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'A Somewhat Lethargic Approach': Britain and the Grenada Crisis, 1983

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ABSTRACT

In October 1983 the small Eastern Caribbean island of Grenada, a member of the Commonwealth with the Queen as Head of State, dominated the headlines in Britain. The US had invaded Grenada to restore order after the violent implosion of the Marxist-Leninist government. It is well established that the US misled the UK as to their intentions until the eleventh hour and that this resulted in a disproportionate amount of discord between the allies. This article departs from that aspect by examining how policymakers in London handled the crisis. Using recently declassified documents and interviews with participants, it demonstrates firstly that the British High Commission in Barbados read the signs of military action correctly but were side-lined by London after the request for assistance was received from the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States. Secondly, it reveals that the idea of taking the initiative and consulting with Washington after the murder of Grenada's Prime Minister never arose and that government claims that they communicated their opposition to a military solution from the start were wrong as this only happened on the afternoon before the invasion.

KEYWORDS

Grenada; Britain; invasion; Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States; Caribbean community

In October 1983 the Eastern Caribbean island of Grenada briefly dominated British headlines. An internal power struggle in the Marxist-Leninist Grenadian People's Revolutionary Government (PRG) led to the murder of Prime Minister Maurice Bishop, seven of his colleagues and the death of over 40 Grenadians in the ensuing melee. Five days later, in response to a request from the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS),¹ the US launched a military invasion to restore order. In Britain it was less the events in Grenada that grabbed the headlines than the fact that London had been deceived and kept in the dark by the US, its' closest ally, until a few hours beforehand and then had their objections ignored. It was not just that Grenada was a member of the Commonwealth

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with the Queen as Head of State, but with American cruise missiles due to be deployed in Europe within weeks it raised awkward questions politically about trust and consultation in the Anglo-American alliance. It soon became clear though that London's claim to have been in the dark was less than accurate; Barbadian Prime Minister Tom Adams revealed in a radio address that he had met with the British High Commissioner Barbados and the neighbouring islands Giles Bullard at 12:30 pm on Friday 21st October and told him what the OECS envisaged and that Britain would be invited to participate.² This immediately raised questions in the media and parliament about what had gone on in the days leading up to the invasion. The UK Parliamentary Foreign Affairs Committee (FAC) enquiry into the crisis concluded that the government's approach was 'somewhat lethargic' and officials had been 'reacting passively to the events unfolding in the Caribbean' rather than taking their own 'initiative to establish the full intentions of the Caribbean political leaders.'³ Furthermore, by relying on traditional diplomatic channels rather than sending a special emissary, as the US did, the FAC concluded that London had been left 'poorly equipped to evaluate accurately the signals coming from Caribbean governments.'⁴ The government's official response to the FAC Report considered it 'over-simplified and relies on hindsight' but the response shed little light on how the crisis had been handled.⁵

Recent declassification of Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO), Cabinet Office and Ministry of Defence (MoD) documents, interviews with senior British FCO officials in London, the High Commissions in Barbados and Trinidad and Tobago, and MoD officials in the Caribbean, and US archival materials, permits a fresh look at London's handling of the Grenada episode. This article will focus largely on the period between London learning of the OECS request on Friday 21st and being informed by Washington late on Monday 24th that they would be responding positively to the OECS' request. Our understanding of what happened in this crucial period is incomplete as most of the existing literature has primarily studied the London-Washington nexus.⁶ This article will depart from this by focusing on activity in London at the FCO and Downing Street and at the British High Commissions in Barbados and Trinidad and Tobago to revisit the FAC's question of 'how alert were British Ministers to the urgency of the developing crisis in the Caribbean?'⁷ The article argues that the British High Commission in Barbados provided a rich stream of information to London. Although senior FCO officials described this reporting as 'piecemeal' and being received 'not quite in time'⁸ the reality was that the High Commission's diplomats read the tea leaves correctly that the Revolutionary Military Council (RMC), established after Prime Minister Bishop's murder, would not be removed peacefully. High Commissioner Bullard, just two months into his posting, accurately assessed the mood amongst the Eastern Caribbean leaders for military action and did not demur in recommending to London that if an invasion did go ahead, led by the US who had the capacity to act, then they

[London] should support it or at least not oppose it. The High Commission reported on the build-up of US military forces in Barbados over the weekend and even the invasion plan itself, hours before President Ronald Reagan's second letter arrived at Downing Street at 10:00 pm on Monday 24th October, saying that the US had decided to respond positively to the OECS request. However, after the High Commission conveyed the OECS' 'oral but formal' request for assistance to London on Saturday 22nd, they found themselves all but cut out of the loop by the FCO in London. Rather than setting alarm bells ringing, the OECS request led FCO officials and Ministers to conclude that a military solution made no sense and that there was no justification for one. But over the key weekend on Saturday 22nd – Sunday 23rd this view was not communicated to the High Commissions in Barbados or Trinidad, the OECS or Washington; instead, FCO officials waited and listened to see what the US would do. The one decision taken, to divert the Caribbean Guardship HMS Antrim towards Grenada in case an evacuation of British citizens was required, had been under consideration for days and was ultimately taken to avoid being open to criticism for having taken no independent action.

The article will also show that Foreign Secretary Geoffrey Howe's claim that 'we made clear our anxieties [*sic*] on the Friday night [21 October] when we first heard of it ... We said this was not something we thought was a good idea and that was our posture throughout'⁹ is misleading. Only after Ministers met on Monday 24th, the day prior to the invasion, did the FCO inform Washington of their opposition to a military solution. The message crossed with the first of President Reagan's letters to Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher informing her that he was considering responding positively to the OECS' request.

Context

At its height Britain's Caribbean empire consisted of 18 territories ranging from Bermuda in the north, to British Honduras (Belize) in Central America and British Guiana (Guyana) on the north coast of South America. World War Two saw British and US interests collide via the destroyers-for-bases deal (1940) which gave the US 99-year free leases on land in seven British territories.¹⁰ Whilst decolonisation swept the British territories in Asia in the early post-war years, London did not picture a rapid departure from the Caribbean, settling instead on federation to keep the region together. The West Indies Federation (WIF) would provide internal self-government but no change in colonial status. However, a combination of British tardiness and financial parsimony and Caribbean political rivalry, amongst other factors, doomed the WIF which collapsed in 1962 after just four years. Britain had indicated to Jamaica that it was eligible for independence and by 1966 Jamaica, Trinidad and Tobago, Guyana and Barbados had all gained their independence. The smaller remaining islands were not deemed politically or economically viable for independence by London which persevered

with the federation idea and established the West Indies Associated States (WIAS) in 1967. Under this arrangement the Associated States had legislative autonomy and Britain were responsible for foreign and defence affairs. This meant that London still had responsibility but without power and combined with the ‘imperial instinct to monitor, evaluate, and, if necessary, intervene’, the dilemma of Associated Statehood was laid bare in the 1969 Anguillan secession crisis.¹¹

Britain’s gradual disengagement from the Caribbean was played out in the context of the cold war. Whilst advocates of decolonisation in international fora, the US were strong supporters of the idea of federation as it would keep the British in the Caribbean and responsible for the security for part of a region which the US had proclaimed as vital to national security since the 1823 Monroe Doctrine. The Cuban revolution and the collapse of the WIF increased Washington’s concern about the speed of Britain’s disengagement. Grenada was where the rubicon was crossed in the Eastern Caribbean as London agreed to Prime Minister Eric Gairy’s request to grant Grenada independence using the government’s reserve powers under the 1967 West Indies Act. This obviated the need for Gairy, an autocratic and eccentric leader with a keen and very public interest in UFOs, to secure a two-thirds majority in a public referendum, which he would not have achieved. Hence Grenada stumbled to independence in February 1974 despite an obvious lack of political stability and economic viability. When the Marxist-Leninist opposition New Jewel Movement seized power in March 1979 in Grenada it only served to confirm what some in Washington feared about Britain’s withdrawal creating a strategic vacuum and the sudden realisation that few of the soon to be independent islands had military forces and that they would be vulnerable to external influences.¹² As the new People’s Revolutionary Government (PRG) in Grenada received arms secretly from Cuba and refused to hold elections, the US Ambassador to Barbados and the neighbouring islands was instructed to inform Prime Minister Maurice Bishop that Washington would ‘view with displeasure any tendency on the part of Grenada to develop closer ties with Cuba.’¹³ Bishop made the most of this in a radio address a few days later:

[n]o country has the right to tell us what to do or how to run our country or who to be friendly with. We certainly would not attempt to tell any other country what to do. We are not in anybody’s backyard, and we are definitely not for sale.¹⁴

This set the tone for US-Grenada relations over the next four-and-a-half years. Britain adopted a more open-minded approach and sought to keep a line open to the new regime but London soon realised that Washington were taking the threat Grenada posed very seriously indeed.

The Fall of the Grenadian Government

By mid-1983 the PRG’s revolution was running out of steam. The beginning of the end of the PRG came in September with an ill-fated proposal for joint

leadership between Prime Minister Maurice Bishop and Deputy Prime Minister Bernard Coard.¹⁵ Bishop initially agreed, but during a visit to Eastern Europe soon afterwards had second thoughts but by the time he returned the momentum was with the Coard faction who ensured that Bishop was expelled from the party and placed under indefinite house arrest on October 13. The British High Commission in Barbados cabled London to report that

Coard (who has little, if any, grass roots support, in contrast to Bishop) has clearly made a takeover bid which has not been immediately successful: but he still looks to have something like a straight flush in this particular game of poker.¹⁶

The FCO requested an assessment from the Joint Intelligence Committee; with around 200 British citizens in Grenada the possibility of an evacuation needed to be considered.¹⁷ On October 17 at the FCO, John Edwards (Head of the West Indian and Atlantic Department – WIAD), and John Ure (Assistant Under-Secretary of State for the Americas) decided that it would be premature to redirect the Caribbean Guardship HMS Antrim which was due to visit Cartagena, Colombia, as ‘there is no suggestion that a democratic friendly government is being ousted by hostile foreign intervention, nor is there any reason to believe that the British community is at risk.’¹⁸ The following day Edwards discussed the situation with the Deputy Chief of Mission at the American Embassy in London, Edward Streater, who reported to Washington that the FCO’s interpretation of events was that Bishop had welched on a power-sharing deal, appealed to the party, made his case and lost when the army refused to back him and therefore the Coard-led faction would prevail.¹⁹ Most Caribbean experts, within government and outside, were also telling the American Embassy that West Indian principles would mean that the situation would be resolved peacefully.²⁰

