

Intervention



Few U.S. officials believed sending 536 marines into Santo Domingo constituted military intervention in the Dominican Republic. The troops were too few in number and their mission too passive for the landing to have much more than a psychological influence on the contending parties in the country's civil war. The presence of the marines might boost Loyalist morale, but it could not stave off the junta's seemingly imminent defeat. Realizing this, Bennett recommended during the evening of the 28th that "serious thought be given in Washington to armed intervention which would go beyond the mere protection of Americans and seek to establish order in this strife-ridden country" and "to prevent another Cuba from arising out of the ashes of this uncontrollable situation."¹ Although the cable did not mention it, preparations to send U.S. Army units into Santo Domingo, if needed, were already well under way.

Those preparations had begun on Monday, 26 April, when the JCS issued an alert to place two airborne battalion combat teams (BCTs) with airlift, tactical air units, and command-support forces on defense readiness condition (DEFCON) 3 status (which, in the case of the airborne BCTs, meant being combat ready and prepared to board aircraft for which all mission-essential loads had been rigged for an airdrop). The two battalions would come from the 82d Airborne Division, the "fire brigade" in America's strategic reserve. Collocated with its parent headquarters, the XVIII Airborne Corps at Fort Bragg, North Carolina, the 82d Airborne Division had recently been reorganized in line with the Reorganization Objectives Army Division (ROAD) concept. In the changeover from the pentomic division configuration of the late 1950s and early 1960s, five cumbersome battle groups gave way to nine airborne infantry battalions that could be shifted among three brigade headquarters and, thus, tailored to meet a variety of contingency operations. On 26 April, the 3d Brigade's 1st Battalion (Airborne), 508th Infantry, was serving as the division ready force (DRF), a unit maintained in a high state of alert for a one-week period, ready to load and launch within hours of receiving an execution order. The 3d Brigade's commanding officer designated the 1st Battalion (Airborne), 505th Infantry, as the second BCT called for in the JCS alert.²

The 82d, as a whole, was well prepared for any contingency that might arise, up to and including military intervention in a crisis such as that in

the Dominican Republic. Each of the three brigades had undergone extensive training and had been involved in a variety of field exercises. That the two BCTs from the 3d Brigade were designated to be the first Army forces into the Dominican Republic, should the need arise, was the result of the DRF assignment of one and the availability of the other. At the time of the alert, battalions from the 1st Brigade were on stand-down status performing routine details, while battalions from the 2d Brigade, together with other divisional elements, were participating in Blue Chip V, a joint Army-Air Force demonstration conducted at Fort Bragg under the auspices of USSTRICOM. The availability of the 3d Brigade was a matter of timing, not design. It was, however, fortuitous from one standpoint. In early April, the brigade had finished Quick Kick VII, a joint, CINCLANT-directed exercise involving all the services in an airborne-amphibious surface-heliborne assault on Vieques Island, an isle with many geographical similarities to the Dominican Republic. As a result of the exercise, certain problems in coordination, communication, and intelligence were identified (although not necessarily resolved), valuable joint training was received, and many of the joint staff who would later work together in the Dominican Republic came to know one another on a first-name basis. Also, because of its participation in Quick Kick VII, the 3d Brigade was, in the 82d's own assessment, "combat ready."³

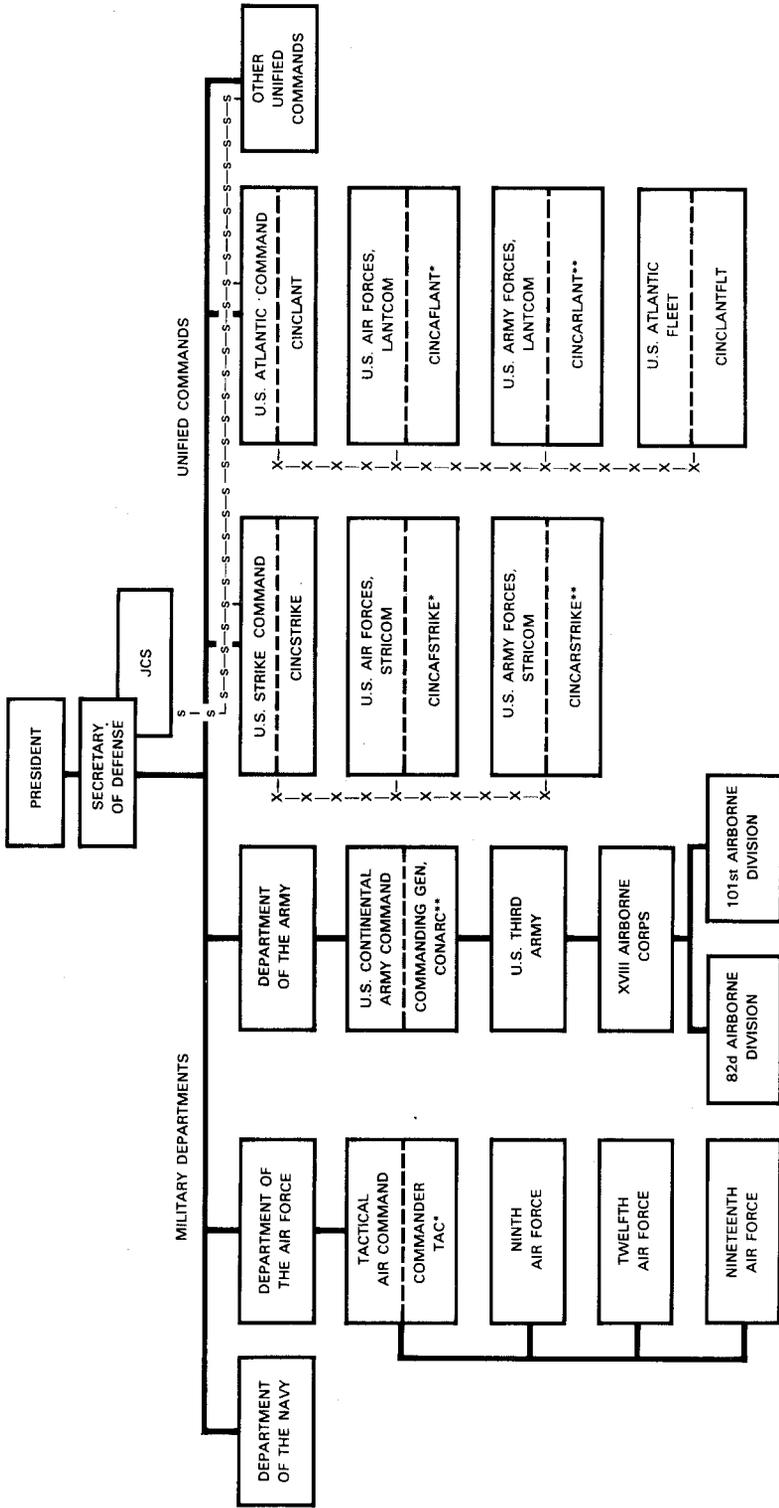
No matter how well trained the paratroopers, before any of the 82d's units could be committed to a crisis, the troops had to be alerted, marshaled, provided airlift, and launched; equipment had to be rigged; and missions had to be formulated and their execution planned. One could not hope to meet these requirements by simply following routine procedures. Unanticipated problems would invariably arise, some unique to the situation at hand, some recurrent in the history of joint operations.

One of the first problems encountered in the preparation of Army and Air Force units concerned messages sent through and outside the formal chains of command. LANTCOM would exercise operational command over military activities in the Dominican Republic. But LANTCOM had no Army or Air Force units assigned to it on a permanent basis. Those units would come from strategic forces based in the United States, in this case primarily from the XVIII Airborne Corps, a key Army contingency planning agency, and the Tactical Air Command (TAC), the primary air arm for use in small wars). When not engaged in joint undertakings, the XVIII Airborne Corps and TAC answered to the Commanding General, U.S. Continental Army Command (USCONARC), and the commander of TAC, respectively. When a unified command, in this case LANTCOM, required augmentation forces from these strategic reserves, operational command for the alerting, marshaling, loading, and launching of the designated units fell to STRICOM. STRICOM, in this sense, acted as a "packaging and delivery service," in which its planners drew the designated forces from their component commands, "'packaged' them with a command element and 'delivered' them to the theater."⁴ Two parallel alert channels existed to set these procedures in motion. One ran from the JCS to the Commander in Chief, U.S. Strike

Command (CINCSTRIKE), to STRICOM's Army and Air Force components. The other ran from the service departments to CONARC and TAC and, then, to the designated units. Once STRICOM had the Army and Air Force units ready to launch, operational command of those forces would be passed ("chopped") to CINCLANT.

Some confusion marked the initial alerting process during the evening of the 26th, when an information copy of the JCS alert order reached the XVIII Airborne Corps and 82d well before notification arrived through formal command channels. According to one source, General Wheeler further complicated matters by telephoning Major General Robert York, the commander of the 82d, to notify him personally of the impending alert. Although these premature warnings allowed the corps and the 82d to assemble key staff personnel in anticipation of formal notification, the deviations from standard alerting procedures also resulted in the assembled staff at Bragg receiving sometimes conflicting information from different sources, a situation that took hours to straighten out.⁵

A more persistent communication problem surfaced between the two unified commands involved—LANTCOM, located at Norfolk, Virginia, and STRICOM, located at MacDill AFB, Florida. The difficulty stemmed from the dual role assigned CONARC's commanding general, General Paul Freeman, and TAC's commander, General Walter Sweeney, in the event that LANTCOM required augmentation forces from the strategic reserves under their commands. When this happened, as in the case of the Dominican crisis, Freeman and Sweeney became component commanders under both CINCSTRIKE and CINCLANT, as the two unified commanders carried out their separate missions (see figure 1). As Commander in Chief, U.S. Army Forces, Strike Command (CINCARSTRIKE), and Commander in Chief, U.S. Air Forces, Strike Command (CINCAFSTRIKE), respectively, Freeman and Sweeney would assist CINCSTRIKE, General Paul D. Adams, in alerting, marshaling, and preparing elements of the 82d and TAC prior to their being chopped to CINCLANT. As Commander in Chief, U.S. Army Forces, Atlantic Command (CINCARLANT), and Commander in Chief, U.S. Air Forces, Atlantic Command (CINCAFLANT), these same two officers would assist CINCLANT in matters pertaining to the operational needs of the Army and Air Force units deployed under CINCLANT's operational command, that is, after the units had been chopped from CINCSTRIKE to CINCLANT. Because Freeman and Sweeney originally controlled the units required by LANTCOM and were involved under Adams in preparing them for LANTCOM's use, CINCLANT often found it more convenient to talk directly to his component commanders and their subordinates regarding troop requirements and preparations. The result was to bypass CINCSTRIKE at the very time Adams exercised operational command over the augmentation forces prior to deployment. According to Adams, "The communications from CINCLANT . . . were practically zero except through CINCLANT to Bragg. . . ." So as not to be cut out of the chain of command entirely, Adams sent several of his J3 (operations) staff to Bragg and Pope to help "guide this thing on its way and get it going, get it untangled, . . ." The



*Commander, Tactical Air Command, also serves as Commander in Chief, U.S. Air Forces, STRICOM, and as Commander in Chief, U.S. Air Forces, LANTCOM.

**Commanding General, U.S. Continental Army Command, also serves as Commander in Chief, U.S. Army Forces, STRICOM, and as Commander in Chief, U.S. Army Forces, LANTCOM.

LEGEND:

- COMMAND
- x-x-x-x-x-x-x-x-x-x OPERATIONAL COMMAND
- s-s-s-s-s-s-s-s-s-s STRATEGIC AND OPERATIONAL DIRECTION

Figure 1. Relationship of CONARC and TAC to STRICOM and LANTCOM

discord between STRICOM and LANTCOM, however, continued throughout various phases of the Dominican crisis, with no attempt to resolve the jurisdictional conflict until the intervention was over.⁶

