

## ➔ AMATEUR RADIO & THE GRENADA INVASION...the real story

by Fred Maia

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(We would like to thank Frank Maia for permission to quote these excerpts from his excellent article in the November 15, 1983 edition of his publication.)

The chancellor of the Grenada St. George's Medical School heard a news report describing the invasion of the island of Grenada, West Indies. Concerned with the safety of hundreds of American students, he quickly telephoned Dick Zaretsky (WB2VGL/4) of West Palm Beach, Florida, with a request to establish contact with amateurs at the medical facility. They had previously arranged that Dick would go on the air in the event of trouble.

Dick hadn't operated HF ham radio since the early 1970's, but set up a station specifically to operate with Grenada in the event of an emergency. It was set up just the weekend before the invasion but due to a defective relay, couldn't be used. He arranged with WA2-HOC/4 and WA2HOD/4 (James and Janet Nunziato of Jupiter, Florida) to assist with an HF link and via a 2 meter autopatch hooked Grenada into St. George's University in New York who had already been contacted by another amateur, K4DMK (Jack Mays of Folkston, Georgia).

Using the Nunziato's HF rig, Dick introduced himself to Mark Baratella (KA2ORK/4), a medical student, who recognized him from his previous involvement with the school. He told Mark that he had the New York line open to the University and would continue to keep it open. It ended up being a 36 hour phone call! Dick told Mark to drop the J3 suffix to facilitate communications.

Mark told Dick how he heard airplanes in the area. This was about 5:45 a.m. Tuesday morning, October 25th. A few minutes later Mark reported the shooting. Amateurs driving to work in West Palm Beach overheard a very interesting 2-meter net on the 147.885/285 repeater that morning as well as those listening to Mark on HF! The HF conversation remained on the two meter autopatch since the Nunziato's did not have a telephone in their ham shack.

Dick Zaretsky called the Department of State to relay to them a Radio Free Grenada transmission that he thought was coded concerning the "marriage of certain students that occurred at 6

a.m. that morning," the time of the invasion. None of the networks or news services knew anything about the invasion since there was a news blackout!

Reporters on the island had been taken off before the invasion and none were allowed in. The amateur radio hookup to Grenada provided the first news of it.

The Department of Defense apparently had gone to great pains to perform the invasion under cover of a news blackout and here was a ham radio eyewitness under a table with helicopters and gunfire overhead broadcasting it to the world! Needless to say, since the media was prevented from covering the invasion, radio, television and newspaper coverage of Mark Baratella's ham radio transmissions were followed very closely.

Within moments of notification of the emergency, amateur operators in key locations were activated. Special authorization (which is covered in Part 97.107) for amateur radio operation during declared emergencies was obtained through the help of Don Kay (K0IND, Delray Beach, Florida) and Jack Mays (K4DMK, Folkston, Georgia).

Because of the gravity of the situation, in-band and out-of-band frequencies were requested in order to secure the most interference free frequencies. The FCC in Washington granted the proper authorization within minutes of the request.

A vigil was conducted throughout different bands and frequencies authorized amateurs for the duration of the emergency. Due to radio wave propagation differences, it was necessary to utilize control operators at different geographical locations and frequencies.

Mark Baratella did a magnificent job of operating under incredibly adverse conditions. Emergency power was used during the greatest portion of the time. Refueling was a problem since their personal safety was imperiled every time they ventured outside the facility. The Grand Anse campus which housed 176 Americans did not have U.S. military protection from the beginning of the invasion until the actual evacuation.

Mr. Reed Clark, of the U.S. State Department, Grenada Task Force desk conveyed messages of great importance and received status reports from Grenada via amateur radio which was the only link between those 176 Americans isolated in a for-

eign country besieged by war.

The State Department was particularly concerned that the Grenadian government in conjunction with Cuban advisers might hold the American students hostage. Evidence was found later supporting such a plan. Amateur radio kept the State Department aware of the status of the students.

At 4:10 p.m. EDT, Wednesday, the 26th of October, the students at the Grand Anse facility were evacuated by U.S. military helicopters. The actual Grenada emergency pertaining to amateur radio was then terminated thirty-six hours after its inception.

Bill Russell, FCC Director of Public Affairs in Washington, said that the State Department requested permission for voice operation in the code subband of the 20-meter band on Tuesday, October 25th. This was granted in the portion between 14.040 and 14.045 MHz. At night, out-of-band operation was granted to about six amateurs 1 kHz above the 40 and 80 meter bands due to interference.

One of these amateurs (K4MM Bill Miller of Fairfax Station, Virginia) told me that this interference was principally from American amateurs. There was, however, some QRM from Spanish speaking stations - Cuba and South America. One message came across in CW, "Yankee Go Home."

The amateur operation was called the Grenada Emergency Net by the net control, Don Kay (K0IND/4), once approval was obtained for other than standard amateur frequencies. Don Kay said he was in telephone contact with both the Department of Defense and the Pentagon during the crisis but he declined to discuss it further.