The tension in Grenada rose as the largely pro-Bishop public staged island-wide demonstrations. On Wednesday 19th October Bishop was forcibly released from house arrest by some of his supporters; they headed for Fort Rupert, the home of the People’s Revolutionary Army, where there were medical supplies, arms, and a radio transmitter. Three army armed personnel carriers were dispatched from Fort Frederick by the Coard faction to retake Fort Rupert and in the ensuing melee, around 40 of Bishop’s supporters were killed and over 100 were injured. Bishop and seven of his colleagues were lined up against a wall and shot dead. By the end of the day a Revolutionary Military Council (RMC) had been formed to take charge and Grenadians found themselves under a four-day shoot-on-sight curfew.²¹

The reaction in the Eastern Caribbean was one of shock and widespread repulsion. For Barbadian Prime Minister Tom Adams intervention was the only appropriate action and he was not alone.²² A meeting of the OECS was swiftly arranged for Friday 21st October in Bridgetown, Barbados, to discuss options. Adams and the St. Lucian Prime Minister John Compton had

already made it clear to the American Ambassador to Barbados and the neighbouring islands, Milan Bish, their desire and support for a military solution. The British Embassy in Washington reported that the US were concerned about events in Grenada but with no diplomats in situ were 'short on fact' and unclear about who was now in charge, although Washington saw no firm evidence of Cuban involvement.²³ Washington's main concern was their citizens in Grenada and Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs, Langhorne Motley, called the Embassy Minister, Derek Thomas, with an urgent request that Britain use its good offices to secure access to Grenada for American consular officers.²⁴ Ambassador Oliver Wright concluded that whilst there was no perceptible anti-US sentiment there could be a risk of Americans getting caught up in factional fighting and so Washington were dusting off contingency plans for evacuating American nationals and considering moving a frigate closer.²⁵ In what proved to be an important stroke of luck in planning terms for Washington, a naval task force en route to the Mediterranean was available and quietly diverted south towards Grenada on Tuesday 20th October.

Back in London senior FCO officials considered again whether HMS Antrim should be moved. High Commissioner Giles Bullard, recommended that 'I cannot at the moment see Antrim being able to do anything in or near Grenada that would justify the publicity attendant on her leaving Cartagena earlier than planned.'²⁶ The Ministry of Defence (MoD) advised that it would take HMS Antrim 32 h to reach Grenada and a further 24 h to evacuate British nationals.²⁷ With no current threat to British nationals, who were mostly long-term residents unlike the American students at St. Georges University Medical School it was felt would be less likely to want to leave, it was agreed that HMS Antrim should complete her Cartagena visit and the situation would be reviewed after the weekend.²⁸

High Commissioner Bullard met with Prime Minister Adams on Friday 21st at 12:30 pm local time, a few hours before the OECS meeting. Adams told Bullard that Prime Minister Edward Seaga of Jamaica and Prime Minister Compton were pressing hard for Caribbean Community (CARICOM) Heads to ask for military help to restore order and were fully cognisant that this would mean a US military intervention.²⁹ The plan was to gain united CARICOM support, take early and effective action and quickly replace US troops with CARICOM troops. Adams admitted that the plan had attractions for Barbados as 'there would never ... be another time when public support in the Caribbean was so much in favour of strong action.'³⁰ He also envisaged Grenada's Governor-General, Paul Scoon, being involved as a symbol of legal government and as a justification (ex post facto) if necessary.³¹ Bullard told Adams that Ambassador Bish had asked him the previous day how London might respond to a request from Washington for support in a military operation; Bullard had replied that it would depend on CARICOM support and

the justifications as restoration of legal government was one thing, but protecting foreign citizens as justification for a military operation was quite another.³² Adams acknowledged this but emphasised that ‘it was however important that military intervention should be forthcoming, if CARICOM Heads asked for it. They did not want ... to be left whistling in the wind.’³³ Reporting back to London, Bullard thought a CARICOM agreement on a diplomatic and trade embargo would be a valuable show of unanimity but that ‘what effect it will have on the authorities in Grenada is hard to say. They are unlikely to be dislodged from power except by force.’³⁴ He concluded that:

Protecting the safety of US citizens is I suppose one of the reasons that might be advanced should Washington decide on US intervention in Grenada, either in furtherance of the national interest or in response to a request from CARICOM Heads of Government ... If his [Adams] mind and Seaga’s are working on similar lines to that of Ambassador Bish the chances of force being used to overthrow the Military Council in Grenada, or “stabilise the situation” as Bish put it, look fairly good.³⁵

Bullard’s report prompted Robin Renwick, Head of the Chancery at the British Embassy in Washington, to approach one of his contacts at the State Department, the Deputy Director for Politico-Military Affairs, Arnold Raphel; having consulted his superior, Admiral Jonathon Howe, Director for Politico-Military Affairs, Raphel assured Renwick that London would be forewarned if Washington ‘decided to consider any more active steps in response to these approaches from the Caribbean leaders’ and that Washington’s initial reaction was ‘to ask the Caribbean leaders to consider what more they could do themselves.’³⁶

As the OECS met in Bridgetown, back at the FCO, Edwards, Ure, Sydney Giffard (Deputy Under-Secretary of State), Patrick Wright (Deputy Under-Secretary of State) and Anthony Acland (Permanent Under-Secretary of State) met to discuss Bullard’s report and consider whether Washington were likely to act. The general feeling was that it would be nonsensical to intervene in what was harmless internal unrest in a sovereign state and that for the US the ‘game was not worth the candle.’³⁷ Giffard was less convinced that the US would not act and the group discussed whether diverting HMS Antrim to Grenada now could be an alternative to US military action. The conclusion reached was that it would not be enough to make any difference.³⁸ Hence concern focused on the possible precedent action could set, the potential danger British nationals could be put in and the constitutional status of the Governor-General.³⁹

After the meeting a cable based on the reporting from the High Commission in Barbados was sent to the Embassy in Washington instructing them to speak urgently ‘at an appropriately senior level’ to the State Department to see if they had also been approached, the assumption was that Adams would have been talking to the US, and how they ‘might be inclined to respond.’⁴⁰ The FCO later relied on this cable when they claimed to have made their position on

the undesirability of military action clear to Washington on Friday 21st when the OECS request was received; the cable did nothing of the sort. In Washington, Renwick spoke directly with Admiral Howe to emphasise London's concern about the safety of British citizens, and to ask about intelligence reports of US naval movements.⁴¹ Howe confirmed that an aircraft carrier with 2,000 Marines aboard had been diverted towards Grenada as a contingency measure should a threat to American citizens develop. He continued that the situation in Grenada was 'very confused' and that Washington was 'coming under very strong pressure from the other Eastern Caribbean Heads of Government to help them do something about the situation.'⁴² Once again Renwick was assured that no decision had been taken. With the new knowledge that the US would soon have the military resources to act in situ, Renwick 'emphasized the need for us [FCO] to be fore-warned of any actions the US might propose to take.'⁴³ He reported this back to London in the early hours of 22 October.⁴⁴ Once again there was no mention of the FCO's opposition or even concern about a military solution.

News of a potential military action had also reached Prime Minister Thatcher via an intelligence services report from the High Commission in Barbados that stated that Prime Minister Adams was trying to arrange 'a multi-national intervention' with US, Eastern Caribbean and 'a British contribution'.⁴⁵ Adams had in mind a SAS operation to rescue the Governor-General and had deliberately used the intelligence channel as he wanted his intentions to reach the highest level back in London.⁴⁶ Adams had particular reason for wanting British involvement, namely to focus attention on the Governor-General who Adams rightly saw as having a key role to play in post-invasion Grenada as the sole surviving source of constitutional authority; he strongly suspected that the US would not easily grasp the importance of the Governor-General.⁴⁷ The idea gained no traction. Thatcher found the SAS idea 'most unwise' and her Private Secretary John Coles considered the idea of a request based on the Governor-General's safety as 'dubious' and noted that 'there is just a chance . . . that one of the Caribbean PMs or perhaps even the Americans will try to get in touch with you over the weekend.'⁴⁸

The OECS Request

The FCO learnt of the outcome of the OECS meeting in Barbados in the early hours of Saturday 22nd from the Chief Minister of Montserrat, John Osborne. Under Article 8 of its Treaty the Organisation had agreed to:

form a multinational Caribbean force to undertake to depose the outlaw regime on Grenada by any means, including intervention by force of arms; and secondly, to ask the United States and other friendly countries for the necessary assistance and means to do this.⁴⁹

High Commissioner Bullard met Prime Minister Adams later that day and Adams proceeded to make a request, 'orally but formally', that 'Britain would associate itself with the multinational operation, even if our support was only in token form.'⁵⁰ He made no secret of the fact that he saw the US as the main contributor.

In London Richard Luce, Minister of State at the FCO and duty minister that weekend, was clear that the safety of British citizens was the first priority and that the FCO might be 'open to criticism' if they were seen to take no independent action although he simultaneously emphasised that it was important not to 'give the impression of acting in panic or overdramatically.'⁵¹ Wright, Ure, Giffard and Edwards all now favoured moving HMS Antrim from Cartagena to Grenada to be kept 'over the horizon'.⁵² Bullard was also consulted and agreed that it would be wise not to rely totally on the US when it came to evacuation. Prime Ministerial approval was received that afternoon but HMS Antrim's departure from Cartagena was scheduled for 1:00 pm the following day because the FCO were 'anxious that we should not be seen to be over-reacting.'⁵³ As a result HMS Antrim did not arrive off Grenada until 1:00 am on October 25.

With the news that the US had diverted a carrier group towards Grenada and the oral but formal request from the OECS the possibility of some sort of action had got a step closer. Acland wanted reassurance that the MoD had been consulted in case the Prime Minister called a meeting about what military contribution the UK could make.⁵⁴ Despite some initial hesitancy, Luce agreed with Wright to contact the MoD to ask whether they had started any contingency planning for assisting the US in responding to the OECS invitation and 'if not, we should, even if it is to say it is a non-starter.'⁵⁵ The MoD prepared a full assessment: if the UK was to act alone then 'the operation would take a considerable number of days to mount' and that the preferred option would be an operation in concert with the US.⁵⁶ The MoD plan was for HMS Antrim to sail to Barbados (currently 36 h sailing away in Cartagena); a RAF Hercules would transport a company of Gurkhas from Belize (on two hours' notice); the UK Spearhead Battalion (1st Royal Anglian on 24 h standby) would be moved to Barbados, and a Forward Operating Base established and troops transported to Grenada by Hercules, HMS Antrim or US assets, having first secured Pearls airport. Additional forces from the UK were on five days' notice.⁵⁷ It is evident that Britain could have got some forces to the region but not within the timeframe required to participate in the invasion and the decision to delay the sailing of HMS Antrim would have made that even harder.

