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The Haiti Crisis
"Factors Shaping the Design and Execution of Military Strategy"

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Course 5605
Seminar N

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Underscoring those **“Factors Shaping the Design and Execution of Military Strategy,”** my paper analyzes measures taken during the Haiti crisis that lead President Clinton to undertake a military intervention strategy to achieve US policy objectives. In the end, this approach should support my assertion that, ***“we can not let our fascination with technology negate our responsibility to maintain a warfighting capability that can defeat a variety of near-term threat to US interests.”***

Specifically, my paper will examine and discuss how President Clinton was able to convince a reluctant Congress and the American people to support a policy of direct **military intervention** in Haiti despite their reservations and belief that no vital US national security interests were at stake. Additionally, it will highlight how difficult and necessary it is that a President garner **public and political** support for any policy calling for the use of military forces to achieve a political objective. Further, it will show that there is “no crisis” in today’s **civil-military relations**. Lastly, the Haiti situation shows us that the proper blending of the statecraft elements of **diplomacy and military** under a sound political objective will more often than not result in success.

All of these points are themes discussed during the conduct of Course 5605.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Haiti has a long history of turmoil that started in 1804 when it became the world's first black independent republic. In their almost 200-year history, the people of Haiti have suffered incessantly at the hands of countless military and nonmilitary dictators. It wasn't until December 1990, following the unprecedented election of Father Jean-Bertrand Aristide, a Roman Catholic parish priest, that the people of Haiti experience any semblance of hope that their despair would soon end. Father Aristide won the presidency with a landslide, receiving over 67 percent of the vote. His popularity became a measure not so much of his eloquence, or even political tactics, as of his open honesty and concern—especially for Haiti's poor—which had been rarities in Haitian politics.¹

During the 10 months following Haiti's free elections, President Aristide called for policy changes that were very popular with the masses, but challenged the traditional elite. In fact, President Aristide, in often saying "I see myself as a president in opposition,"² recognized his policies would not draw favor with the military or business aristocracy. Many believe, among them the Catholic Church and Washington, that "his impassioned call for a more just distribution of land and goods"³ was the proverbial straw that broke the camel's back – The stage was set for a coup.

¹ Louis L. Ortmayer and Joanna Flinn, "Hamstrung over Haiti: Returning the Refugees," (Washington, D.C. Georgetown University, 1994) p. 3

² Amy Wilentz, "The Oppositionist," The New Republic, October 28, 1991, pp. 16-19

³ Ortmayer and Flinn, "Hamstrung over Haiti: Returning the Refugees," p. 3

In September 1991, President Aristide, upon returning from a visit to the United States and The United Nations, was overthrown by a military coup led by General Raoul Cedras. General Cedras would later become the *de facto* leader of Haiti's coup inspired government, and the main impediment to the international community's efforts to return President Aristide to office.

Although America's initial response to the Haitian coup originated with President Bush, the decision to utilize American troops to expedite President Aristide's return to office was made by President Clinton. There was little consensus in Congress about how to respond to the Haitian crisis during the Bush administration and later at the outset of President Clinton's. Given our government's indecisiveness in dealing with a crisis in our backyard, how did President Clinton gain congressional and popular support and approval to send troops to Haiti?

Let us now examine the Haiti crisis as viewed through a US policy, interest and strategy, congressional, and public (people and interest group) prism.

U.S. POLICY – BUSH

“ As in a building, which, however fair and beautiful the superstructure, is radically marred if the foundation be insecure-so, if the strategy be wrong, the skill of the general on the battlefield, the valor of the soldiers, the brilliancy of the victory, however otherwise decisive, fail in their effect”

