SECOND BATTALION (AIRBORNE), 325TH INFANTRY REGIMENT
IN GRENADA, 25 - 26 OCTOBER 1983
"OPERATION URGENT FURY"

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INFANTRY OFFICER ADVANCE COURSE 4 - 88
At 2100 hours on 24 October, 1983, the 82nd Airborne Division initiated its Notification Hour sequence (N-Hour sequence) for Operation Urgent Fury. Thirteen hours later, the Second Battalion (Airborne), 228th Infantry Regiment (2/305) and its attachments took off in C141B aircraft from Pope Air Force Base enroute to Grenada. In the next twenty-four hours, this task force relieved a Ranger force while in contact, seized the Cuban compound at Calliste, captured the Francisco Supply Depot, engaged in numerous actions around the Point Salines Airfield, and inflicted heavy casualties on the enemy. Effective command and control, good training, and the high quality of the paratroopers and their leaders produced success for Task Force 2/305 during Operation Urgent Fury.

In October of 1983, political upheaval on the Caribbean Island of Grenada endangered the 1,000 United States citizens there and presented a threat to vital U.S. interests in the region. After a request from the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States for assistance, President Reagan ordered the commitment of U.S. forces. The subsequent operation was code-named Operation Urgent Fury and involved all four services. Planned and executed in a matter of hours, the operation accomplished all objectives quickly and efficiently.

Enemy military forces on Grenada consisted of a Cuban Engineer Battalion, a Cuban Military Advisory team, the Grenadian People's Revolutionary Army (PRA) of 2,100, the Grenadian People's Revolutionary Militia (PRM) of 7,000, and advisory detachments from five Eastern bloc countries. [1]

The Soviet Embassy's communications equipment accessed their
entire intelligence gathering apparatus. Thus, while US forces would fight the Cuban and Grenadian ground forces, they had to contend with the sophisticated intelligence systems of the Soviet Union. This necessitated strict Operational Security measures (OPSEC).

The 62nd Airborne Division has the mission to deploy forces to combat anywhere in the world eighteen hours after notification. In order to meet this readiness mission, the Division task organizes its brigades and battalions and maintains them all at various levels of recall status. The three infantry brigades are numbered according to their recall status: Division Ready Brigade One (DRB-1) through DRB-3. The nine infantry battalions are further designated Division Ready Force One (DRF-1) through DRF-9. The Division Assault Command Post (Division Assault CP), the DRB-1 headquarters, and the DRF-1 task force are always on a strict two hour recall status. The habitually associated attachments for each brigade and battalion task force maintain the same recall status as their infantry counterparts.

Battalion level planning began on Saturday, October 22, when Lieutenant Colonel Jack L. Hamilton, the 2-325 battalion commander, was told to report to Division Headquarters with his Operations Officer (S-3), Major Bill Baine, and his Intelligence Officer (S-2), First Lieutenant (1LT) Stephen Teirney. At 1700, they attended a briefing for selected members of the Division staff and the Division Ready Brigade One (DRB-1). Initially, they planned a Brigade Task Force operation to evacuate U.S. nationals, establish military control over the island, and perform peacekeeping duties as part of a Caribbean Peacekeeping Force (CPF). Due to strict OPSEC, no planning was authorized outside of the
Division Operations Center. On Sunday, the planning cell learned that the Marines would be responsible for the northern half of the island, and the Army would handle the southern half. On Monday morning, the plan changed again as the battalion was told that the Rangers would secure Point Salinas Airfield, followed by the 82nd Airborne Division's Brigade Task Force. Because of the numerous changes to the plan, Major Bane recommended developing operational packets for key leaders. These packets contained tourist maps, imagery of the airfield, and a simple operations order which numbered all assembly areas and known objectives on the island. [3]

At 2000 hours, the Division called out the ODE 2. By 2145, all of the battalion's key leaders were present in the battalion headquarters to receive Lieutenant Colonel Hamilton's warning order. This was the first time that anyone outside of the weekend planning cell was informed of the actual mission. The companies would not be briefed until moved into the Secure Personnel Holding Area (SPA). The junior officers, Non Commissioned Officers (NCOs), and men quickly drew their weapons, communications gear, and special equipment. By 2300 hours, the entire task force was assembled with their personnel ready to move to the marshalling area adjacent to Pope Air Force Base. [4]