In London that afternoon the Prime Minister phoned Luce who had to reassure her that HMS Antrim was 'not sailing into battle'⁵⁸; she later phoned the Secretary of State for Defence, Michael Heseltine, and the Lord President, Willie Whitelaw, who both agreed that the government's attitude towards the OECS request should be 'extremely cautious' and that a meeting would be

held to discuss Grenada on Monday 24th.⁵⁹ The absence of a formal written request, Adams had promised that this would follow later in the day, and the promise from Washington that London would be kept in the loop, created the feeling that the request was a more imagined than real proposition.⁶⁰ Naturally, there was no guarantee that it would not happen; Giffard was concerned that other options had not been explored so decided to consult High Commissioner Bullard:

Do you think there would be anything to be gained by attempting or inspiring an attempt to promote negotiation about the restoration of constitutional government in Grenada. Is it in your view possible that Hudson Austin or Coard would entertain an approach of this kind? Are there other identifiable political forces in Grenada which might come into play? Do you think that the Commonwealth Caribbean governments most closely concerned about developments in Grenada would be prepared to make or join any such approach?⁶¹

Bullard's response was unambiguous: the idea was a non-starter. He considered General Hudson Austin, the head of the RMC, and Coard untrustworthy and there were no other alternative political forces in Grenada. Bullard emphasised that the Caribbean governments were in no mood to go along with third parties promoting negotiations. Bullard was as surprised as the officials in London about the prospect of the UK and US being asked to intervene, and even had doubts about how it would turn out if the US did it, but his advice to London was emphatic:

People like Adams, Compton and Miss Charles ... are I think the best judges of how to handle the problem presented by the military coup in Grenada. If they and their CARICOM colleagues come out in favour of a multi-national force and if the US supports the idea I recommend we should give our support too or at the very least take no steps that might weaken the operation.⁶²

Naturally, this reply did not gain much favour in London where the flawed assumption was that the OECS would favour a non-military solution if possible. With CARICOM due to meet in Trinidad late on Saturday 22nd the FCO hoped that 'wiser counsels might prevail' and a common position on sanctions reached.⁶³

In Washington Renwick met again with Howe, speaking under instructions, who confirmed that the US had also received a request from the OECS but that no decision had been taken on how to respond as there was a need to find out more about what was going on in Grenada and what the Caribbean leaders exactly had in mind in terms of action to restore constitutional rule in Grenada.⁶⁴ Howe reported that the conclusion of the National Security Council meeting that morning was that the US should proceed very cautiously: Renwick was again assured that 'there would be consultation if the Americans decided to take any further steps.'⁶⁵ The message that he took away gave the FCO the wrong impression of thinking in Washington – by now President

Reagan had made a 75 per cent commitment to action.⁶⁶ More significantly, a decision had been taken at that morning's Special Situation Group (SSG) chaired by Vice President George Bush to notify London 'at the last minute.'⁶⁷

The decision was to cause significant discord in Anglo-American relations in the days and weeks to come. Washington's decision not to take London into its confidence earlier partly reflected well-established geopolitical considerations. US policy makers primarily viewed Grenada through the perspective of the Cold War: the PRG's close relationship with Cuba and ties with the Soviet Union guaranteed that Grenada was seen as a threat to the US' regional hegemony. As President Reagan had memorably put it in a March 1983 speech: 'it is not nutmeg [Grenada's largest export] that is at stake in the Caribbean and Central America. It is the United States' national security.'⁶⁸ Washington was mindful of Britain's historical connections to the Eastern Caribbean but London's steady disengagement from the region, with its reduction in political interest and military presence, meant that, as Renwick put it, 'America would not have seen our locus standi in the same light as ourselves.'⁶⁹ Indeed, the view in the State Department was that Grenada was not a problem that Britain needed to resolve, or demonstrate that it could.⁷⁰ On a practical level, Britain had no military resources in the region that the US needed.

There were also more specific reasons for the decision. As one SSG meeting attendee later explained, we 'anticipated that Mrs. Thatcher would be unhappy. We ... didn't want to give her any room for manoeuvre, either publicly or privately. We didn't want to lose control of the operation.'⁷¹ Firstly, officials were cognisant of Grenada's Commonwealth status, with the Queen as Head of State, and the political awkwardness that this would cause for Mrs. Thatcher in parliament and with Buckingham Palace. Secondly, the closeness of her relationship with President Reagan makes it easy to imagine that she would have been on the phone trying to dissuade him from acting, as indeed she did when she was informed on the eve of the invasion, something that would have been distracting and time-consuming, and possibly successful. Now that significant momentum in favour of military action had built up in Washington, the State Department, the government agency in the driving seat, did not want to see the 'window of opportunity' close.⁷² Finally, once planning switched from an evacuation of American nationals to a full-scale military invasion of the island, secrecy was paramount. The military faced a challenging 'no-plan' operation, typified by operational security and rapid response, 48 h in this case, where there was no time to refine plans through multiple iterations into detailed operations.⁷³ It is ironic that up until the decision to keep London in the dark, the main source of intelligence about events on Grenada and the RMC leadership was the British High Commission in Barbados.⁷⁴ Although Britain's diplomats in Washington were shut out, the exchange of information between the intelligence services continued.⁷⁵

One notable and successful feature of the decision-making process in Washington was that it was very closely held to avoid leaks. In his phone call to Prime Minister Thatcher the day after the invasion, Reagan referred twice to the risk of a leak but not via London; 'it was no feeling on our part of lack of confidence at your end. It's at our end.'⁷⁶ Washington's concern was that a leak would increase the risk to American citizens and lead Cuba to send military reinforcements to Grenada. However, even the RMC knew hostage-taking would trigger an immediate reaction from the US and announced on Saturday 22nd that the American students would be treated with the 'utmost consideration' and given vehicles and escorts to shuttle them between campuses.⁷⁷ The Cuban government also indicated its intentions in a public communication to the RMC from President Fidel Castro who strongly condemned the RMC, saying 'no internal division can justify atrocious acts' like the murder of Bishop and his colleagues and that Cuba would 'strictly abide by the principle of non-interference in the internal affairs of Grenada', the Cubans on Grenada would remain at their camp and there would be no military reinforcements.⁷⁸ The Cuban government also sent a message to the US Interests Section in the Swiss Embassy in Havana to underline that they would not be interfering in what they viewed as a domestic matter. Grenada was alone.

The British Embassy worked their contacts in the State Department and the Department of Defense but to no avail. As one senior embassy official recalls, he simply got the message that Washington was going through the motions to bring pressure to bear on the RMC and not to worry about reports of military action.⁷⁹ Moore contemplates that 'it was indeed odd that so much weight was put on the words of a single, middle-ranking administration official [Howe].'⁸⁰ The answer was that Howe's 'no action planned' message was prioritised by FCO officials because it was the most definite response they had received from any of the contacts made. Unfortunately, Howe's response misled the FCO as he had exceeded his brief in addressing the subject of military action and being unequivocal in stating that none was planned.⁸¹ Howe later stated that he 'wouldn't have tried to mislead Robin [Renwick]' but that his view might have been 'reflecting the Department of Defense's reluctance to act.'⁸² Howe's message also overshadowed the information that the FCO received from their diplomats in the Caribbean.

The CARICOM Meeting

Meanwhile in Trinidad, the CARICOM meeting started at 9:00 pm on Saturday 22nd. The British High Commissioner in Port-of-Spain, David Lane, reported that the Trinidad National Security Council had met prior to the meeting to consider a military operation and concluded that it would be a departure from the norm, they had did not have the necessary military capability and a joint CARICOM operation would take too long to mount and be too hard to

co-ordinate to have any chance of success.⁸³ It was this reporting that led the FCO to conclude that a CARICOM non-military solution was in the ascendency and that the belligerent talk from the OECS and Barbados and Jamaica of Saturday had dissipated.⁸⁴

Sure enough when Jamaica's Prime Minister Edward Seaga raised the option of a military solution there was strong opposition from Trinidad, Guyana, Belize and the Bahamas and the idea was rejected.⁸⁵ It was what the OECS had expected. The meeting concluded the next day with a majority decision (by 11 votes to one) to impose political and economic sanctions on Grenada and expel her from CARICOM.⁸⁶ Whilst the CARICOM meeting was in progress, Adams contacted Bullard to ask whether the UK had decided how to respond to the OECS' oral request for assistance. Bullard asked Adams when the promised formal written request would be forthcoming and was assured that it would be delivered the following morning and that 'a British contribution to the multinational forces would be of the greatest value.'⁸⁷ Adams told Bullard that the local assessment was that whilst the element of surprise might have been lost, it would not be essential to military success; in doing so he also implied that there was already a US contribution agreed.⁸⁸

At the FCO the CARICOM decision led officials to conclude that 'the dangers of gunboat diplomacy [were] much reduced'⁸⁹; the moment for a Caribbean inspired military operation seemed to have passed as a feasible non-military solution had emerged that was aligned with London's thinking. This was an initiative they could support 'to bring maximum pressure to bear on the authorities in Grenada by the threat of political and economic measures if they do not take early and effective action to put their house in order.'⁹⁰ Also, as Giffard recalled, 'the idea that a longer-term attempt to make CARICOM more useful was partly influenced by the fact that we were getting definite replies from Washington to the effect that it was not going to happen.'⁹¹ Indeed, the British Embassy reported that in Washington 'no decisions have been taken on further action. Work is proceeding on the various options. The Americans will be in touch immediately if they come to definite (sic) conclusions.'⁹² Howe had told Renwick that the next step was for US to evaluate reports from their consular officers who had gone to Grenada and from Presidential Emissary Ambassador Frank McNeil who had gone to Barbados to meet Prime Ministers Tom Adams, Eugenia Charles (of Dominica) and John Compton.⁹³ Finally, the tragic death of 241 marines in Beirut in a terrorist bomb attack that morning also led the FCO to conclude that Lebanon, rather than Grenada, would be the top priority for President Reagan in the coming days and Washington would be more risk averse when it came to launching a military action that could involve further losses.

