its power” meant activities that destabilized third world states and

---

regions. In a December 1981 speech, Reagan’s United Nations Ambassador Kirkpatrick noted that the era of reduced Cold War tensions after about 1968 was more a negative than a positive for U.S. security in that moderated pressure and opposition to Soviet external policies had failed to yield positive outcomes.

Fundamentally, Reagan’s team believed that when the European and broader western perception of the American deterrent capacity was measurably devalued by Soviet nuclear achievements and by Soviet successes in the third world, U.S. national security could only be assured by actually rolling back Soviet gains and discouraging further Soviet backed adventures. This meant, to a great extent, Soviet backed activities in the third world.

The Caribbean and Latin American region has arguably been the area where United States security interests boasted the longest, most durable tradition in terms of being defined by the projection of American military strength. Among the major components of a historical perspective in United States relations in the region were: the Monroe Doctrine, Theodore Roosevelt’s corollary to the Monroe Doctrine, the “loss” of Cuba to Castro’s communist revolution, and numerous overt as well as covert interventions in the Caribbean and Latin American region aimed at stemming the Soviet backed tide. Whether this was part of a broader plan for actually winning the Cold War at this stage of the Reagan Presidency is open to debate, and in any case requires an appreciation for the finer points of the
containment strategies of the years following World War II. The Grenada crisis of October 1983 represents an opportunity to examine what was, from a U.S foreign policy point of view, a moment that was both defining and animating.

For the Reagan administration, harnessing the inherent advantages of the United States free market democratic system and achieving a position of superiority could only happen when these advantages were seen as being inextricably joined with political, national will. The similarity to Reagan’s inaugural message is unmistakable. Establishing this will in the perception of America’s adversaries meant reversing the “weaker is stronger” doctrine that supposed American strength only elicits counter measures and exaggerated reactions from the Soviets.

The Reagan administration immediately, clearly and unapologetically enunciated a foreign policy that was based on ending the Cold War stalemate and that the only way to accomplish this was by equating American security with American strength. Connecting this broad policy to the regional challenges of Latin America and the Caribbean was an immediate priority, partly because of the real-time dynamics of the region that included the struggle unfolding in El Salvador and the destabilizing activities of the Sandinistas of Nicaragua. But it was also a matter of traditional determination to control U.S interests in the region.

---

6 Ibid., 33.
Since Castro’s revolution and the role Cuba played in major events during the Kennedy administration, the further spread of Soviet influence through third world states, especially in the Caribbean and Latin America, had never ceased to be an immediate concern for U.S. policy makers. This concern was acute in the first years of the Reagan presidency.

A March 1982 speech to the Security Council by Ambassador Kirkpatrick not only responded to a Nicaraguan complaint about the prospect of United States military intervention by pointing out that Nicaragua was itself militarily intervening in the affairs of neighboring countries, but specifically delineated instances of arms shipments through a joint Cuban-Nicaraguan network supporting terrorists and leftist insurgents with shipments to or through Honduras, Guatemala, El Salvador, and Costa Rica.\(^7\) Several months before the Grenada crisis, President Reagan had already made clear the connection between Nicaragua, El Salvador, Grenada and United States national security. In a March 1983 speech, months before the murder of Maurice Bishop transformed the Grenada problem into the Grenada crisis, the president characterized the Grenada connection:

“...that tiny little island is building now, or having built for it, on its soil and shores, a naval base, a superior air base, storage bases and facilities for the storage of munitions, barracks, and training grounds for the military. I'm sure all of that is simply to encourage the export of nutmeg. People who make these arguments haven't taken a good

\(^7\) Ibid., 187-89.
look at a map lately or followed the extraordinary buildup of Soviet and Cuban military power in the region or read the Soviets discussions about why the region is important to them and how they intend to use it. It isn't nutmeg that's at stake in the Caribbean and Central America; it is the United States national security.”

With such statements, the Reagan administration made clear a national security concern focused on small-state activities in the third world region that had historically been of crucial interest to the United States.

Maurice Bishop and the New Jewel Movement leadership established their Soviet aligned credentials in the eyes of the world even before the end of the Carter presidency, most notably when Grenadian votes in the United Nations took a stand against condemnation of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. Also, in late 1979 Bishop announced that Cuba would build the airport at Point Salines. A speech by Defense Secretary Weinberger in February 1982 referred to Grenada as a Cuban satellite as he expressed concern over the air and naval facilities being constructed on the island, largely by Bishop’s principal benefactor in Havana.

