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REAGAN MEETING TODAY WITH CARIBBEAN LEADERS: WORRIES OVER SECURITY THREAT
CONTINUE, BUT ECONOMIC MATTERS MORE ON THE MINDS OF THE WEST INDIES

---Caribbean leaders at South Carolina summit disgruntled over elusive benefits of Reagan's Caribbean Basin Initiative

---Regional Common Market already facing hard times can expect few gains from CBI

---Is Reagan administration violating law against police training in its controversial work with Caribbean special forces?

---Has working for the Yankee dollar paid off?

President Reagan's meeting today at the University of South Carolina with the leaders of 13 Caribbean nations was dominated by deep concerns over the much-heralded Caribbean Basin Initiative's prospects for boosting the region's failing economies, signalling that Washington may have to pay a higher price to secure its policy goals in the area. Caribbean officials are looking to the U.S. to play a more active role in reviving regional trade -- possibly by expanding the aid provisions in the CBI -- and are anxious for the Reagan administration to continue financing the local military buildup begun after the Washington-led invasion of Grenada last October.

The Columbia summit comes on the heels of an annual meeting of the heads of government of the Caribbean Community and Common Market (CARICOM), held earlier this month in Nassau, that left unanswered serious disputes over regional trade and seemed to evidence simmering hostilities within the body over the Grenada action.

Four CARICOM members, Trinidad & Tobago, Guyana, Belize and the Bahamas, voted against the use of force during an emergency session of the group's heads of government following the Oct. 15 overthrow and arrest of then-Grenadian Prime Minister Maurice Bishop.

COMPLAINTS WITH THE CBI

The extremely low level of economic aid allocated in 1982 to the Eastern Caribbean under the CBI is a central complaint of the area governments. Congress originally approved \$350 million in economic assistance for the program, with Jamaica receiving \$50 million, the

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Dominican Republic \$40 million, Haiti \$5 million, Belize \$10 million, and six Eastern Caribbean countries \$10 million. But three U.S. allies in Central America -- El Salvador, Honduras and Costa Rica -- gained \$233 million, by far the lion's share of the CBI's initial economic funding.

Critics of the CBI also point out that the exclusively bilateral nature of the program endangers the very nature of CARICOM's support for integrated regional development. A report issued by the Development Gap for Alternative Policies in August 1983 stated that in formulating the CBI, the Reagan administration "did not concern itself with how American policy could encourage greater regional trade and more complete and permanent integration of regional production." The study concluded that "this neglect by the Administration could be interpreted...as a deliberate effort to undermine already struggling attempts to build regional unity."

TRINIDAD SKEPTICAL ABOUT CARICOM

Today's meeting with President Reagan also did not feature the participation of Prime Minister George Chambers of Trinidad & Tobago, CARICOM's wealthiest member state, who expressed some doubts following the Nassau conference over proposals to solve trade disagreements. In early 1983, the Chambers government instituted an import licensing system that has discouraged CARICOM exporters. Port-of-Spain cited "a lack of reciprocity in trade from its [CARICOM] partners" as cause for its trade-restricting measure and remains unhappy with the level of regional purchasing of its goods.

In a speech at the Nassau meeting, Chambers complained that some Caribbean nations had "rewarded [his] country's sacrifices for CARICOM with studied lack of appreciation, with malice and with abuse." Trinidad provided nearly \$500 million in economic aid to CARICOM nations over the past decade.

At Nassau, Chambers did pledge to lift the licensing system on the condition that CARICOM members buy more of his country's exports. The Trinidad leader later noted that his government will "wait and see whether the implementations will follow the undertakings," and set January 1985 as a possible date for ending the licensing regime.

U.S. POLICE TRAINING: OPENING A PANDORA'S BOX

Their gripes over the CBI's minimal benefits aside, most of the Caribbean leaders have found the Reagan administration sympathetic to their post-Grenada security fears, and are counting on Washington to contribute additional millions in security training, ammunition and assistance to complete the formation of an 1,800-man Regional Defense Force (RDF) -- whose most active sponsors, aside from the administration, have been Prime Ministers John Compton of St. Lucia and Tom Adams of Barbados. As envisioned by Adams, the RDF, a step-child of a five-nation 1982 security understanding known as the Eastern Caribbean Security System (ECSS), would extend "the protection available against mercenary adventurers, other external aggression, domestic revolution or other violent episodes."

Since last December, approximately 100 U.S. Green Berets from Fort Bragg, North Carolina, have conducted intensive six-week training courses for squads of 80-man Special Security Units (SSUs). The SSUs -- trained on the islands of Barbados, Dominica, St. Vincent, Jamaica and St. Lucia -- essentially are police personnel, but have been designated paramilitaries in order to accommodate Section 660 of the 1974 Foreign Assistance Act, that prohibits U.S. funding to "provide training or advice...for police, prisons or any other law enforcement forces for any foreign government..." Each graduating "class" of SSUs subsequently joins the Caribbean Peacekeeping Force on Grenada, where 300 U.S. personnel remain. Adams has stated that the CPF will remain on the Spice Isle until late 1985 -- well after the anticipated parliamentary elections slated for this fall.

Funding for the training comes from \$15 million the Reagan administration initially allotted to restructure Grenadian defenses following last October's invasion. In addition, the United States has provided small arms, M-16s, grenade launchers, telecommunications systems, radio equipment and military vehicles to the RDF.

But the plan has come under widespread criticism from area opposition leaders, who fear that development of the RDF will jeopardize, in the name

of security, the sovereignty of individual states and potentially could be used to suppress dissent at the beck and call of politicians. Others cite the experience of Dominica, whose 100-man defense force was disbanded following an abortive coup attempt against the Eugenia Charles government in April 1981. Former Barbadian Prime Minister Errol Barrow has charged that the estimated initial \$100 million required to create and maintain the RDF will force area leaders to develop a long-term reliance upon the United States "for weapons and training, and that throws us more under the U.S. military establishment."

One notable critic of the RDF has been Trinidadian Prime Minister Chambers, who has rebuffed numerous requests that his country contribute to the initiative and refused to send troops from to take part in the peacekeeping force on Grenada. Chambers also abstained from the planning and implementation of the Grenada intervention last fall.

The Trinidad leader's absence from the South Carolina gathering, reportedly due to scheduling difficulties, may reflect his continuing displeasure with the upsurge of security consciousness in the region and with the Reagan administration's gunboat diplomacy.