London was also awaiting a report; Deputy High Commissioner to Barbados, David Montgomery, had paid a brief visit to Grenada from Saturday 22nd – Sunday 23rd during which time he met with British citizens, the Governor-

General, and members of the ruling RMC. Montgomery's report was received in the early hours of Monday 24th in London and did not make for easy reading. He felt it was difficult to see how further instability could be avoided and had serious doubts about the capability of the RMC – 'a clutch of inexperienced political opportunists dressed up as soldiers' – to run the country until a promised Cabinet was established. Montgomery speculated that factional bickering would result in the collapse of the RMC or Bishop supporters and the general populace would join forces against the RMC resulting in some form of unrest.⁹⁴

In his meeting with Governor-General Scoon, Montgomery briefed him on the discussions taking place in the Caribbean and that he [Scoon] was widely seen as the only remaining symbol of constitutional government and democratic authority. Scoon was not surprised and said that he had 'considered his position carefully and had decided that his best course would be to remain at government house and wait for an appropriate opportunity to arise where he could play a constructive role.'⁹⁵ Montgomery then explained that a US naval task force had been diverted to the region and that some people were interpreting this as the prelude to an invasion.⁹⁶ Montgomery continued:

I enquired whether if such military intervention took place, he would be prepared to support it by eg broadcasting a message to the people once the intervening force had secured the country. He replied, without any hesitation, that he would probably be eliminated if he made any move that directly challenged the authority of the RMC. He doubted therefore that he could ask for outside help. Short of that he could be relied upon to do whatever was required of him.⁹⁷

Montgomery's report made no mention of an invitation because at that point there was not one; London therefore concluded that 'the Governor [General] had made no request for help of any kind either to the deputy high commissioner or direct by telephone to Buckingham Palace.'⁹⁸ Montgomery's meeting with Scoon took on more significance when the US and OECS countries cited a written request from the Governor-General to justify the invasion. Prime Minister Adams revealed in a television address that 'by the kind offices of a friendly government, albeit a non-participating government, his [Scoon] views were sought well before the military operations commenced on the issuing of an invitation to friendly countries to enter Grenada and restore order.'⁹⁹ Speculation was rife that this referred to Montgomery and that he had taken a written invitation to Scoon. Had Montgomery failed to put London properly in the picture about his meeting? It would have been quite an omission. Montgomery was certainly supportive of military action and knew that Britain did not have the resources to respond in the timeframe the crisis was unfolding, even if they were willing to.¹⁰⁰ He had previously discussed the Governor-General's constitutional status with Adams, whom he

described as ‘the motivating force for everything’,¹⁰¹ as well as the outcome of his meeting with Scoon. That was the extent of his involvement though. It was only after this point that a request for military assistance from Scoon materialised as Adams, keen to keep the pressure on the US to accede to the OECS’ request for military assistance, took the initiative and formed the most positive, optimistic interpretation of Scoon’s comment that ‘he could be relied upon to do whatever was required of him’ as a green light for an oral request to be followed by a written invitation once Scoon had been secured.¹⁰² Even if Montgomery had reported that the Governor-General had issued a request for assistance it would have cut little ice in London who had not responded to the OECS’ request.

No Justification Morally or Legally for Action

It was not until Monday morning at 10:00 am that Ministers finally met to discuss the situation and the OECS’ request. Foreign Secretary Geoffrey Howe, who had spent the weekend at a European Foreign Ministers meeting in Athens, provided an update on the CARICOM meeting outcome, Montgomery’s visit to Grenada, and the unchanged situation in Washington. Recently released FCO records reveal that discussion focused on the pros and cons of military intervention, which shows that Howe’s later claim that the government had told Washington of their opposition to military action on Friday 21st October was untrue. MoD contingency planning had indicated that any military action would require several days of preparation. In favour of action was that it was, as some of Grenada’s neighbours viewed it, an opportunity to clean up the mess in Grenada and that: the penalty of failing to respond to a request for military assistance could be that Grenada might become irreversibly Communist; the Caribbean governments might also lose confidence in our willingness or capacity to support them; we could have difficulties with the Americans if they decided intervention was desirable.¹⁰³ This final point was prescient but did not seem to receive much consideration, possibly reflecting just how unlikely they thought military action was.

The main argument presented for not intervening was, put simply, as far as London was concerned – there was no justification morally or legally for action unless lives were at risk. Several other negatives were also identified: it would divide the Commonwealth (just before the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting due in November); it would provide a golden propaganda opportunity to the Soviet bloc; it would also mean British troops intervening ‘following a quarrel between left-wing revolutionaries, not coming to the rescue of a constitutionally elected government’ and then facing a situation where extrication might be tricky given that there was no organisation in Grenada to work with to rebuild government.¹⁰⁴ What overshadowed these considerations in the FCO’s mind was that all the signs were that no military

action was likely from Washington and the Caribbean countries advocating action could not act alone. The meeting's conclusion was that:

The balance of argument is against military intervention. We should therefore explore other possibilities of bringing pressure to bear on Grenada to return to constitutional government. CARICOM governments are likely to impose economic and political sanctions ... I recommend that we should respond to this as positively as we can compatibly with our other obligations.¹⁰⁵

Whilst there was broad agreement on this position not everyone was confident that action was unlikely. As the meeting was breaking up the Chief of the Defence Staff, Field Marshall Edwin Bramall, said to the Prime Minister that 'I have no collateral for this at all but I feel in my water that the Americans are going to go into Grenada'. A surprised Mrs Thatcher's response was 'what on earth would make them do a stupid thing like that?'¹⁰⁶ Bramall recalls mentioning the bombing in Beirut and the Cuban presence in Grenada. Thatcher turned to Howe and asked his view; Howe said the FCO had been in touch with Washington and been assured that things were proceeding in slow time and there were no plans for an intervention.¹⁰⁷ The telling point was Thatcher's response which revealed her basic view that intervention would be 'stupid' and that judgment did not change. As Bramall later concluded, she had no intention of invading and didn't think others should.¹⁰⁸

The outcome of the meeting was communicated to Ambassador Wright in Washington just before 2:00 pm In contrast to what Howe had told the Prime Minister, the cable tended to reflect the growing concern of some FCO officials that the US might act, although still firmly believing that Washington would keep its promise to consult London first. With a sense of urgency that had been missing to date, the cable stated that 'although the Americans have undertaken to consult us I am concerned at the possibility that they might be moving towards early direct intervention'; Wright was instructed to put the word in quickly at the 'highest level available' that London saw no grounds on which military intervention could be justified internationally and that:

we are under no illusions as to the character of those currently in authority in Grenada ... It is only after careful consideration of the alternatives that we have reached the conclusion that political and economic pressure primarily from within the region but with outside support, is the best way of dealing with them.'¹⁰⁹

This was conveyed to President Reagan and was the first time that London had told Washington that they thought intervention was unjustified.

At 4:00 pm Howe was due to provide an update on the situation in Grenada to the House of Commons. The draft statement focused on two points: firstly, British nationals and the Governor-General do not appear to be in imminent danger although the situation remained extremely volatile and HMS Antrim has been put on standby to evacuate our community if necessary. Secondly,

the government had been in close touch with CARICOM countries and would be discussing the best way of achieving the restoration of order in Grenada.¹¹⁰ Interestingly there was no mention of being in contact with the US.

The draft prepared answers to supplementary questions included: 'Have we had any request from the OECS or CARICOM to intervene in any way – no' and

Has Mr Adams (Prime Minister of Barbados) requested our participation or co-operation in international intervention? Our exchanges with individual Caribbean leaders in the region must naturally remain confidential [but no request has been received from either of the regional organisations].

This was only true if it was a written request. Whilst the statement had not mentioned the US, the draft answers did: 'Are the US using or about to use force? We have no reason to think so.'¹¹¹ Edwards recalled that there was a growing feeling amongst some FCO officials in London that it would be unwise to rule out the possibility of action, as indicated in the earlier cable to Ambassador Wright, and that an open-ended answer would be prudent. Edwards recalls strongly disagreeing with Brian Fall, the Foreign Secretary's Principal Private Secretary, on this point but both Fall and Howe felt that it was important to say something firmer and positive and settled on 'I know of no such intention.'¹¹² The words would soon return to haunt Howe.

Howe made his short statement to the House and took questions. Shadow Foreign Secretary Dennis Healey asked whether US intervention was likely. Howe replied, 'I know of no such intention'. When pushed on the point by another MP, Howe assured the House that 'we are keeping in the closest possible touch with the United States Government and the Caribbean Governments ... I have no reason to think that American military intervention is likely.'¹¹³ Whilst this was technically true as the US had promised to consult London before any decision was made, it directly contradicted the cable sent to Ambassador Wright earlier that afternoon about London's suspicions that military action was increasingly likely. MPs did not think to ask whether the Caribbean countries had asked for assistance.

In London on the surface it looked as though the CARICOM preference for a non-military solution had prevailed, although the OECS, Barbados and Jamaica were still pushing for a military solution although no written request had been received. Nonetheless, the military preparation for an intervention had been advancing; London knew that Washington had diverted a carrier group towards Grenada and Prime Minister Adams had revealed the nature of the gradual military build-up with US helicopters in C-130 Hercules transport planes already in airport hangers in Barbados. However, when the MoD asked WIAD about this on the afternoon of Monday 24th October they were told that it was 'only rumour.'¹¹⁴ The previous day the British Naval Attaché to the Caribbean, Captain Hugh Peers, happened to be travelling from Antigua to Barbados and amongst his fellow passengers were 15 surprised

looking members of the Antiguan Defence Force, ‘going to Barbados for training, nothing to do with Grenada’ as Peers put it.¹¹⁵ In Jamaica, the British Defence Attaché to the Caribbean, Colonel Pat Beaumont, had learnt from General Robert Neish of the Jamaican Defence Force (JDF) that a JDF company under Colonel Ken Barnes would be departing for Barbados that Sunday as a visible demonstration of Jamaica’s willingness to contribute to a military solution; the timing also made it clear that the order had been given before the CARICOM meeting.¹¹⁶ Beaumont bagged himself a seat on the same Air Jamaica flight and the next morning in Barbados met with Colonel Barnes who had attended an early morning clandestine briefing by Colonel Rudyard Lewis (Commander of the BDF) and US Marine General George Crist. Beaumont garnered full details of the operation which was timed to go ahead anytime from first light on Tuesday 25th.¹¹⁷ Peers recalls that:

While the High Commission struggled on with their obsession with chartering a plane, which was clearly impossible, to evacuate British nationals Colonel Pat [Beaumont] tried vainly to explain that “it was all about to happen.” Even when the penny dropped it took ages to send the Flash signal to London – the well-worn FCO procedure ... of drafting, typing, correcting, and finally retyping a signal for transmission was apparently interrupted frequently with local irrelevancies.¹¹⁸

Ambassador Bish had informed Bullard at noon that whilst US military dispositions were far advanced the political decision had yet to be taken.¹¹⁹ Beaumont’s report confirmed Bish’s statement but contradicted the cable traffic the High Commission had been copied into between London and Washington.

