

---

## THE CARIBBEAN REGIONAL COAST GUARD PROGRAM

[Submitted by HQ, U.S. FORCES CARIBBEAN]

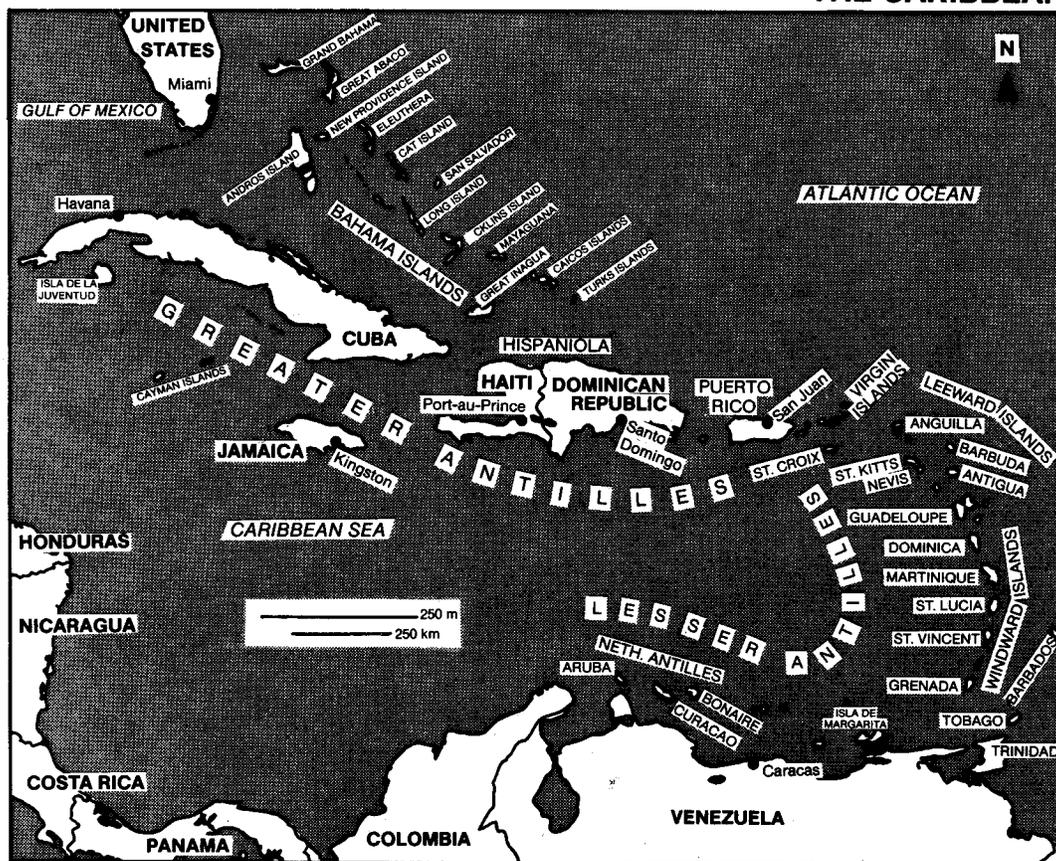
The Security Assistance Program managed by the Commander, U.S. Forces Caribbean (COMUSFORCARIB) includes a substantial commitment to the establishment and maintenance of a regional coast guard in the Caribbean. The concept of such a regional coast guard is not a new idea. As a matter for thought and conjecture, it has been addressed numerous times in the past. As a matter of application, it has often been proposed and, on several occasions, tentative initial steps have been taken, though not usually involving U.S. support. Nonetheless, to date there has not been established, a viable, longstanding regional coast guard. The United States has renewed its focus on the Caribbean as a region vital to U.S. national security, as evidenced by the Reagan Administration's Caribbean Basin Initiative, the Grenada Rescue Operation, and the escalating U.S. effort aimed at interdicting drug traffic and illegal immigration within the region. This renewed focus has provided the impetus and funding for another effort to create such a regional entity.

