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Briefing Report to the Chairman,
Subcommittee on Legislation and
National Security, Committee on
Government Operations, House of
Representatives

March 1990

PEACE CORPS

Reorganization in the Eastern Caribbean





United States
General Accounting Office
Washington, D.C. 20548

National Security and
International Affairs Division

B-235775

March 1, 1990

The Honorable John Conyers, Jr.
Chairman, Legislation and National
Security Subcommittee
Committee on Government Operations
House of Representatives

Dear Mr. Chairman:

You requested that we assist the Subcommittee in its oversight responsibilities for the Peace Corps by reviewing the agency's operations and activities. During our October 4, 1989, briefing on the results of our review of Peace Corps operations at seven overseas posts,¹ you requested a report on the status of the reorganization of Peace Corps posts in the Eastern Caribbean. This briefing report is in response to that specific request. The results of our broader review will be provided in a subsequent report.

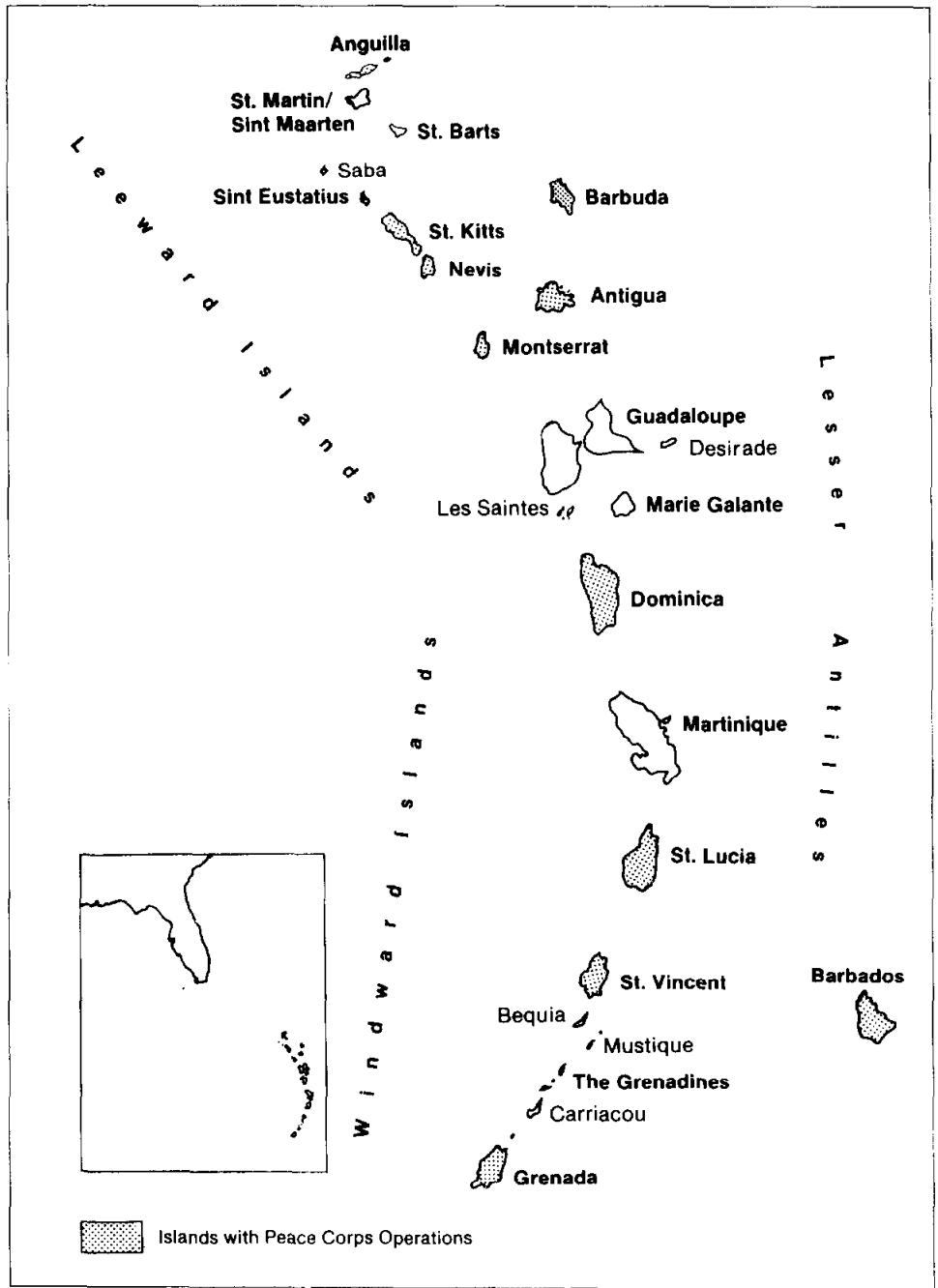
Results in Brief

In the fall of 1988, the Peace Corps initially decided to split management responsibility for the Eastern Caribbean between Antigua and Grenada in an attempt to alleviate management and operational problems. While the Department of State informally supported the reorganization, the Peace Corps was not aware that it needed to obtain formal State Department approval as required by a presidential directive. Because of this misunderstanding, the Peace Corps did not fully implement the reorganization.

In November 1989, the Peace Corps changed its original plan based on a new evaluation of its operations in the Eastern Caribbean which recommended that the Peace Corps reduce over time the number of volunteers in the Leeward Islands. This change would enable the agency to consolidate management responsibility for its operations in the region on St. Lucia, which is centrally located in the Windward Islands and is under the administrative jurisdiction of the U.S. Embassy in Barbados. Peace Corps sought and received the required State Department approval for this change.