The High Commission had seen London’s cable to Ambassador Wright in Washington communicating their support for diplomatic pressure rather than intervention. Peers’ account notes that

to our [the High Commission] astonishment we received a signal from London reporting the Cabinet’s deliberations about what to do in Grenada which was “nothing” ... Even in the High Commission at Barbados – not the most hawkish lot – the signal was received with disbelief.¹²⁰

The assumption had been that the UK would support the US position. In a final attempt to make London aware of the reality of the situation, Bullard acknowledged the force of London’s arguments but emphasised several key points:

(A) it is now publicly known that a number of Caribbean countries support the idea of a multinational peacekeeping operation ... (B) though the lives of British and other non-Grenadians on the island are not as far as we know at present at risk, the position could change very quickly ... (c) we were unable today to fly in a charter plane to bring out from Grenada those British citizens (about 45) who want to leave.¹²¹

Drawing on Beaumont’s report, Bullard warned London that ‘at the moment all the evidence here suggests that the operation is going ahead without us and that it could be mounted as early as first light tomorrow, 25 October.’¹²²

Countdown

Ambassador Wright was invited to the White House at 3:00 pm where Under-Secretary Lawrence Eagleburger showed him a letter that was on its way from President Reagan to Prime Minister Thatcher that Washington were 'actively considering' responding to the OECS' request for help with 'direct action against Grenada' and that the President had sent a special emissary, Ambassador Frank McNeil, to Barbados to consult with the Caribbean leaders concerned. An experienced diplomat, Wright adroitly asked 'whether McNeil's mission was to recommend [following word underlined] whether the US should intervene, or [following word underlined] how it should do so. The answer it seemed to me was: how.'¹²³ Eagleburger noted London's preference for political and economic sanctions but added that 'in the US analysis the nature of those now in charge left no room for hope about the future direction of Grenada.'¹²⁴ In his report to London, where President Reagan's letter had already been received, Wright conveyed Eagleburger's caution that 'the US administration would not understand if we actively lobbied against the course of action they had almost but not quite decided upon.'¹²⁵ In London, Prime Minister Thatcher's mood would not be one of understanding.

President Reagan's letter had reached the Cabinet Office at 6:47 pm It revealed that the President was 'giving serious consideration to the OECS request' for US participation in a military operation in Grenada and would welcome the Prime Minister's thoughts on the matter.¹²⁶ Thatcher was informed by her Private Secretary John Coles who felt that there was 'no sense of urgency or haste' in the letter.¹²⁷ She consulted briefly with Howe and Heseltine before requesting that the FCO draft a response counselling caution and reasons why military action might be unwise for her to consider when she returned from a dinner engagement. For London this was the long-awaited consultation that Washington had promised. The draft response started by supporting the objective of restoring security and democracy in Grenada and that close consultation would be needed on how to achieve this before any decisions are taken; it is then suggested that Luce, who had just arrived in Washington on other business, should have urgent confidential talks with President Reagan's people.¹²⁸ The draft also contains a rather disingenuous claim about the OECS request:

It is of course essential that we should have the support of the democratic governments in the area. But it is difficult in present circumstances to establish their precise views. The Prime Minister of Barbados has made his position clear to us, as he has to you. But Barbados is not a member of the OECS.¹²⁹

It was as if the reporting from the High Commission in Barbados had not existed. Bullard had made it crystal clear that Adams was the prime mover in the OECS initiative and to imagine that the OECS' viewpoint would be different from his was folly. In summary Thatcher's message was that:

I have serious doubts about mounting a military operation. It could endanger the lives of those we wish to protect. And it is hard to see how such an operation against the regime in Grenada, however repellent that regime might be, could be justified to the world ... I am sure that we need to weigh very carefully whether, given all these problems, a policy of bringing to bear the maximum economic, political and diplomatic pressure would not be wiser than military action.¹³⁰

At this point London was overtaken by events. At 10:00 pm, before the reply was sent, another letter from President Reagan arrived stating that he had decided to 'respond positively' to the OECS' request, as had Barbados and Jamaica.¹³¹ London's response to this dramatic development has been covered in depth elsewhere¹³²; in a nutshell a written response was sent stating that there was no credible justification for military action. Thatcher followed this up with a short phone call to Reagan urging him to 'consider her [earlier] reply very carefully indeed'; Reagan agreed to but made clear that 'we are already at zero'.¹³³ The penny now dropped and the extent to which London had been misled by its closest ally became apparent. With military action now inevitable a cable was sent to the High Commission in Barbados referring to Beaumont's earlier report of impending military action, saying rather wishfully that the FCO were making representations on the subject in Washington and it was uncertain whether these could affect the timing or direction of an operation. The High Commission were told to take no further action.¹³⁴ In Washington Ambassador Wright was told to convey London's instruction that the US should take all necessary steps to protect UK nationals in Grenada 'urgently and without fail tonight at the highest possible level'.¹³⁵ Finally, HMS Antrim, which had just arrived off Grenada, was ordered to keep her distance from the gathering US invasion force.

The deception came as a terrible shock to Thatcher, who prided herself on her close relationship with President Reagan; she recalled feeling 'dismayed and let down' and that 'at best the British Government had been made to look impotent; at worst we looked deceitful'.¹³⁶ As Moore shows, even the series of letters soliciting Thatcher's advice were 'just flattery' and 'a charade, carefully worked out' by Washington at the SSG meeting on Saturday 22nd.¹³⁷ Thatcher and Howe both faced bumpy rides explaining the situation to the House of Commons on Tuesday 25th as the invasion was underway without condemning or condoning it. In an effort to repair fences Reagan called on October 26 during the Commons debate and broke the ice by joking that 'if I were there Margaret, I'd throw my hat in the door before I came in' then going on to apologise for any embarrassment caused and explaining that the need for secrecy and fear of a leak was the reason London was not informed sooner. In her memoirs Thatcher recalls that she was 'not in the sunniest of moods' when Reagan called and that 'there was not much that I felt able to say and so I more or less held my peace'.¹³⁸ A recording of the call was declassified in 2014 and provided an added dimension, revealing what Moore terms

Thatcher's 'chilly politeness.'¹³⁹ At a previously scheduled meeting in Brussels on 27 October Howe and US Secretary of State George Shultz met twice. Howe explained that the Prime Minister's message to President Reagan reflected 'deeper anxieties,' particularly the impact on the cruise missile deployment, and underlined the importance of consultation and the need for it to be credible; Howe made it clear that there should be no repeat performances.¹⁴⁰ Rather than looking forward, Howe and Thatcher both turned to the media and criticised the US action; Howe appeared on LWT's *Weekend World* and Thatcher on a BBC World Service phone-in. Washington were dismayed and surprised by Mrs. Thatcher's 'strident and persistent' reaction.¹⁴¹ FCO officials were also concerned about Mrs. Thatcher's position;¹⁴² whilst understanding her views there was disquiet about the continuing focus on the lack of consultation which was not helpful, and that London needed to communicate its desire to work with Washington to restore democracy to Grenada and make clear that they did not disagree on the ends, just the means.

Conclusion

Although the FCO did not accept the FAC Report's criticisms they were unsurprisingly content with its forward-looking focus. However, officials were 'slightly taken aback by the unbalanced and single-minded press response to the Report ... [they] ignored almost everything in the Report except the critical adjectives.'¹⁴³ Indeed, the papers seized on the suggestions of lethargy and passivity with aplomb: typical examples were the *Daily Mail* – 'Britain "dithered" as U.S. invaded' – and the *Times* – 'Officials "lethargic" over Grenada crisis' and 'Whilst Britain Slept.'

The FAC's charge of lethargy against the FCO can be dismissed. The Committee felt that by relying on 'normal diplomatic channels' to convey their view, the FCO were 'poorly equipped to evaluate accurately the signals coming from the Caribbean Governments' and queried why the FCO did not send a representative directly to the scene as the US did.¹⁴⁴ Whilst the Americans had sent a special emissary, Ambassador McNeil, his purpose was to make an independent assessment of the seriousness of the OECS request and emphasise the need for a written invitation if the US were to act, which was drafted during McNeil's meeting with the Caribbean leaders. This was not a meeting to convey views; Washington had already made the decision to act although the final 'go' order had not yet been given. The FCO were quite correct that their representatives in the region were best placed rather than an external emissary from London. High Commissioner Bullard and First Secretary Mark Williams met with Prime Minister Adams daily; Williams was the MI6 officer in the region and had a good working relationship with Adams who made good use of the intelligence channel to London. Deputy High Commissioner David Montgomery was in contact with his American counterpart several times a

day, and visited Grenada and met with Governor-General Scoon and British citizens; Williams was in touch with his American counterpart regularly, and Second Secretary John Kelly based in Grenada provided valuable ongoing reports to the High Commission which was the main source of information for the Americans prior to their own diplomats visiting the island on Saturday 22nd. As detailed above, the British High Commission diplomats correctly assessed the OECS' strong desire for military action, supported by Barbados and Jamaica, and made a clear and bold recommendation to London that if an invasion did go ahead then they should support it or at least not oppose it.

