

Crisis in Haiti: Operation UPHOLD DEMOCRACY

William J. Allen

OPERATION DATES: September 9–October 12, 1994

LOCATION: Haiti

OVERSEAS BASES USED: Port-au-Prince International Airport, Cap Haitien Airport, Haiti; Roosevelt Roads Naval Air Station (NAS), Puerto Rico; Guantanamo Bay NAS, Cuba

AIR FORCE ORGANIZATIONS:

WINGS:	WINGS: (con't.)
4th Wing	314th Airlift
6th Air Base	355th Wing
7th Wing	436th Airlift
9th Reconnaissance	438th Airlift
16th Special Operations	552d Air Control
20th Fighter	
23d Wing	GROUPS:
33d Fighter	193d Special Operations
55th Wing	145th Airlift

AIR FORCE AIRCRAFT: C-130, AC-130, A/OA-10, E-3, EC-130, RC-135, EC-135, U-2, F-15, C-141, C-5, KC-135, KC-10

Operations

On September 18, 1994, U.S. President William J. Clinton signed the order that launched U.S. sea and air forces to the island nation of Haiti. Under the name Operation UPHOLD DEMOCRACY, the United States used its military forces to return democracy and the Haitian exiled president to a country whose people suffered under military dictatorship and corrupt government. USAF participation effectively ended October 12, when resupply of U.S. forces became routinely scheduled airlift missions and deployed aircraft and crews returned home. Three days later, Haitian President Jean-Bertrand Aristide and his entourage went back to Haiti in triumph, flying

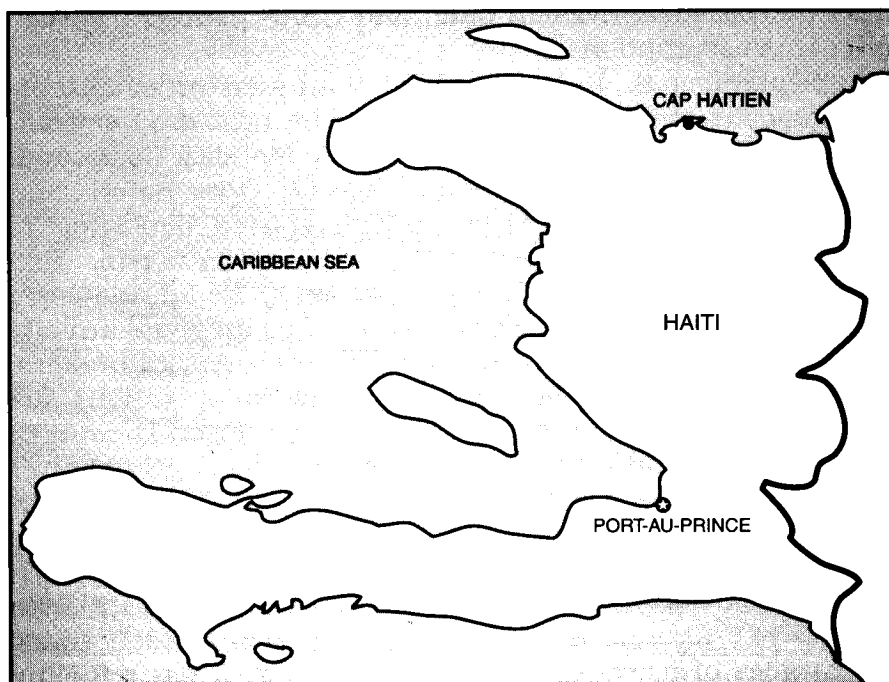
from Andrews Air Force Base (AFB), Maryland, aboard a USAF C-137 and a C-9.

Aristide, a leftist Roman Catholic priest, had been elected in December 1990 in a landslide victory as president of Haiti. He took office on February 7, 1991. He appointed as commander in chief of the Haitian armed forces Lt. Gen. Raoul Cedras, who on September 30, 1991 engineered a military coup that forced Aristide from power. With Cedras' regime came social and economic despair for most Haitians. Many attempted to find a better life in the United States by crossing the Atlantic Ocean by boat some 700 miles to Florida.

By January 1992, the number of Haitians the U.S. Coast Guard picked up at sea reached 14,000. The increasing flood of Haitians forced U.S. President George H. W. Bush to order those not eligible for political asylum returned directly to their home country. By May 1992, he had ordered the U.S. Coast Guard to repatriate all Haitian boat people without allowing them to apply for asylum. The flow of refugees slowed to a trickle.