Issues regarding the political feasibility and the desirability of creating a centralized regional coast guard headquarters with some measure of operational control over multinational coast guard assets are beyond the scope of this article. The study, rather, focuses on the feasibility and desirability of creating and supporting region-wide interoperability and compatibility of equipment, training, and operations among the Caribbean island nations themselves, and between them and the U.S. Coast Guard. This article outlines what has been accomplished to date in these areas and where we are going in the current regional coast guard effort.

Over the last two years the U.S. Security Assistance Program, particularly in the Eastern Caribbean, has come close to transforming the concept of a regional coast guard into a reality. As is true for most security assistance programs, the Eastern Caribbean regional coast guard is being built on a foundation of equipment, facilities, and required training.

While most of the island countries in the Eastern Caribbean are newly independent and consequently ill-equipped and insufficiently trained to perform the duties of a coast guard (or "police marine wings" as they are often referred to locally), the maritime forces of the Western Caribbean (the Greater Antilles countries of the Dominican Republic, Haiti, and Jamaica) have been in existence for a much longer period of time and thus possess a better force of ships, boats, and facilities. Training, though of a different nature, has become just as important in the Western Caribbean as it is in the East.

## THE CARIBBEAN



The different types of training programs provide an excellent point from which to begin a closer examination of the United States security assistance approach to establishing a Caribbean regional coast guard.

### International Military Education and Training (IMET)

Although the coast guards and navies of the nations of the Caribbean do participate in "routine" types of training (e.g., students are sent to the United States for resident courses of instruction), the uniqueness of the training program in the Eastern Caribbean merits discussion. Since the nations of Antigua-Barbuda, Dominica, Grenada, St. Christopher-Nevis, and St. Lucia have what can best be described as fledgling coast guard/police marine wing organizations, it was necessary to begin their training in an intensive, "all-hands" environment. The other unique factor was that these organizations were coast guards in nature and not navies; their missions did not (and do not) align so much with those of the U.S. Navy as they do with the U.S. Coast Guard whose missions include search and rescue, environmental protection, maritime surveillance, and marine safety.

The U.S. Coast Guard is uniquely qualified to provide the training needed in the Eastern Caribbean because of the small size of its active military force (about 40,000) and the fact that it only operates small vessels (some 2,000 boats less than 65 feet in length and over 130 additional vessels of various types less than 110 feet in length). The effort in the Caribbean has brought the U.S. Coast Guard into a new and expanding role in security assistance programs. Consequently, the Commander, U.S. Forces Caribbean requested and obtained three U.S. Coast Guard Technical Assistance Field Teams (TAFTs), each comprised of three men, to work with the coast guards of Antigua, Dominica, and St. Lucia, beginning in February, 1984. These three teams were given the task of providing a basic organizational structure,

teaching maintenance fundamentals, and establishing operating criteria for their host country coast guards. When these teams departed their host nation a year later in February 1985, they left behind a group of individuals who were well grounded in the basics of seamanship and governmental maritime duties.

Having acquired the essential "entry-level" skills, these trainees are now capable of participating in the more advanced training provided at the U.S. Navy Small Craft Instruction and Technical Training School (NAVSCIATTS) at Rodman Naval Station in Panama, as well as at various U.S. Navy and U.S. Coast Guard schools in the United States.

A similar approach has been taken to rebuild the coast guard in Grenada. A U.S. Coast Guard officer conducted an initial survey of the remnants of the Grenadian Coast Guard in early 1984, and, based in part on his recommendations, a three-man Mobile Training Team (MTT) was dispatched to the island in August of that year. That team completed initial training for the Grenadian Coast Guard in basic seamanship and navigation skills in October, 1984. The initial three-man MTT was followed by a two-man MTT which left the island in February of 1985. Then, a three-man U.S. Coast Guard TAFT arrived, identical to those sent to Antigua, Dominica, and St. Lucia, and began conducting a one-year course of instruction for the Grenadians.

Apart from learning the basics of seamanship and operational functions, the trainees in the Eastern Caribbean are also being taught maintenance, an absolute necessity if the new vessels which have been sent there from the U.S. are to survive more than a year or two. To help insure proper maintenance, the Security Assistance Program will continue to provide some commercial technicians to perform sophisticated and/or specialized maintenance required to keep the new vessels operational.