While it appears no FCC official actually gave specific permission for operation on 14.351 MHz when the operation returned to 20 meters, the FCC decided to allow the net to continue there. The logic by the net was that since out-of-band operation was authorized on 40 and 80 meters, it must be OK to operate 1 kHz above the 20 meter band, too.

### HAM OPERATION IN AND OUT OF BAND

Bill Russell said that the State Department reported on the 14.351 MHz operation and the FCC said, "We don't care." The amateurs involved were told, "Just keep doing what you are

doing because it is an essential service." They considered this as being authorized.

The FCC cancelled all authorization for phone use of CW subbands and non-amateur frequencies by radio amateurs on Wednesday, October 26th. On Friday morning, the FCC sent out the following electronic mail to all district Field Operations Bureau offices throughout the nation.

(Quote) "One of the objectives during the invasion of Grenada was to secure the campus of the medical school where a large number of American students were in attendance. Both the U.S. forces and the Cuban were trying to gain the same objective. An amateur station located on the campus was apparently the only point of communication with anyone at the school and because of this, the U.S. State Department requested a special authorization to use an amateur frequency to maintain contact with this amateur station to keep tabs on the situation at the school. Verbal authority was given for SSB use in the 14140 to 14145 kHz portion of the amateur band. This was later shifted to 7070 to 7100 kHz. Also by verbal permission. It appears that the authorization depended pretty much on what frequencies the Grenada station could work effectively without interference and would change accordingly. Ultimately the net ended up on 14351 kHz.

"While no special authorization was given for this out-of-band activity, the nature of the situation necessitated that it continue. For this reason, the Commission allowed the communications to continue and will take no enforcement action against those involved. Signed: Elliott Ours, Chief FCC Enforcement." (End Quote)

### THE MEDIA AND THE GRENADIAN INCIDENT

There are many side ham stories to the invasion of Grenada. One of the more significant ones is the role that the media played. The Department of Defense invaded Grenada under an imposed news blackout but private amateur radio communication was permitted. Many reporters, not understanding amateur radio rules, couldn't comprehend why messages and private conversation with Grenada was allowable but not getting status reports from these same pri-

# CLUB CORNER

Last issue we listed several CB club publications which were still healthy following the gradual demphasis of the CB service.

One publication which may be of interest to serious CB'ers is "The Eleven-Meter Times & Journal," edited and published by Bill "Doctor Rigormortis" Cheek.

EMTJ specializes in CB pirates and "Freeband" radio. A complimentary copy is available by writing to P.O. Box 10723, Edgemont Station, Golden, CO 80401.

## GRENADA INVASION from p. 20

ivate citizens. Some were furious to put it mildly.

The FCC Private Radio Bureau and the ARRL went over this many times with various radio, TV and newspaper reporters. They were told that they could retransmit live anything they wanted to since Section 605 (secrecy provisions of the Communications Act) did not apply to amateur radio. The media was prohibited from acting as a Third Party (even though these privileges existed for one day) if they were gathering news reports.

Jim McKinney, Chief of the FCC Mass Media Bureau, said that broadcasting was a professional use of amateur radio and specifically outlawed. He prohibited broadcasters from using amateur radio as a news gathering tool, a remote news pick up medium or to conduct interviews that would be broadcast over other than the amateur service. He cited limitations in the rules about rebroadcasting from another service.

Furthermore, the broadcast stations were directed to advise the FCC how they had used ham radio in their news broadcasts. The media had trouble understanding that CB radio could be used as a news communications medium, but not amateur radio. Some said the administration obviously had something to hide and that the Constitution guaranteed Freedom of the Press and Speech.

Bill Miller (K4MM), one of the main U.S. participants during the crisis, said he got a call from a CBS reporter who wanted to do a live interview via amateur radio. "I practically had to hang up on him, he was so arrogant," Bill said. "I told him point blank I wouldn't do it! He kept on and on. 'USA Today' (a national newspaper) was here

most of the day. The TV people wanted to come out here and I said 'Be my guest.' They wanted to do it live and I said 'You won't be able to do anything live when I'm on the air.'"

All across the country, radio and TV stations were showing ham operators listening to or participating in the Barattella communications. In all fairness, there was little else they could do. It was a major event and the news media was frozen out.

## NBC'S ROY NEAL (K6DUE) ON MEDIA INVOLVEMENT

"I think maybe that we are in time to think about some rule changes with the FCC to permit us to be a further service during emergency conditions. It is about time that somebody looked at us as 'the service' and I am using that word very carefully because it is the fundamental concept on the basis of which we are licensed - as a service to mankind.

"There was supposed to be no news coverage of the Grenada invasion. Well, here is one amateur station - actually there were two... the second guy was Don Atkinson... who got tired of reporting after the middle of the first day... but here was a station defeating the whole purpose of all the security. The news media was totally frustrated... absolutely irate being censored out of a major story by the Defense Department.