Alfred Thayer Mahan

Although not publicly acknowledged, the United States' primary concern with the Haitian crisis centered solely on stemming the flow of tens of thousands of poor, black refugees to our shores. President Bush issued a repatriation order in May 1992, requiring Haitian immigrants stopped at sea to be returned forcibly to Haiti. Despite much criticism, this order survived many legal attacks, before the Supreme Court granted the Bush administration interim authority to continue the practice of forced

repatriation The Bush administration did consider several other options, including the use of military forces, but Haiti was not high on their “importance” meter and that option was dropped Moreover, the Haiti crisis was so insignificant to the Bush administration that a senior official noted that “the Haitian crisis did not involve the kind of security considerations--the flow of oil in the Persian Gulf, or narcotics trafficking in Latin America--that in recent years caused the United States to commit military power against Iraq and Panama ”⁴ President Bush’s policy towards Haiti simply represented a thorn he did not want to deal with considering he was preparing for a presidential election that was not a forgone conclusion in his favor

The Bush administration’s use of maritime forces to forcibly repatriate Haitians stopped at sea represented an incoherent application of a quasi-military strategy to achieve an ill-conceived policy objective void of benefit, cost and risk considerations

US POLICY - CLINTON

Initially, President Clinton handled the Haitian crisis with the same dismissive attitude as had Bush Not until he was reminded of “Candidate Clinton’s” scathing criticism of President Bush’s forced repatriation policy, did he look for a policy that was more responsive President Clinton revised his policy of returning Haitian immigrants to Haiti in June 1994 The new policy called for Haitians stopped at sea to be processed at the U S Naval Base at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, and then transferred to Panama or the Dominican Republic to await “favorable” repatriation to Haiti

⁴ Louis L. Ortmayer and Joanna Flinn, “Hamstrung over Haiti: Returning the Refugees,” (Washington, D C Georgetown University, 1994) p 14

For much of President Aristide's exile during the Clinton administration, the United States' policy centered primarily on the use of **diplomacy** to pressure the *de facto* Haitian government to restore constitutional democracy. President Clinton increased the pressure on the Cedras regime, prodding him to the negotiation table to discuss immediate restoration of Haiti's legitimate democratic government. The Governors Island Accord of June 1993 outlined a process for change but collapsed, causing the United States to consider a new policy. This set-back forced President Clinton to take even a tougher position toward the military regime promising stiffer sanctions if they refused to step down voluntarily.

U.S. INTEREST AND EMERGING MILITARY STRATEGY

In a September 15, 1994 television address to the American people, President Clinton outlined United States **interests** as follows: "to stop the brutal atrocities that threaten tens of thousands of Haitians, to secure our borders and preserve stability, to promote democracy in our hemisphere, and to uphold the reliability of the commitments we make and the commitments others make to us."⁵

President Clinton's public declaration and framing of US interest was the first indication that the United States was orchestrating an **integrated policy and military strategy** to amplify the synergies that accrue from wedding these dynamic instruments of statecraft. This was a clear indication to both the American people and the international community that the United States was totally committed to removing the current rogue regime of Haiti. To the military strategist, this pronouncement not only

⁵ Louis L. Ortmayer, United States Intervention in Haiti (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University, 1994) p. 10

identified the “**ends**” (political objective), but also signaled the impending use of a more forceful “**means**” (military) to achieve stated US objectives

“ The effectiveness of military power depends not only upon a nation’s physical and technical command of the means of warfare but, just as much, upon its whole conception of war – especially the relations of war to international politics ”

Robert E. Osgood

President Clinton prepared to take more severe actions as General Cedras continued to defy the international community, refusing to step down in the face of escalating sanctions. The President’s Special Advisor on Haiti, former Congressman, William Gray III, was tasked to work with other countries to apply the maximum amount of pressure on Haiti for a diplomatic solution to the on going crisis. Both Gray and the President threatened military intervention if economic and political sanctions failed ⁶

As a prelude of possible things to come, President Clinton deployed U S forces to Haitian waters to enforce U S and UN embargoes against Haiti in October 1993. He deployed more forces in July 1994, in case they were needed to evacuate American citizens. These actions are the essence of military strategy – **real means** (naval and marine forces), applied to **real ends** (removal of rogue regime and return of democratically elected president), in support of **real interests** (uphold commitments, promote democracy, etc), threatened by **real opponents** (Haiti military junta)