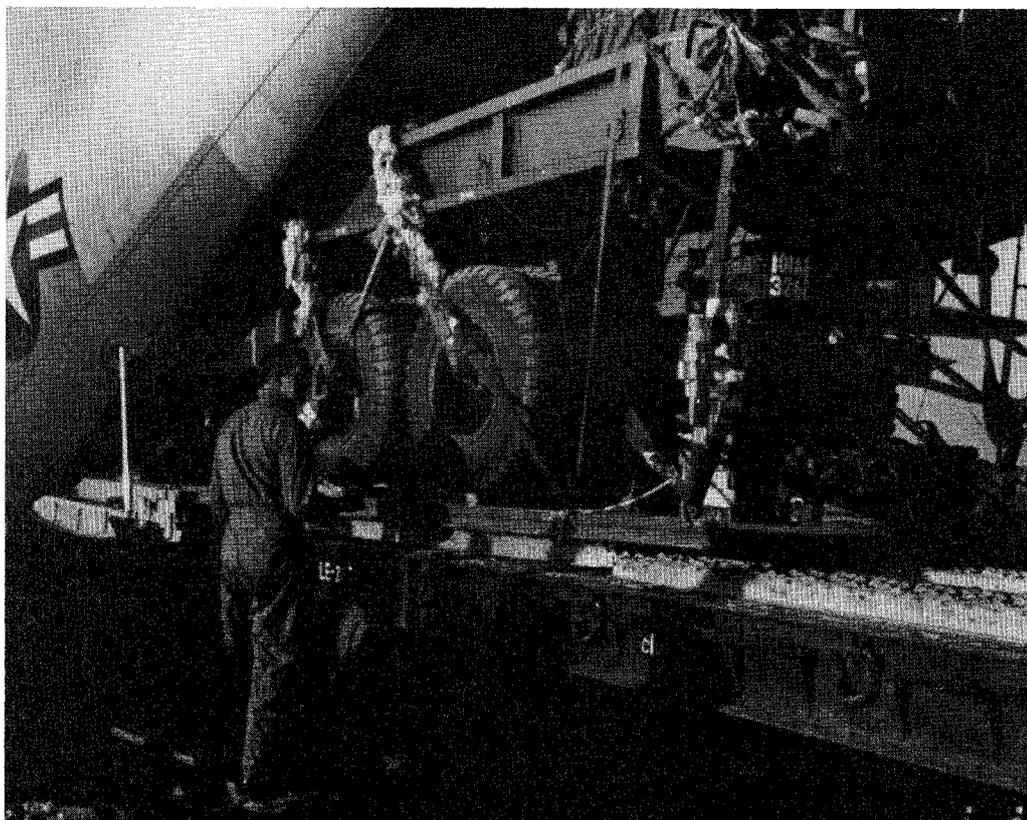
Communications outside formal command channels were not the only problem to surface as the military prepared for possible intervention. Once XVIII Airborne Corps, the 82d, and TAC received the alert notification on the 26th, planning for deployment began immediately. Because the Dominican Republic fell within LANTCOM's area of operations, CINCLANT was responsible for having ready an operation plan (OPLAN) covering the spectrum of contingencies that might involve U.S. military activity directed toward that country. In early 1965, LANTCOM had cleared with the JCS and had published an updated plan for the Dominican Republic, OPLAN 310/2-65, the provisions of which covered such contingencies as a show of force, blockade, the protection and evacuation of American nationals, and all-out intervention. In the event of the last contingency, the plan called for the deployment of up to six airborne infantry battalions and four U.S. Marine battalion landing teams, together with other special and supporting units. When the crisis in Santo Domingo raised the possibility of intervention, the JCS designated the specific forces to be alerted, but they did not order the execution of OPLAN 310/2-65. In accordance with a warning included in the plan, units on alert were to regard it only as basic guidance and to expect inevitable deviations.⁷

When the first alert to the Army and Air Force went out on 26 April, neither service had updated contingency plans based on OPLAN 310/2-65. The XVIII Airborne Corps and the 82d had not received copies of LANTCOM's newly published plan, while the Nineteenth Air Force, TAC's planning agency, had not published the airlift portion of its component plan. The result was that staff officers from both services approached their tasks with woefully outdated plans in hand. The XVIII Airborne Corps' OPLAN 310/2L did not have up-to-date troop lists, while the 82d's OPLAN 310/2L-63 did not even reflect the current ROAD configuration of the division but called for deployment of two or three battle groups, the main combat element of the discarded pentomic division. Because of the "fire brigade" status of the 82d, the division had dozens of OPLANs in its inventory and little time for updating them. Thus, the table of organization and equipment (TOE) attached to the plan was inaccurate. TAC's working plan was also geared to the deployment of two or three battle groups. Finally, none of the plans, from LANTCOM on down, allowed for the possibility that an entire division might have to deploy to the Dominican Republic.⁸

For Army and Air Force staffs at Fort Bragg and Pope AFB, the period 27-29 April entailed some frantic activity, as they labored to revise outdated plans, tend to routine tasks, and keep abreast of changing conditions and requirements. It was frustrating work, given the numerous obstructions they faced.⁹ Most of these obstacles were related directly to STRICOM's joint Army-Air Force Blue Chip V exercise taking place that week at Fort Bragg. Across the board, Blue Chip V had an adverse effect on preparations for possible intervention by the 82d in the Dominican Republic. The exercise

tied up divisional staffs, the 2d Brigade headquarters, paratroopers of the 1st and 2d Brigades and other major units, available airlift, rigging lines, equipment, air field control units, parking and billeting facilities—the list goes on. As the two battalion combat teams of the 3d Brigade prepared for possible deployment, they encountered immediate delays in getting their equipment rigged for possible airdrop—first, because Blue Chip loads had to be derigged in order to make room on the rigging lines for the BCT loads, and later, on the 27th, because STRICOM's refusal to cancel a parachute assault demonstration necessitated the simultaneous rigging of Blue Chip and BCT loads. On Wednesday, 28 April, when the JCS directed that the two BCTs achieve DEFCON 2 status (meaning that all designated airlift had to assemble at Pope AFB so that the loading of equipment could begin as the paratroopers staged nearby), the unloading and repositioning of Blue Chip aircraft required four hours before loading BCT-rigged equipment could begin.

Once under way, the loading process took nearly fourteen hours, as it encountered further delays caused by inadequate lighting, too few load-masters and inspectors, and a shortage of loading equipment. Consequently,



U.S. Army

A 2½-ton truck being rigged and loaded for airdrop aboard a C-130 transport

the 3d Brigade did not reach DEFCON 2 until the afternoon of the 29th, just hours before it received the order to deploy. As a TAC after-action assessment conceded, "The long delay in reaching the advanced condition of readiness was excessive for this type of airlift operation."

Although CINCSRIKE was at Bragg observing the exercise—and was therefore fully aware of its disruptive effect in terms of the Dominican crisis—he refused to cancel Blue Chip V until the last minute on the 28th. Until then, General Adams did not believe it likely that the Army would actually intervene. He was not the only officer at Bragg to hold that view. The distraction caused by Blue Chip, when combined with the constantly shifting assessment of events in the Dominican Republic prior to the 28th, made it difficult for planners to sustain their concentration and sense of urgency with respect to the foreign crisis. There was, the 82d reported afterwards, a "decreased unity of effort and singleness of purpose so necessary for rapid response." On the evening of 28 April, just hours before receiving the JCS message to put the 3d Brigade on DEFCON 2 status, General York provided evidence for this observation when he sent his staff home because no one anticipated a combat deployment.¹⁰

Despite the confusion, division of effort, and delays, the personnel and resources required to prepare a two-battalion brigade for deployment strained, but did not exceed, the capabilities possessed by TAC and the 82d. Messages from "higher headquarters," though, had already made it clear by the 28th that additional BCTs, together with headquarters and supporting units, might be committed as well. Speculation on this matter ended that evening. As the first wave of armed marines was landing in the Dominican Republic and the 3d Brigade was ordered to attain DEFCON 2, the JCS directed that the four additional BCTs, command elements, TAC airlift and tactical air units, and the required support groups called for under OPLAN 310/2 be placed on DEFCON 3. This escalation placed enormous burdens on an already overtaxed system. Locating additional airlift, scheduling their timely arrival at Pope, devising a parking plan for an overcrowded facility, computing systematic loading plans and finding enough men qualified to implement them, locating billeting for the hundreds of flight crews and other personnel that would soon arrive at the airfield, and working out flight plans should the additional BCTs be deployed were but the more onerous of the myriad tasks that now confronted planners already weary from long hours of work. Exhaustion also plagued the paratroopers of the 2d Brigade, the designated follow-on force, who, having just completed their grueling Blue Chip assignment, had little or, in some cases, no chance to rest before beginning the alert procedures. Some soldiers that eventually deployed to the Dominican Republic had gone without sleep for seventy-two hours. Despite the indefatigable efforts of all concerned, not all of the problems inherent in the escalation to a larger assault force could be solved in a timely way.¹¹

As staff officers labored to prepare aircraft and combat units for possible intervention, General York had to determine what the 82d's mission would be in the event of deployment. Neither LANTCOM's OPLAN nor the JCS-

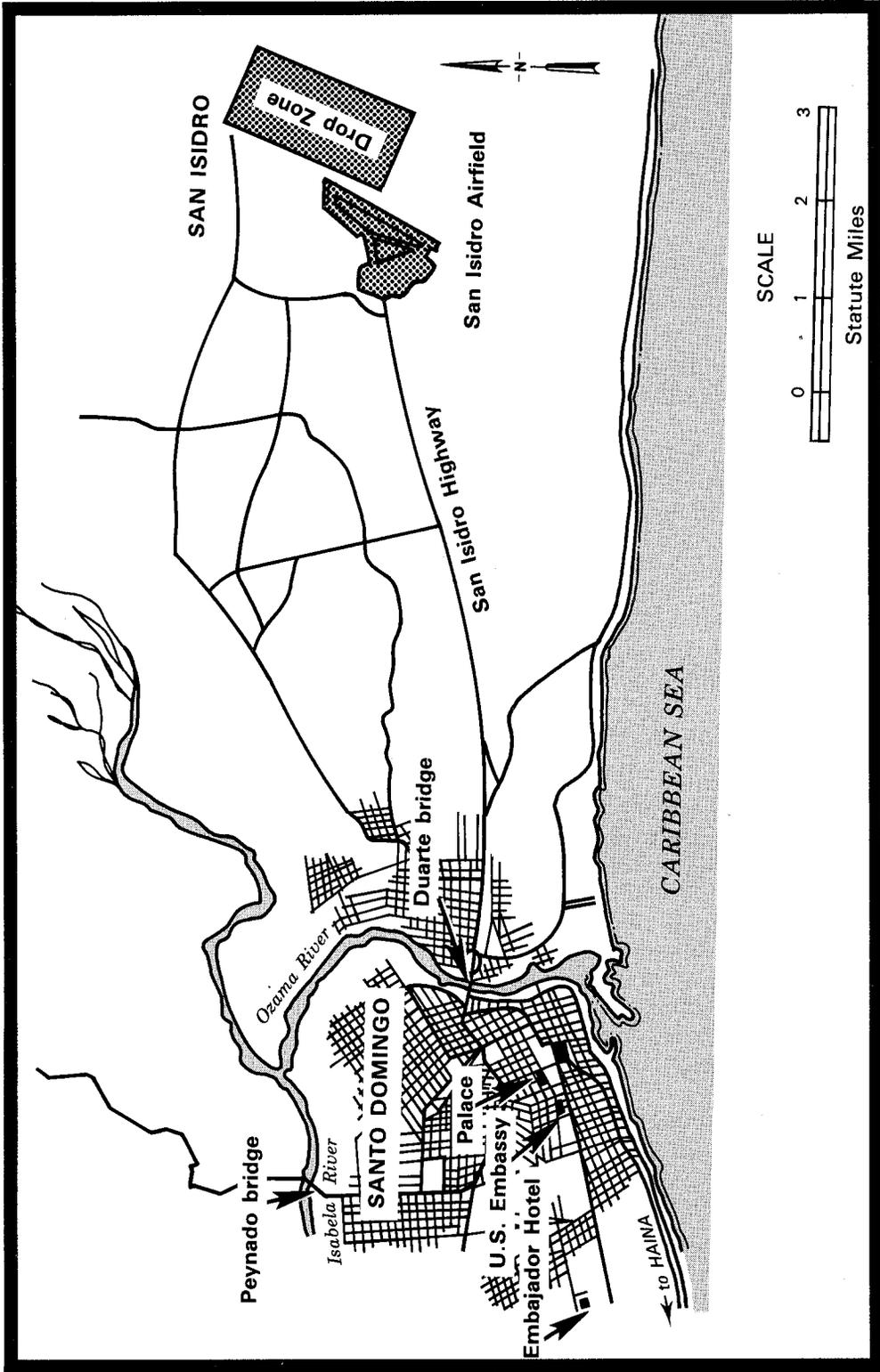


Power Pack

Maj. Gen. Robert York, commanding general of the 82d Airborne Division

originated alerting message had contained a hint of what specific action the 82d would be expected to perform in the Dominican crisis. York, in effect, would have to devise a plan for the initial assault force. Staff officers working through the night of 26–27 April had a proposal to place before the general in an 0400 briefing. The plan—“deduced” from available information—called for the two BCTs to airdrop near San Isidro, seize and secure the airfield, expand the airhead westward to the Duarte bridge, and stand ready to assist in the evacuation of American personnel (see map 4). York approved the plan at 0500; Brigadier General Robert L. Delashaw, vice commander of the Nineteenth Air Force, soon added his concurrence. On the basis of these decisions, the staff prepared a “concept of operations” statement for publication, but York delayed disseminating his “tentative” plan “pending clarification of the mission and receipt of a directive from higher headquarters.”¹²

In determining the mission that elements of the 82d would perform if sent into the Dominican Republic, commanders and their staffs, from York and Delashaw on down, required up-to-date, accurate intelligence, especially on the identity, status, and location of friendly and unfriendly forces and the location of key facilities in Santo Domingo. The information they received did not fulfill these requirements. York and his staff argued later that “a critical intelligence vacuum existed during the vital early stages of the operation.” As is usually the case, given the shortage of intelligence officers and the easily overlooked duty of keeping plans updated, the



Map 4. Santo Domingo and San Isidro airfield

LANTCOM OPLAN offered little to an airborne commander in the way of useful information or analysis, either political or military, strategic or tactical. Nor, at first, was there a clear and secure channel through which the 82d could receive timely information from Norfolk or higher headquarters. CINCLANT was having his own problems in divining JCS intentions, and because of the lack of secure communications, the 82d could get little information from LANTCOM until the 29th, when a liaison officer sent to Norfolk on the 27th was able to see that intelligence available to CINCLANT was forwarded on a regular basis to Fort Bragg. Prior to that, of the only ten intelligence messages the division staff received, most were based on newspaper accounts, and all were outdated.