At the N+2 meeting, Lieutenant Colonel Hamilton learned that D-Day H-Hour was Tuesday, 25 October, at 0530 and that the normal eighteen hour sequence was compressed to six hours. Planning and coordination time were cut to an absolute minimum. The battalion elected to draw double the normal load of ammunition, three days of rations, flak jackets, two quart canteens and other available contingency items. At
The battalion task force consisted of a small headquarters element, three rifle companies (A and B Companies of 2/325 IN and 8 company 2/505 IN), the scout platoon, the medical platoon, fire support teams (FIST) from B Battery 2nd Bn (ABN), 319th Field Artillery 2nd Platoon, 8 Company, 307th Engineers (Airborne), and a Marine Amphibious Team from Camp Lejeune. The Brigade Assault CP (twenty men), the Division Assault CP (forty men), the 2nd Battalion (ABN), 319th FAB (a), and other brigade attachments occupied the same aircraft (B). The task force was cross loaded for an airborne assault, meaning that units were broken down into sub-elements and spread across all twelve aircraft. Commanders and key staff members were split up so that if a plane went down, the remainder of the force could carry on with the mission.

Mission planning took place enroute to the objective. The Division Assault CP communicated with the controlling headquarters, Atlantic Command, via satellite from the lead aircraft. Information was relayed to the other aircraft on plane to plane radios. The senior man on each aircraft briefed the troops on the current situation. The packets created by the Battalion S-3 facilitated the assignment of assembly areas and objectives based on the latest update from Point Salinas. Two
hours out from Grenada, the Division Commander announced that the
airfield at Point Salines was secure and that the force would airland.
The lead aircraft landed at 1405 hours on Point Salines Airfield.
The Division Assault CP moved to the hanger area to link up with their
counterparts. The decision to airland severely hindered the buildup of
Combat power by the 82nd. While the runway was cleared of obstacles, it
could only accommodate one C-141B at a time. It took approximately three
hours to get the entire task force on the ground. If the force had
jumped, it could have assembled in thirty minutes. Because the task
force crossed loaded for a jump, companies arrived piecemeal and initial
command and control suffered until all intermediate headquarters
landed.

Captain Charles Jacoby, A Company commander, and half of his First
Platoon ran off of the lead aircraft to their designated assembly area
north of the runway. As the men formed a perimeter, a Colonel drove up
in a Cuban truck, advised Jacoby of the nearest Ranger positions, and
instructed him to link-up with them. Jacoby directed the first platoon
leader and his men to conduct the link-up. SSG Brian P. Sengbusch first
made contact with the Rangers of Bravo Company, 1st Battalion (Ranger),
75th Infantry (B Co 1/75) on Goats Hill a few hundred meters north of
the runway. From their position, the Rangers overlooked the Cuban
Compound at Calliste where approximately 300 Cubans had consolidated.
Hasty coordination with the Rangers revealed that small groups of
Cubans were moving around the area in the hilly and sometimes thickly
vegetated terrain; but the immediate area had been cleared. As the
platoon spread down the ridge from the Ranger position, they engaged one
of these raving Cuban groups in a brief firefight. Later, they captured three Cubans hiding among some civilians in a local house. As the prisoners were marched away, their Cuban brethren down the hill attempted to shoot them. Similar incidents occurred all over the airfield that afternoon as the paratroopers quickly adjusted to their new environment.[65]

Arriving on chalk two, Captain Michael Ritz, commander of B Co. 2/325 quickly oriented his men while his men assembled. They moved to a position behind Goats Hill and also linked up with A Co 1/75. Ritz and Captain Clyde Newman, the Ranger company commander, exchanged information. It had been a long day for the Rangers. Alerted early Sunday morning, they had little rest since then while preparing for the operation. They had donned their parachutes and boarded C130s at 2100 on Monday night, remained on the aircraft for eight hours, and jumped into heavy antiaircraft fire from 500 feet at 0637 Tuesday morning. They fought their way east along the runway, forcing the remaining Cubans into the Callisile Compound. By 1400 hours, they occupied a rough north south line from Goats Hill, across the road into the compound and onto a hill north of the road.[71] (Figure One)

As the first C141B landed, many of the Rangers did not know of the upcoming relief in place with the 82nd until the paratroopers linked up with them.[83] Complicating matters, the Cubans counterattacked as the third C141B was unloading its personnel. Cuban Captain Grandales led three BTR-60PBs and a platoon of infantry against the eastern edge of the runway. They ran into a Ranger platoon from A Co 1/75th who destroyed the BTRs with 90mm recoilless rifles, LAWs, and AC130 gunship.
fires. The enemy infantry fell back under effective M-60 and small area fires. By 2000 hours, the relief in place was complete. The Rangers were consolidated by the hanger area and the personnel of TF 2-325 were all on the ground. (Figure Two) The vehicles arrived later in the night.

