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Operation Uphold Democracy:

Military Support for Democracy in Haiti

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Conclusions

Uphold Democracy and its successor--the United Nations Mission in Haiti (UNMIH)--were successful for many reasons, but the most salient factors included:

Adequate Preparation Time. Nearly a year of detailed planning resulted in flexible, scenario-based operations plans that could be switched on short notice. Military units were able to train for specific tasks and readiness levels peaked for the operation. Such deep familiarity with planning pays off in increased flexibility during execution.

Unity of Support and Effort. ***Uphold Democracy*** enjoyed widespread support at many levels. The UN provided the mandate, the Organization of American States supported it, and many countries participated in both the Multinational Force (MNF) and in UNMIH with the U.S. military as the core and in command of both. Unity of effort was achieved as international, regional, non-government organizations (NGOs), and U.S. government civilian agencies worked closely with the MNF and UNMIH. Coalition consensus on objectives (even if the means to achieve them was sometimes in disagreement) was a key factor in the military success.

A Clear Mission with a Finite Endpoint. The U.S. military knew it was not going to occupy Haiti for the long term, nor try to run the country. Its mission was to get in, dismantle the repressive institutions that were preventing democratic government from taking root, and create a security buffer that would help the legitimate government get back on its feet and hold elections for a successor. Unclear, open-ended missions invite trouble; ***Uphold Democracy*** avoided that mistake.

Background

Operation ***Uphold Democracy*** was a U.S.-led, multinational military intervention authorized by the UN to restore the legitimate, democratically-elected government of Haiti to power. Democracy was, at best, a weak concept in Haiti, and it had been almost extinguished by a military coup in 1990. The operation provided the security needed to resume the development of democratic government in Haiti. ***Uphold Democracy*** removed the military ruler and demobilized the repressive Haitian army, making the return

of Haiti's president and the transition to a new democratically-elected president in 1996 possible. UNMIH oversaw these elections and the formation of the Haitian National Police (HNP).

Principal Objectives and Keys to Achieving Them

UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 940 authorized the use of all necessary means (including military force) to secure the departure of the coup leaders from Haiti, to restore the government of President Jean Bertrand Aristide to power, and to create a secure and stable environment that would allow the country to rebuild and advance democratic development. The UN mandate had three primary objectives: 1) Neutralize armed opposition and create a secure environment for restoration of the legitimate government of Haiti; 2) Restore and preserve civil order; and 3) Be prepared to pass responsibility for military operations in Haiti to the UNMIH.

First Objective: *Neutralize Armed Opposition and Create a Secure Environment for the Restoration of the Legitimate Government of Haiti.*

Multinational Force Composition

U.S. Forces- 21,000 Oct. 94	Guatemala- 134 Oct. 94
U.S. Forces- 18,000 Nov. 94	Costa Rica- 11 Nov. 94
U.S. Forces- 6,000 Mar. 95	IPM (non-U.S.)- 665
CARICOM- 295 Oct. 94	Brown & Root
Bangladesh- 1,049 Oct. 94	Svcs Corp.- 1,800

UNMIH Force Composition

U.S. Forces- 2,400	India- 120
Argentina- 15	Nepal- 410
Bangladesh- 1,050	Netherlands- 135
Canada- 474	Pakistan- 800
CARICOM- 275	Surinam- 36
Djibouti- 430	CIVPOL- 900
Guatemala- 120	Brown & Root- 1,800
Honduras- 120	

Long Lead Time for Planning. Military planners had almost a year to develop three possible operation plans. The first scenario envisioned a non-permissive entry of U.S. forces with a high probability of

violence between various Haitian factions. This scenario was characterized by a unilateral forced entry with rapid closure of additional forces. A semi-permissive scenario with a low threat to U.S. forces and low probability of violence among Haitians led to development of a plan calling for a measured closure of a multinational force. In early September 1994, development of a third plan to better fit a scenario falling between the two scenarios above began. This plan was keyed to turbulent and changing conditions, and an ambiguous threat. Mixing characteristics of the first two plans, it was the plan eventually used when forces entered Haiti on September 19, 1994. The multinational plan was coordinated with coalition partners and other U.S. government agencies. Part of this coordination took place at a special inter-agency rehearsal in Washington, D.C. only a week before the operation commenced.

In addition to the ability to fully coordinate the military aspects of the plan over an extended period of time, there was also adequate time for the peacekeeping-experienced 10th Mountain Division, the core of the Multinational Force, to provide its soldiers specific just-in-time training for the difficult mission they would have once they had established their presence in Haiti. The long period of planning and preparation for ***Uphold Democracy*** was a significant factor in successful execution which required unusual flexibility during the initial stages.