Some Embassy and CIA reports reached the 82d, but the staff regarded these messages as alarmist, unreliable, and because of their preoccupation with the Communist issue, virtually irrelevant in terms of military planning. Consequently, the twice-daily briefings for key 82d officers were based primarily on rough translations of Spanish-language television and radio transmissions and newspaper reports emanating from Santo Domingo and monitored in the corps' Emergency Operations Center at Bragg. That many military intelligence analysts who spoke Spanish had been sent to Vietnam did not help matters. When one throws in the lack of secure facilities at Bragg in which to gather and display classified material and the shortage of maps of Santo Domingo, it is little wonder that York later regretted not having sent one of his senior officers to the Dominican Republic for the purpose of gathering firsthand information for use in the division's planning phase. Instead, the general could only lament that "the division did not know friend from foe during the planning stage."¹³

The men of the 3d Brigade knew even less. Confined to their barracks after the alert of the 26th, most of their information came from radios, television, newspapers, and rumors. There was talk among them of "killing commies" or "kicking Red asses," but none of them had any idea of what he was to do specifically should he be deployed. Throughout the preparation phase, information of this kind was simply too highly classified. In the event of an execute order, there was a plan to brief the men during a scheduled stopover at Ramey AFB, Puerto Rico, prior to the planned airdrop. The layover at Ramey, according to one official history, was primarily for political and psychological reasons: there appears to have been some hope in Washington that the movement of U.S. airborne forces closer to the Dominican Republic would boost the morale of the Loyalists and perhaps turn the situation around, thereby obviating further U.S. intervention. When the situation in Santo Domingo continued to deteriorate on the 29th, the layover at Ramey would be canceled. So, too, would the much-needed briefings planned for the paratroopers.¹⁴

When evaluating the preparations that took place for the military intervention between the time Army and Air Force units received alert notifications on 26 April and the attainment of DEFCON 2 status by two airborne BCTs on the 29th, contemporary participants and later historians agree that what transpired hardly represented a textbook model for joint operational



Paratroopers ready to board C-130s

planning. Chain of command violations, conflicting priorities, escalating requirements, equipment and personnel shortages, coordination difficulties, outdated OPLANs, and inadequate and inaccurate intelligence: all presented problems with which commanders and their staffs had to contend. Long hours and diligent staff work overcame many of these obstacles; others persisted well into the intervention. Some of the general problems that the military encountered during the preparatory phase of the crisis continue to arise in joint contingency operations today.

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While the 82d was preparing to move into the Dominican Republic, Ambassador Bennett was weighing the possibility of further U.S. military moves. Shortly after midnight on the 29th, a "clutch" platoon of marines had arrived at the Embassy bringing medical supplies requested by the ambassador for the Red Cross and providing additional forces for the protection of the Embassy. Marines had also expanded the polo field perimeter to include the Hotel Embajador (where a road block had been set up along the road leading to the hotel) and, at the ambassador's request, had used helicopters to deliver rations to Loyalist forces isolated at San Isidro. By then, Bennett had declared a moratorium on landing further troops until he could reassess the situation on Thursday. Having already suggested that Washington consider large-scale intervention, he informed the State Department before dawn that he was reluctant to recommend the actual execution

of such a course because it would take the United States "down a tortuous path whose end we cannot see." He assured the department, though, that should the situation continue to deteriorate, he would not hesitate to recommend intervention.¹⁵

Information reaching the Embassy late Wednesday night and early Thursday—the veracity of which Embassy officials accepted without confirmation—depicted scenes of rebel atrocities and destruction of property. Armed bands reportedly filled the streets, and casualties of their violence filled the hospitals. By midmorning, however, Bennett was telling Washington that the fighting had tapered off and that the junta was preparing "Operation Clean Up," despite continuing problems with communications, coordination, and morale. Bennett noted that the Loyalists were passing word that U.S. marines would take part in the operation—a complete falsehood even in the unlikely event that the "clean-up" would be executed. Bennett, however, did not try to squelch the rumor because it might boost Loyalist morale, while having the opposite effect on the rebels. Both sides, he assumed, were tired and demoralized.

The accuracy of that assumption was called into question later in the day, as news coming into the Embassy again took on ominous overtones. The Constitutionals, reports indicated, were attacking the Loyalist-held Transportation Headquarters in the northern part of the city, Fortress Ozama, and various police stations, where the defenders were allegedly murdered if captured. The U.S. MAAG offices in downtown Santo Domingo had been sacked, and there were widespread reports of looting and imminent danger to American property. To Embassy officials, it appeared that the rebels were on the move, the junta was stalled, and the situation was indeed deteriorating once again, despite the Marine landings of the previous day. In midafternoon, the Embassy came under sniper fire just as Bennett was holding a meeting in his office with Dare and Daughtry. From the perspective of American officials in Santo Domingo, the time for U.S. intervention had arrived.¹⁶

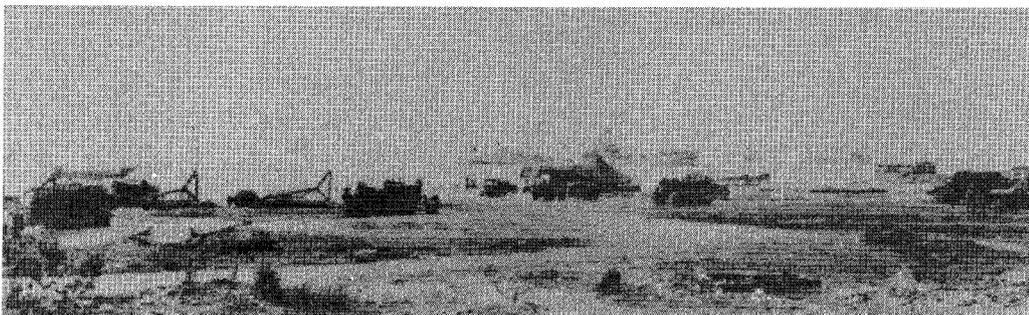
For once Washington was ahead of officials in the field. By midafternoon, President Johnson had already decided to land the remainder of the marines, which he thought were still aboard the *Boxer*, and to deploy two BCTs of the 82d to Ramey AFB. Washington had concluded that the United States could not accept the continuing instability in the Dominican Republic, thereby risking a Communist takeover. Furthermore, the president and his advisers had agreed that they should use overwhelming force to stabilize the situation. They recalled how, during the early phases of the 1958 crisis in Lebanon, President Eisenhower's deployment of large numbers of troops had created a climate of intimidation conducive to the reduction or cessation of hostilities. With the fiasco of the Bay of Pigs relatively fresh in his mind, Johnson needed only minimal prodding from McNamara and Wheeler to see the wisdom in Eisenhower's precedent.¹⁷

Bennett apparently knew of the president's decision to send in more marines even before the Embassy meeting with Dare and Daughtry (although

he might have learned the information in telephone conversations during the meeting). What the ambassador said to the two officers is not exactly clear, but in a report to State, Bennett indicated that he had instructed Dare to bring ships carrying marines and heavy equipment closer to shore in preparation for a landing. As Bennett explained, "This will take two or three hours and gives us time to review situation again before finally committing troops to shore." Twenty minutes later, Bennett informed Washington that he had just instructed Dare to prepare to land the remaining 1,500 marines of the 6th MEU still aboard ship, together with their heavy equipment (tanks, ONTOS, LVTs, etc.). Lead time was estimated at three hours. The ambassador noted in passing that there were no marines left aboard the *Boxer*, contrary to what the president and his military advisers seemed to think.¹⁸

The substance of Bennett's message, a response to State's request for his estimate of the situation, dealt with how the marines should be deployed if they were ordered to land and the composition of the warring forces they would encounter. With respect to the first item, the ambassador favored establishing a security zone from the Hotel Embajador to the Presidential Palace, an area that would incorporate most American residences and foreign missions. Concerning the rebels, he wrote that "our best guesswork" indicated that about 1,500 were under Communist leadership, fewer than 1,000 were military regulars, and anywhere from 1,000 to 4,000 were "hangers-on." He estimated junta forces at about 1,700, scattered in various locations throughout the city, with the bulk of them located at San Isidro. (CINCLANT would pass these estimates on to his subordinate commanders, including York, who may or may not have received them prior to deployment.) In this same message, Bennett made reference to three U.S. Air Force MAAG officers already at San Isidro helping the Loyalists with communication work. In compliance with instructions received earlier that morning from Mann, the ambassador went on to state that he intended to have the three officers, together with an Army MAAG officer who had just been dispatched to the airfield, broaden their role to include advising the junta on operational planning. He chided the junta for accomplishing "literally nothing" of military significance and concluded with the observation that the Dominican Republic "has probably never in its history witnessed a battle of this magnitude and is totally unprepared for it."¹⁹

While Bennett was discussing troop movements with Washington, Dare was returning from the Embassy to the *Boxer* via helicopter. While airborne, he ordered the ships still containing marines and heavy equipment to approach shore. When he and Daughtry reached the *Boxer*, they were surprised to find Vice Admiral Kleber Masterson, commander of the Second Fleet. The day before, CINCLANT had activated Joint Task Force (JTF) 122, with Masterson as its commander. Under CINCLANT, Masterson would, for the time being, have responsibility for the conduct of all U.S. military operations in the Dominican Republic. That evening, the JCS selected the code name for these operations: Power Pack. Later, Masterson dissolved TG 44.9 and, in its place, activated a naval task force, TF 124. Dare became commander



Dominican Crisis, 1965—1966

Marine vehicles coming ashore at Red Beach

of TF 124, which assumed responsibility under JTF 122 for all U.S. naval units involved in the Dominican affair.

While Dare and Daughtry were briefing Masterson and his staff, the order came to execute Operation Barrel Bottom—the landing of the remaining marines and their heavy equipment. Masterson acknowledged the order, and marines began to move over Red Beach, a landing area near Haina that a beachmaster had discovered by chance during Tuesday's evacuation activities. Once ashore, the marines would wait for the tanks and other weaponry, then proceed in an armored column to the Embajador. The landing began at 1830, and the column reached the hotel an hour later.²⁰

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An hour or so after the marines had arrived at the hotel, Army units were also on the move. The initial assault force of the 82d was headed for Ramey, with General York in the lead transport of an air armada of 144 C-130s, 33 of which carried the 1,800 paratroopers involved, 111 their equipment.²¹ Unknown to the troops, a debate was taking place in the United States over whether to divert the aircraft in midroute from Ramey to San Isidro, where the BCTs would airland instead of airdrop. McNamara and the JCS favored the San Isidro landing in view of a delayed departure by the 82d from Pope AFB and recent reports that the situation in Santo Domingo had reached a critical point.²² "If we wait," Wheeler is reported to have said, "we may not have anything to support." CINCSTRIKE and CINCLANT opposed the change in plans, because they feared overcrowding at San Isidro and because the troops would have only their muscles and small tools for unloading heavy equipment rigged for airdrop. Besides, no one, not even the Embassy in Santo Domingo, seemed to know for sure whether the airfield was still in friendly—that is, Loyalist—hands. To clear up this latter point, Wheeler contacted Vice Admiral Masterson with instructions to find out who controlled the airfield and whether it was operational.²³

Masterson had planned to send a Marine rifle company to San Isidro to secure the airfield, but after talking with Wheeler, he dispatched an officer and a Spanish-speaking sergeant by helicopter to find General Wessin and bring him back for an intelligence update. The men returned to the *Boxer*

with General Imbert, instead. The general reported that the airfield was in friendly hands but that the control tower and runway lights had been shut down for the night. He also mentioned the possibility of armed rebel bands roaming the area. Masterson reported this information up the chain of command, after which Wheeler decided in favor of landing York's units at San Isidro that night. When CINCLANT informed Masterson of Wheeler's decision, the vice admiral ordered two marines and one Navy officer to go to the airfield, secure the tower, and get the runway working.²⁴

York was two hours into his flight before he received word of the change in plans. Minutes later, he also learned that Wheeler had named him commander of land forces in the Dominican Republic. (The position was not designated in the LANTCOM OPLAN, even though an intervention implied an operation in which land, not naval, forces would play the predominant role.) Further information was sketchy. The airfield, York was told, was *assumed* to be in friendly hands. Although changing plans and incomplete information added to the uncertainty, there was one point about which the general had no doubt: it was pure lunacy under any circumstances to airland planes loaded with heavy equipment rigged for a parachute drop. From the C-130, he proposed to Washington that only the planes carrying troops airland and that the equipment be dropped as planned. Permission was denied. Apparently, the president and certain key advisers were convinced that parachutes opening in the night skies over Santo Domingo would appear far too "warlike"—more indicative of an invasion than an intervention.