CONGRESSIONAL RESPONSE TO POLICY SHIFT – MILITARY STRATEGY

Military strategists can not overly concern themselves with differences expressed by the executive and legislative branches of government about their use. However, they must take into account the potential impact these divisions may have on

⁶ Congressional Digest, U S Policy Toward Haiti, (VOL 73, No 8/9 August/September, 1994), p 200

recommended “**ways**” (courses of actions) to achieve stated “**ends**” (policy objectives)

This segment of the paper address **factors shaping the design and execution of military strategy** - The differences and reasons the president and congress disagreed on some means and the degree of US involvement in Haiti

President Clinton’s dilemma with Congress was that many Democrats were siding with Republicans because they did not see Haiti as a threat to any U S vital national interest. Additionally, a number of members stated that, although they had been kept informed, their concern was the limited amount of consultations regarding the issue and possibly the lack of public support. Certainly the public support aspect of their concerns was at center stage, because many of them were up for re-election in the upcoming fall 1994 congressional elections. It was recommended to the Secretary of Defense that any invasion of Haiti be delayed until after the November congressional elections to avoid accusations that military action was politically motivated.⁷ A senior administration official asserted that the President was under no obligation to seek congressional approval for an invasion of Haiti. Secretary of State Warren Christopher told a television interviewer that the President has “a constitutional prerogative” allowing him to deploy forces quickly.

The potential deployment of troops also raised questions regarding Congress’ role in authorizing the use of military force. At a committee hearing, a member of Congress sought a commitment from special envoy Gray that the administration would seek subsequent congressional notification of an authorization for an invasion. Gray avoided making such a commitment, saying only that the President would act in

compliance with the War Powers Resolution, which required him to consult with Congress “in every possible instance,”⁸ and to report troop deployments in certain circumstances, triggering in some cases a time limit without congressional authorization

President Clinton himself, when asked to justify potential military intervention in Haiti, swiftly ticked off reasons very similar to those that served as justification for U S invasions of Panama and Grenada in 1980

- 1 First, it's in our backyard
- 2 Second, we've got a million Haitian Americans
- 3 Third, we've got several thousands Americans in Haiti
- 4 Fourth, we believe drugs are coming through Haiti to the United States
- 5 Fifth, we face the possibility, the continuous possibility, of a massive outflow of Haitian migrants to the United States
- 6 Sixth, Haiti and Cuba are the only two non-democracies left in our hemisphere, and, unlike Cuba, Haiti at least had an election and overwhelmingly for democratic government, which has been denied⁹

The last two reasons became the catalyst behind the shift in US policy towards Haiti. The United States now considered its use of the military instrument of power the primary tool for resolving a problem that previously resided solely in the diplomatic domain. With Congress virtually neutered, the only task left for the President was that of securing the American people's support.

⁷ Ibid

⁸ Ibid

PUBLIC OPINION

It is extremely important that a strategist understand the profound impact public support may have on his ability to formulate a functional military strategy. In America, the very essence of our democracy is centered on the will of the individual, the people. If the American people do not understand the threat, risk, benefits or cost associated with maintaining a large or expensive military structure, then their misgivings will be materialized in the form of little or no funding and definitely no public support. Let us now look at what steps President Clinton took to insure public support for his Haiti policy.

President Clinton acknowledged up front that it was going to be difficult explaining to the American people why the United States was embarking on a substantial military operation in Haiti. Americans' apprehension and astonishment were likely, given growing Congressional opposition to the Haiti intervention and because the administration was late with a policy marketing plan. Additionally, the recent loss of American troops in Somalia and the problems in Bosnia were still on the minds of the American people.

Essentially, the American people never understood why US military intervention was necessary considering, Somalia's problems had no direct impact on US vital interest and Bosnia was first and foremost a European problem. Certainly, neither situation warranted risking the loss of American service members' lives.