The broader national security based Reagan foreign policy objectives as well as the specific U.S. concern for Cuban-Soviet adventurism in the Latin American and Caribbean region make up the historical context in which the Granada crisis arose in the fall of 1983. The principle decision making figures were all on record

---

10 Ibid., 200.
with respect to the importance they attached to developments in the tiny island nation of Grenada and the connection to American national security. What the U.S. could have, or would have done about Grenada if the Coard-Bishop fracture had never occurred, apart from economic pressures and sanctions, will never be known.

The Marxist New Jewel Movement under Maurice Bishop and Bernard Coard had displaced the government of Eric Gairy in 1979. While the NJM came into power with a Marxist social and economic agenda, they were often forced to concede policy compromises because the economy remained mired in problems. Bishop was quite popular and was the NJM’s primary communicator. He was also increasingly close to Fidel Castro, who openly admired Bishop. Cuba became the principle supplier of military hardware and training to the NJM government. In addition to the Cuban connection, which soon was expanded and included Cuban military and construction personnel on the island, Grenada signed military assistance agreements with North Korea and the Soviet Union.¹¹ Both the Carter and Reagan administrations received intelligence on these relationships of external support, and documents seized during the invasion confirmed direct military assistance and training. In addition to the construction project to lengthen the runway at Point Salines, the military strength to which the NJM aspired was seen as out of proportion to the size of the country and any conceivable requirements for

peaceful defensive purposes. While Cuban support for the runway project was, at $40 million the largest by far, other financing came from Syria, Iraq, Iran and Libya totaling about $12 million. The perceived strategic threat posed by the military buildup, Soviet/Cuban support and by the 9,000 foot runway at Point Salines was rapidly building.

Foreign Policy Process: Geographic, Strategic, and Security Inputs To Crisis Decision Making - October 1983

President Reagan’s address quoted above mentions the necessity to be aware of the geographic importance of the Caribbean. Amazingly, very little of the scholarship devoted to the Grenada invasion has attributed significant weight to the maritime security aspect of U.S. security assessments at the time of the crisis. The Caribbean region in total constitutes the eastern approach to the Panama Canal. Naval and maritime security specialists refer to choke points, or places where Sea Lines of Communication (SLOC’s) are vulnerable to hostile threat of control, generally by virtue of their geographic location. One of the principle strategic choke points with respect to international maritime security since the early twentieth century has been the Panama Canal. The Caribbean Sea contains the four principal SLOC’s for naval and commercial maritime access to the eastern entrance to the Panama Canal as well as to the Gulf of Mexico which, in terms of

U.S. national security is even more proximate. By nautical chart name, these are: The Windward Passage, The Florida Straits, The Mona Passage and the Yucatan Channel. In the administration’s preliminary report on the Grenada operation, the defense Department notes that positioning of Cuban MIG-23’s on Grenada would have resulted in overlapping combat aircraft range coverage of the entire Caribbean between Cuba and Grenada. Assessment of challenges to U.S security interests resulting from the relationship between the NJM and Soviet backed regimes, principally Cuba, North Korea and Nicaragua, would have been heavily influenced by the potential for degraded U.S. military power in the vital Caribbean region as a strategic choke point. In deed, Defense Secretary Weinberger’s February 1982 speech pointed out that the Cuban led naval and air facility construction projects were producing facilities that were demonstrably disproportionate to reasonable Grenadian defense requirements in terms of its regional relationships. Presumably, Weinberger was suggesting that an offensive threat was being built up.

The NJM leadership fractured in 1983, with Coard casting Bishop as too moderate, and too slow in pushing the Marxist agenda. Recognizing the emerging threat to stated foreign policy goals as well as specific security interests posed by the NJM’s leadership direction in Grenada, the Reagan defense department staged

---

large scale exercises in the caribbean the year before under the code name
Operation Ocean Venture, including a practiced invasion of an island. On October
19th, Bishop and several colleagues were murdered by the Coard faction, a
development that threatened a rapid deterioration in stability and caused the safety
of civilians to be, at best, difficult to assess. The murder of Bishop and others
inflicted an altered reality on the U.S. decision makers. Up until the murder, the
U.S. was principally focused on monitoring the situation with respect to protecting
American lives on the island where several hundred U.S. citizens attended medical
school. Intervention had been discussed more in the context of supporting other
Caribbean island states in effecting a regional solution. The murder of Bishop
demonstrated that the Coard faction was increasingly inclined to use violence to
advance their control and agenda. In doing so, it made the safety of U.S. citizens
the top priority. It also made it impossible for U.S. diplomats to trust the NJM in
any diplomatic process. Moreover, the State Department’s Restricted Interagency
Group (RIG) discussions began to address a concern that, while Bishop’s
popularity might have enabled him to cling to control in spite of deteriorating
domestic and economic conditions, Coard was viewed as being likely to require
immediate and direct propping up by the Cuban government in order to consolidate
power. At this point, direct rather than indirect action by the United States defined the decision making parameters.