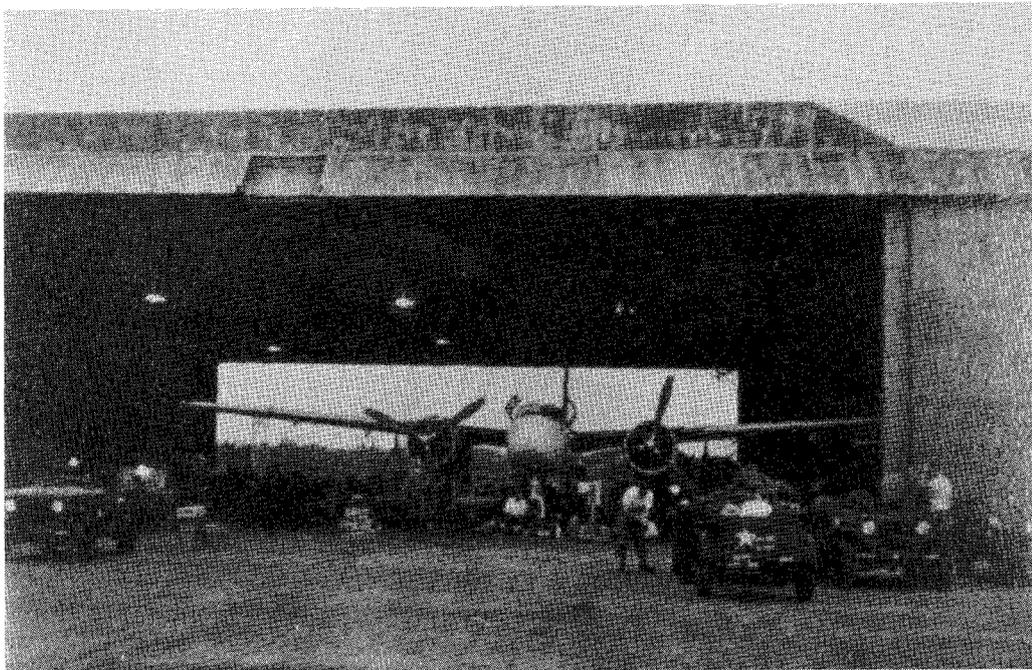
When the paratroopers aboard the thirty-three C-130s learned that they would not have to jump, most cheered. Their enthusiasm would have reached even higher levels had they known that the designated landing zone near San Isidro (recommended by a U.S. officer in the Dominican Republic after he had reconnoitered what appeared to be a flat, grassy area from his car) was covered with coral. Had the original plan calling for an airdrop been carried out, the casualty rate among the two BCTs would have been enormously high.²⁵

A TAC EC-135 airborne command post flying out of Ramey AFB established contact with the C-130s and guided them to San Isidro. At 0215 on 30 April, General York's plane touched down on the poorly lit airfield.²⁶ That the first C-130 to land carried General York and Colonel William L. Welch, USAF, the airlift task force (ALTF) advanced echelon commander, generated no controversy at the time but later caused some to question the wisdom of the move. While the commanding general needed to get on the ground as quickly as possible to provide leadership and exercise command, being the first to land entailed certain risks, particularly considering the poor intelligence with which the 82d had had to contend since the initial alert. The assumption that the airfield was in friendly hands, despite General Imbert's warning about bands of rebels in the vicinity, was put to the test immediately upon arrival. Imbert, who had flown by helicopter from the *Boxer* to see what was going on, met York but could offer no current information except to say that the situation was grave. To get to the control tower, York hitched a ride from a group of armed men in an automobile,

not knowing whether they were junta or rebel forces. His worries ended when he arrived at the tower unharmed.²⁷

The officers Masterson had sent to man the tower had the landing situation under control. The thirty-three C-130s carrying troops would land first, unload, and depart, after which as many of the aircraft loaded with equipment as the airfield could accommodate would land. Given the smallness of San Isidro and the absence of unloading facilities, 65 of the 111 C-130s carrying equipment were diverted to the SAC air base at Ramey, there to have the loads reconfigured for airlanding before the planes returned to San Isidro according to a hastily arranged schedule.

After satisfying himself that the tower was secure and functioning, York established a command post in a hangar nearby. In the meantime, paratroopers began to gather on the airfield as they waited for information regarding assembly points and instructions on what to do. The soldiers had no ammunition: the assumption that Loyalist troops controlled the airfield had led to a decision not to issue any ordnance while the paratroopers were airborne. A grenade pin pulled accidentally aboard an aircraft full of troops could have fatal consequences. C-130s with equipment began landing about 0400, but a half-hour passed before groups of soldiers attached to the first wave made their way to the command post and received directions for unloading the aircraft. What followed was several hours of extremely hard work, during which the derigging and unloading of heavy equipment had



Power Pack

Initial 82d headquarters (HQ) in a hangar at San Isidro. The HQ was later moved to a military academy nearby.

to be accomplished by hand or with the most rudimentary of tools (for example, the use of axes for cutting through tough nylon webbing and lines). Some of the platforms were damaged in the process; all of the men who took part were exhausted. Nevertheless, by 0530, enough equipment had been unloaded and small-arms ammunition and grenades distributed to permit the assembly of task force personnel. By dawn, the two BCTs, together with Troop A of the 1st Squadron, 17th Cavalry, were ready to begin operations.²⁸ With combat marines already ashore and more airborne BCTs being readied at Bragg, the intervention that most American officials had hoped to avoid was now under way.

Stability Operations I: Confusion and Cross-Purposes



In keeping with the guidance of General Harold K. Johnson, chief of staff of the U.S. Army, military activities during the Dominican intervention acquired the generic label, “stability operations.” In the fall of 1964, Johnson had expressed concern that the military demonstrated little understanding of counterinsurgency and other kinds of unconventional, nonnuclear warfare. The term then in vogue, “special warfare,” proved the point. According to the general, there was nothing “special” about what he regarded as the Army’s “major mission in the foreseeable future.” “More so than ever before,” he argued, “. . . overseas operations called for forces designed to safeguard or re-establish the peace and stability of areas threatened by guerrillas, insurrection, and other forms of local or foreign-inspired subversive pressure.”¹

By the spring of 1965, General Johnson’s preferred terminology, “stability operations,” was finding its way into the Army’s lexicon. Lieutenant General Bruce Palmer, Jr., who came to command U.S. forces in the Dominican Republic not only employed the term in his periodic reports from Santo Domingo but elaborated its definition. The goal of stability operations, Palmer asserted, was neither “to maintain the status quo, . . . nor to support any particular faction or political group, but rather to establish a climate of order in which political, psychological, economic, sociological and other forces can work in a peaceful environment. . . .” Stability operations, according to Palmer, were “designed to help a country attain its legitimate aspirations in an atmosphere of tranquility,”² just as the Johnson administration said it was attempting to do in the Dominican Republic.

As articulated by Generals Johnson, Palmer, and others, the concept of stability operations dovetailed with the theories of limited war on one central issue: political considerations would dictate the focus of military operations to a much greater degree than experienced in such large-scale conventional conflicts as World War II. Recounting his experience in the Dominican intervention, General Palmer acknowledged that in a situation “*more political than military*,” it “is inevitable that Washington is going to take direct control.”³

Having conceded this point, however, the proponents of stability operations were reluctant to accept without qualification what the practitioners

of limited-war theories regarded as the next logical step: policymakers in Washington, not commanders in the field, would determine the scope and nature of military activities at the operational and tactical levels. In coping with this inherent conflict between military tradition and civilian direction of military operations, the best one could expect was to mitigate its effects by establishing effective coordination among the parties involved on both sides of the issue.⁴ The problem in the Dominican crisis was that during the first days of the intervention, political-military coordination suffered several breakdowns that aggravated the confusion and uncertainty attendant on any operation in its early phases and that, in one instance, led to the spectacle of U.S. officials working at cross-purposes when military necessity conflicted with political objectives.

Of the issues that surfaced between 30 April and 3 May where better political-military coordination might have diminished confusion or uncertainty, the one that generated the most controversy, then and later, was the discrepancy between the announced mission of U.S. military forces entering the Dominican Republic and the purpose for which many of those troops were used. Initially, the Johnson administration publicly justified military involvement in the crisis solely in terms of protecting American lives. Nothing was said to the American people on 28 or 29 April about preventing a "second Cuba." The president refrained from declaring the anti-Communist motive behind his decision until he could line up what support he could within the hemisphere for an action many Latin Americans were certain to regard as military intervention in the affairs of a sovereign nation.⁵ In the meantime, all military operations in and around Santo Domingo would be explained, without exception, in terms of the announced mission of safeguarding American lives and property.

Where the marines were concerned, there existed little problem in defining military operations in terms of the administration's public statements. Elements of the 6th MEU were to establish control over the area between the Hotel Embajador and the U.S. Embassy, thus creating a neutral zone that would provide sanctuary for noncombatants and protection for the American residences and foreign embassies located therein. Bennett had suggested this operation on the afternoon of the 29th, and State and the White House had agreed. The JCS then included the mission as part of the guidelines it gave Vice Admiral Masterson in asking him, as commander of JTF 122, to develop an operations plan for the marines and the 82d. At the president's direction, the JCS later instructed Admiral Smith (on his last day as CINCLANT before Admiral Moorer took over) to delay the establishment of an International Security Zone (ISZ) pending the outcome of an OAS Council vote that Washington hoped would give multilateral sanction to the plan. After the OAS approved a resolution calling for a cease-fire and for "an urgent appeal" to all sides "to permit the immediate establishment of an international neutral zone," State informed Bennett that "authority is given to use necessary forces" to establish an ISZ.⁶ The U.S. plan called for marines to sweep the area, after which the "urgent appeal" mandated by the OAS would be made to the rebels, in effect asking them to approve a *fait accompli*.

Using marines to establish an ISZ could be explained in terms of their acknowledged mission, even though policymakers understood the ulterior, anti-Communist reason for their actions. But how did the units from the 82d fit into this picture? Upon hearing that the 3d Brigade was to land at San Isidro, Bennett had queried the State Department, "Is it planned that these troops will immediately begin operations in view [of] statement [that] action continues to be based on need for protection US lives in DomRep?" State's reply was that the airborne forces could be used to help establish the neutral zone—a blatant fabrication considering the distance between the paratroopers and the marines, the lack of a feasible means for joining the two forces without risking a bloody engagement with the rebels who separated them, and the ability of the marines to carry out the ISZ mission by themselves. But Washington stuck to the fiction. As the JCS told Masterson, "Military commanders should respond to press queries relative to deployment of 82d Airborne troops that they are to reinforce Marines for purpose of protecting lives of Americans and other foreign nationals. No other response or conjecture should be offered."⁷ These instructions arrived after surprised reporters had already heard Commodore Dare disclose the anti-Communist rationale behind the Marine landings. Dare's statement could not be retracted. But other officers, until notified to the contrary, found themselves in the position of having to mislead the press about what they knew to be the true objective of the 82d. The failure to square political pronouncements with military deployments produced confusion about U.S. intentions and marked the beginning of the military's confrontation with the theretofore friendly news media.

Adding uncertainty to confusion during the first days of the intervention were a series of ambivalent signals received by U.S. officials and military officers in the Dominican Republic concerning the manner in which Washington hoped to end the civil war on terms compatible with American interests. As the crisis neared the end of its first week, the overall goals of the Johnson administration remained the same: the prevention of a Communist takeover, the restoration of order, and the protection of American lives and property. The preferred method of achieving these goals was a negotiated settlement beginning with a cease-fire, although most in the administration would not have been dismayed had this option been canceled by a Loyalist victory.

Still not ready to give up on the Loyalist military, the State Department, during the night of the 29th, asked that Bennett "give urgent consideration to development of operational plans" by the junta, "with the quiet assistance of [a] few US officers[,] for the deliberate and systematic reduction of insurgent held parts of city." The next afternoon, however, after the OAS Council had called for a truce among the warring factions, State instructed Bennett to curtail U.S. participation in talks at San Isidro regarding immediate military action. Notably, the new position did not prohibit U.S. officers from assisting the Loyalists in making contingency plans for future operations. By the time the ambassador received this message, he had been notified on a "For Your Information Only" basis that Washington was considering "the feasibility of interposing US armed forces between insurgents

and Junta forces in order to bring about an effective cease fire and give the OAS time to address itself to and find solutions for [the] basic problems which we confront.”⁸

To Bennett and to York, Masterson, and Dare—the American commanders in the field charged with planning operations in the Dominican Republic—the impression imparted by the messages emanating from State and the JCS was that a military solution to the crisis, in terms either of U.S. support for a Loyalist offensive or of a direct U.S. attack against the rebels, could not be ruled out. There existed little doubt in their minds that should the president’s decision to intervene with overwhelming force fail to have the psychological impact necessary to stop the fighting and to force negotiations, U.S. Marine and Army units would be deployed militarily against the rebels. York, for one, saw no other alternative. Upon arriving at San Isidro, he had assessed the situation, the reality of which contradicted some of the information he had received at Bragg. With the exception of a few pockets of Loyalist resistance, the Constitutionals controlled most of the city, not, as he had been told, just Ciudad Nueva in the southeast portion, although that was where the majority of rebels were concentrated because it constituted the economic heart of Santo Domingo. Most of what York saw and heard, however, confirmed what he had already been given to understand: the junta’s forces were demoralized, plagued by desertions, hungry, and incapable of immediate combat. If Santo Domingo were to be cleared of rebels and order restored, the tasks would have to be accomplished by U.S. troops.⁹