For a variety of reasons, President Clinton's administration had done less groundwork than usual to prepare the American people for the idea that troops were

⁹ Christopher Marquis and Robert A. Rankin, "Clinton lists 6 reasons why U.S. might use force in Haiti," Miami

going to be sent overseas, possibly into combat President Clinton had also been preoccupied with his domestic agenda, particularly his comprehensive health care reform package

Recent military operations indicate that regardless of what position an administration takes, deploying or not deploying American forces in “harms” way, the American public will support overseas commitments until soldiers are killed in an unacceptable way The obvious recent example was Somalia, where the sight of American Rangers being dragged through the street was too much for the people to handle – parental and family associations came into play In the end, President Clinton bypassed Congress and went directly to the people in a television address on the Haiti problem The address became the centerpiece of the White House’s marketing strategy for American support of a military campaign in Haiti

It is a familiar pattern A president acts The public rallies Then the public evaluates whether the action or policy is working and issue judgment If the intervention works, as in Grenada or Panama or Kuwait, then the public is happy and presidential approval rises, even if Americans initially opposed the policy Policy failures produce public displeasure ¹⁰

INTEREST GROUPS

“Force gains moral justification only by virtue of its relation to some valid purpose beyond its own immediate effect”

Robert E Osgood

“The use of military power is not only an act of policy, but also a human endeavor As such, it is inevitably guided—and, ultimately, judged—by moral and ethical norms “No strategy is stronger than its moral foundation ”

Herald, May 20, 1994, A1

¹⁰ Louis L Ormayer, United States Intervention in Haiti (Washington, D C Georgetown University, 1994) p 11

“In Haiti, we have a case in which the right is clear, in which the country in question is nearby, in which our own interests are plain, and in which the mission is achievable”

President Clinton

This segment of the Haiti case study addresses the **moral and ethical considerations** surrounding strategy formulation. Specifically, it shows how threat, logistics, moral and ethical considerations, and policy guidance interact to shape the design and execution of military strategy. Motivated by human rights advocates' outcries for immediate military intervention, President Clinton pressed the military to develop a strategy to achieve US policy objectives.

Historically, individual and corporation, interest groups have played a significant role in policy-making and decision-making. The Haiti crisis was no exception. Randall Robinson, the leader of the lobbying group TransAfrica, declared that the President should give Haiti's military junta 48-hours notice to leave or be ousted. It was Robinson's 27-day hunger strike in the spring of 1994 that galvanized the public and the Congressional Black Caucus to press President Clinton for a more aggressive Haiti policy. Human rights organizations, immigration lobbyists, and the entire political leadership (bi-partisan) of Florida (major port of entry for refugees) called for a strong federal response.

President Clinton decided to appear on television with the hope that the people would initially rally to support his policy and in turn bring Congress with them, willingly or not. On September 15, 1994, he made his case for his policy on Haiti. He cited human rights abuses and the need for regional stability, and warned Haiti's dictators to step down or risk being forced out by a military invasion. The President offered four basic

arguments to support his contention that **vital U.S. interest** were at stake in Haiti ¹¹

First, he stressed that supporting democratic governments, especially in countries close to the U S , strengthened America's own security and fueled domestic prosperity. History has demonstrated that free governments are more stable and peace abiding than dictatorships.

Second, he underscored the argument that continued chaos and repression in Haiti would lead to ever-larger waves of **refugees** risking their lives to escape to the U S , creating problems and burdensome costs for this country. He argued forcefully that stability and democracy in Haiti itself were the only means to stem a threatened massive flow of refugees across the Florida straits. He reiterated that the U S Coast Guard had picked up more than 21,000 fleeing Haitians during a two-month period in the summer of 1994 alone.

Third, the President contended that the United States had a special responsibility to move against brutal violations of human rights when they occurred in close proximity to America. He specifically invoked the cause of **human rights** in Haiti, speaking of "a campaign of rape, torture and mutilation" under General Cedras and the military regime. He also noted that there were atrocities committed against priests, women, and children, even orphans, under the military regime.