The foreign policy process considerations are a window into the way the broader Reagan foreign policy goals merged with the short fuse issue of protecting American lives in Grenada during the crisis to produce the decision in favor of the full invasion option. Key individual figures in the final decision making process included Reagan, Schultz, National Security Advisor Robert McFarlane, Chief of Staff James Baker, Defense Secretary Caspar Weinberger, and Vice President George Bush. McFarlane, having been a recent compromise appointment as NSA, was not in a position to play a central role in the decision process. Weinberger was initially and understandably reluctant to expose the Pentagon to the political fallout that might result from a hastily organized military action. The Crandall study paints Schultz as the key player as his personal access to the President, especially during a golf trip to Augusta, Georgia during the critical time period of the weekend of October 20-22 allowed him significantly more time with the President. But it is also likely that the State Department could play a lead role in the process precisely because it was not the government agency that would have to own the physical results of a military operation. These observations with respect to the role of the State Department point to a need to consider institutional dynamics

---

alongside the role of key individuals. Within State, the RIG was chaired by Assistant Secretary of State Langhorne Motley, and included participants who, always mindful of the Iranian hostage debacle, were early supporters of intervention that would be direct and which would require actually taking control of the island in order to meet mission objectives. Initially, there were three options on the table:

1. Support an operation led by other island states under OECS (Organization for eastern Caribbean Security) and relying on the leadership of Tom Adams of Barbados and Edward Seaga of Jamaica.

2. Execute a special forces based “Entebbe” style extraction of the American civilians with no broader attempt to affect the NJM’s control and future.

3. Quickly mount a full invasion of the Island based on needing to control the island in order to achieve the safety objective, and thereby create the ability to address the larger security threat issues.

Interviewed later, Motley described a four tiered process for determining a course of action where the requirement to protect American lives in a foreign country is at stake: 1. Point out to the host government that it is obligated to protect U.S. citizens. 2. If the host cannot guarantee safety, they are asked to assist in removing civilians from potential harm. 3. If the host is either unwilling or unable to assist, then the U.S. announces its intention to accomplish this removal from danger based on a pledge of non-interference from from the host government. 4. In the event the host does not provide such a pledge, the U.S. employs whatever force
is necessary to accomplish safe evacuation.\textsuperscript{15} Clearly, to the RIG participants, and no doubt to the President and his advisors sitting in the Crisis Pre-Planning Group and Special Situations Group meetings of 20 October, the bloody violence of 19 October altered the realities that might have made steps 1-3 worth pursuing. In fact, it fast-tracked deliberations to the fourth stage in Motley’s construct and thus the Non-Permissive Evacuation Operation (NEO) mindset. This (NEO) option was championed early on by Constantine Menges a member of Reagan’s National Security Council and Special Assistant to the President for Latin America.\textsuperscript{16}

Weinberger’s defense team was initially reluctant to endorse the invasion option based on the early debate over mission purpose and because leaked information about the diversion to the Caribbean of a marine task force, originally bound for the Middle East, had degraded the element of surprise and because the time frame was too compressed to allow for confidence in the planning and preparation of operational details. Adding to this was news of the terrorist bombing of the Marine barracks in Saudi Arabia received on 23 October. It is also ironic that the Defense Department, more specifically the Joint Chiefs of Staff, chaired by General John Vessey, that introduced the procedural effort to maintain legal compliance for the invasion decision. The JCS sought to address compliance with article 3 of the War Powers Resolution of 1974 aimed at bringing “collective judgement” to decisions that introduce U.S. military forces.\textsuperscript{17}

However, a formal request for intervention assistance was received from the OECS and support for U.S. action also came from Prime Ministers Tom Adams of Barbados and Eugenia Charles of Domenica. This regional security support,

\textsuperscript{15} Ibid.: 147.
\textsuperscript{16} Ibid.: 153.
combined with Reagan’s and Schultz’s determination to remain true to their broader foreign policy objectives in deciding on a response to the Grenada situation, resulted in a clarification of the mission and an order to proceed.