Masterson agreed. The operations plan “deduced” by York on Tuesday and the plan developed independently by Masterson a few days later called for U.S. troops to move into areas bordering the rebel stronghold in Ciudad Nueva. Although the general and the admiral had not communicated prior to York’s arrival at San Isidro, their separate plans were virtually identical. While the marines expanded the area they occupied into a neutral ISZ, the paratroopers would secure their airhead, move to the Ozama River, and relieve junta forces on both sides of the Duarte bridge. If successfully executed, these operations would secure the east bank of the Ozama, protect the junta at San Isidro from an anticipated rebel attack, and put the 3d Brigade in a position to enter Santo Domingo proper if need be. Masterson’s plan contained an additional element: Loyalist forces, once relieved, would patrol the area between the marines and the paratroopers, that is, between the Duarte bridgehead and the U.S. Embassy. When Masterson and York met aboard the *Boxer* shortly after dawn on the 30th, the JTF commander told the general that he viewed the Loyalist patrol as a temporary expedient until enough U.S. reinforcements arrived to complete the encirclement of the rebels in Ciudad Nueva and to tighten the “noose” around them. If these operations did not produce a cease-fire, U.S. troops would be in ideal positions to launch an attack. Because York had already surmised that his troops might have to contain and destroy the rebels, he asked Masterson to request more troops, specifically the four additional airborne BCTs called for under OPLAN 310/2-65. Masterson forwarded the request directly to the JCS.¹⁰

Masterson, Dare, and York could contemplate combat operations to defeat the rebels, but they could not initiate them on their own authority. Washington had made clear to Bennett that "participation by US troops in offensive fighting against extremists is a major policy decision which should be made by highest authority here." Because of the hundreds, if not thousands, of Dominicans, including innocent bystanders, who would be killed and wounded in a direct U.S.-rebel confrontation, it was a decision LBJ hoped to avoid. Among his close advisers, there were those for whom the prospect of a frontal U.S. assault against rebel positions conjured up the unfavorable analogy of "another Hungary," a reference to the bloody suppression by Soviet troops of a popular uprising in Budapest in 1956. Counterbalancing that grim prospect was the equally unsettling possibility of a rebel victory.¹¹

At midmorning on Friday, 30 April, the president met with his advisers amid reports that the junta was near collapse and that Fortress Ozama, a key arsenal manned by Loyalists, was about to fall into rebel hands. Johnson weighed a decision to send U.S. troops into Santo Domingo proper to engage the Constitutionalist militarily. It was a difficult decision, and he refused to make it, choosing instead to keep his options open. He would, he declared, continue for the time being to work through the OAS for a cease-fire. Through this and other initiatives involving Latin Americans, he hoped to make the intervention a hemispheric, multilateral affair. To assist Bennett and the papal nuncio—the ranking diplomat in the Dominican Republic—negotiate a cease-fire, the president directed John Barlow Martin, a former ambassador to that country and a well-known liberal, to go to Santo Domingo in order to establish contact with rebel leaders. (It was no secret that Bennett had little credibility within Constitutionalist circles; nor was he temperamentally inclined to negotiate with the rebels. There was also concern that the papal nuncio might make too many concessions to the rebels.) Should the cease-fire effort fail, Johnson wanted enough troops on hand to "take and hold" the troubled country. McNamara and Wheeler advised the president that one or two divisions would be necessary to perform the task, so Johnson authorized sending the rest of the 82d, the 4th Marine Expeditionary Brigade, and, if necessary, the 101st Airborne Division. LBJ went on to say that he would approve the use of whatever troops and measures necessary to prevent a Communist takeover. Having committed the entire 82d and having ordered the 101st placed on alert, the president decided to activate the Headquarters, XVIII Airborne Corps, and sent it to Santo Domingo. It was a busy morning in the Cabinet Room.¹²

Soon after the White House meeting ended, Bennett received word of the administration's position. Embassy personnel were to continue working for a cease-fire. They were also to discourage any rash military acts on the part of the Loyalists. The junta was the only organized Dominican force friendly to the United States and, thus, needed to be preserved as the basis for a new government. The White House did not want U.S. troops placed in a position of having to rescue the junta through military action. The president had also directed that American troops should use no more force

than necessary and then only to carry out their previously assigned missions of establishing a neutral zone and securing the Duarte bridge and San Isidro. As of Friday morning, Washington was not ready to sanction U.S. attacks on rebel strongpoints.¹³

Not that policymakers had ruled out the employment of U.S. forces to secure a military decision. Until something happened to foreclose the possibility of a rebel victory, the administration could not dismiss any course of action. For this reason, the White House meeting on Friday did nothing to clear up the uncertainty in the minds of Bennett, Masterson, York, and Dare concerning the ultimate objective of military operations. All four thought a military showdown with Constitutionalist forces likely, and that conviction colored their approach to the deployment of Marine and Army units and to the attempts to arrange a cease-fire. As a result, the political and military measures taken by the United States over the next few days seemed at times to be working at cross-purposes. The extent to which this was the case was demonstrated vividly during the first week of the intervention.

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In the early hours of Friday morning, while General York and his troops were landing and assembling at San Isidro, Vice Admiral Masterson relayed his operations plan to CINCLANT and within an hour received permission from the JCS to have the marines begin establishing the ISZ. Masterson chose to wait for the arrival of an additional company of the 6th MEU and for a chance to meet with York to coordinate marine-airborne operations. That meeting, as noted, took place aboard the *Boxer* shortly after York's arrival in the Dominican Republic. Because both men envisaged virtually the same mission for the paratroopers, the conversation was brief.¹⁴ Afterwards, York, accompanied by Masterson's deputy, Major General R. McC. Tompkins, USMC, flew to the Embassy for what was to have been the final coordinating step before implementing the joint Army-Marine plan.

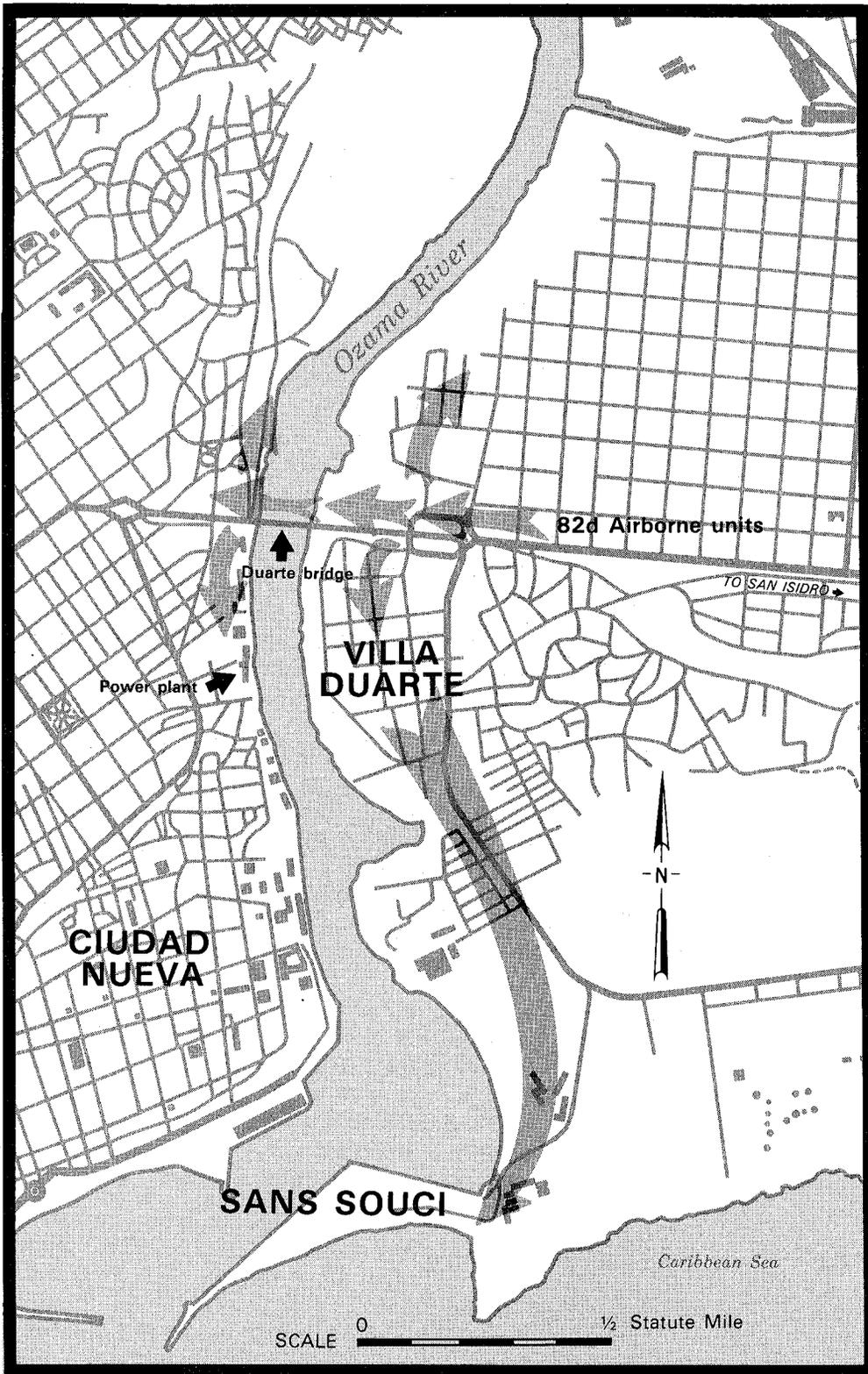
Bennett readily approved the proposed operations but requested that York, Tompkins, Connett, and the U.S. air attaché fly to San Isidro to explain the plan to the junta. Bennett wanted reassurances regarding Loyalist intentions. Thursday night, he had learned that the junta's leader, Colonel Benoit, was against using U.S. troops in combat operations. Any American military move against the rebels, the colonel feared, would play into Communist hands by arousing nationalistic and anti-American sentiments among the Dominican people. Benoit had urged, instead, that Loyalist forces be given one last chance to clean up the city by themselves, a position from which some of his generals dissented given the poor condition of the troops. Bennett, while not opposed to a combined U.S.-Loyalist operation to clear the city of rebels, objected to Benoit's proposal on two counts: the Loyalists were reportedly in no condition to fight, and more important, a unilateral Dominican clean-up operation would be "inconsistent with previous requests for US intervention"—requests based on the junta's admitted inability to restore order or protect American lives. The ambas-

sador need not have been concerned. When York arrived at San Isidro, he quickly realized that Benoit's combative rhetoric exceeded his military capabilities. After a long and animated discussion, York persuaded the junta leader to accept the patrolling mission assigned his troops in the U.S. plan.¹⁵

Once the ambassador, the junta, and the U.S. commanders reached a consensus, the military operations commenced. At San Isidro, the 3d Brigade of the 82d began to move at daybreak (see map 5).¹⁶ While the 1st Battalion, 505th Infantry, secured the airfield, the 1st Battalion, 508th Infantry, together with the cavalry troop and engineer attachments, moved in two columns toward the Duarte bridge. Intelligence provided no accurate estimate of rebel strength, although word circulated that the Constitutionalists were operating in groups of fifteen to twenty men with little central control and were incapable of offering resistance other than small-arms sniper fire. Because those Constitutionalists who had defected from the military wore uniforms identical to those of the Loyalists, a U.S. officer suggested that junta forces in the area wear their caps backwards to avoid accidentally coming under U.S. fire.

Within fifteen minutes, the lead elements of the 508th had made contact with junta forces on the eastern side of the bridge. An hour later, U.S. troops had secured the position. A patrol then crossed the bridge to contact Loyalists on the west side and to determine their positions. A larger U.S. force would follow but not until the east bank of the Ozama, especially the Villa Duarte area to the south from which increasing sniper fire was being received, had been cleared of rebel pockets. One company and a reconnaissance platoon cleared the area north of the eastern bridgehead, while another company and the cavalry troop moved against Villa Duarte. These were time-consuming operations, requiring house-to-house searches, but by midafternoon, the east bank was secure. Operating in accordance with an order to fire only when fired on, Company C of the 508th—flanked by the battalion's Company B and the 505th Battalion's Company C—crossed the bridge in force. Sniper fire and the remains of burned-out vehicles slowed their advance. Once on the west bank, they fanned out to secure the bridgehead, particularly the vital power plant to the south, which Company C of the 1st Battalion, 505th Infantry, seized under "withering fire." By late afternoon, U.S. forces had relieved all but a small number of Loyalists on the west bank. Besides the power plant, American troops controlled a semicircle with a six-block radius. On the east bank, units had moved all the way south into San Souci and had established positions atop an eight-story silo overlooking the rebel stronghold downtown. The entire operation had cost the paratroopers five casualties, none of them serious.