Fourth, he argued that **American credibility** was at stake. He emphasized that the United States under the Bush administration had been committed to restoring President Aristide to power. Therefore, maintaining U S credibility around the world required follow through on this commitment. President Clinton referred to the Haitian

¹¹ Ibid

regime's failure to abide by the Governor's Island Accord of 1993. He summarized the multiple arguments for military intervention in Haiti: "In Haiti, we have a case in which the right is clear, in which the country in question is nearby, in which our own interests are plain, and in which the mission is achievable."

In his appeal for support at home, the President emphatically announced that the Haiti intervention would be "**limited and specific**," using the comparisons of Panama and Grenada. He stated that military leaders had worked hard to minimize risks to American troops, and he declared that most of the force would be returned home within months -- "not years."¹²

"The linkages between force and diplomacy are growing more intricate."

Course 5605 Theme

President Clinton also dispatched a delegation headed by former President Jimmy Carter to persuade Haiti's military junta to relinquish power. Carter was accompanied by General Colin Powell, former Chair of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and Senator Sam Nunn (D-Ga), Chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee, along with several members of the administration's national security team.

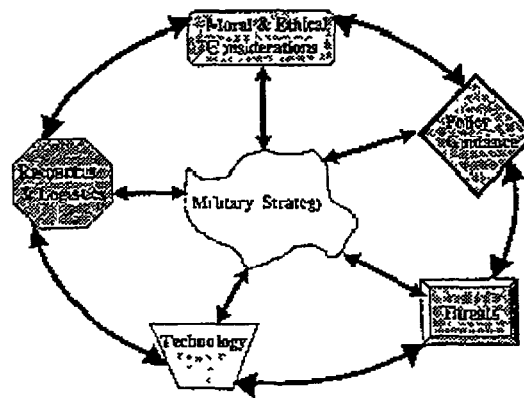
President Carter and his delegation managed to work a last-minute deal even as troops were enroute to begin the invasion. President Clinton announced the agreement at the White House, highlighting the fact that the U.S.-led force would not be opposed as they entered Haiti to facilitate President Aristide's secure return to power. Congressional opponents on both aisles agreed that the uncontested arrival of U.S. and international forces in Haiti had changed the dynamics of the debate and would silence

¹² Ibid

congressional criticism The bipartisan measure received at least the tacit approval of the administration and sailed through the Senate by a vote of 91 to 8

CONCLUSION

Factors Shaping the Design and Execution of Military Strategy



Excluding “technology,” the interaction of the other factors shown in the figure above had a significant affect on President Clinton’s decision to pursue a military strategy to resolve the Haiti crisis To gain public and political support for his military intervention strategy, President Clinton took the following steps

- 1 He identified US interests, including **moral and ethical considerations** that were aligned to the Haiti crisis
- 2 He outlined the **threats** to those interests
- 3 He assessed and changed previous **policy guidance**
- 4 Lastly, he outlined the nature (**resources, logistics, timeline, etc.**) of his strategy

Considering the context of Course 5605, the Haiti crisis, in the humble opinion of this student, more closely represents the nature of future conflict. As such, we as military strategists, must balance our warfare investments so that we retain the capability to wage and win a “non-cyber” war - a war that most likely will be low-tech and in many cases (Somalia, Haiti, Bosnia, etc), no-tech

Nothing I have learned this entire year leads me to believe that the plurality of future (the next 20 years) warfare will rest solely in the advanced-technology domain. Instead, I have learned to weigh the likelihood and impact future threats (WMD, Information warfare, etc) will have on the design of our future force structure

“Circumstances vary so enormously in war, and are so indefinable, that a vast array of factors has to be appreciated—mostly in the light of probabilities alone. The man responsible for evaluating the whole must bring to his task the quality of intuition that perceives the truth at every point. Otherwise, a chaos of opinions and considerations would arise and fatally entangle judgment.”

Carl Von Clausewitz