Unfortunately, the High Commission was side-lined once the OECS request was received in London. The only substantive cable from the FCO that the High Commission received subsequently was sent on Saturday 22nd enquiring about the possibility of a negotiated solution. When Howe was asked by the FAC why he and Luce did not call Prime Ministers Adams and Charles directly, Howe responded that the High Commission was copied into cables between the FCO and the Washington Embassy and so 'our reaction would be known in that way ... the intention was that our view was conveyed throughout the weekend.'¹⁴⁵ This was news to Bullard:

I had no instructions over the weekend to speak to Adams or to any of the other island Prime Ministers ... I did not tell Adams what I was saying to London, so that at no time could he have known from me what Ministers' likely response to a US-led invasion was going to be. I did not know it myself.¹⁴⁶

It was not until mid-afternoon local time on Monday 24th that Bullard received a cable from London explaining that there would be no reply ready to convey to Adams before London had got the US' view.¹⁴⁷ There were two key reasons that Bullard received no instructions and the High Commission was side-lined. Firstly, FCO officials decided that any response to the OECS request must depend upon consultation with Washington.¹⁴⁸ After all, the US would be the ones providing the muscle for any action so divining their intentions became of paramount importance so the thinking went. Secondly, it was considered that until Ministers met on Monday 24th it was almost impossible to talk to the Caribbean Governments 'without either urging action or inaction – or at the very least leaving an impression that we were doing one or the other.'¹⁴⁹ Reflecting on the situation sometime later, Ure concluded that discussions with the Caribbean leaders 'presupposed a degree of certainty about our attitude which did not exist over that weekend.'¹⁵⁰ With this in mind the FCO decided that the right preliminary moves were to ascertain what was happening in Grenada, hence Montgomery's visit, rather than making clear their doubts to Prime Ministers Adams and Seaga.¹⁵¹ This guaranteed that London would not receive a written OECS request as Adams had made clear that his invitation was oral but formal and that once Britain had responded a formal written response would follow. As Bullard was not given any response to convey no written

invitation was ever going to appear. It was therefore ironic that the FCO and Downing Street subsequently chose to emphasise the fact that the formal written OECS invitation was never received, only 'an oral unsubstantiated one' from a non-OECS member; Howe later confirmed even if a written invitation had been received it would have made no difference to London's position.¹⁵² What mattered to London was Washington's position; CARICOM's opposition to military action was convenient.

There was also another factor in play as some FCO officials' attitude towards the High Commission's reporting was influenced by the fact that the Caribbean had never featured highly on the FCO's list of priorities which was reflected in the level of resource and staff investment. Often disparagingly referred to by some officials as a diplomatic backwater, there was a degree of dismissiveness evident in London towards events in the Caribbean and the reporting from the High Commission in Barbados; senior FCO officials described the reporting as 'piecemeal' and being received 'not quite in time.'¹⁵³ Edwards' recollection was that 'there were indications that the OECS member states were beginning to deploy forces or get forces organised in the expectation or hope, but nothing about American intervention came from the Caribbean, except that it might happen.'¹⁵⁴ When a FAC delegation visited the Caribbean in January 1984 they found the High Commission staff very discrete about the FCO's performance despite the fact that many of them could not comprehend London's lack of understanding about what was occurring and why they did not wake up to the High Commission's reporting.¹⁵⁵

The FCO paid more attention to the reports from the High Commission in Trinidad and Tobago about the CARICOM meeting because it coincided with London's thinking. Of course, the CARICOM call for sanctions did not explain how, when, or if, they would work but as Edwards explained: 'since we were not in a position to intervene militarily and not anxious to do so ... we were naturally keen that any other opportunity should be explored' and 'I do not think that I said it was the best option that we were looking for other than a military intervention ... It was all part of the process of trying to avoid an inevitable military intervention.'¹⁵⁶ Further discussion of CARICOM's non-military solution did not happen as it was felt that it would prejudice the outcome of expected forthcoming discussions with Washington.¹⁵⁷ Similarly, Montgomery's report of his meeting with Governor-General Scoon did not mention a request for assistance and so no action was necessary.

The FAC's description of the British government reacting passively to events unfolding in the Caribbean is harder to dismiss and centres on two misjudgements. Firstly, whilst in the period between Bishop's arrest and death FCO officials exchanged thoughts with the American Embassy in London, after that, as Giffard later noted, 'there had been no serious consultation about intervention with us ... The Americans had no grounds for supposing that these events might not have inclined our own thinking.'¹⁵⁸ The idea of taking the

initiative and initiating consultation with Washington after Bishop's death and prior to the OECS request does not appear to have crossed FCO officials' minds even though they had long known that there was 'an interventionist party in US thinking about Grenada.'¹⁵⁹ It was not until a week after the invasion that Howe's Principal Private Secretary, Brian Fall, sent a note to the FCO stating that 'the Secretary of State has commented that it now occurs to him that the murder of Bishop was a point where we might ... have given thought to initiating consultations with the Americans.'¹⁶⁰

Secondly, as Bullard concluded, 'where I think we can be faulted is in not questioning the need for a military solution earlier and more strongly than we did.'¹⁶¹ Howe's claim that London communicated their concerns to Washington on Friday 21st, and again on Saturday 22nd, was simply wrong; the initial contact only aimed to find out the US' likely response to the OECS request. As detailed above, it was only on Monday 24th that London expressed their view to Washington that intervention was unjustified and that sanctions were preferable.

In their response to the FAC report's charge of passivity the FCO outlined the measures they had taken over the weekend: the diversion of HMS Antrim, Montgomery's meeting with the Governor-General, monitoring the CARICOM discussion and decision, and the constant contact with Washington policymakers. Giffard's view was that this level of activity could 'only [be] regarded as inadequate if it was thought that we should have made the assumption that the Americans were going to brush us aside.'¹⁶² However, the weekend between learning of the OECS request late on Friday 21st and the OD(EM) meeting on Monday 24th saw FCO officials in London watching and waiting; meetings that were held largely focused on what the US might do, based on the reporting from the Embassy in Washington, and preparing papers for the OD(EM) meeting; the only major decision taken was to divert HMS Antrim, something which had first been raised on October 17.

From the start London put all their eggs in one basket – how would Washington respond? – trusting that their closest ally would keep their word and consult if any military action was contemplated. London had no reason to think that Washington would deliberately mislead them or keep them in the dark and this aspect genuinely left 'disproportionate bruises on both sides' of the Anglo-American relationship.¹⁶³ The focus on Washington meant that insufficient attention was paid to the information being received from the High Commission in Barbados as the FCO officials did not consider that it would contribute anything towards finding out what Washington were planning.¹⁶⁴ The reporting from Trinidad and Washington aligned with London's thinking which viewed sanctions and US gunboat diplomacy as bringing pressure to bear on the RMC and providing time to allow the situation to be resolved peacefully. The OECS' desire for a military solution ran contrary to this and London never planned to respond to their 'oral but formal' request.

Operation Urgent Fury's success was inevitable given the military imbalance but American troops met some stiff resistance and the fighting was not over until 28 October and hostilities officially concluded on 3 November. The invasion was widely popular with Grenadians with a CBS News poll finding 91 per cent in favour.¹⁶⁵ Although the Eastern Caribbean still had a close relationship with Britain post-independence, there was quite a bit of criticism by the Caribbean media and politicians accusing London of abandoning them in their hour of need. Adams for example suggested that '[t]hey [London] could not take us seriously enough perhaps, because we are small islands where unimportant people live.'¹⁶⁶ Much of it was political rhetoric but could not be totally ignored as London now had to make a decision as to how they should engage with the restoration of democracy in Grenada and what this would mean for engagement with the Caribbean more widely. Ministers agreed that Britain's role was 'not to lead or to lag and respond positively to requests coupled with diplomatic activity to encourage others. We should give practical assistance.'¹⁶⁷ In late November a £750k loan to Grenada for capital aid and technical cooperation was announced, followed by a one million pound loan in February 1984.¹⁶⁸ It was the start of close cooperation with the US, Eastern Caribbean leaders and the Governor-General over the following year which culminated in the restoration of democracy in Grenada at the ballot box in December 1984 and, in the longer run, what Edwards described as a 'real attempt for us [Britain] to get alongside the Americans and talk about the Caribbean thoughtfully and its longer-term future.'¹⁶⁹

Notes

1. The OECS was established in 1981 and consisted of Antigua and Barbuda, Dominica, Grenada, Montserrat, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines. Barbados and Jamaica also responded to the OECS request.
2. Gilmore, *The Grenada Intervention*, 103.
3. FAC, *Grenada*, xviii.
4. *Ibid.*
5. FCO, 1984, 6. Cmnd 9267.
6. The literature consists mainly of biographies, autobiographies, and studies of the Anglo-American relationship: Thatcher, *The Downing Street Years*; Howe, *Conflict of Loyalty*; Renwick, *Fighting with Allies*; Moore, *Margaret Thatcher*; Campbell, *Margaret Thatcher*; Smith, *Reagan and Thatcher*; Aldous, *Reagan & Thatcher*; and Treharne, *Reagan and Thatcher's Special Relationship*. One exception is Payne, "The Grenada Crisis."
7. FAC, *Grenada*, xii.
8. Author's interview with Sydney Giffard, 9 November 2000. Author's interview with John Edwards, 22 June 2009.
9. FAC, *Grenada*, 10.
10. In exchange for 50 ships, small arms and ammunition, the US obtained land leases in the Bahamas, Jamaica, St. Lucia, Trinidad, Antigua and Barbuda, British Guiana and air and naval base rights in Bermuda.