At this time, York expected the junta's troops to begin patrolling the area between the 82d and the marines. Instead, the Loyalists, with their equipment intact, returned to San Isidro. Until further U.S. troops arrived, the plan to isolate the bulk of the rebel force in Ciudad Nueva would have to be held in abeyance. Despite that, it had been a successful operation for the 82d, even if, by the division's own admission, "the current and planned



Map 5. Movement of units of the 3d Brigade, 82d Airborne Division, 30 April 1965



Col. Steven Butler

Aerial view looking north toward the Duarte bridge. The smokestacked building on the west bank (left) is the power plant.

disposition of . . . [its] forces did not appear to substantiate the stated mission of protecting American and foreign nationals. . . ." This discrepancy did not escape American reporters, who had only the previous day received



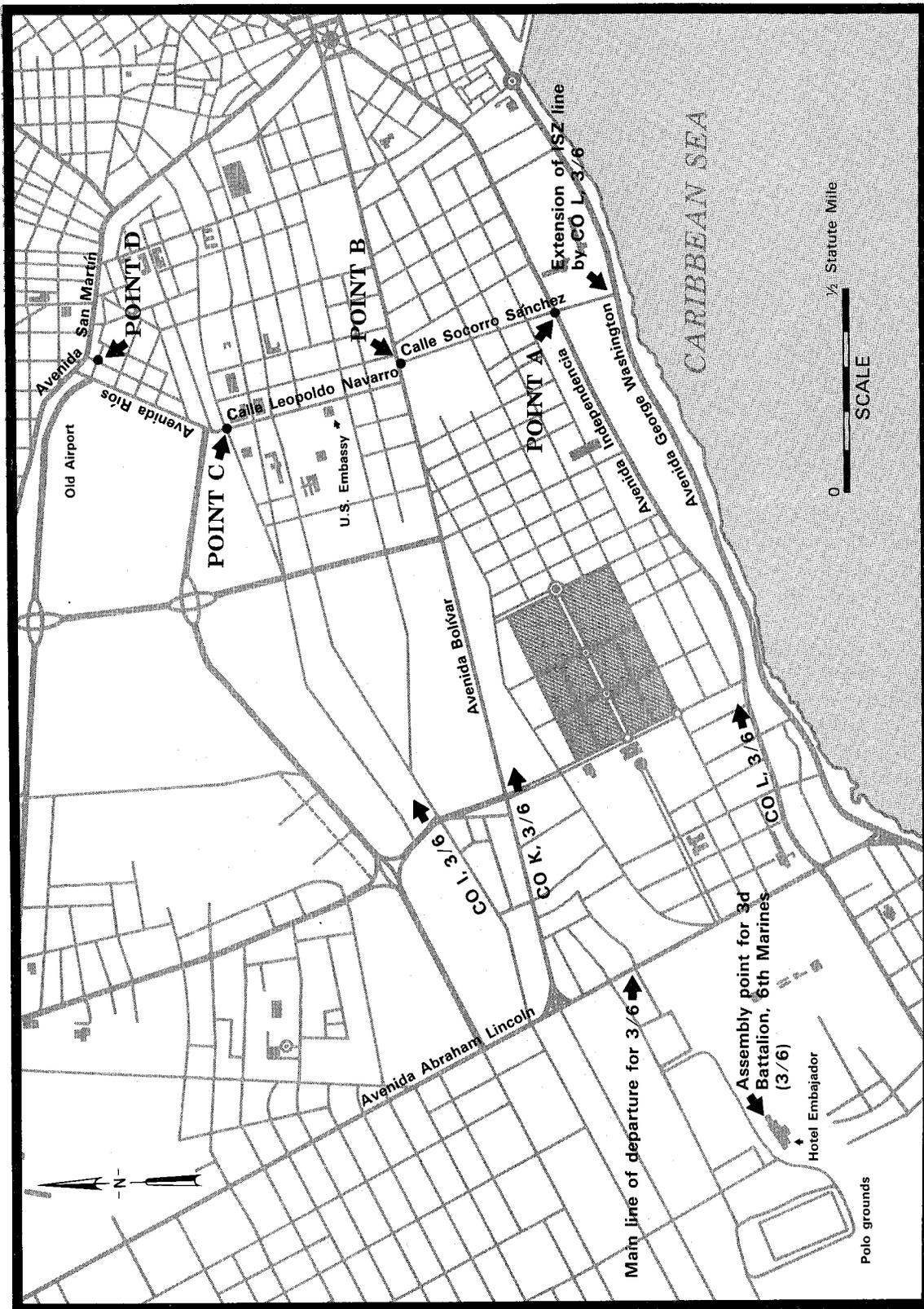
Dominican Crisis, 1965-1966

Marines move to line of departure in preparation for establishing the ISZ

Washington's permission to enter Santo Domingo. As one reporter noted, the 82d's move to the Ozama had nothing to do with evacuating Americans but was instead a political deployment designed "to prevent the collapse of the Benoit junta."¹⁷

On the western side of town, at the Hotel Embajador, the marines assembled on the morning of the 30th to begin the clearing operation that would establish the perimeter of the International Security Zone (see map 6).¹⁸ While the battalion commander hovered overhead in an observation helicopter, the lead elements of the 3d Battalion, 6th Marines, began their advance from Avenida Abraham Lincoln, the north-south line of departure near the hotel, and moved eastward toward the Embassy. Expecting to encounter rebel sniper fire, the battalion's three companies moved in single file behind tanks, ONTOS, and LVTs, "hugging garden walls and moving from tree to tree and from telephone pole to telephone pole." Company K, advancing along Avenida Bolívar toward Point B at the intersection with Calle Socorro Sánchez, and Company L, moving along the right flank toward Point A at the intersection of Avenida Independencia and Calle Socorro Sánchez, reached their objectives without encountering opposition.

Company I, operating on the left flank, was not so fortunate. As it passed near the U.S. Embassy, newsmen and photographers who climbed aboard the vehicles wondered why the marines were being so cautious.¹⁹ The answer came minutes later as the company approached its objective, Point C at the intersection of Avenida Francia and Calle Leopoldo Navarro, about a block and one-half north of the Embassy. Small-arms fire suddenly erupted from housing near the old Santo Domingo airport and from buildings along Avenida San Martín and Avenida Presidente Ríos, the latter an approach to the company's ultimate objective, Point D. The company commander, restricted to the use of small arms, sent a request up the chain of command to Masterson to use heavier caliber weapons to dislodge the snipers. While awaiting a response, the company commander proceeded to Point C, where he ordered his three platoons to silence the rebels through a series of squad- and fire-team rushes. The results were mixed, with the 1st and 3d Platoons taking casualties of one killed and eight wounded. That afternoon, the company received authorization to use 3.5-mm rockets



Map 6. U.S. marines establish International Security Zone, 30 April 1965

to reduce the buildings housing the snipers. Although the rockets proved highly effective, a checkpoint established at Point D could not be held. In view of this, Colonel Daughtry ordered the company to consolidate its position at Point C.

By day's end, the Marine position ran in a north-south line from Point C to Avenida George Washington near the sea. The U.S. Embassy occupied a position directly on the line; troops—not land—provided the only buffer between U.S. officials and the rebels, many of whom had yet to be cleared from within the precarious perimeter established by the marines.

While the 82d and the marines were still conducting their respective operations, a meeting convened at San Isidro in midafternoon for the purpose of arranging a cease-fire. Bennett, the papal nuncio, General York (representing Masterson), Wessin, Benoit, and two men representing Caamaño were among those in attendance, as was LBJ's personal emissary, Ambassador Martin, who arrived just as the meeting was getting under way. There followed a long, acrimonious argument between Loyalist officers and Constitutionalist representatives in which each spoke emotionally about atrocities and other crimes allegedly committed by the other side. The fall that morning of Fortress Ozama, from which only four policemen escaped with their lives, added to the intensity of the confrontation. "This was hate, real and naked," Martin later wrote. For a time it appeared as though agreement was beyond reach, but at Martin's urging, Wessin, then Benoit, then the others present,²⁰ signed a brief document that sought to guarantee the personal safety of all individuals, regardless of political affiliation, and that requested the OAS to send a commission to arbitrate the conflict. The signers wanted Caamaño's personal approval and signature but decided to wait until the next morning before making the hazardous journey to the colonel's headquarters. In the meantime, the nuncio announced the agreement over the radio.²¹

As the cease-fire went into effect, both marines and paratroopers reinforced their positions and waited for nightfall. A platoon from the 82d flew by helicopter to assist marines defending the landing zone near the Embajador. It was a symbolic gesture calculated to demonstrate the 82d's involvement in the effort to protect American lives. Along the eastern edge of the ISZ, the three Marine companies each had a section of 106-mm recoilless rifles to bolster their firepower. Sniper fire continued throughout the night, despite the cease-fire, but once the marines became accustomed to it, their fire discipline improved—that is to say, they stopped returning fire until they had a clear target.²²

On the west bank of the Ozama, the bridgehead defended by elements of the 82d came under intermittent sniper fire, at times heavy, throughout the night. The division's initial assault force had arrived configured for light operations, but an artillery battalion had brought in 105-mm howitzers, which were set up between San Isidro and the bridgehead. At one point around midnight, when the snipers were particularly active, the 105s fired illumination rounds over the bridgehead. After eight such rounds caused a

discernible drop in the rate of sniper fire, a battalion commander, fearing that the burning remains of shells would ignite fires in the shanty town that bordered the bridgehead, ordered the artillery to cease firing. (As it turned out, there would be no more artillery rounds fired in combat by U.S. forces during the intervention.) Well before dawn, sniper fire in the Army sector became sporadic. The cease-fire seemed to be taking effect, but few were optimistic it would last.²³

The cease-fire agreement certainly caused no celebration among the Loyalists and American officials in Santo Domingo. Believing a cease-fire unwise while rebels still controlled most of the city, Bennett had tried, without success, to convince Washington of his reservations. York regarded the agreement as an obstacle to preventing a Communist takeover, while Masterson informed CINCLANT and the JCS that the agreement was "tenuous" and that he was "not sanguine as to its effectiveness." Rebel elements, Masterson believed, would attempt to probe U.S. positions, and he had accordingly ordered "Army and Marine commanders to hold their positions and defend them as necessary." At San Isidro, Loyalist officers were convinced that the rebels would use a cease-fire to consolidate their positions and to build up their forces. Bennett agreed but reminded the Loyalists that they could also use the respite to regroup for possible action in the event that the cease-fire broke down. Bennett's nudging was hardly needed. Despite having signed the document, the junta talked about future clean-up operations not as a possibility but as an inevitability. Caamaño's thoughts are not known, but many on both sides wondered whether he had enough control to impose the cease-fire on the small armed groups under his command.²⁴

The attempt to revise the cease-fire agreement when Martin, Harry Shlaudeman, and the papal nuncio visited Caamaño's headquarters on Saturday led to a complete breakdown in political-military coordination. The colonel, the entourage discovered, had already signed the cease-fire document. When he warned that U.S. troops must not be allowed to cross the cease-fire lines, Martin produced an ESSO oil company map of the city. The map, which Bennett had given him that morning, had the ISZ boundaries sketched in, based on the approximate position of the marines at that time. Martin explained that the marines intended to move the ISZ line two blocks to the east in order to give the U.S. Embassy better protection. Caamaño agreed to the move and accepted the other boundaries. Only later did Martin discover that Masterson and Tompkins also wanted the northern boundary expanded several blocks in order to provide better protection for what were exposed Marine positions in the area. Martin's failure to consult the military before agreeing to changes in the ISZ boundaries prompted Tompkins to object "in the strongest language (politely of course) that to have the military committed unilaterally to new boundaries and rules, and then fail to tell the military, was an unexcusable [*sic*] piece of madness." Martin offered to reopen negotiations, but both he and Tompkins realized that it was too late for that. For the time being, the agreed upon boundaries would stand.²⁵

In one other respect, Martin's political achievement conflicted with what U.S. officers on the scene perceived in terms of military necessity: the cease-fire in place ratified the gap between the marines and the paratroopers. York expressed concern, but he did not have the authority to override President Johnson's personal emissary. As in the case of the ISZ boundaries, it appeared that this aspect of the agreement, unsatisfactory as it was from a military perspective, would not be altered. Lieutenant General Bruce Palmer had other ideas.

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Palmer arrived at San Isidro shortly after midnight Saturday. At the White House meeting the previous day, after LBJ had approved activation of the Headquarters, XVIII Airborne Corps, the president reportedly instructed General Wheeler to select the "best general in the Pentagon" to take command of the forces in the Dominican Republic. Wheeler immediately approached Palmer, who was then the Army's deputy chief of staff for operations (DCSOPS) but slated to take over as commanding general of the XVIII Airborne Corps in a few weeks. Palmer, a modest man, attributed his selection in part to Army politics—Wheeler wanted to put in his own man as DCSOPS immediately—and to the desire of LBJ and his advisers to have a general officer from Washington, one presumably attuned to the political-military dimensions of the crisis, placed in the sensitive role as commander of the U.S. forces ashore. Wheeler informed Palmer to leave at once for Fort Bragg, "pick up an austere headquarters with communications support from XVIII Airborne Corps," and fly to Santo Domingo. The chairman of the JCS went on to say that Palmer's "announced mission" was to save American lives but that his "unstated mission" was to prevent a Communist takeover of the Dominican Republic. Palmer was to take all necessary measures to prevent a second Cuba and was promised sufficient forces to "do the job." Wheeler urged Palmer to "get close to Ambassador Bennett and coordinate your actions with him." Finally, the chairman directed that all messages sent by Palmer through the chain of command, that is, through the JTF commander and CINCLANT, should also be sent directly to Wheeler through a back channel. This last directive stemmed from Wheeler's opinion that "communications from the scene of operations coming via the USS *Boxer* and CINCLANT were slow, sketchy, and unreliable."²⁶

Breakdowns in communications were not confined exclusively to the Navy. Neither General Bowen, the current commanding general of the XVIII Airborne Corps, nor General York was informed of Palmer's mission. Thus, when Palmer arrived at Bragg on the afternoon of the 30th, a "more than indignant" Bowen asked him, in effect, "What the hell are you doing here?" Palmer told him. During the discussion, the phone rang, and Bowen finally received official notification of what was going on. Palmer got the headquarters segment and communications package he needed but little useful intelligence before setting off in a C-130 for San Isidro. Upon his unexpected arrival, he reluctantly awakened York from a much-needed sleep so that the 82d's commander could brief his replacement as commander of

Lt. Gen. Bruce Palmer, Jr., commander of the U.S. forces in the Dominican Republic



