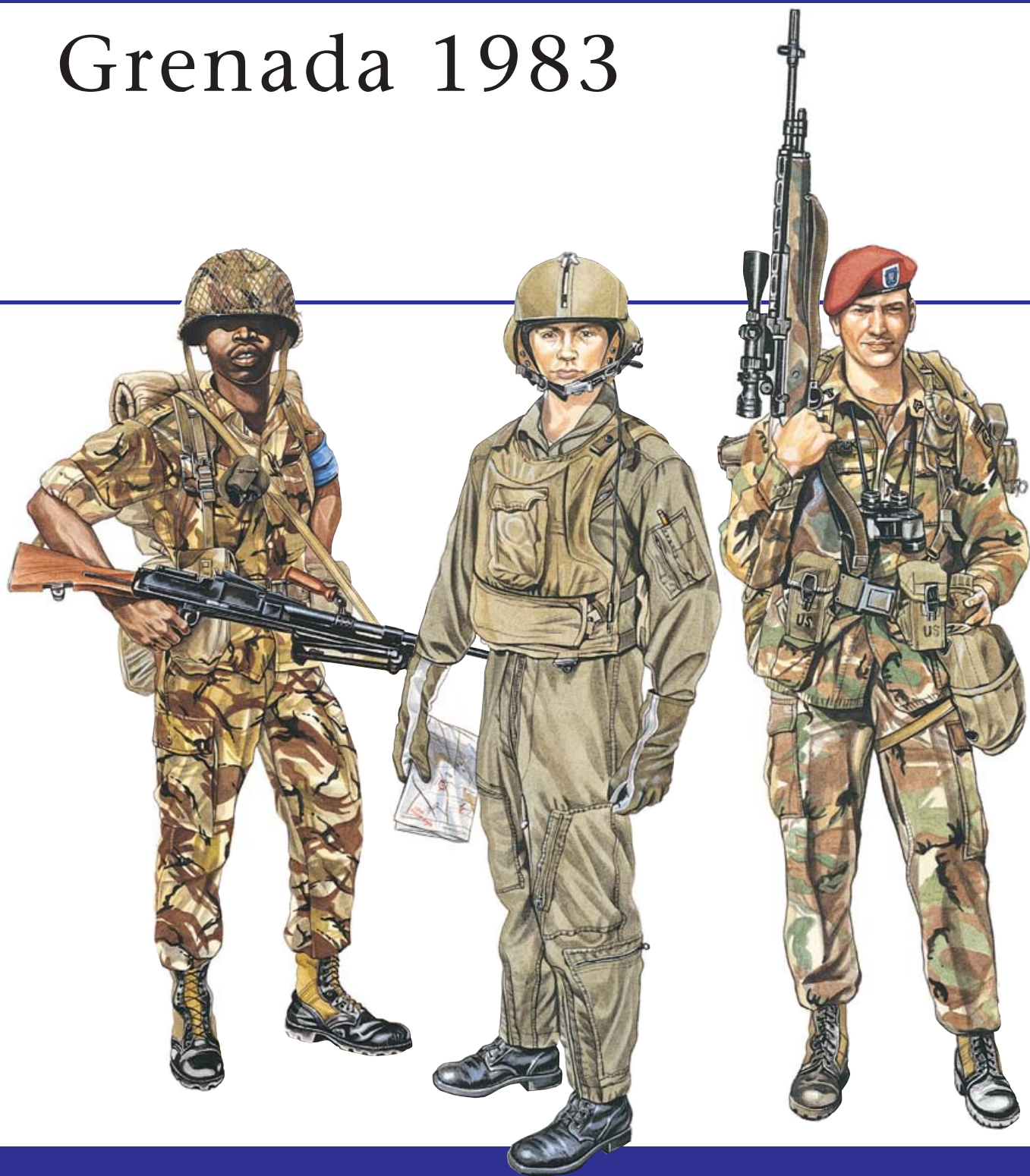


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## *The 'New Jewel' Movement*

The island of Grenada was first discovered by Columbus in 1498 on his third voyage to the New World. Thereafter, it passed through Spanish and French hands, and finally came under British ownership during the 18th century. Nutmeg and spices were introduced during the reign of George III, and soon became the island's chief export, remaining so until the present day. England governed Grenada directly as part of its Windward Islands Administration until the late 1950s. Early in the next decade, Britain sponsored two attempts to form her Caribbean colonies into a single federation. Failing in this, the individual islands were given independence within the British Commonwealth system, starting with Grenada in 1974. The island's first Prime Minister was the eccentric Sir Eric Gairy, a former trade union organiser. Gairy's administration combined a bizarre foreign policy with corruption and political repression at home. In March 1979 he was overthrown in a bloodless coup led by Maurice Bishop, a political rival long respected for his opposition to Gairy and his henchmen.

Bishop took power as head of Grenada's Provisional Revolutionary Government (PRG) in the name of his NEW JEWEL Movement Party: an acronym that stood for Joint Endeavor for Welfare, Education and Liberation. As in many Third World countries, the new leadership faced both political and economic problems, and Bishop and the NJM saw a solution in the example of Communist Cuba. Over the next four years they invited increasing assistance from both Cuba and other Communist states. This, plus Bishop's disinterest in holding elections, brought the PRG into conflict with American foreign policy in the region. The situation was aggravated by the PRG's announcement of its most ambitious project, a new

international airport at Point Salines at the south of the island.