11. Mawby, "Overwhelmed in a Very Small Place," 244.
12. Sim and Anderson, "The Caribbean Strategic Vacuum," 4. Quester, "Trouble in the Islands." The remaining WIAS members secured independence in quick succession – Dominica (1978), Saint Lucia (1979), St. Vincent and the Grenadines (1979), Antigua and Barbuda (1981) and Saint Kitts and Nevis (1983).
13. Rossin, *United States-Grenada Relations*, 12.
14. Bishop, "In Nobody's Backyard, 13 April 1979," 29.
15. The proposal would have left Bishop as Prime Minister and Chairman of the Central Committee but made Coard Chairman of the Political Bureau, the policymaking body, which would have allowed him to move the revolution further left than Bishop had been willing to do.
16. D. Montgomery to FCO, "Grenada," 14 October 1983, no time, Bridgetown 289, PREM 19/1048, The National Archives (hereafter TNA), Kew, available via the Margaret Thatcher Foundation (hereafter MTF), <https://www.margarethatthatcher.org/document/128141>.
17. The contingency plan for such an operation was regularly updated by the British High Commission staff.
18. J. Edwards to J. Ure, "Grenada," letter, 17 October 1983, FCO 44/3055, TNA.
19. J. Louis to State Department, "British Comments on Bishop's 'Slow Toppling'," 18 October 1983, 181511Z, London 22270. <https://foia.state.gov/Search/Results.aspx?searchText=grenada&beginDate=19831015&endDate=19831031&publishedBeginDate=&publishedEndDate=&caseNumber=>
20. J. Louis to State Department, "Grenada: British Views on Implications of Violence in St. Georges," 211537Z, 21 October 1983, London 22693. <https://foia.state.gov/Search/Results.aspx?searchText=grenada&beginDate=19831015&endDate=19831031&publishedBeginDate=&publishedEndDate=&caseNumber=>
21. For an account of events see: Thorndike, *Grenada*; Heine (ed.), *A Revolution Aborted*; Williams, *US-Grenada Relations*; Meeks, "Grenada Once Again," in Grenade (ed.), *The Grenada Revolution* and Puri, *The Grenada Revolution*.
22. Author's interview with Mark Williams, 19 January 2012.
23. O. Wright to FCO, "US Assessment is No Threat to Citizens," 202359Z, 20 October 1983, Washington 3053, FCO 44/3055, TNA.
24. *Ibid.* Motley was the key architect of the US response to the situation in Grenada at the State Department.
25. *Ibid.*
26. G. Bullard to FCO, "My Telegram No 308: Grenada," 20 October 1983, 202255Z, Bridgetown 314, FCO 44/3055, TNA.
27. R. Hart to J. Edwards, "Grenada," letter, 20 October 1983, FCO 44/3055, TNA.
28. J. Edwards to J. Ure, "Grenada: Safety of British Citizens," letter, 21 October 1983, FCO 44/3055, TNA.
29. Established in 1973, CARICOM was an older, larger, and more politically diverse regional organisation than the OECS, founded to promote economic integration and cooperation and foreign policy coordination. It did not have any security mechanism. In 1983 its 13 members were: Antigua and Barbuda, the Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Dominica, Grenada, Guyana, Jamaica, Montserrat, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines and Trinidad and Tobago.
30. G. Bullard to FCO, "Grenada," 21 October 1983, 211815Z, Bridgetown 320, PREM 19/1048, TNA.
31. *Ibid.*
32. *Ibid.* Bullard had reported this in a phone call with John Edwards at the FCO. *Ibid.*

33. Ibid.
34. G. Bullard to J. Edwards, "Grenada," letter, 21 October 1983, FCO 44/3065, TNA.
35. Ibid.
36. O. Wright to FCO, "Grenada," 21 October 1983, 212140Z, Washington D.C. 3064, FCO 44/3056, TNA.
37. Author's interview with Edwards.
38. Author's interview with Giffard.
39. Author's interview with Edwards.
40. G. Howe to British Embassy, Washington D.C., "Grenada Bridgetown Tel no 320 to FCO," 21 October 1983, 212030Z, London 1752, FCO 44/3056, TNA.
41. Author's interview with Williams.
42. O. Wright to FCO, "Your Tel no 1752: Grenada," 220105Z, 22 October 1983, Washington D.C. 3074, FCO 44/3056, TNA.
43. Ibid.
44. Author's interview with Edwards.
45. Moore, *Margaret Thatcher*, 119.
46. Ibid., 120.
47. G. Bullard to G. Howe, "Urgent Fury: The Invasion of Grenada," letter, 14 November 1983, FCO 44/3063, TNA.
48. Ibid. Underlined by the Prime Minister.
49. M. Bish to State Department, "The Organization of Eastern Caribbean States Officially, Formally Resolves Unanimously to Intervene by Force if Necessary on Grenada and Pleads for U.S. Assistance," 22 October 1983, 220831Z, Bridgetown 6514, obtained via US Freedom of Information Act.
50. G. Bullard to FCO, "Grenada and the OECS," 22 October 1983, 221645Z, Bridgetown 329, FCO 44/3056, TNA.
51. G. Howe to British Embassy, Athens, "Grenada," 22 October 1983, 221500Z, London 417, PREM 19/1048, TNA. London had a standing reciprocal arrangement with US about evacuation of citizens; Luce communicated the FCO's "hope and expectation" that this arrangement would be honoured if the US decided to evacuate their citizens. G. Howe to British Embassy, Washington D.C., "Grenada," 22 October 1983, 221035Z, London 1754, FCO 44/3056, TNA.
52. J. Sutton, "Sequence of Events in Defence Situation Centre Leading up to US Invasion of Grenada," note, 8 November 1983, DEFE 68/701, TNA.
53. Downing Street Duty Clerk to Prime Minister, "Situation in Grenada as at 1730 h," 22 October 1983, PREM 19/1048, TNA at MTF, <https://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/128215>.
54. John Edwards' papers.
55. J. Sutton, "Sequence of Events."
56. P. Voute, "Military Options," 22 October 1983, memo, FCO 44/3059, TNA.
57. Ibid.
58. Luce, *Ringing the Changes*, 109.
59. J. Coles to P. Ricketts, "Grenada," note, 24 October 1983, PREM 19/1048, TNA at MTF, <https://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/128216>.
60. Author's interview with Edwards.
61. G. Howe to British High Commission, Barbados, "Grenada," 22 October 1983, 221815Z, London 295, FCO 44/3056, TNA. Giffard also suggested that it might be worth pursuing St. Vincent's Prime Minister Milton Cato's offer to meet with General Austin. Author's interview with Giffard. Cato's offer was quickly overtaken by events.

62. G. Bullard to FCO, "Your Tel no 295: Grenada," 22 October 1983, 222359Z, Bridgetown 333, FCO 44/3056, TNA.
63. Author's interview with Edwards.
64. O. Wright to FCO, "My Telegram No. 3078: Grenada," 22 October 1983, 222150Z, Washington D.C. 3084, PREM 19/1048, TNA at MTF, <https://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/128213>.
65. Ibid.
66. "Britain's Grenada Shut-Out," *The Economist*, 22.
67. Clarridge, *A Spy for All Seasons*, 252. A time chart was drawn up where a cable would be sent to London via the British Ambassador at 3:00 pm (EST) on October 24. Moore, *Margaret Thatcher*, 121.
68. US President, "Remarks on Central America and El Salvador at the Annual Meeting of the National Association of Manufacturers, March 10, 1983." *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States*, Ronald Reagan Presidential Library, <https://www.reaganlibrary.gov/archives/speech/remarks-central-america-and-el-salvador-annual-meeting-national-association>.
69. O. Wright to FCO, "Grenada: Short-term conclusions, 30 October 1983," 302040Z, Washington D.C. 3225, FCO 44/3061, TNA.
70. Interview with Langhorne Motley, 16 August 1999. Interview with Craig Johnstone, 1 September 1994.
71. Moore, *Margaret Thatcher*, 121.
72. G. Shultz, *Turmoil and Triumph*, 330.
73. Harper, "Logistics in Grenada," 50.
74. The information was being shared with US embassy officials and via the intelligence services. Interview with Ludlow Flower, 27 October 1994. Interview with Mark Williams, 19 January 2012.
75. Telephone interview with Duane Clarridge, May 23, 1997. Clarridge was the Latin American Division Chief of the Directorate of Operations at the Central Intelligence Agency at the time.
76. Memorandum, "Grenada: No. 10 record of telephone conversation between Prime Minister and President Reagan," PREM 19/1048, TNA.
77. O'Shaughnessy, *Grenada*, 160.
78. Adkin, *Urgent Fury*, 90. Cuba did send Colonel Pedro Tortolo Comas, who had commanded a military mission in Grenada in 1982, to Grenada on Monday 24th to organise the approximately 800 Cuban workers there to defend their position but only if fired upon. The Cubans were lightly armed and were soon overwhelmed by the US force the next day and had to surrender. Cotman, *The Gorrion Tree*, 220. Colonel Tortolo retreated to the Soviet Embassy and later surrendered with other officials. He was subsequently demoted to private and shipped off to Angola where Cuban forces were fighting local guerrillas; he was killed in action in 1986. Adkin, *Urgent Fury*, 314.
79. Author's correspondence with senior FCO diplomat, 11 August 1997.
80. Moore, *Margaret Thatcher*, 122.
81. Email from Langhorne Motley to author, 4 January 2010. Motley explained that Howe's "participation in the overall scheme was minimal – to keep [Secretary of State George] Shultz apprised of DOD's [Department of Defense] thinking and plans. I only learned that he had been talking to embassy types after the event when the bad feelings started to surface." Ibid.
82. Moore, *Margaret Thatcher*, 122.
83. D. Lane to FCO, "Your Tel No 295 to Bridgetown: Grenada," 23 October 1983, 230025Z, Port-of-Spain 173, FCO 44/3056, TNA.

84. Author's interview with Edwards. Lane later reflected that London had allowed this to disproportionately shape their response. Author's interview with Lane, 7 March 2001.
85. All four had different reasons: Trinidad were strong proponents of the non-intervention principle; Guyana, a socialist ally of Grenada, firmly supported the principle of unanimity of decisions in CARICOM; Belize had a long-running border dispute with Guatemala and was dependent on Britain for its security; and the Bahamas, geographically distant, adopted a legalist position. Braveboy-Wagner, *The Caribbean in World Affairs*, 188.
86. Guyana voted against, arguing that no decision could be binding because Grenada had not been invited and the decision was not unanimous.
87. G. Bullard to FCO, "Grenada," 23 October 1983, 230445Z, Barbados 345, FCO 44/3056, TNA. Adams had in mind an SAS operation to rescue Governor-General Scoon. Ibid.
88. Ibid.
89. Author's interview with Edwards.
90. G. Howe to British Embassy, Washington D.C., "Grenada," 24 October 1983, 241350Z, London 1759, PREM 19/1048, TNA at MTF, <https://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/128143>.
91. Kandiah and Onslow, *Witness Seminars*, 36.
92. O. Wright to FCO, "My Tel no. 3084: Grenada," 23 October 1983, 232125Z, Washington D.C. 3087, PREM 19/1048, TNA at MTF, <https://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/128230>.
93. O. Wright to FCO, "My Tel no. 3084: Grenada," 24 October 1983, 240830Z, Washington D.C. 3089, FCO 44/3056, TNA. For an account of the McNeil meeting see Williams, *US-Grenada Relations*, 140–143.
94. G. Bullard to FCO, "Grenada: General Impressions: Following from Montgomery," 24 October 1983, Bridgetown 344, FCO 44/3056, TNA.
95. Ibid.
96. Author's interview with David Montgomery, 10 November 1995.
97. G. Bullard to FCO, "Grenada: General Impressions: Following from Montgomery," 24 October 1983, Bridgetown 344, FCO 44/3056, TNA.
98. Howe, *Conflict of Loyalty*, 327.
99. 'Governor General "in Aid Appeal",' *The Guardian*, 27 October 1983. It is Adams' version of events that Scoon echoes in his memoirs. He recalls that Montgomery raised the idea of a written invitation but that he had felt that it would be too risky but he was 'content for the message being conveyed (by Montgomery) to be regarded *pro tem*, as such a request with a formal written request from me to follow as soon as a secure, practicable means of communication became available.' Scoon, *Survival for Service*, 136.
100. Author's interview with Montgomery, 8 Nov. 1995.
101. Ibid.
102. Author's interview with former FCO official, 31 July 2010. The letter was produced by Barbadian and Jamaican officials. For a full account of this controversial episode see Williams, "Shrouded in Some Mystery."
103. "OD(EM): 1000 24 October, 1983," record of meeting, FCO 44/3056, TNA.
104. Ibid.
105. Ibid. This echoed her earlier reaction to the idea of an SAS operation to rescue the Governor-General.
106. Kandiah and Onslow, *Witness Seminar*, 43.
107. Ibid.