On July 3, 1993, General Cedras and exiled President Aristide signed the Governor's Island Accord, which provided for Aristide's return by October 30, 1993. This agreement also called for the retirement of Cedras and other military leaders and the lifting of sanctions imposed by the United Nations and Organization of American States against Haiti. However, General Cedras ignored the agreement, and the flood of refugees began anew. By July 1994, thousands of refugees overwhelmed U.S. ability to send them back to Haiti. The United States detained the refugees at Guantanamo U.S. Naval Base, Cuba, and in other Caribbean countries. However, the situation in Haiti rapidly deteriorated until on September 8, 1994, when U.S. national leaders determined to intervene militarily.

The U.S. Atlantic Command (USACOM) developed Operation UPHOLD DEMOCRACY in two different plans, one a forcible entry and the other a passive entry plan. The first optioned for an airdrop of the U.S. Army's 82d Airborne Division, marshaled at Pope AFB, North Carolina, and special operations forces into Haiti's capital, Port-au-Prince, and other strategic drop zones. Initially, it called for sixty C-130 aircraft for the airdrop of heavy equipment and paratroopers at the International Airport in Port-au-Prince. Near the cities of Mirebalais,



Haiti, Site of Operation UPHOLD DEMOCRACY

thirty miles northeast of Port-au-Prince, and Miragoane, fifty miles west of Port-au-Prince, forty-five C-141 aircraft would air-drop heavy equipment and paratroopers. Eight more C-141s would land troops at the International Airport in the capital city. Special operations teams required an additional seven C-141s to air-drop them into Port-au-Prince.

In the permissive-entry plan, if the Cedras government agreed to relinquish power peacefully, the U.S. Army's 10th Mountain Division from Fort Drum, New York, would land in Haiti by sea and airlift. The U.S. Air Force planned to airlift members of the 10th to Port-au-Prince and Cap Haitien, on the northern coast of Haiti. Further, armed forces from Jamaica, Trinidad, Tobago, Barbados, Antigua/Barbuda, Guyana, and Belize would also be airlifted into Haiti as part of the U.S.-led multinational force. USAF planners worked through evolving variations not knowing which of the two plans would be chosen at the last moment. USACOM planners looked to September

20 as the possible invasion date, and USAF planners worked under this assumption.

On September 8, 1994, the Joint Staff alert order authorized prepositioning of mobility forces. The next day, aircraft, crews, and support technicians from Air Mobility Command, Air Combat Command, Air Force Special Operations Command, and other USAF organizations started deploying to staging bases in the United States and the Caribbean. Nine days later, the Joint Staff directed execution of the forcible-entry plan. For the invasion, the Air Force gathered an aerial armada of over 200 aircraft that included 121 transports, 73 tankers, and several command and control and special operations aircraft like E-3 AWACS and AC-130 gunships. From Pope AFB, North Carolina, and MacDill AFB, Florida, sixty C-130 aircraft of the 314th Airlift Wing at Little Rock AFB, Arkansas, 7th Wing at Dyess AFB, Texas, and 23d Wing at Pope, departed on the initial wave on September 19. At Charleston AFB, South Carolina, and McGuire AFB, New Jersey, sixty-one strategic airlift C-141 aircraft remained awaiting their launch times with cargoes of heavy equipment and troops. Aerial refueling aircraft to support the armada came from Robins AFB, Georgia (twenty-eight KC-135s); Homestead AFB, Florida (eleven KC-135s); Roosevelt Roads Naval Air Station, Puerto Rico (nine KC-135s); Seymour Johnson AFB, North Carolina (twelve KC-10s); and Barksdale AFB, Louisiana (thirteen KC-10s).

From the start, the plan proceeded as scheduled, up to and including the launch of the second formation of troop-carrying C-130s. The lead assault wave, forty-six C-130s, consisted of eighteen aircraft loaded with paratroopers and twenty-eight carrying heavy equipment. The second wave of fourteen C-130s only carried paratroopers. All the heavy equipment aircraft left MacDill while the paratroop aircraft departed from Pope. As aircraft of the first wave flew to form up over the Atlantic Ocean, significant problems developed.

Flying from MacDill, the twenty-eight C-130s had good weather, took off as scheduled, formed up, and prepared to link up with the thirty-two aircraft from Pope. However, the C-130s from Pope experienced problems from the start. First, planners only allowed forty-five seconds between aircraft launches. Second,



C-130s staging at MacDill AFB during Operation UPHOLD DEMOCRACY, September 1994.

because of unusually heavy loads, they decided to use 700 feet of flight line, requiring aircraft to taxi to the far end of the runway, turn around, and then take off. This maneuver actually required between seventy and ninety seconds, resulting in excessive time between the first and last takeoffs. Additionally, the first aircraft launched was equipped with the master station-keeping equipment that allowed safe formation flying. With aircraft strung out over more than ten miles, the station-keeping aircraft became completely ineffective. To complicate matters more, Pope launched their aircraft during rain showers, and thunderstorms awaited the crews all along their flight to the south.