¹ Ecuador and Honduras in Latin America, the Leeward Islands of the Eastern Caribbean, Fiji and Thailand in the Far East, and Kenya and Senegal in Africa.

Figure 1: The Islands of the Eastern Caribbean



Miscommunication between Peace Corps and the State Department regarding the reorganization, however, blocked its full implementation. The Peace Corps informally advised State's Caribbean Affairs Officer

The Second Reorganization

Subsequent to our visit to the Eastern Caribbean, Peace Corps management in late-1989 began considering another reorganization strategy for its operations in the Eastern Caribbean. In November 1989, Peace Corps completed a detailed reassessment of its operations in the Eastern Caribbean, which concluded that the posts should gradually reduce the number of volunteers in the Leeward Islands and that, as a result, the Peace Corps should consolidate management operations for the Eastern Caribbean to St. Lucia, which is centrally located in the Windward Islands. Such a move would place the Eastern Caribbean office in an area projected to have the major concentration of volunteers for the foreseeable future.

St. Lucia is also under the jurisdiction of the U.S. Embassy in Barbados and, thus, is not subject to the limitations of the Special Embassy Program, as in Antigua and Grenada. Further, the Peace Corps plans to provide its own fiscal and related administrative support without additional assistance from the U.S. Embassy in Barbados. The Peace Corps initiated the National Security Decision Directive 38 procedure in December 1989 and received approval from the Barbados Chief of Mission in the same month. All activities to shift administrative services and overall Eastern Caribbean supervision from Antigua, Barbados, and Grenada to St. Lucia are expected to be completed by the end of fiscal year 1990.

Objectives, Scope and Methodology

The objective of this report is to provide information on the planned reorganization of the Peace Corps' Eastern Caribbean operation. We interviewed Peace Corps and State officials and reviewed documents regarding the initiation, review, and decision on this reorganization. We also reviewed correspondence between the two agencies.