International Coordination. Through diplomatic and military channels, a composite battalion from the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) nations was assembled, under the command of a Jamaican officer. This force, composed of soldiers from Jamaica, Barbados, Antigua, Trinidad & Tobago, Belize, and the Bahamas, was assembled and trained in Puerto Rico. Naval vessels from Argentina, Canada, the Netherlands, and the United Kingdom also contributed to the mission. 1050 troops from Bangladesh and 134 troops from Guatemala arrived in October, after brief training periods in Puerto Rico. Before UNMIH took over the mission in March 1995, the MNF had been supported with military or police personnel from 15 other countries. Critical to the successful employment of other forces in the MNF was making an accurate assessment of their capabilities, assigning them missions where they would be most effective and maintaining effective liaison needed for command and control.

The Carter Mission. Shortly before the commencement of ***Uphold Democracy***, a last diplomatic effort was attempted. Former Presi-dent Jimmy Carter, accompanied by Senator Sam Nunn and former Chair-man of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Colin Powell, went to Haiti and met with the de facto rulers of Haiti, General Cedras and the illegitimate President Emile Jonaissant. Late in the night of September 18, while airborne forces from Ft. Bragg were en route to Haiti, an agreement was signed calling for Haitian military and police forces to cooperate with the U.S. military and for Cedras and his cronies to retire and leave the country peacefully. The synergy resulting from the combined diplomatic/military approach brought about the agreement which meant that the invasion plans had to be changed literally overnight. While U.S. military forces would have quickly overwhelmed the Haitian military and police, this negotiated solution saved lives on both sides, made the task of securing Haiti for Aristide's return easier, and avoided awakening of nationalist anti-U.S. sentiment which might have occurred had fighting taken place.

Flexibility in Execution. The success of the Carter mission imposed a new requirement: rapidly shifting from the forced entry plan to the recently developed permissive-but-uncertain entry plan. "Real time" command and control allowed the recall of in-flight airborne forces before they parachuted into Haiti. Rules of engagement, already developed for this option during the planning phase, were quickly verified and disseminated to all personnel. In this dynamic scenario, the value of the long hours of planning for three different options became apparent. A common logistic support package for all options simplified the change. Moving forces into the country quickly and decisively was still important to maintain the

momentum. The mix of joint forces demonstrated the flexibility of tailoring units specifically to this mission. The staging of ground forces and their aviation assets on Great Inagua in the Bahamas, at Guantanamo, on board two Navy aircraft carriers and on amphibious ships provided the ability to shift to the new plan while still forward deployed. The ability to react rapidly to changing situations is a product of both modern technology and innovative joint force training.

Second Objective: *Restore and Preserve Civil Order. If the forcible entry option had been used, the Haitian police and military forces would have been destroyed. By switching to a permissive entry, those forces were left intact and it was hoped they would cooperate with the MNF to help maintain order. There was also fear that the MNF presence in Haiti would lead to Haitian against Haitian violence. USACOM identified three factors most threatening to civil order and a safe and secure environment in Haiti: violence, instability, and poor infrastructure.*

Controlling Violence. Violence had long been endemic to Haitian society and politics. Haiti' s severe economic conditions coupled with the absence of respect for the rule of law encouraged the violent settlement of routine disputes. The MNF aggressively neutralized sources of violence. An aggressive and constant force presence was maintained in Port-au-Prince, characterized by frequent street patrols on foot and by vehicle. It was immediately clear that the U.S. forces were prepared to win any confrontation decisively. Platoon and company-size patrols were conducted to outlying cities and towns by helicopter or small boats. Special Forces units established a presence in rural areas. While completely disarming Haitians through door-to-door searches for weapons was both unrealistic and outside of the UN mandate, the MNF seized heavy weapons from the Haitian armed forces and confiscated weapons caches as they were discovered. A weapons buyback program was initiated in late September. Over 33,000 weapons were obtained through these programs. The MNF also implemented a vigorous program to protect government buildings and routes between them. Bodyguards were not provided to Haitian officials, but frequent and highly visible mobile patrols provided a psychological deterrent to the use of violence by Haitians against Haitians.

Creating Stability. The long-term capricious use of authority in Haiti had created a highly unstable society with no regard or freedom for most citizens. The MNF moved quickly to change the status quo. Working with the aid of U.S. government agencies, Parliament reconvened, Mayor Paul of Port-au-Prince was reinstated, migrants were repatriated from the Operation SEA SIGNAL camps at Guantanamo, commercial air flights were resumed, markets were opened, and emergency food and jobs were provided. Creating stability in the rural areas was principally the job of Special Forces. As with the initial planning, Port-au-Prince and Cap Haitien were still considered "centers of gravity" for the operation, and therefore urban security operations were especially important to achieving the "safe and secure environment" necessary for the eventual transition to UNMIH. Creation of a new Haitian security apparatus was begun by disarming the Haitian armed forces, vetting existing police to eliminate known human rights abusers, and forming the rest into an Interim Public Security Force (IPSF) that would provide policing functions until new recruits could be graduated from a new police academy. A partnership was formed between MNF military police units and the IPSF, augmented by the International Police Monitors (IPM). Joint patrols by MPs and the IPSF demonstrated that the Haitian government was beginning to function again, but that none of the earlier abuses and lawlessness would be tolerated from any element of the society. This clear demonstration that things had changed was critical to achieving stability.

