



'BIG STICK' DIPLOMACY ON HAITI

AFTER A MILITARY COUP OUSTED HAITI'S FIRST DEMOCRATICALLY ELECTED PRESIDENT IN 1991, U.S. TROOPS WERE POISED TO FORCEFULLY LIBERATE THE ISLAND NATION THREE YEARS LATER. THE THREAT OF U.S. MILITARY ACTION AND LAST-MINUTE DIPLOMACY TURNED THE INVASION INTO A PEACEKEEPING MISSION.

BY JIM SERVI

President Theodore Roosevelt preached "speak softly and carry a big stick; you will go far." President Ronald Reagan said, "Our military strength is a prerequisite to peace, but let it be clear we maintain this strength in the hope it will never be used." In 1994, those words were put to the test on Haiti.

Haitian army Lt. Gen. Raoul Cedras had overthrown Haiti's first democratically elected President, Jean-Bertrand Aristide, on Sept. 29, 1991. Aristide had been elected in December 1990 after winning 67 percent of the presidential vote before Haitian military forces ousted him.

The United Nations established a

10-step plan to restore power to President Aristide on July 3, 1993, only to have the de-facto government ignore the proposal. The UN ratcheted up their efforts authorizing "all necessary means" to return power to Aristide. The United States took the lead, forming a multinational coalition.

Diplomatic efforts are almost always the precursor to conflict, with the hopes that they will prevent the conflict before it starts.

That's exactly what occurred as military operations were being planned concurrently with diplomatic efforts. However, negotiations continued to falter.

"Even though in an ultimate kind of way, one could say that getting President

Aristide back was what we were trying to do," explained then-U.S. Army Maj. Gen. David Meade, commander of Joint Task Force 190 and the Multinational Force Haiti, in an oral history conducted by the XVIII Airborne Corps. "The challenge from the very first moment was the establishment of this safe and secure environment."

U.S. TROOPS READY IF NECESSARY

The purpose of the operation was to shape the environment to return Haiti to democracy, but the avenue to achieve that objective was shifting up until the moment of execution. There were two primary plans on the table. OPLAN 2370 was forcible entry named *Operation Restore Democracy*, and OPLAN 2380 was permissive entry named *Operation Uphold Democracy*.

On Sept. 19, 1994, nearly 23,000 service members from the U.S., Argentina and Poland were ready to restore democracy through force. As nearly 4,000 paratroopers from the 82nd Airborne Division were loading planes at Pope Air Force Base, N.C., ready to jump into Haiti, one last-minute diplomatic effort was being attempted.

Former President Jimmy Carter, then-Sen. Sam Nunn (D-Ga.) and Colin Powell, the former Army general who had recently retired as Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, met with Cedras to convince him to give up power.

As the Haitian army general watched video feed of planes taking off full of U.S. paratroopers, he relented and vowed to give up power. The might of the U.S. military allowed the diplomatic effort to effectively resolve the situation through peaceful means.

Meade said later that despite the successful U.S. diplomatic efforts, his soldiers were ready if necessary.

"As has been widely reported, the troops had actually started to move, including all the airplanes at Fort Bragg, and so on, when word finally came that they were to be flown back," Meade said. "With that, we decided to execute what was essentially, the 2380 plan, our plan, and begin that as we had planned all along, with an air assault to seize the airport."

Brig. Gen. Richard W. Potter Jr., Commander of Army Special Operations Task Force, agreed.

LEFT: A U.S. soldier protects a man suspected of throwing an explosive device into a crowd of supporters of ousted Haitian President Jean-Bertrand Aristide on Sept. 29, 1994, in Port Au-Prince, Haiti. U.S. troops who participated in the six-month long *Operation Uphold Democracy*, which kept the peace after Aristide was reinstalled following a military coup, earned the Armed Forces Expeditionary Medal.

RIGHT: Members of the 75th Ranger Regiment, 160th Special Operations Aviation Regiment, Navy SEALs and other special operations troops sail toward Haiti in September 1994 aboard the *USS America (CV-66)*. Just minutes before launching their assault on the island, the troops were ordered to stand down.

"We had to change our mindset, and that mindset was that, until the 2370 (original) plan was called off, everyone was in camouflage paint, and taped down equipment, and ready to execute the takedown of the island, which I'm sure would have been most successful," he said later.