The objectives of the mission were officially defined as:

1. Secure the safety of U.S. citizens on the island
2. Restore democratic government to the island
3. Eliminate Cuban (and by proxy, Soviet and North Korean) involvement

The Invasion - Operation Urgent Fury

A critical point to bear in mind in recounting the invasion itself is that the naval commanders who carried out Operation Urgent Fury received their mission instructions only about 40 hours before the operation was to commence. The operating plan called for the island to be split in half, with the Marines responsible for the northern sector and U.S. Army Rangers assigned the task of securing the southern half. The priority for the southern zone was the Point Salines airfield as a necessary means of neutralizing opposition to the rescue of the medical students who were also in the far southern part of the island. Navy SEAL units were dropped off the coast of both Point Salines and Pearls the day prior to the invasion in order to fill gaps in tactical intelligence. Casualties came early in the operation. The Point Salines SEAL team was lost, becoming the first American casualties of
Urgent Fury. Apparently this resulted from severe weather and sea conditions that were either unanticipated or underestimated. The failure to acquire the needed intelligence for the landing of Rangers at Point Salines prompted a one hour delay in the drop time in order to allow at least minimal daylight conditions for visual reconnaissance.\textsuperscript{18}

The operation commenced early on 25 October 1983. The Marine amphibious force encountered very light resistance in the north at both Pearls and Grenville. In contrast, Army Rangers and Special Forces elements leading the assault on Point Salines and St. Georges encountered fairly heavy antiaircraft and automatic weapons fire. Much of the resistance at Point Salines was from Cubans, about 250 of whom were captured by the Rangers. By about 0900 hours of the first morning, the Rangers succeeded in rescuing 138 Americans at the True Blue medical campus which was located next to the air base. It was then that the greatest of several intelligence failures became apparent as the Rangers learned that there were many more students at the Grand Anse campus which was several miles away.\textsuperscript{19} Confirmation of the Cuban component of the stronger than anticipated resistance being encountered prompted General Vessey to approve the dispatch of two additional battalions from the 82nd Airborne.

\textsuperscript{18} Ibid., 34-35.  
\textsuperscript{19} Ibid., 42.
Apart from the rescue of students on the True Blue campus and discovery that a larger group of students resided on a separate campus, there were other developments. About mid day, Major General Norman Schwartzkopf and Vice Admiral Metcalf shifted elements of the underutilized Marines to a landing at Grand Mal Bay to multiply the points of engagement and extricate a pinned down SEAL team at the residence of Governor General Paul Scoon.20

Day two saw the rescue and evacuation of the Grand Anse students, rescue of Governor General Scoon and his family, the arrival of two more battalions of the 82nd Airborne and the capture of the barracks at Calivigny by heliborne Rangers. By the third day of the invasion, operations began to focus on care and feeding of prisoners and rescued civilians as well as Cuban and Soviet non-combatants. Also on 27 October, Assistant Secretary of State Langhorne Motley arrived on the island to coordinate the State Department’s role in establishing a provisional government to assume managerial responsibilities of key political institutions.21 Motley had chaired the important meetings of the State Department’s Restricted Interagency Group during the critical week in which the decision to employ the full invasion option was reached.

By 28 October, official reports characterize the remaining combat operations as being isolated and of a mopping up nature, with substantial command resources

20 Ibid., 47.
21 Ibid., 57.
being devoted to legalities regarding classification of prisoners, especially Cubans, and the thorny questions associated with media access and the public affairs function. The Department of Defense account considers the period 29 October to 2 November to be the end of combat operations, where the major military concern was to plan for neutralization of a feared Cuban led insurgency. Bernard Coard and others involved in the murders on 19 October and who had led the Grenadian and Cuban resistance were captured on 29 October. Their incarceration on board the USS Guam resulted in the final collapse of resistance and cleared the way for the multinational Caribbean Peacekeeping Force (CPF) to provide international, or at least regional, supervision of the Grenadian facilities and institutions.

Outcomes

The answer to those two deceptively simple questions is brought into sharp relief more by framing the decision and the mission objectives in terms of the broader Reagan foreign policy objectives than by the actual military operation. First, and as a practical matter, the safety of the U.S. citizens could not have been assured with a limited, or surgical, special operations mission. There were more than 500 American civilians to be rescued, and the situation on the ground was both ill-defined and volatile as a result of the demonstrated willingness of the Coard faction to use lethal force to advance its aims, and by the shoot to kill curfew order. In addition, the recent past held too many lessons of unlimited down
side associated with a limited response, and the U.S. decision makers saw no reason to increase the potential for a negative outcome by deciding not to use all the resources at their disposal. Moreover, the round-the-clock shoot to kill curfew made civilian safety even more problematic under conditions where the Grenadian and Cuban enemy were not being forced to cope with invasion forces arriving in numerical and tactical strengths that would be certain to stretch them to the breaking point. So the Reagan administration saw the limited option as risky, both in terms of protecting the civilians and in terms of negative outcomes from mission failures. Assuring the safety of the civilians was seen as relying on complete control of the island. They also recognized that broader U.S. foreign policy objectives would be intentionally neglected without the invasion option to eliminate the geographic aspect of the strategic security threat by removing the Cuban presence and to restore a democratic government. It was one of those rare and fortuitous moments where decision makers pretty much had to do that which would yield the greatest strategic national security benefits in order to resolve the immediate crisis as well.