Interrogation of prisoners and radio intercepts of the Cuban communications revealed that close to 100 Cubans remained in the Calliste Compound. They were amply supplied with weapons, food, and ammunition and had refused numerous surrender offers throughout the day. Further, they received instructions from Havana to fight to the death for the glory of the revolution. (9) As the Cubans in the compound could place fires into the hanger area and onto portions of the runway, Division ordered the compound seized. TF 2-325 got the mission.

Lieutenant Colonel Hamilton issued his operations order at 2400 hours. The plan was simple. A Co provided supporting fires as B Co attacked from southwest to northeast across the compound. Once Calliste was seized, B Co 2/505 would attack to seize the Frequentia Warehouse Complex. (Figure Three) Indirect fires from the 2/319th FAC(-) would precede the assault on Calliste. The attack would commence at 0530 and the Battalion Commander would control the attack from the A Co support position. (10)

The company commanders returned to their units and issued their orders. In A Co, the platoons made minor adjustments to improve their fields of fire and waited for the word to fire. In B Co, Cpt Ritz also issued a simple plan. The first platoon would support by fire from a hill to the company's left. The second and third platoons would assault northeast into the compound, guiding on the road leading from the hanger.
First platoon was to be in position no later than 0530 so that they could initiate fires when the assault commenced. At 0400, B Company moved to their attack positions astride the road. Ritz called the platoon leaders together to conduct a quick leader’s recce. The company commander, the three platoon leaders, and two sergeants moved out to a position fifty meters in front of the unit. The group halted and Ritz pointed out the specific routes that the assault and support teams were to follow. He further directed the two assault platoon leaders to reconnoiter their route while he took the support platoon leader up to pinpoint the support position. The group split and the two assault platoon leaders conducted their reconnaissance and returned to the company command post (CP). As they waited at the CP, they heard automatic weapons fire from the hill. The Ritz had gone to reconnoiter. Second Lieutenant (2LT) Jim Bowen, the senior platoon leader, did not know it yet, but Captain Ritz’s group had run up on a Cuban position. Walking point, Captain Ritz was killed instantly as the Cubans opened up from ten meters away. SGT Quinn, five meters behind Ritz, was unconscious with a sucking chest wound. 2LT Steve Seeger, five meters behind Quinn, fired two magazines towards the Cubans and yelled for Ritz and Quinn. Getting no response, he slowly began to work his way down the hill. Lieutenant Colonel Hamilton also heard the firing and called B Company for a report. Learning that Captain Ritz had not returned and assuming the worst, the battalion commander placed 2LT Bowen in charge of the company, telling him to continue with the mission as planned. It was now 0530 so Bowen sent the First Platoon led by SFC
Capetillo to seize the support position. The platoon fought the Cubans off of the hill, recovering the wounded SGT Quinn and 2LT Seege, but suffering one friendly dead and six wounded. (Figure Four)

As B Co fought up the hill, A Co opened up on the compound. The Cubans responded with heavy fire against the A Co positions. A small element attacked towards the first platoon sector, wounding a team leader in a close range engagement. Lieutenant Colonel Hamilton, located at the A Co CP, observed the effects of three of the unit's M-60 machine guns immediately to his front. The guns were mounted on tripods with traversing and elevation mechanisms facilitating extremely accurate fire into the windows and doorways of the compound. Snipers from the battalion and the Rangers positioned themselves on a small porch nearby, and accounted for several Cuban dead.

The artillery fires began with 105mm rounds landing on the hill behind the compound. Because of the questionable accuracy of the issued tourist maps, the forward observer began the fires well away from the compound and walked them in from the northeast.[14] At this time, two Navy A-7A attack aircraft came on station above Point Salinas. The ANGLICO team was unable to contact them because they did not have the proper frequencies. Fortunately, the Brigade Air Liaison Officer (ALJO), Air Force Captain Bob Autrey, had the correct frequency and raised the A-7s.[15] Lieutenant Colonel Hamilton had Captain Velzeboer, the ANGLICO, bring the aircraft in for a dry run to identify the target and friendly positions. After their first dry run, Lieutenant Colonel Hamilton was satisfied that the pilots were on target, and he brought them in live.[16]
The A-7's 30mm cannon fire devastated the cinder block buildings within the compound. Whereas the walls afforded the Cubans protection from the 7.62 and 5.56 caliber fires of the rifle companies, the 30mm cannon blew large holes through the walls, hitting those hiding on the far side. All fires began to concentrate on the headquarters building which flew a large Cuban flag. Following an accurate pass by the aircraft, white flags appeared from all windows of the building. Without orders, the troops immediately ceased fire.