WARY PEACEKEEPERS

Even though diplomatic efforts seemed to be working, military planners were not going to take any chances. Mogadishu, Somalia, was still fresh on their minds from the year before as they prepared.

"It wasn't a direct threat in that we needed armor to destroy their armor in a classical role," acknowledged Col. Thomas G. Miller, planning officer for Joint Task Force 190. "But we needed the armor as a presence issue. It was a symbol of power, that's number one. Number two is, lessons learned from Somalia, even the most unorganized, lightly armed individuals can trap an American unit."

OPLAN 2370 and 2380 were essentially merged into 2375, as planners decided to come in as peacekeepers but have the ability to quickly transition to combat if necessary. Units on the ground saw it the same way and were ready to prevent another Somalia from happening.

"The only reason why I'm here is political," Capt. John Vallerod, commander of B Co., 3rd Bn., 15th Inf., said at the time. "It's to avert an Oct. 3 incident that happened in Somalia. For example, the situation is a light infantry platoon doing a patrol is pinned down by a hostile Haitian crowd. I had the means of going in there and getting them out ... that option wasn't available on Oct. 3 in Somalia."

The combination of diplomatic efforts and military might worked as contingents of now-peacekeepers arrived in Haiti.

"The reaction of the public at large that first day, I don't know if it was a surprise, I guess it was," said Col. Andrew R. Berdy, 1st Brigade Combat Team com-

mander. "The fact that they greeted us with open arms — we expected, mostly, a happy greeting."

A 'NOT-SO-GENTLE' WARNING

Although there were the inevitable struggles of any intervention, the overwhelming positive sentiment remained in Haiti. As agreed, Cedras relinquished his power with a not-so-gentle reminder to never let it happen again.

"Gen. Shelton directed me to look him [Cedras] in the eye, don't blink and tell him, 'If you ever do this again, there's a personal price for you directly to pay,'" said Col. Michael L. Sullivan, commander of the 16th Military Police Brigade and Joint Task Force Provost Marshall.

Teams were scattered throughout the country to uphold security, and within a few short weeks Aristide returned as leader of the country. Only one U.S. soldier, Sgt. 1st Class Gregory D. Cardott of the 3rd Special Forces Group, was killed by hostile fire during the operation.

"In the Special Forces, every team forms a unique personality," said Capt. Timothy Baxter during Cardott's funeral service at John F. Kennedy Memorial Chapel at Fort Bragg, N.C. "A large part of who we are can be attributed to Greg's influence on us."

With Aristide back in power, government services restored and relative security across Haiti, *Operation Uphold Democracy* successfully ended on March 31, 1995.

It was replaced by a United Nations mission called Operation New Horizons. It was led by a U.S. commander and included 2,400 U.S. soldiers who remained for an additional year to ensure that peace persisted. ★

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DOO PHOTO

U.S. UNITS INVOLVED IN OPERATION UPHOLD DEMOCRACY

More than 20,000 U.S. troops were part of the mission to restore Haitian President Jean-Bertrand Aristide to power on the Caribbean island. Here are some of the major units involved.

10th Mountain Division (JTF 190)
HQ, 1st Brigade Combat Team
1st Bn., 22nd Inf.
2nd Bn., 22nd Inf.
1st Bn., 87th Inf.
HQ, 2nd Brigade Combat Team
2nd Bn., 14th Inf.
B Co., 3rd Bn., 15th Inf.
2nd Bn. 87th Inf.

3rd Squadron, 73rd Armor, 82nd Airborne Div.

TF Raleigh (Black)
2nd Bn., 3rd Special Forces Group

C Co. 5th Bn., 19th Special Forces Group,
Colorado National Guard

A Co., 1st Bn., 20th Special Forces Group,
Alabama National Guard

Joint Special Operations Task Force
2nd Bn., 75th Rangers
160th Special Operations Aviation
SEAL Team 8
Delta Force

7th Transportation Group
10th Aviation Brigade
11th Signal Brigade
16th Military Police Brigade
18th Aviation Brigade
20th Engineer Brigade
44th Medical Brigade
525th Military Intelligence Brigade
Joint Psychological Operations Task Force
1st Corps Support Command