



THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE  
WASHINGTON, THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

8 DEC 1983

Mr. Henry Anatole Grunwald  
Editor in Chief  
Mr. Ray Cave  
Managing Editor  
Time  
888 Sixteenth Street, N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20006

Dear Messrs. *Henry* Grunwald and Cave:

On October 27 you wrote to the President regarding the Administration's news information policy and the Grenada rescue operation. Since that time, hundreds of newsmen have been to Grenada and covered the story.

I am enclosing for your background a copy of an article that I wrote for the Los Angeles Times on November 13 on this subject. I hope this article helps to explain what occurred in Grenada and our thinking on the matter of initial press coverage.

Our firm belief is that our information policy has been a responsible one, and this Administration wants to continue to work with the media to find ways of informing the public without endangering military operations or risking American lives. Toward that goal, General Vessey has asked retired Major General Winant (Si) Sidle to chair a panel of experienced newsmen to study these and related questions.

Your letter has been forwarded to General Sidle, who will be in touch with you as he begins his important task.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Joe Entenza", is written below the word "Sincerely,".

Enclosure

51670

# Should the Press Have Been With the Military on Grenada?

## No: Secrecy Was Needed for Citizens' Safety

By Caspar W. Weinberger

WASHINGTON

**O**n the issue of whether there should have been media coverage of the initial stages of the Grenada operation, our initial thoughts as we planned the rescue mission on very short notice were not primarily on press relations, but on how to secure the evacuation of Americans as quickly and safely as possible and, in so doing, to minimize casualties to our own and Eastern Caribbean forces and to the Grenadian people.

Late Monday, Oct. 24, the President responded to an urgent request of the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States and a then-secret plea from the imprisoned governor general of Grenada and ordered U.S. troops to move into Grenada. Early Tuesday morning, Oct. 25, the first U.S. and Eastern Caribbean troops arrived.

Because we had very few hours to plan and carry out the Grenada operation, our intelligence was not as complete as we would have liked. However, we did know that Grenada had no government; there was a 24-hour shoot-on-sight curfew imposed by a gang responsible for assassinating Grenadian leaders several days before; several hundred Cuban construction workers were there, some working on a new airfield, and most had probably had Cuban military training, and there were more than 1,000 American citizens and other unprotected civilians. Finally, we knew that high-ranking Cuban military officers had arrived two days before, presumably to organize and

WEINBERGER...Pg. 2-F

### WEINBERGER...Continued

strengthen the Cuban military capability there.

Given these circumstances, two things became obvious to military planners: First, we must arrive in absolute secrecy to prevent Grenadian or Cuban troops from strengthening their resistance, or seizing American hostages; and second, that our forces could not be diverted from their main mission of ensuring the safety of U.S. citizens. With this in mind, the decision was made by the commanders to whom we entrusted this dangerous mission to withhold from the press advance notification of the Grenada operation and to keep reporters and other noncombatants off Grenada until the American citizens were safe, so as to utilize all our available resources for the actual rescue mission.

As it turned out, U.S. and Eastern Caribbean forces did encounter heavy hostile fire from Cuban and, to a lesser extent, Grenadian forces. Although the medical students and other U.S. civilians were not taken hostage, it took 48 hours to rescue and secure the evacuation of the 600 or more who wanted to leave. As soon as the evacuation was in its final stages, less than 48 hours after the operation began, members of

the press were flown into Grenada, although sporadic fighting continued, and they were given complete freedom and the run of the island,

and our total cooperation in arranging interviews, etc. We also arranged to fly press representatives back to Barbados every day so they could file their stories, because there were no transmission facilities on the island.

In an effort to keep the press informed prior to entry into Grenada, the Defense Department held briefings for reporters here in Washington and on Barbados. In addition, the department provided the press with unclassified film footage and photographs taken by military personnel during the first 48 hours of the Grenada operation.

As public officials, particularly those in national-security areas, we are sometimes faced with difficult choices. In this case we came down on the side of trying to provide for the security of military and civilian personnel. The unique circumstances surrounding the Grenada operation, particularly the uncertainties our troops would face, because we had so little time to plan or secure up-to-date intelligence, made it imperative that we rescue the medical students and other civilians before we added noncombatants to the personnel being sent to the island.

Caspar W. Weinberger is secretary of defense.