Infrastructure Support. The infrastructure in Haiti has always been extremely poor. Electric power was generally unavailable; potable water and sewage systems were nonexistent; and health care was primitive at best. The only transportation within the country was by boat or poor roads.

The U.S. military was not given the task to make substantial long term improvements in Haitian infrastructure. Certain tasks, however, were deemed mission essential and qualified for use of DOD funds: street clean-up and basic sanitation measures, landfill operations, repair of critical roads and bridges, and restoration of electrical power. A Civil-Military Operations Center (CMOC) was established to coordinate efforts. Civil Affairs officers, many of them reservists, helped restore the power plant to operation with fuel provided by the MNF. Ports were opened and repaired, police stations were reopened and new ones were built, and schools were reopened. Assistance was provided to NGOs to distribute humanitarian supplies and help reopen hospitals. Civil Affairs officers from the reserves were assigned as advisors to each ministry of the Haitian government to get them moving in a hurry. Each action was calculated to contribute directly to the objectives of restoring civil order and confidence in the new government.

Third Objective: *Be Prepared to Pass Responsibility for Military Operations in Haiti to UNMIH. UNMIH was scheduled to assume responsibility for Haitian security at the end of March 1995 with a force of approximately 6000. A "safe and secure environment" was a necessary precondition for the transition.*

Maintaining a Safe and Secure Environment. With the restoration of civil order well underway, the total number of MNF forces in Haiti declined from a peak of 21,000 to 18,000 by November 1. The operation continued to be executed through four major forces: MP units operating with Haitian IPSF and the IPM in the major cities; Special Forces operating in the countryside; Infantry forces operating primarily in the major cities, but deploying to other areas frequently to extend their presence; and Army Aviation units providing mobility. In January 1995, the 25th Infantry Division replaced the 10th Mountain Division as the principal U.S. force in the MNF. Replacing the 10th Mountain troops, who had been operating at an extremely high operations tempo since August 1994, provided the advantage of fresh soldiers who could better continue the hard work remaining in Haiti and give another unit valuable experience in peace operations. The 25th had undergone intensive peace operations training in the Joint Readiness Training Center in September 1994 and followed the 10th without a hitch. It was extremely important that potential adversaries not perceive any weakness during the transition to UNMIH.

UNMIH Preparation. With the experience of Somalia still fresh in everyone's memory, it was important that this hand-off be well-planned and executed. Many lessons had been learned by the UN since Somalia, and they were put to good use. By naming a U.S. Army major general as the UNMIH commander, the transition was facilitated. The Secretary General's Special Representative was named and the UNMIH staff was assembled in advance of the transition date, and trained in the United States and in Haiti before the hand-off actually occurred. After Haiti was declared safe and secure in early January 1995, the composition of the MNF changed so that when UNMIH assumed responsibility on March 31, 1995 almost all of the international forces were actually in Haiti, thus ensuring there would be no gap in capability to control Haitian security during the hand-off. Of a total of about 6,000 military personnel in UNMIH, about 40 percent (or 2,400) were U.S. military, providing a strong and positive psychological impression on the Haitian people that the United States was still actively involved in the mission.

Exit Strategy

UNSCR 940 had set February 1996 as the completion date of UNMIH's mandate in Haiti. Some critics felt the U.S. military exit should be tied to measurable security conditions in Haiti rather than a fixed timetable, but the use of a fixed date precluded a lengthy "occupation" of uncertain duration that would

have allowed Haitians to delay difficult decisions about the conduct of their own affairs or to generate anti-U.S. sentiment. The last U.S. troops in UNMIH departed in mid-April 1996, although UNMIH has been extended by the Security Council (at a greatly reduced number) through June 1996. A small contingent of U.S. forces (primarily combat support forces numbering less than 450) remains in Haiti as a support group for planned future engineering exercises there. They are not a part of the UN mission.

The Future

Haiti's future is not assured. Many problems remain that no external force can resolve. Economic reform, societal transformation, and political maturation are necessary before this country will be able to reverse its generations-long decline into ever-worse poverty and hardship. For the first time, however, there is some hope. In February 1996, a newly-elected president was inaugurated. What President Preval and his government do to move Haiti forward will be critical to the country's future. What the international community does to assist is also crucial. Failure to maintain progress in Haiti could negate the military success achieved during ***Uphold Democracy***.

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