TF 120. “Bob wasn’t completely happy about seeing me,” Palmer recalled later, “but he recognized the situation and was very good about it.” Be that as it may, an underlying tension developed between the two generals that Palmer attributed to York’s natural reluctance to relinquish his role as land force commander. But as Palmer was to argue, York had his hands full with the 82d, and a higher echelon commander who could work with the Country Team as a buffer between the combat troops, with their military preoccupations, and the policymakers in Washington, with their political demands, was essential. The strain between York and Palmer would become more severe in the weeks that followed as their perceptions of the intervention diverged.²⁷

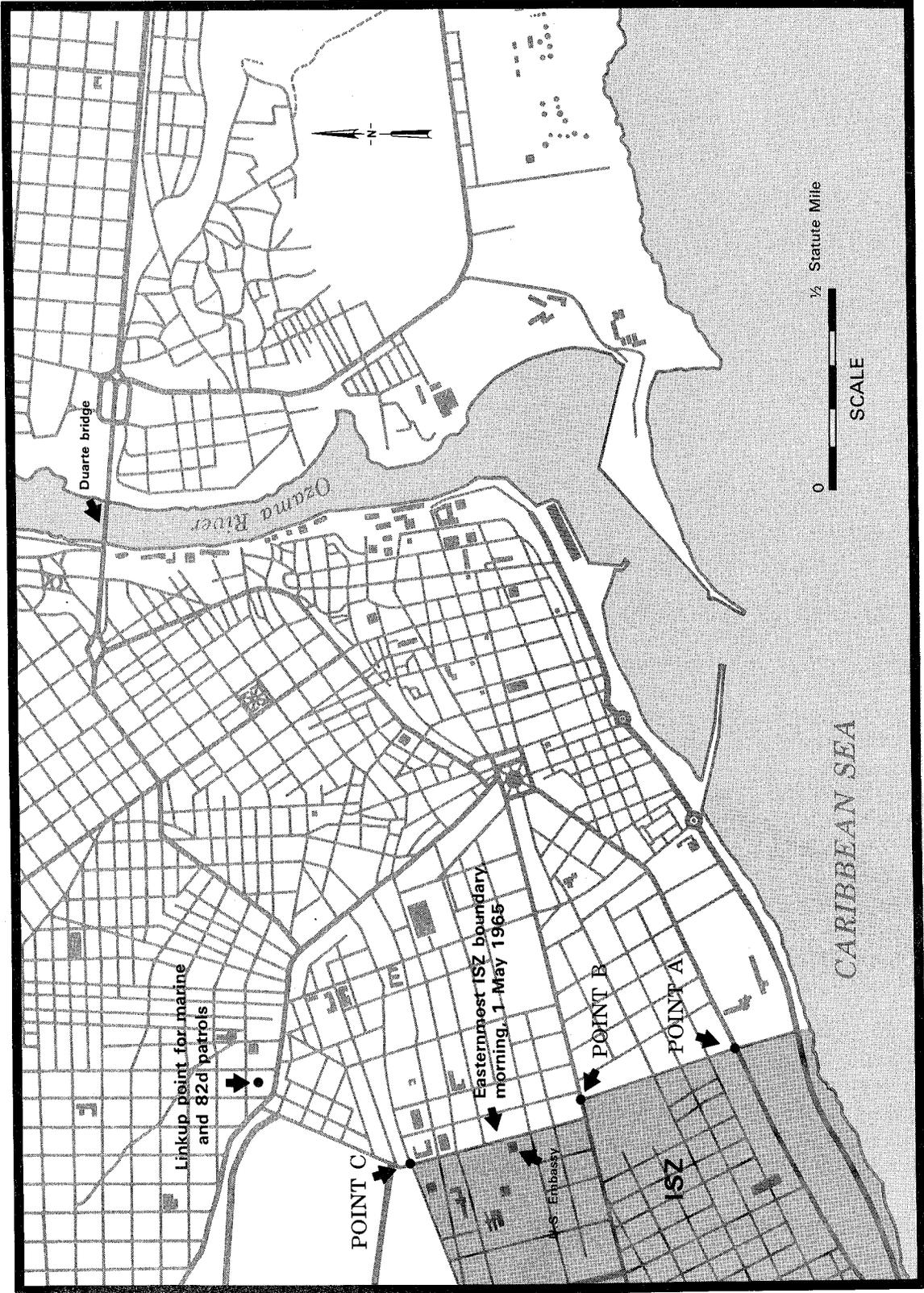
York’s briefing in the division’s noisy hangar at San Isidro—megaphones had to be used—convinced Palmer that the situation “was a very confused one.” What disturbed Palmer most was the cease-fire in place, under which U.S. forces would have to live with the gap between the Army and the Marine positions, with the rebels, “who had initiated a reign of terror and anarchy,” operating at will in between. To Palmer, this was militarily unacceptable, and he informed York that he did not recognize the cease-fire for that reason. York agreed, claiming that he had not signed the agreement but had only witnessed it for Masterson. Both generals concluded that a corridor had to be established between the two U.S. positions. As a first step toward that objective, Palmer ordered York to mount a reconnaissance in force that day for the purpose of determining rebel strength within the gap and finding a feasible route for a corridor.²⁸ Over the next two days, the issue of a corridor became Palmer’s primary opera-

tional concern, as he tried to undo the consequences of what he considered a failure in political-military coordination.

Around 1000, Palmer flew by helicopter to the U.S. Embassy, landing next door, where Trujillo had maintained his residence. The marines guarding the Embassy were engaged at the time in a firefight with rebel snipers, so Palmer and his pilot hastily scrambled up a fence and dropped onto the Embassy grounds. In the meeting that followed this unceremonious arrival, Bennett expressed his reservations to Palmer regarding the cease-fire agreement and promised to support the general's request for more troops. Whether Palmer, during the course of the conversation, told Bennett about the reconnaissance in force scheduled for later that morning is not clear. At some point, the general did report his plan for an Army-Marine linkup over the telephone to the director of the Joint Staff in Washington, and he had to have informed Masterson in order to get U.S. Marine Corps participation in the operation.²⁹ But the evidence suggests that Palmer did not inform Bennett, perhaps because he had not had time to form a judgment as to the diplomat's reliability. If this was the case, the cause of political-military cooperation suffered a temporary setback as a result of Palmer's caution.

About the time Martin was meeting with Caamaño on the cease-fire, the reconnaissance in force was getting under way as the marines and 82d sought to make contact near the ISZ (see map 7). Company I of the 3/6 BLT moved northeast without resistance from their position at Point C to the proposed linkup point on Avenida San Martín. At 1025, a reconnaissance platoon and the 1st Platoon, Company C, 1st Battalion, 508th Infantry, set out from the west bank of the Ozama along a route that would take it due west and then southeast to the rendezvous. Unlike the marines, the paratroopers ran into resistance at two points on their march and suffered their first fatality (another man would later die of his wounds). The opposition in both instances was suppressed before movement proceeded, with one platoon getting lost temporarily because of its outdated maps. Nonetheless, the linkup finally occurred in an open field, after which the joint force canvassed the immediate area gathering valuable intelligence until York ordered the patrols to return to their original positions. The 82d's account of the withdrawal order indicates that it was issued because the force was not large enough to "sustain itself in an isolated position." Another account suggests that the order to withdraw came directly from Washington.³⁰

Washington became involved after Caamaño complained about the troop movements. In a cable to Santo Domingo, Mann confessed to being puzzled over the colonel's charges, especially after the Defense Department had assured State that the only known troop movements were between the Duarte bridge and San Isidro. Bennett, who was apparently as much in the dark as Mann, waited two hours before replying and then allowed only that the Embassy was receiving rebel protests about some movement by the paratroopers into the city and that the "conflicting reports" were being checked out. In the meantime, Bennett continued, Shlaudeman had told the



Map 7. Linkup of U.S. Marine and 82d Airborne Division patrols, 1 May 1965

rebels that the United States, while neutral, had "given no commitment as to where our forces might or might not move in execution of their mission." That evening, the ambassador conceded that there was "confusion here this afternoon over movement west of Ozama bridgehead by forces of 82nd Airborne Division." Only at 2040 (in a situation report written at 1830) did the Embassy acknowledge the Army-Marine linkup that afternoon.³¹

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For Palmer, the linkup demonstrated the feasibility of establishing a cordon from the Duarte bridge to the ISZ. The next step was to obtain troops and support for the operation. He would encounter difficulties in securing both. To establish and hold a corridor through rebel territory, he required at least the four additional BCTs York had requested early Friday morning. At the time, York, in making his request, had anticipated an immediate and affirmative response. His optimism seemed warranted. Even before President Johnson met with his advisers later that morning, the JCS told CINCLANT to prepare the four BCTs for deployment "as soon as possible," pending a presidential decision. To quiet expressed concerns that the Air Force did not have enough airlift to meet the requirements of an expanding operation, the JCS indicated that TAC could employ "total active USAF airlift resources less than absolutely essential minimum airlift required to support Southeast Asia." Once LBJ made his decisions on troop alerts and deployments, telephone calls and message traffic between the JCS and Joint Staff, on the one hand, and CINCLANT, CINCSTRIKE, TAC, and XVIII Airborne Corps, on the other, increased in volume and intensity. CINCLANT was to give "maximum priority to positioning aircraft for movement of remaining four BCTs" committed to OPLAN 310/2-65 and to "make maximum preparation for an *immediate* launch" of the battalions (*italics mine*). The same message "emphasized that this force must move with minimum delay upon receipt of movement execute directive," and that "personnel should be standing by for immediate departure as aircraft are available and all possible advance loading of equipment [should] be accomplished."³²

The wording of these messages left little doubt that, in the Joint Chiefs' interpretation of LBJ's decisions, the deployment of additional airborne forces was imminent and a matter of great urgency. Two of the four BCTs attained DEFCON 2 status by Friday afternoon, only to wait while their transports sat idle. Hours passed. Finally, that evening, CINCLANT received word that there would be no execute order until the next morning, after the president had met again with his advisers. Sometime later, the Joint Chiefs discovered to their horror that in the crowded and confused conditions at Pope AFB certain elements of the 2d Battalion of the 505th had already taken off for San Isidro. Immediately, the JCS ordered these forces to return to Pope or to divert to Ramey. (Apparently, the troops had found seating aboard Power Pack I's Bravo echelon, which was originally designated for carrying equipment and supplies only.)³³

When Palmer arrived at San Isidro early Saturday, he learned of the Joint Chiefs' action to withhold the four BCTs, at least for the time being. Remembering Wheeler's assurances to him that he would be given whatever

forces necessary to prevent a second Cuba, Palmer immediately requested that troop movements be resumed. But the only additional combat troops he would see that morning were 100 or so "contaminated" paratroopers from the 2d Battalion of the 505th Infantry who, unaware of the recall order, had proceeded to San Isidro. Also landing at the airfield that morning was the lead element of the 15th Field Hospital, a unit the JCS had inserted into the airlift upon receiving Embassy reports of massive casualties in Santo Domingo. York and Palmer were furious. The 82d and the marines already had adequate medical support. From the perspective of the two generals, the purpose of the airlift, once the initial assault forces had landed, was to provide the ground commanders with what they needed, when they needed it. And what they needed Saturday were more combat troops. "A force commander committed to an objective area must be able to request units whose capabilities augment those which are already committed," Palmer later reported, "and he needs to know what sort of units are alerted or en route to join his force." (Palmer was operating under the dubious assumption that higher headquarters had some clue as to the alert or deployment status of the units in question.)³⁴

As Palmer and York fumed in the Dominican Republic, President Johnson was reconsidering military movements he had approved only twenty-four hours earlier. The reason for this second White House meeting was simple. The decision to send elements of the 82d to the Dominican Republic had caused a violent reaction throughout Latin America and within the OAS. Riots and mass demonstrations greeted the news, and Latin American leaders—some of whom supported the troop commitment privately—denounced the United States publicly for violating its policy of nonintervention. As criticism mounted, so, too, did the fear on the part of several key presidential advisers that additional military deployments would further alienate friendly governments in the hemisphere, thus jeopardizing the administration's efforts to transform the intervention into a multinational enterprise under OAS auspices. The news that a cease-fire had been arranged Friday afternoon lent weight to this cautious position. LBJ was caught in the middle. He had agreed to emphasize a negotiated settlement. A moratorium on further troop commitments would lend credibility to that position and, perhaps, mollify the Latin Americans long enough for the OAS to send a commission, and possibly troops, to the Dominican Republic. But the cease-fire in place worked out by Martin would, according to Bennett, Palmer, Masterson, and the Pentagon, work to the rebels' advantage, thereby undermining the administration's goal of preventing another Cuba. Stopping the Communists, the military reiterated, required additional troops—the more the better. The wisdom of sending in enough troops to subdue the rebels, either psychologically or militarily, still held. Johnson weighed the advice, then decided on a middle course. He would continue to emphasize the cease-fire and OAS involvement, while honoring Palmer's and Masterson's requests for more troops from the 82d and 4th Marine Expeditionary Brigade (MEB). The 101st would not be deployed at present. As for the U.S. troops gathering in the Dominican Republic, they would not be allowed for the moment to take offensive action to defeat the rebels.³⁵