108. Author's interview with Edwin Bramall, 16 March 2001.
109. G. Howe to British Embassy, Washington D.C., "Grenada," 24 October 1983, 241350Z, London 1759.
110. UK, *Hansard Parliamentary Debates*, House of Commons (HC) 47, "Grenada," columns 27–30, 24 October 1983, <https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/1983-10-24/debates/f0bd55f1-67ad-45e1-8da6-870cab5d264b/Grenada>.
111. J. Ure to S. Giffard, "Parliamentary Statement on Grenada," letter, 24 October 1983, FCO 44/3056, TNA.
112. Author's interview with Edwards. Howe ended up using both phrases.
113. UK, *Hansard Parliamentary Debates*, HC 47, "Grenada," column 30, 24 October 1983. As US Deputy Secretary of State Kenneth Dam later put it: "He had absolutely no basis for saying so, as even the British Embassy here confirms, based upon their review of their notes of the briefing we gave them," Meeting with Prime Minister Eugenia Charles of Dominica, 25 October 1983, <https://foia.state.gov/Search/Results.aspx?searchText=&beginDate=&endDate=&publishedBeginDate=&publishedEndDate=&caseNumber=F-2011-00929>.
114. "Sequence of Events in Defence Situation Centre Leading up to US Invasion of Grenada," memo, 8 November 1983, DEFE 68/700, TNA.
115. Author's interview with Hugh Peers, 24 April 2018.
116. B. Smallman to FCO, "Grenada," 23 October 1983, 231813Z, Kingston 296, FCO 44/3056, TNA. Seaga, *The Grenada Intervention*, 25.
117. Author's interview with Patrick Beaumont, 18 February 2018. The operation would consist of three phases: (1) heliborne assaults on key targets; (2) transport mixed forces from Barbados to Pearls including 300 OECS soldiers and (3) US troops leave and Caribbean forces maintain order. G. Bullard to MoD, "Grenada: From Col Beaumont in Bridgetown for Cossec," 24 October 1983, 242120Z, Bridgetown no number, PREM 19/1048, TNA at MTF, <https://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/128234>. Bullard had not been keen to have Beaumont around and it took a cable from the Chief of Defence Staff to change that. Author's interview with Peers.
118. Author's interview with Peers.
119. G. Bullard to FCO, "Grenada," 24 October 1983, 241907Z, Bridgetown 347, FCO 44/3056, TNA.
120. Author's interview with Peers.
121. G. Bullard to FCO, "Your Tel no 1759 to Washington: Grenada," 24 October 1983, 242345Z, Bridgetown 349, FCO 44/3056, TNA.
122. *Ibid.* Prime Minister Adams phoned Mark Williams in the early hours of Tuesday 25th October and suggested he present himself at the airport. Williams was joined by Beaumont and over the next couple of hours they witnessed American forces departing for Grenada. Author's interview with Williams.
123. O. Wright to FCO, "Your Tel No 1759: Grenada and Telecon Wright/Fall," 24 October 1983, 242130Z, Washington D.C. 3099, FCO 44/3056, TNA.
124. *Ibid.*
125. *Ibid.*
126. White House to Cabinet Office, "Grenada: Reagan message to Margaret Thatcher (OECS request US participation in 'collective security effort' in Grenada)," message, 24 October 1983, 241847Z, no number, PREM 19/1048, TNA at MTF, <https://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/131574>.
127. J. Coles, "An Appreciation of Margaret Thatcher by Sir John Coles, Private Secretary for Foreign and Defence Affairs, 1981–84," MTF, <https://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/135761> (accessed 23 December 2021).

128. B. Fall to J. Coles, "Grenada," 24 October 1983, letter, PREM 19/1048, TNA at MTF, <https://www.margareththatcher.org/document/128414>.
129. *Ibid.*
130. *Ibid.*
131. White House to Cabinet Office, "Grenada: Reagan Message to Margaret Thatcher (situation in Grenada: US intervention)."
132. The fullest account to date is Moore, 125–128.
133. J. Coles to B. Fall, "Grenada," 25 October 1983, PREM 19/1048, TNA at MTF, <https://www.margareththatcher.org/document/128152> (accessed 23 December 2021).
134. G. Howe to British High Commission, Bridgetown, "Grenada," 25 October 1983, 250210Z, London 302, PREM 19/1048, TNA.
135. G. Howe to British Embassy, Washington D.C., "Grenada," 25 October 1983, 250224Z, Washington D.C. 1768, FCO 44/3057, TNA.
136. Thatcher, *The Downing Street Years*, 331.
137. Moore, *Margaret Thatcher*, 127.
138. Thatcher, *The Downing Street Years*, 333.
139. Moore, *Margaret Thatcher*, 130. The recording is available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/audio/2014/nov/10/ronald-reagan-margaret-thatcher-grenada-audio> (accessed 23 December 2021).
140. G. Howe to British Embassy, Washington D.C., "Grenada," 27 October 1983, 271730Z, Washington 1806, FCO 44/3062, TNA. John Goulden, Head of the FCO News Department, recalls that Shultz was very apologetic. Author's interview with John Goulden, 18 June 2020. Shultz even acknowledged that the letter to Prime Minister Thatcher should have been sent on Sunday 23rd October. R. Renwick to J. Ure, 'Consultations with the American about Grenada,' letter, 28 October 1983, FCO 44/3063, TNA.
141. US Deputy Secretary of State Kenneth Dam's record of a meeting with Thatcher at Chequers on November 7 noted that she was "extremely agitated about Grenada" and made clear that the signals that London had received suggested that no action was imminent and "to say that all this had put us in difficulty was to put it mildly." Kenneth Dam Diaries, "Sunday, November 6 to Wednesday, November 9, 1983," <https://foia.state.gov/Search/Results.aspx?searchText=&beginDate=&endDate=&publishedBeginDate=&publishedEndDate=&caseNumber=F-2011-00929>.
142. Some officials felt that the closeness of the relationship between Thatcher and Reagan meant that she took the snub too seriously and that it clouded her view of the issues. "Eight International Episodes, Grenada," All Souls College (University of Oxford), Foreign Policy Studies Programme Seminar Series, 20 January 1995.
143. J. Edwards to J. Ure, "FAC Report on Grenada," letter, 27 April 1984, FCO 44/3089, TNA.
144. FAC, *Grenada*, xix.
145. FAC, *Grenada*, 13.
146. G. Bullard, "FAC Report on Grenada," letter, 17 April 1984, FCO 44/3089, TNA.
147. G. Howe to British High Commission, Bridgetown, "Grenada," 24 October 1983, 241811Z, London 299, FCO 44/3057, TNA.
148. S. Giffard to J. Coles/A. Acland, "Grenada," letter, 30 October 1983, FCO 44/3063, TNA.
149. J. Ure to J. Edwards, "FAC Report on Grenada," letter, 19 April 1984, British Embassy, Brasilia, FCO 44/3089, TNA. Giffard echoed this: "we presented arguments against invasion only in Washington as we did not wish to appear to be rallying the Caribbean

- countries against the principle that firm action might be necessary.” S. Giffard, note to file, “Urgent Fury,” 25 November 1983, FCO 44/3065, TNA.
150. J. Ure, “FAC Report on Grenada.”
 151. S. Giffard to J. Coles/A. Acland, “Grenada.”
 152. Author’s interview with Geoffrey Howe, 6 November 2000. S. Giffard, “Grenada,” 30 October 1983. After the FAC report had mentioned his repeated promises that a letter would be handed over, Prime Minister Adams responded that “I don’t see the relevance of the letter to the issue.” J. Steele, “Adams hits back at UK,” *The Guardian*, 22 June 1984.
 153. Author’s interview with Edwards. Author’s interview with Giffard.
 154. Kandiah and Onslow, *Witness Seminar*, 42.
 155. Author’s interview with Bill Proctor, 23 May 2016.
 156. Kandiah and Onslow, *Witness Seminar*, 36.
 157. S. Giffard to J. Coles/A. Acland, “Grenada.”
 158. *Ibid.*
 159. *Ibid.*
 160. B. Fall to S. Giffard, “Grenada,” 1 November 1983, FCO 44/3062, TNA. Underlining in original.
 161. G. Bullard to G. Howe, “Urgent Fury: the Invasion of Grenada,” letter, 14 November 1983, British High Commission, Bridgetown, FCO 44/3063, TNA. Giffard also came to this conclusion, reflecting that London should have looked harder at the pros and cons of an early British military action. Interview with Giffard.
 162. S. Giffard to J. Coles/A. Acland, “Grenada.”
 163. O. Wright to FCO, “The Prime Minister’s Meeting with Kenneth Dam,” 4 November 1983, 050553Z, Washington D.C. 3332, PREM 19/1151.
 164. Author’s interview with Edwards.
 165. Clymer, “Grenadians Welcomed Invasion, a Poll Finds”.
 166. FAC, *Grenada*, lx.
 167. “Grenada: OD(EM)” record of meeting, 31 October 1983, FCO 44/3062, TNA.
 168. FAC, *Grenada*, xxxiv. Britain had fulfilled their existing aid commitments to Grenada under the PRG but declined to provide any new aid. The additional money brought Grenada more into line with the aid per capita of the other newly dependent islands. UK, *Hansard Parliamentary Debates*, HC 64, “Estimates Day, Class II, Votes 1 and 8,” 17 July 1984, <https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/1984-07-17/debates/bbacf2f3-a633-4140-9532-57482de6f110/EstimatesDay>. British aid focused on policing, training, infrastructure, and election preparations.
 169. Kandiah and Onslow, *Witness Seminar*, 51.

Disclosure Statement

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