"Immediately, Fred, as a newsmen I will tell you this. The first thought you have is 'What are they trying to hide.' And in this case, what were they trying to hide during the invasion. You must realize that here you have a kid that goes to medical school. He is neither a trained or qualified reporter. He is the link with the whole world...

"Mark (Barattella) was being quoted worldwide against his own requests not to be. He several times said, 'I don't want to be questioned on any of this, I'm just providing information here'... so the whole thing is wrong. It was wrong conceptually... it was wrong in fact... and it remains wrong in my book. It put too much pressure on the kid who did very well.

"To say that he was a link for the State Department... come on! The State Department has direct links to the Commander of the troops in the field. Think about it. They are working through the National Security Council. They work from the war room in Washington that has the finest communi-

cation in the world. Field commanders have been known to pick up handi-talkies and using satellites they can talk to Washington from Vietnam. We don't need amateur radio to provide the State Department a necessary link for that kind of operation."

## GRENADA 2-METER REPEATER BLOWN UP!

A subsequent report filed from the Caribbean by Herb (KV4FZ) five days after the invasion said...

"The friendly forces learned that there was a potential for a hidden camp and some underground bunkers in the vicinity of the 16/76 repeater site. They did a search and destroy mission in the hills near the repeater on Grenada.

"A rifle grenade was hurled into the repeater building and the repeater blown up. The 16-76 machine is no more. The villages around Grenada relied almost solely on this amateur repeater for communications which is now non-existent. Health and Welfare messages are now piling up at various ham shacks and can not be distributed via the Coconut Telegraph - the 16/76 machine.

"A number of people in the United States are now working to replace the repeater. The Coconut Telegraph currently is being manned by runners to get traffic distributed to the various villages. There are no other 2-meter repeaters on Grenada."

## INTERFERENCE TO GRENADA LINK

I wondered why it was necessary to operate telephony on amateur CW spectrum and out-of-the-band with Grenada. I asked Bill Miller, K4MM, the main link between amateur radio and the State Department about this:

(K4MM) - "Because of interference. There were a half a dozen idiots questioning our use of the frequency. They put music on, they would swish their VFO's back and forth. We could understand the Cubans doing it, of course. But more than the majority were Americans. Some of them when we were out of band were coming in wanting an authorization to join. I had two or three phone calls wanting me to authorize them to come up. I said we don't need help."

(W5YI) - "Were you asked by the State Department to get specific information?"

(K4MM) - "When Reed Clark (State Department Grenada Task Force) wanted certain information they would

## SIGNALS FROM SPACE from p. 12

for registration information.

AMSAT INFORMATION AND NEWS NETS			
REGION	DAY, UTC	FREQ	KHZ
ESPAÑOL	SUN 1900	14.180	
INTERNAT'L	SUN 1800	21.280	
INTERNAT'L	SUN 1900	14.282	
EUROPEAN	SAT 1000	14.280	
UK	SUN	3.780	
		(1015 local)	
ASIA/PACIF	SUN 1100	14.305	
S. PACIFIC	SAT 2200	28.878	
S. AFRICA	SUN 0900	14.280	
S. AFRICA	SUN 0900	7.080	
SEASAT	SUN 1300	7.280	
F. COAST	WED	3.850	
		(2100 local Tues)	
MID-AMERIC.	WED	3.850	
		(2100 local Tues)	
W. COAST	WED	3.850	
		(2000 local Tues)	
AUSTRALIAN	SUN 1000	3.680	
NEW ZEALAND	WED 0800	3.850	

VHF NETS	FREQ
	MHZ
NEW YORK C. WED	144.400
	(2200 local Tues)
GODDARD WED	146.835
	(2100 local Tues)
LOS ANGELES WED	144.144
	(2000 local Tues)
LOS ANGELES DAILY	144.144
	(0730 local Tues)
S. AFRICA SUN 0900	145.650
UK SUN	144.280
	(1930 local)

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Next month we'll take a look at the most sophisticated Amateur Radio satellite ever, AMSAT-OSCAR 10, as well as recap the STS-9 Ham-in-Space mission of Dr. Owen Garriott, W5LFL plus other interesting frequencies, tips, hints, equipment and comments.

## QSL'S from p. 17

to, members of the station's staff may be interested in your country. Send them a viewcard or a brochure of your community. Your thoughtfulness will usually be rewarded.

Be sincere and honest when making out your reports. If the station is located in a poor country include some IRC's to help

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tell me. Mark would also give me information to pass. I did not hear from the Department of Defense. Don (K0IND - Net Control Station) did, however.

(W5YI) - "Did you talk to the FCC?"

(K4MM) - "I talked to the Watch Officer in Washington. The FCC Chairman (Mark Fowler) was also involved. Basically the way the thing was put to me on the phone was that 'There will be no citations.'"

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\* (W5YI REPORT) \$18 for 24 semi-monthly issues; P.O. Box 10101, Dallas, TX 75207. Sample \$1.)