During our review, we interviewed Peace Corps officials in the region, including the Country Directors for the Leeward and Windward Islands and the Barbados Peace Corps administrative officer. We met with Peace Corps headquarters officials in Washington, D.C., including the current Regional Director for Inter-American operations, and the Eastern Caribbean Desk Officer. We also obtained information from the U.S. Charges d'Affaires in Antigua and Barbados, the U.S. Embassy Financial Officer in Barbados, and State Department officials in Washington, D.C.

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We conducted our review from September 1989 to January 1990. As requested, we did not obtain official agency comments on this briefing report.

As arranged with your office, unless you publicly announce its contents earlier, no further distribution of this briefing report will be made until 30 days from its issue date. At that time, copies of this briefing report will be sent to the Director of the Peace Corps, the Secretary of State, Director of the Office of Management and Budget, and other interested parties.

Major contributors to this briefing report are listed in appendix I. If you have any questions or need additional information, please call me on (202) 275-5790.

Sincerely yours,



Harold J. Johnson
Director, Foreign Economic
Assistance Issues

and the U.S. Missions in the region of its plans prior to the reorganization, and the Peace Corps Director provided written notification in September 1988. Nonetheless, the Peace Corps began encountering delays in receiving State Department administrative support in November 1988. At this time, State informed the Peace Corps that the reorganization could not be completed until the National Security Decision Directive 38 process was completed and the Secretary of State approved the reorganization.

The National Security Decision Directive 38 process requires that U.S. Executive Branch agencies seeking to change staffing levels at foreign posts submit a formal proposal to the Chief of Mission for the affected location(s). These proposals, along with comments from appropriate State Department bureaus, are then reviewed by the Ambassador (Chief of Mission), who approves or disapproves the request. However, in posts covered by the Special Embassy Program, such as those in Antigua and Grenada, the Mission Chief only recommends approval or disapproval and the final decision is made by the Secretary of State. One key element of the Special Embassy Program is to keep the staffing, and thus the "American presence," to minimum levels.

The Peace Corps initiated the National Security Decision Directive 38 process in December 1988 with an exchange of cables with the posts in Barbados, Antigua, and Grenada. The embassies in Antigua and Grenada indicated that, without additional personnel, they could provide only limited support. The U.S. Embassy in Barbados advised the Peace Corps that it could supply the agency with the needed administrative support, provided it was given six additional full-time equivalent staff positions, which would need to be funded by the Peace Corps.

The proposal to have the Peace Corps fund additional administrative support in Barbados was later reduced to five positions, with a review at the end of 3 months to determine the need for any changes in staff levels. However, believing that the U.S. Embassy in Barbados was requesting a greater level of staffing than was needed, the Peace Corps entered into negotiations with the Embassy. The negotiations for the added support were not completed and the overall reorganization plan to split the Peace Corps' Eastern Caribbean operations was never submitted to the Secretary of State, as required. According to the Charges d'Affaires in Antigua and the Country Director in Grenada, because of this problem, the Peace Corps has in effect maintained "unauthorized" personnel on those islands and has had to continue administrative operations in Barbados.

The Initial Peace Corps Reorganization

The Peace Corps had been experiencing difficulty in communication and other logistical matters related to volunteers, and in providing them with needed support. Agency officials believed that by splitting management for the Eastern Caribbean region between two posts, the agency could alleviate these problems. Specifically, it anticipated that the reorganization would improve program operations by permitting more direct management of Peace Corps communications, logistics, and programming, thereby enabling management staff to concentrate on their training and programming responsibilities.

In September 1988, the Peace Corps initiated a reorganization in the Eastern Caribbean to move its operations from Barbados, which had been responsible for the entire Eastern Caribbean, to two other islands. (See fig. 1.) During that month, the Peace Corps established management operations in Antigua for the Leeward Islands² and, in January 1989, the agency established operations in Grenada for the Windward Islands.³

²Anguilla, Antigua/Barbuda, Dominica, Montserrat, Nevis, and St. Kitts.

³Barbados, Carriacou, Grenada, St. Lucia, and St. Vincent.