LT Stephen Tierney, the S-2, stood by the lead scout jeep a few hundred meters down the road from the entrance to the compound. As the white flags appeared, Tierney and LT Horace Stogner, the Scout Platoon Leader, mounted the jeeps and drove straight for the gate. There were a few tense moments as the scouts drove into the compound and faced the civilians but still armed Cubans. Tierney, fluent in Spanish, ordered the Cubans to lay down their weapons. Staring down the barrels of the scout platoon's six M-60s, the Cubans complied. [17] The assault platoon from B Co quickly closed on the compound and secured the prisoners.

Lieutenant Colonel Hamilton moved with a platoon from A Company to the compound. He brought CSM Barajas and LT Mike Okita, the Assistant S-3, with him. Upon reaching the compound, the battalion commander placed Okita in command of B Company.

With the successful seizure of the compound, Lieutenant Colonel Hamilton shifted the main effort of the battalion to the seizure of the Frequent Warehouse Complex. He directed B Company 2/505 to quickly move to Frequent from its position east of the runway. Okita was given five minutes to take charge of B Company 2/525 and move them north to
swize the radio station on the high ground above the compound. A Company began movement from the support position south of Calliste to the hills northeast of the compound. The scouts established a screen to the west and the engineer platoon secured the prisoners in the Calliste Compound.

IL Tiernay, the battalion medical platoon, and the engineers searched the eighty-six prisoners, treated the twenty-nine Cuban wounded, and consolidated the sixteen Cuban dead. They found hundreds of weapons with ample ammunition, communications equipment, medical gear, and documents indicating that this had been the Cuban military headquarters on the island.[183]

The battalion command group initially moved with A Company to the high ground in the center of the battalion sector, then down to link up with B 2/505. Upon reaching the company, Lieutenant Colonel Hamilton was surprised that they were not yet moving towards Frequenti. He interrupted the operations order that the company commander was issuing and moved out with the first platoon. The unit closed on the warehouse complex, finding one Grenadian soldier who offered no resistance. The warehouses overflowed with Soviet weapons and equipment.[181 (Figure Five)

As the scouts conducted dismounted patrols on the west, two Cubans moving toward the north came upon the platoons' vehicles. The vehicle drivers killed one and wounded the other in a brief firefight. Shortly after this engagement, Stogner received orders from battalion to displace to the east of the runway to recover the bodies of four Rangers killed in an ambush the day before.
With the help of local civilians, the scouts quickly located the ambush scene. While recovering the bodies, the scouts questioned a doctor who drove up from the east. The doctor indicated that twenty Cubans with an armored car waited 500 meters further to the east around a bend in the road. Stogner attempted to notify battalion of this but could not reach them. He decided to attack the Cubans as that was his understanding of the battalion commander's intent for the Scout platoon.

The scouts drove around the bend and halted 175 meters from the BTR-60. SFC Gillum, SSG Lalone, and one other man dismounted and fired LAWs, hitting the vehicle three times in the side. As the BTR billowed smoke, heavy automatic fire fell on the lead three scout jeeps from a hill 200 meters to their south, pinning down the dismounted scouts. The other four jeeps drove around the bend and laid heavy suppressive fire into the ambushers, allowing the dismounted element to rearm and break contact.

The scouts' action constituted the last significant enemy contact for 2nd Battalion (A BN), 25th Infantry. The night of 26 October, the battalion occupied a line running from the radio station in the north to Frente Warehouse Complex east of the runway. (Figure Six) In the next ten days, the battalion continued operations on Grenada, linking up with the Marines on 26 October, conducting clearing operations and air assaults, then redeploying on 2 November to a warm welcome from the Secretary of the Army and the entire Fort Bragg community.

Effective Command and Control during the operation resulted from simple plans, mission orders, a clear understanding of the battalion
commander's intent and the commander's presence at the decisive place on the battlefield. Due to limited planning time, the generic operations orders with multiple objectives facilitated rapidly changing the plan as the situation dictated. Lieutenant Colonel Hamilton's order for the Calliste attack was simple and effective, as were those of the company commanders. When Captain Ritz was killed, 2LT Bowen was able to execute the plan effectively and on time.

During the attack, key leaders were at the decisive place at the right time. The battalion commander was at the support position where he could best synchronize his maneuver forces and firepower assets. Jacoby, collated with his machine guns where he could best control his supporting fires. The Scout platoon leader and S-2 immediately moved into the compound after the surrender, not allowing the Cubans a chance to reconsider. The battalion commander personally assessed the situation in the compound then moved with B Company 2/505 as they became the battalion's main effort.