In the Greater Antilles, U.S. security assistance programs have been established for a longer period of time, with the result that IMET programs are in full operation. Members of the Dominican Republic Navy, as well as the Jamaica Defense Force Coast Guard, routinely attend courses at stateside schools. Likewise, Haitian Navy personnel have been active participants in the IMET program for a number of years. Another positive sign for the regional coast guard has been the acceptance of IMET programs for the first time by Trinidad-Tobago and the Bahamas which have begun their association with security assistance by sending their first students to U.S. Coast Guard courses.

One indication of possible future Caribbean-wide cooperation is the fact that in early 1985 the Jamaica Defense Force Coast Guard provided an officer to assist the Grenada Coast Guard in training. This demonstrated exchange of personnel, combined with the quantities of U.S.-sponsored training, should provide the basis for establishing increased cooperation among the various coast guards/navies/police wings of the Caribbean. A possible harbinger of things to come was the Eastern Caribbean nations participation in UNITAS XXV in 1984 during which five countries (Antigua, Dominica, Barbados, St. Lucia, and St. Vincent) executed at-sea exercises and shoreside demonstrations and professional exchanges in conjunction with the U.S. Navy.

## MAP/FMS Vessel Procurement

Just as training has been started at a more basic level in the Eastern Caribbean than in the Western Caribbean, so too has vessel acquisition been directed to accommodate the varying levels of sophistication in each nation.



The Dominican Republic patrol boat "Orion."

The Dominican Republic, with a naval force of some two dozen vessels of various types and sizes and a comparatively large and stable national economy, was able to purchase two 110-foot patrol boats through the FMS program. These two vessels (basically "off-the-shelf" patrol boats constructed by Swiftships of Morgan City, Louisiana) were delivered in April and June of 1984. The boats' aluminum construction and comparatively basic engineering and electronics package make them an excellent, easily-maintained addition to the Dominican Republic Navy.

Jamaica is preparing to purchase a new patrol boat using FY 85 MAP funds. Sole source procurement has been requested from the Lantana Boatyard of Lantana, Florida. The boat to be purchased was originally constructed for a Central American nation which failed to take delivery. Thus, Jamaica is able to husband some of its MAP funds by virtue of the fact that the builder has been willing to reduce the price based on previous payments received.

Lantana Boatyard was also the builder of a 106-foot, all-aluminum patrol boat, the "Tyrrel Bay," which was supplied to Grenada as part of the MAP program in late 1984. The vessel itself was constructed in a relatively short time; also, the normally lengthy process of Letter of Offer and Acceptance (LOA) signature, funding approval, acceptance trials, crew familiarization, and transit of the vessel to its homeport were accelerated so that a total of only 67 days elapsed between signing of the LOA and arrival of the "Tyrrel



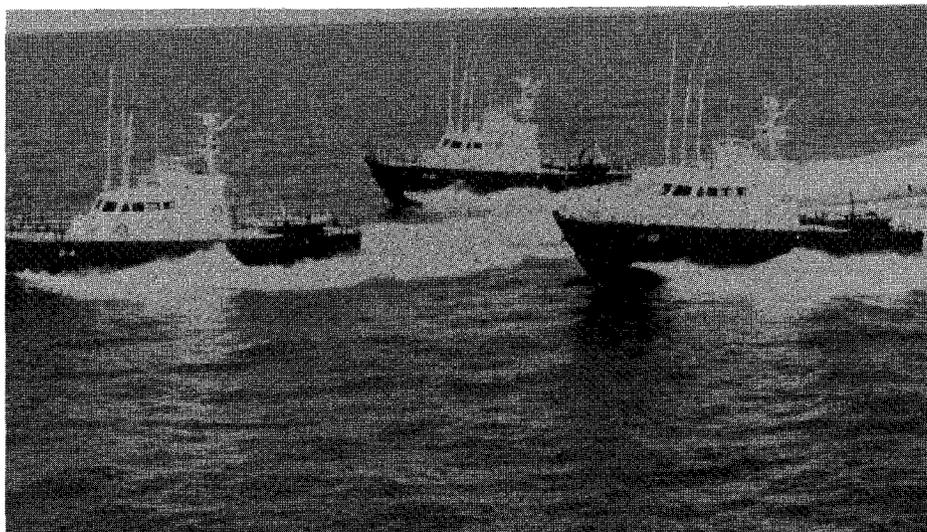
The Grenadian patrol boat "Tyrrel Bay."