Soon, Palmer, York, and Masterson would have the troops they needed to establish a cordon linking the Army and marines. They still needed authorization to mount the operation. At the Embassy on Saturday afternoon, Palmer contacted Washington—presumably he talked with Wheeler—and presented a strong case for the proposed action in spite of the cease-fire. A cordon, Palmer argued, could follow a route that would bifurcate the southeast part of the city, pushing the rebels into a very small area and giving U.S. troops control over Santo Domingo's telephone exchange, main post office, banks, and other key facilities. The risk entailed in taking this southern route was almost certain confrontation with rebel forces. To reduce the risk, Palmer proposed an alternative: a cordon set up along a line similar to the one used for the Army-Marine linkup that afternoon. Passing north of Ciudad Nueva, such a route would leave key installations in rebel hands but would contain the Constitutionalists.³⁶

Before returning to San Isidro Saturday, Palmer also talked with Bennett and Martin and received their support. Martin was prepared to yield to military necessity despite the cease-fire he had negotiated because he realized that the gap left the Constitutionalists in control of the city. But he rejected the introduction of U.S. troops directly into the rebel area for fear that the move would precipitate a bloodbath. He preferred, instead, the alternate route Palmer had broached with Wheeler. After Palmer arrived at San Isidro, he apparently continued his appeal for a cordon when he communicated with LBJ at 0400, 2 May, via an Air Force C-130 "talking bird" located at the airfield.³⁷

That Washington was willing to consider such an operation was evident from instructions sent to Palmer, Masterson, Bennett, and Martin on Saturday night and Sunday morning. Each individual was requested to assess the situation and to recommend a course of action to Washington in time for a Sunday morning meeting between the president and his advisers. The directive to Palmer and the one to Masterson came from Wheeler, who expressly raised the issue of establishing a perimeter around the southeast portion of Santo Domingo. From both officers, he wanted to know the most desirable route, the number of U.S. troops to be used, the time it would take to establish and secure the perimeter, and the estimated casualties. Ironically, Palmer, the architect of the idea, never received Wheeler's message. Palmer's copy was sent by mistake to Fort Bragg and not forwarded to him; he therefore did not provide the detailed information Wheeler desired. Instead, he waited for the chairman's response to his proposals of Saturday afternoon, not understanding why Wheeler would hesitate to recommend to the president what was so obviously required on the basis of military necessity. Only later did Palmer learn the reason for Wheeler's recalcitrance. In responding to the JCS inquiry regarding routes and troop requirements, Masterson had indicated that between twelve and eighteen battalions would be needed to carry out the mission. This was two to three times the force of six battalions that Palmer would have recommended. In effect, Masterson's estimate would require the deployment of the 101st Airborne Division. Little wonder for Wheeler's concern.³⁸

While Palmer pondered Wheeler's inexplicable silence and waited for instructions, others made his case for him. On 2 May, Bennett, speaking for the Country Team and for Martin (who had by then concluded that the revolt had been taken over by Castroite-Communist elements), strongly urged State to accept Palmer's recommendation to close the gap between the Army and the marines. Masterson, as noted, echoed these sentiments, if not in the exact words that Palmer would have chosen. That afternoon, State instructed Bennett to contact members of the OAS commission (who had just arrived at San Isidro) to determine their opinion as to the establishment of a line of communication (LOC) across the city (the use of the term "cordon" was now forbidden because of its negative connotation). The commission had reservations, but despite its concern that the move might have an adverse effect on the cease-fire, the members approved the plan when they realized that no corridor existed to provide for their safe passage back and forth between San Isidro and the diplomatic heart of the city. Commission members appreciated the deference shown to them, although they might have suspected that it was simply another token gesture to elicit OAS approval for what would be a unilateral U.S. undertaking. Such suspicions would have been well-founded: State had assured Bennett before he made contact with the OAS commission that the LOC would be established regardless of the commission's attitude.³⁹

Apparently, several considerations convinced Washington policymakers to accept Palmer's plan: the fragile nature of the cease-fire, a decision to level with the American people regarding the perceived Communist menace, the rationale that a corridor would be used to facilitate the evacuation of American citizens, and the appeal of establishing a perimeter that would isolate the bulk of the rebels. At 2045, President Johnson talked with Bennett and gave him the go ahead to establish the corridor. Later that night, LBJ again went on television to deliver a major address in which he reaffirmed U.S. neutrality in the crisis and announced his decision to send more U.S. troops into the country. To justify additional troop commitments, he revealed publicly for the first time the administration's fears of a Communist takeover in the Dominican Republic and the need for the United States, acting through the OAS, to prevent such a catastrophe. "The American nations cannot, must not, and will not permit the establishment of another Communist government in the Western Hemisphere."⁴⁰

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With the president's personal approval and with orders from Wheeler, Palmer was set to "turn loose" the 82d. The operation would occur at night in order to minimize casualties on both sides and among innocent bystanders. At a conference in Bennett's office, Palmer, the ambassador, Tompkins, and Marine Colonel Joe Quilty, the chief of the military group, had already selected the route for establishing the LOC. State had assumed that the operation would follow the same route used for Saturday's linkup, but studying an ESSO map spread before them on the floor, the conferees in Bennett's office considered all possibilities. The southern route of advance was ruled out because it would mean an inevitable clash with the main

concentration of rebels, something Washington would not approve. A route that ran north of the ISZ also held out the danger of crossing through rebel hot spots. The route finally chosen “was calculated on the basis of the shortest distance and least rebel resistance.” This meant avoiding the dangerous Point D by turning south along Calle San Juan Bosco, which led into Point C, already secured by the marines. In retrospect, all agreed that rejection of the northern-most route was a mistake because it left Radio Santo Domingo in rebel hands. Once the establishment of the LOC rendered a Constitutionalist victory improbable, the propaganda broadcast from the radio station created one of the major obstacles to ending the crisis.⁴¹

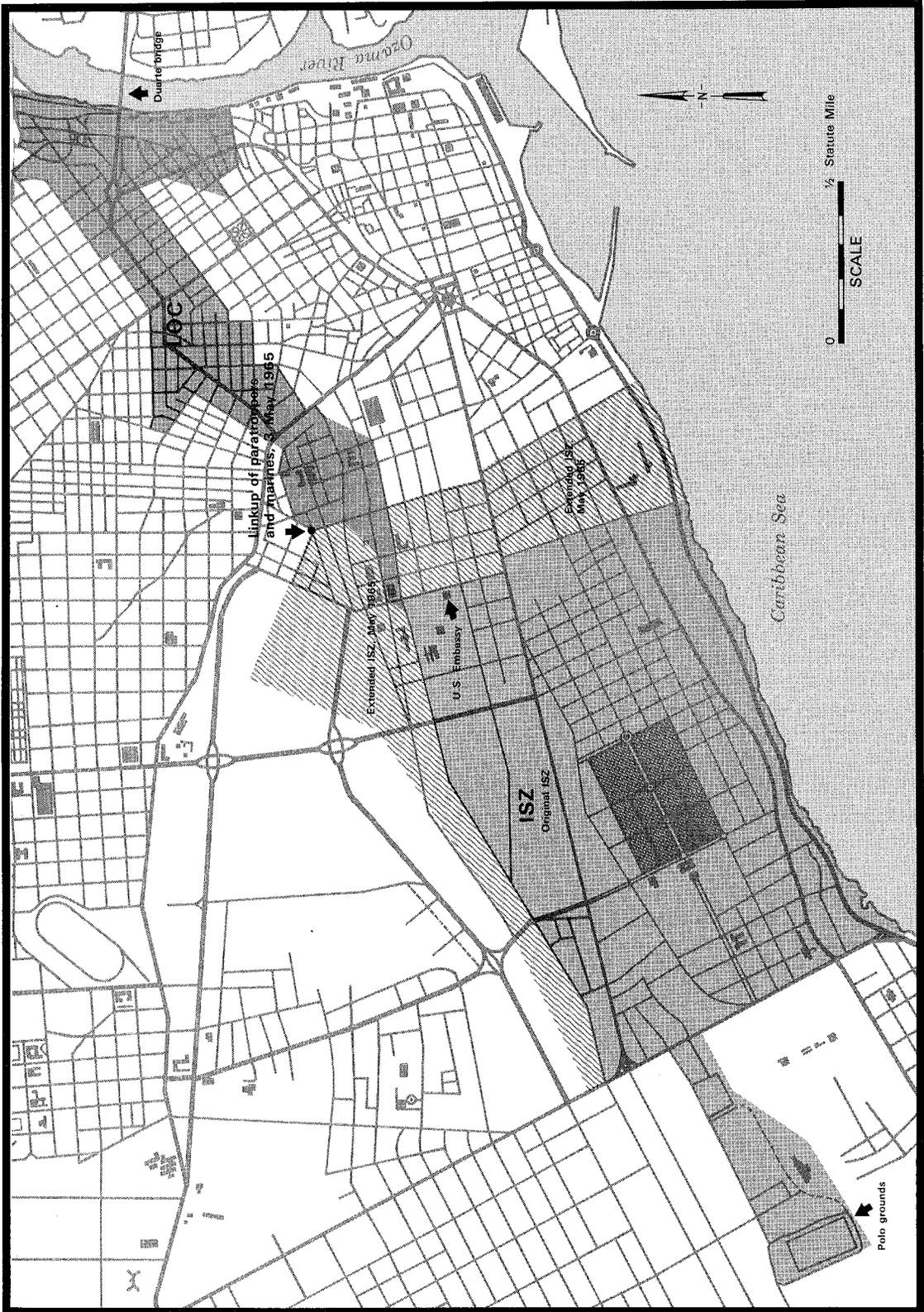
At one minute past midnight on 3 May, the operation began. A Marine platoon moved east along Calle San Juan Bosco to Calle Rosa Duarte.⁴² Farther east, three battalions from the 2d Brigade, which had only recently arrived at San Isidro, left the relative security of the 82d’s bridgehead and began moving toward the rendezvous.⁴³ The tactics employed were, in General Palmer’s words, “striking”:

Using a leapfrog method, one battalion would move out, secure an area, and hold it. The next battalion on the line would pass through the area held and advance and hold. The third battalion then moved through the two battalion areas and advanced to the Marine position, thus forming a link-up. They encountered only light resistance and contact was made with the marines an hour and 14 minutes later.⁴⁴

Palmer’s account fails to mention an incident that took place when the 82d reached the linkup point. Accompanied by General York, the lead elements signaled the marines. At that time, a rebel sniper fired on the 82d’s position. The paratroopers killed the sniper, but in the darkness, some marines who heard the fire opened up on the 82d. A second attempt to signal the marines also resulted in a brief firefight. Angry and frustrated, York finally stood up, walked to the middle of the street, and identified himself by yelling. The linkup then took place.⁴⁵

Although declared to be a safe route once several convoys traversed the LOC later on the 3d, the “All American Expressway”—or “Battle Alley,” as the LOC came to be called—was widened over the next two days in order to make positions along it more tenable and to “minimize direct fire in the area.” The ISZ was again also extended, this time two blocks east to secure the embassies of Ecuador and El Salvador (see map 8).

The LOC, by providing a ground corridor between the Duarte bridge and the ISZ, facilitated communications and the movement of people and supplies. It also served as an alternate evacuation route and allowed paratroopers to begin a series of humanitarian acts that included making food, water, and medicine available to the city’s inhabitants—regardless of ideology—who had gone without those necessities for days. Militarily, the LOC split the rebel force and trapped up to 80 percent of Caamaño’s troops in Ciudad Nueva. Because U.S. soldiers quickly set up checkpoints along the LOC, the movement of armed rebels into the northern part of Santo Domingo—where they could carry on operations and possibly mount an insurgency in the countryside—was diminished. The LOC, in effect, ended



Map 8. Final disposition of the International Security Zone and line of communication

any possibility that the Constitutionalists could take over the country by military means. They were surrounded and outgunned. Caamaño would have to negotiate or face certain military defeat.

Palmer and York preferred not to allow him the choice. Their primary reason for establishing the corridor had from the beginning been to provide the 82d with an advantageous jumping-off position for an all-out attack on the rebels. As Palmer noted later, "The forces which opened the LOC could have moved southward upon linkup with 4th MEB. Such action would have broken the rebellion early and restored law and order without delay." Palmer planned an attack that combined ground and heliborne operations and would hit Caamaño from all sides at once. The battle, York speculated, "would be over in a matter of hours."⁴⁶ All that was needed was authorization to proceed. The word never came. Following the breakdown in political-military coordination that left standing the gap between Marine and airborne units, Palmer had persistently argued that military necessity had to take precedence over political considerations because of the uncertain military situation in the city. The general had been persuasive and had won his case. But the establishment of the LOC opened a new phase in the intervention, a phase in which military considerations would never again override political objectives on an issue the magnitude of the LOC.

With the threat of a Communist takeover removed, the Johnson administration regarded any further U.S. military action as counterproductive to American interests in the Dominican Republic and Latin America. That assessment did not mean, though, that all American troops would be withdrawn. Their presence provided the administration the leverage it needed to forge a political solution to the crisis—a political solution that LBJ prayed the diplomats could achieve quickly before the intervention took on aspects of an occupation. But until negotiations proved fruitful, U.S. soldiers would remain in harm's way, the targets of snipers' bullets, machine-gun fire, and, depending on one's location, popular resentment and mob violence. Just because the intervention had entered a political phase did not eliminate the military dangers. What the transition portended was an increasing number of political restrictions that would interfere with the ability of U.S. troops to counteract these dangers. Frustration would mount in the days and weeks to follow, as American soldiers, having completed the major portion of what combat they would see in the Dominican Republic, experienced the effects of the subordination of military to political considerations. For the soldiers under fire, it was a distasteful lesson and one that no amount of political-military coordination could ever make completely palatable.