To be built largely by Cuban workers, it featured a 9,000 ft runway—enough to take the largest jet aircraft. Its ostensible purpose was to improve Grenada's sagging tourist trade (the existing Pearls Airport could accept only twin-engined air traffic), but documents captured later also indicate a military potential. The Cubans planned to use the airport as a staging base for airlifting supplies to their troops in Africa, and as a refuelling stop for Soviet planes en route to Nicaragua. Work began in late 1979, and was scheduled for completion in early 1984.

By 1983, however, the PRG was facing increasing difficulties. Eastern Bloc aid proved something of a mixed blessing. The military and security forces benefited the most. By 1983 Grenada's People's Revolutionary Armed Forces (PRAF) outnumbered on their own the forces of all their Eastern Caribbean neighbours combined, and there were plans to expand them further in coming years. Cuba and Eastern Europe had done little for the country's economy, however. Most of their effort had been spent on improving Grenada's usefulness as a political and logistics base in the region. In addition, the heavy-handed advisors dispatched by Cuba had begun to antagonise the local population.

By the late summer of 1983, the NJM had split over the issue of the Communist connection. One faction, led by Bishop, was disappointed with progress and wanted closer ties with the West. A second, led by Deputy Prime Minister Bernard Coard, wanted to speed up the conversion to a Marxist state. The crisis came to a head on 13 October 1983, when Coard, having first obtained the backing of the military under Gen. Hudson Austin, ordered Bishop to step down from office. He was charged with failing to carry out the orders of the NJM's Central Committee, and placed under



**Marine helicopter crewman mans a .50cal. Browning MG from the gunner's position of a CH-46D Sea Knight. He wears the Navy/Marine Corps SPH-3B helmet, PASGT body armour and standard CWU-27 flight suit. The heavy canvas gauntlets facilitate changing hot barrels, clearing jams, etc. (US Marine Corps)**

house arrest. Several of his Ministers resigned in protest and were also arrested.

### **The Death of Bishop**

The arrests were greeted with shock and anger by the population. Over the next several days large pro-Bishop demonstrations occurred throughout the island. There were reports of unrest in the militia, and a general strike was called in the capital, St George's. On Tuesday 18 October crowds of students surged through the city chanting pro-Bishop, anti-Coard slogans, watched impassively by police and soldiers.

In the midst of the crisis, Foreign Minister Unison Whiteman returned from New York, where he was scheduled to address the United Nations, and began agitating for Bishop's release. On the morning of 19 October Whiteman began address-

ing a crowd in the streets of St George's. As the crowd swelled in numbers, the listeners decided to free Bishop themselves, and set out *en masse* for his official residence at Mount Royal. At first Bishop's guards stood their ground, even firing over the heads of the demonstrators; but in the end numbers prevailed and they finally allowed the crowd to free their prisoner.

After securing his release, Whiteman next persuaded Bishop to return with the crowd to St George's, where several of his Ministers were reportedly held at the 18th-century Fort Ruppert. Originally part of the harbour defences, the Fort was now used as a base for the People's Revolutionary Army. Another confrontation was avoided as the garrison, small and demoralised, gave up their arms to the crowd and permitted them to enter the Fort. While Bishop met with his chief supporters, the crowd continued to grow. At this point, PRA reinforcements arrived in the shape of three armoured personnel carriers and a truckload of soldiers.

After deploying in front of the Fort, the officer





**US Army Ranger from 1/75th Ranger Bn. leads two handcuffed PRA infantrymen into captivity at Point Salines. Slung over his shoulder is one prisoner's folding stock AKM, and in his right hand he carries their web gear of Soviet origin. The captives wear Cuban fatigue uniforms and boots, while the helmets are the latest Soviet type. The large letters picked out in white rocks on the hillside read 'Siempre es 26' ('It is always 26'), a reference to the date (26 July) celebrated in Cuba as the official beginning of the revolution which placed Castro in power. (US Army)**

cadet commanding the column gave the order to open fire. More than 100 Grenadians fell before the withering fire or were trampled in the ensuing panic.<sup>1</sup> 'Oh God, they have turned their guns on the masses', were Bishop's last recorded words. As survivors fled, the PRA moved quickly to re-arrest the leaders. Bishop, four of his Ministers and three prominent supporters were taken at once to an inner courtyard of the Fort. Shortly thereafter, they were put to death by the PRA. Education Minister Jacqueline Creft was beaten to death. Bishop, Whiteman and the others were shot as they knelt beside a basketball court. A 24-hour curfew was immediately imposed and notice was given that violators would be shot on sight.

<sup>1</sup>After giving the order to fire, the column commander, Officer Cadet Conrad Meyers, was himself shot dead by one of his own men, possibly by accident, along with two other soldiers.

## *The Decision for Intervention*

On the night of 19 October Gen. Austin spoke on the radio, offering his own version of events, and announcing the formation of a 16-member Revolutionary Military Council with himself as head. No mention was made of Coard, who was rumoured to have fled. (He was in fact acting as Austin's advisor at the time.) Under cover of a four-day curfew, arrests of prominent citizens were carried out. Included were local businessmen, former Bishop officials, PRA officers and NJM cadres suspected of disloyalty. The bodies of Bishop and the other victims were taken from Fort Ruppert and secretly buried in a garbage pit at Calivigny Camp on the east coast of the island.

Meanwhile, the news of Bishop's death was received with shock and horror throughout the normally placid Eastern Caribbean. Even those governments critical of his policies had generally adopted a 'wait and see' attitude toward the NJM. Now it had all ended in bloodshed. Amid newspaper calls for a boycott or embargo against