Bay" in St. George's, Grenada. This rapid delivery procedure was necessitated in part by a perceived need to have the vessel in place in Grenada prior to the holding of national elections in early December, 1984. Members of the provisional government and the U.S. Embassy country team in Grenada felt that the presence of Tyrrel Bay would help insure a smooth election process, and the boat itself was used to transport balloting material from the outlying island of Carriacou.



Two Grenadian thirty-foot patrol boats.

Three other nations of the Eastern Caribbean also received MAP-funded patrol boats in 1984. Antigua, Dominica, and St. Lucia all acquired identical 65-foot, all-aluminum vessels in the spring of that year. The boats were constructed at the same Swiftships yard which built the boats for the Dominican Republic. The three vessels were then sailed in convoy to their respective homeports.



Patrol boats from Antigua, Dominica, and St. Lucia (the Liberta, Melville, and Defender, respectively).

The aforementioned U.S. Coast Guard TAFTs were aboard the vessels with their host-country crews for the final stages of construction, acceptance trials, and transit. This method of putting the initial trainers on board with the trainees prior to delivery of the vessel permitted everyone to develop excellent familiarity with the boat and its characteristics, as well as to create appropriate maintenance routines before the vessel entered its home country waters.

Maintenance routines are essential to the establishment and long-term viability of all the coast guards/police marine wings. Consequently, LOAs for both short- and long-term parts packages, as well as for the previously noted civilian maintenance contracts, have been signed. Such on-going contracts typify the "total package" approach considered essential to the success of any security assistance program.

Additional patrol boat acquisitions and training teams lie in the near- and long-term future. A 110-foot patrol boat is planned for delivery to the nation of St. Christopher-Nevis in the late summer of 1985, and it will be accompanied by another U.S. Coast Guard three-man TAFT scheduled to remain for one year. This boat is being constructed by the Swiftships organization.

Further in the future, U.S. Forces Caribbean, in conjunction with the Military Liaison Office (MLO) in Bridgetown, Barbados, intends to obtain a 120-foot patrol boat for the nation of St. Vincent, and perhaps an additional

vessel for Barbados in FY 87 or later. The MLO in Barbados performs security assistance/liaison functions for all the island nations of the Eastern Caribbean.

### Shoreside Facilities

Boats without bases are extremely difficult to keep operating. Supply storage, workshops, and personnel berthing are all necessary to the successful establishment of any naval force. The problem of building such facilities in the Eastern Caribbean has been a difficult one for the Security Assistance Program. Though the need is well-known, limited MAP funds (combined with the financial inability of most of the Eastern Caribbean nations to undertake construction projects on their own) simply prohibit full-scale construction of proper facilities in each of the nations which have acquired patrol boats.

Consequently the U.S. State Department, COMUSFORCARIB, and the American Embassy MLO in Bridgetown, Barbados, have been working with the British government in an effort to share the burden of constructing shoreside facilities. Any construction project will be long term in nature (probably taking 18 months for completion), but the presence of the boats and the creation of solid organizational foundations dictate that base construction be undertaken as quickly as possible.

### Summary

With its tripartite approach of training, equipping, and supporting regional coast guard/marine police forces, Commander U.S. Forces Caribbean intends to make the Eastern Caribbean regional coast guard a success. It is hoped that this will be the first step toward a larger, Caribbean-wide Regional Coast Guard. In forming such an entity, the best interests of the nations involved, as well as those of the United States, will be served: operational compatibility will be created, the United States will generate allies with a commitment to seaborne security, and a program to assist in the maintenance of regional stability will be established.