If properly executed, Captain Ritz's reconnaissance of his unit’s support position would have facilitated a rapid occupation of that position by his support platoon. While Ritz displayed great courage in personally conducting his night reconnaissance, his failure to bring adequate security, communications, or to leave a detailed contingency plan cost his his life and temporarily disrupted his unit's ability to accomplish the mission. The fact that Bravo Company overcame the loss of their commander and continued the attack is a great tribute to Ritz's leadership and training of his subordinates.

After the success at Calliste, Lieutenant Colonel Hamilton did not
consolidate on the objective but quickly reorganized and maintained the momentum by moving on to new objectives. The use of the engineer platoon for prisoner security freed rifle platoons to continue the attack with their companies. The mobility and firepower of the scouts were used extremely well as they moved around the battlefield. In each instance, the rapid movement and quick thinking of the scouts contributed to the battalion's success and inflicted casualties on the enemy.

The battalion conducted an intensive period of training during the nine months prior to Urgent Fury (in February) they conducted company evaluations (ARTEPs), the Jungle Operations Training Center in Panama during March, the Battalion ARTEP in May, Operation Bright Star in Egypt and the Sudan during August, Expert Infantryman's Badge training in September and finally a week of Military Operations in Urban Terrain. The battalion underwent a Division Emergency Deployment Readiness Exercise, calling for the evacuation of U.S. nationals from a fictitious Central American country the week prior to Urgent Fury. This exercise required the battalion to assemble, execute the entire 48-hour sequence, jump into Camp Mackall, rescue the American citizens and extract by helicopter. All of this training conditioned the men physically, mentally and spiritually for the rigors of combat operations. The squads, platoons and companies were used to mission orders and rapid execution.\[2\]

The battalion possessed high quality soldiers and leaders. Unit strength was 102% and most of the senior NCOs and officers had been in the battalion at least a year. Lieutenant Colonel Hamilton was in his
thirty-fourth month of battalion command) and the unit responded superbly to his leadership. Experience at all levels was good. For example, in Alpha Company the First Sergeant and one of the platoon sergeants (PSG) were Vietnam veterans. Of the other three PSGs, one was a former Ranger Instructor and the other two had several years in the battalion. All were E-7s. In the Platoons, at least two of the three squad leaders were E-6s with many experienced E-4s and E-5s in the squad. The company commander and two of three platoon leaders were Ranger qualified.[22]

The individual paratroopers were superb. Only two in Alpha Company were not high school graduates, most having enlisted for the Army College Program. All were airborne qualified, an experience which teaches soldiers to perform in spite of the natural fear associated with jumping out of a perfectly good airplane. This ability to perform in spite of fear was essential to the battalion's success when troops were called out of their homes at 2:100 on a Monday night and thrust into their first combat situation a few hours later.

Operation Urgent Fury was a "come as you are fight." With little planning time, strict OPSEC requirements, a constantly changing political and military situation, and piecemeal arrival on the battlefield, the operation posed many challenges to the lead battalion from the 82nd Airborne Division. Effective Command and Control, good training, and the high quality of the paratroopers and their leaders produced success for the 2nd Battalion (Airborne), 325th Infantry in Grenada.
1. Information provided by Captain Charles Jacoby, Instructor, Department of History, United States Military Academy, West Point, New York. Captain Jacoby commanded Alpha Company 2/325 in Grenada, and is currently involved in research on Operation Urgent Fury.

2. 82nd Airborne Division, Readiness Standard Operating Procedures, (Fort Bragg, North Carolina: Headquarters, 82nd Airborne Division, 14 May 1984).


4. Author’s personal experience as first platoon leader of Alpha Company, 2/325 from March 1983 through December 1983.

5. B Co 2/505 replaced C Co 2/325 on 24 October 1983 because C Co was filled with new soldiers as part of the Army's Cohesion and Operational Readiness Training Company Program.

6. Author’s personal experience.

7. Interview with Captain David Pullison, formerly company executive officer of Bravo Company, 1st Bn (Bgr), 78th BN during Operation Urgent Fury.

8. Pullison interview.


11. Interview with Captain James Bowen, formerly the second platoon leader of Bravo Company, 2/325.


14. Interview with Master Sergeant Steele, formerly Brigade Fire Support NCO for 2nd Brigade, 82nd Airborne Division during Operation Urgent Fury.

15. Steele interview.
16. Hamilton interview.

17. Interview with Captain Horace Stogner, formerly Scout platoon leader 2/325 during Operation Urgent Fury.


19. Hamilton interview.

20. Stogner interview.

21. Author's experience.

22. Hamilton interview and author's experience.
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