There were numerous miscues in the invasion itself, notably the fact that all the special forces actions either failed or were marginalized by problems, and the fact that about ten percent of the U.S. military aircraft deployed in the operation were lost and many others were damaged. Intelligence failures were costly, but
could have been even more costly. The failure to know that the students were distributed among two separate campus locations resulted in a delay in rescuing those who were located at the Grand Anse campus, and this delay could have afforded the Grenadian and Cuban militia an opportunity to accomplish exactly the hostage situation that conditioned a great deal of the decision making process. Given the previous and persistent attention paid to the Grenada situation by the United States government, these intelligence failures should be seen as surprising. Another negative was the exclusion of the military Public Affairs section from the planning process. This resulted from a security imperative that excluded a number of sections and levels, but the result was that the government was playing public relations catch-up throughout the operation with respect to media relations since there were no provisions to include and accommodate the media during real time operations.

Finally, as the American public generally applauded the Grenada operation, once it was complete, criticism was reduced to those who questioned its legality. The War Powers Resolution of 1973 was another chapter in a long tradition of tug of war between the executive and legislative branches with respect to the true constitutional authority governing the conduct of foreign relations, and exactly what the founding fathers really meant by advice and consent. The War Powers

---

Resolution was passed over Presidential veto, and Ronald Reagan followed his predecessors in disputing its constitutionality. Less than two weeks before he ordered the invasion of Grenada he reminded congress that their power to make laws cannot have the effect of impermissibly infringing presidential authority.\textsuperscript{23} Criticism of the Grenada invasion that was based on the War Powers Resolution centered on article 3 which sought the broad statutory objective of making sure that a judgement in favor of using military force would be a collective judgement, meaning between the President and congress. Michael Rubner concludes that the letter and spirit of that article were both trampled in the case of the Grenada decision. Yet he essentially concedes that the 1973 Act gives a power to Congress to constrain or limit the President that is fundamentally self-limiting, if not completely dead in situations of the sort that presented to U.S. decision makers in October 1983. These are so called “low intensity” conflicts where “…the use of a relatively small force in a geographically confined area where the U.S. can quickly establish superiority in pursuit of limited objectives that can be secured with minimum casualties.”\textsuperscript{24} Moreover, the question of the statute’s constitutionality had the effect of undermining it as a basis for criticism of the decision.

However, overall, the military did achieve all the mission objectives. Nearly 600 American civilians and another 121 other nationals were evacuated. Bernard

\textsuperscript{24} Ibid.: 645.
Coard and members of his NJM government were imprisoned by a judicial proceeding that was Grenadian. U.S. combat forces did not have to remain engaged in an environment where winning the peace would become a more daunting challenge than winning the war. Elections were held the following year, and the island is still governed democratically.

Based on Reagan administration objectives of rolling back Cuban and Soviet gains in the Latin American and Caribbean region, the removal of Cuban and Soviet presence from the island was consistent, and by that measure can be said to have improved U.S. security in the Caribbean and Latin American region even though it was the crisis of October 1983 that made the full military intervention the logical, and indeed acceptable, decision. To the extent that the invasion resulted in an improved security position, a central part of that improved security position was the message being sent to Cuba, to Nicaragua and to others around the world. Destined to be known as “the great communicator,” Reagan’s decision to employ the full invasion option communicated something that was an essential component in his administration’s foreign policy, namely that the United States had clear international objectives, that the United States intended to use advantages that are inherent to free and democratic systems in order to achieve the position of militarily superior strength necessary to achieve those objectives, and most important of all, that the United States possessed the will to use that superior
strength. It is not possible to assess the important foreign policy moments that followed in the remaining years of the Reagan administration, especially the final years of the Cold War, without considering the decision to bring full conventional military power to bear on an island of about 135 square miles as determinative in international and domestic perceptions of American foreign policy.
Bibliography