These problems created a stressful and uncertain situation for the Pope C-130 crews as they flew toward a rendezvous with the MacDill C-130s. Pope aircrews used speed adjustments to catch up with the lead C-130, an acceptable practice in small formations with minimum spacing but impractical for large formations spread over long distances. After all the C-130s

from Pope were airborne and heading south, it was a formation only in name.

With the C-130s on their way to planned objectives, and the C-141s yet to launch, the Joint Staff ordered the invasion halted and the airborne forces to return to their respective launch bases for a twenty-four-hour period. At nearly the last minute, a diplomatic proposal that former U.S. President James (Jimmy) E. Carter offered General Cedras persuaded the junta leader to relinquish his control over Haiti. The unexpected decision caused a mission change from a military invasion to the insertion of a multinational peacekeeping force. When President Clinton and the Joint Staff thought that Cedras intended to cooperate fully, USACOM ordered on September 19 the cancellation of the forcible-entry plan. At the same time, the Joint Chiefs issued the execution order for the permissive-entry plan.

Transition between plans required a twenty-four-hour pause to reposition some aircraft now supporting the new plan. Those already in place for the deployment of the permissive-entry forces took off, carrying several U.S. Army units, and landed at Haitian airports as planned. These U.S. Army units delivered by the air and sea forces functioned as a military police force maintaining the peace. They also assisted in training a new police force for Haiti during the political transition period between the Cedras and Aristide governments.

On September 19, a C-5 carried members of the 436th Airlift Wing's Tactical Airlift Control Element from Dover AFB, Delaware, to Port-au-Prince to establish airlift control, aerial port, and other airfield support for aircraft bringing equipment and troops. Shortly thereafter, ground forces began arriving at Port-au-Prince on commercial and military aircraft. The permissive-entry plan required the deployed strategic airlift forces, C-5s and C-141s, waiting at Dover, McGuire AFB, New Jersey, and Griffiss AFB, New York, to fly to various locations for loading and then to Haiti before returning to their respective deployment bases. These large aircraft flew only to the capital city since no other airfields in Haiti could handle them. By September 26, USACOM had established requirements for twenty-five C-141 and ten C-5 daily inbound flights.

Although over 20,000 troops eventually arrived in Haiti, the initial execution of some portions of the permissive-entry plan was anything but smooth. For example, to move the 10th Mountain Division from its home at Fort Drum to Griffiss AFB, action officers coordinated ground and air transportation times. For its part, the division contracted with local school bus companies to move its troops. However, the troops did not always arrive at Griffiss on time to meet the scheduled aircraft launch. Thus, launch times slipped, resulting in the Tactical Airlift Control Element at Port-au-Prince sometimes not knowing exactly when or what type of aircraft would show up. This created problems when scheduling, unloading, and notifying Army soldiers when to expect arrival of equipment and troops at Port-au-Prince. Further, C-130s and USA helicopters distributing equipment and troops to airfields around the country had no firm scheduling times to pick up loads.

The C-141s, C-5s, and commercial aircraft delivered U.S. and foreign forces to Port-au-Prince, Roosevelt Roads NAS, Puerto Rico, and Guantanamo Bay Naval Air Base, Cuba. At these locations, the C-130s from MacDill AFB that originally supported the forcible-entry plan loaded troops and cargo and airlifted them to various airfields throughout Haiti. Later, on September 26, ten aircraft and crews from the 7th Wing redeployed from MacDill to Roosevelt Roads to conduct airlift operations to Haiti. USACOM also released the remaining MacDill C-130s and crews from participation in the crisis.

By September 30, USAF operations in Haiti became more or less routine as Air Mobility Command added supply airlift missions to point-to-point, or channel, mission scheduling. The airlifters of Operation UPHOLD DEMOCRACY helped deliver the peak military strength of the multinational forces of 20,931 by October 2. On October 10, General Cedras resigned and two days later left the country. After completing the movement of multinational forces from Roosevelt Roads, the remaining C-130s redeployed to their home station by October 12, ending USAF contingency flying operations for UPHOLD DEMOCRACY.

On October 15, 1994, Aristide returned to his country, the benefactor of a strong U.S. response to an oppressive dictator. General Cedras only agreed to leave after tough negotiations

and perhaps the realization that he faced an approaching force similar to that of the airborne invasion of Panama in 1989. As in Panama, the Air Force brought to bear an overwhelming force of fighters, command and control aircraft, gunships and other special operations aircraft, reconnaissance airplanes, aerial refueling tankers, and thousands of troops aboard the airlift fleet of strategic and tactical aircraft. The successful adaptation to the last-minute change in mission, from military invasion force to airlifting peacekeeping troops, was a major indicator of the flexibility air power offers U.S. military and political leaders in fulfilling national foreign policy objectives.