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INNOVATION IN INTELLIGENCE: AN ANALYSIS OF U.S. MARINE CORPS  
INTELLIGENCE MODERNIZATION DURING THE OCCUPATION OF  
HAITI, 1915-1934

by

Laurence Merl Nelson III

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree

of

MASTER OF ARTS

in

History

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UTAH STATE UNIVERSITY  
Logan, Utah

2017

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## ABSTRACT

Innovation in Intelligence: An Analysis of U.S. Marine Corps Intelligence Modernization  
during the Occupation of Haiti, 1915-1934

by

Laurence M. Nelson III, Master of Arts

Utah State University, 2017

Major Professor: Dr. Robert McPherson  
Department: History

This thesis discusses the progression of Military Intelligence methods used by US Marines during the occupation of Haiti from 1915 to 1934. Changes occurred due to the shifting circumstances of combat, new concepts taking place in the intelligence field, and individual initiative. U.S. experiences in Haiti provide an excellent study for how knowledge can foster success or defeat for an occupation. The periods that have increased information efficacy and effort often see the most dramatic U.S. successes. The growing bureaucratization of the occupation and personal initiative helped to introduce better intelligence methods. The staff officers that assumed the role of intelligence personnel created new forms for recording intelligence reports and made past intelligence more accessible to military command. Individual ingenuity led to the assassination of Charlemagne Peralte, the central leader of the caco revolt. The importance of intelligence efforts during a counterinsurgency operation is made plain in this historical analysis of the occupation of Haiti by U.S. forces during the early twentieth century. (Pages 145)

## PUBLIC ABSTRACT

Innovation in Intelligence: An Analysis of U.S. Marine Corps Intelligence Modernization  
during the Occupation of Haiti, 1915-1934

Laurence Merl Nelson III

Increasing modernization in military technology and methodology occurred during the beginning of the twentieth century. These changes had a direct effect on how U.S. Marines practiced military intelligence during the occupation of Haiti from 1915-1934. The use of military intelligence had an impact on the outcome on the occupation but was not the only factor that contributed to U.S. military victories. My thesis explains that the improvement of intelligence methods used by Marines in Haiti occurred as a result of outside influence, changing circumstance in Haiti, and individual agency. Major failures had occurred that allowed resistance to grow unchecked in the Haitian countryside. With the introduction of full-time military intelligence officers and improved data documentation, the intelligence collected became more useful to Marine Corps leadership. The staff officers that assumed the roles of intelligence personnel created new forms for recording intelligence reports and made past intelligence more accessible to military command. Individual ingenuity led to the assassination of Charlemagne Peralte, the central leader of the caco revolt. This thesis discusses the intelligence innovation that occurred during the occupation of Haiti from 1915 to 1935.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This thesis could not have been completed without the support and direct aid from many people. Vital financial support from the U.S. Marine Corps Heritage Foundation in the form of a grant made my research trip to the National Archives and U.S. Marine Corps Archives at Quantico possible. Their willingness to take a chance on a young, inexperienced historian gave me the opportunity to discover many important primary documents for my thesis. The personnel at both the National Archives and the U.S. Marine Corps Archives gave me an important direction to the collections that yielded results for my research. Guidance from my Thesis committee shaped my efforts and helped me to create a more professional finished product. Dr. Robert McPherson repeatedly read and provided feedback on my prose. His consistent counsel and help made the completion of this project possible. Dr. Jeannie Johnson instructed me on Marine Corps culture and development that proved pivotal to my thesis question. Dr. Jamie Sanders's insights into Native agency and culture proved to be key to providing nuance into my thesis. Special thanks also are owed to Dr. Branden Little who introduced me to the topic of this thesis when I was still an undergrad. The support of my family has been my greatest strength, and without their faith in me, I would certainly have lost hope in completing this project. My wife deserves more recognition than I can give for her constant support and encouragement throughout this process. Her unflagging assistance to this project made its timely completion possible. It is not hyperbolic to say that she was the single most important person that made this project successful.

## CONTENTS

ABSTRACT.....	iii
PUBLIC ABSTRACT .....	iv
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS .....	v
CHAPTER	
I. INTRODUCTION.....	1
II. INITIAL STABILIZATION 1915-1916.....	22
III. INTER-VIOLENCE PERIOD 1916-1919.....	50
IV. THE CACO REVOLT OF 1919.....	63
V. THE FINAL DAYS .....	98
VI. CONCLUSION.....	129
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	135

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

The changing use of military intelligence in Haiti, from 1915-1934, occurred because of the shifting circumstances of the occupation, outside influences, and individual actions of the Marines that participated in the occupation. The military intelligence practices of the Marines in Haiti aided in the suppression of rebel forces and the partial achievement of their nation-building objective. The purpose of this paper is to describe why military intelligence was employed differently over time in Haiti. It will also discuss which intelligence methods were effective and which were not. Further, it will explain how and why the use of intelligence changed during the occupation of Haiti. The term “military intelligence” is meant to describe both the gathering of relevant information about the enemy and the exploitation of that information. The intelligence gathered by the Marines and their sources in Haiti was of a political, social, and military nature because U.S. forces were required to maintain control of Haitian society. The Marines were expected to build a new nation in Haiti and to suppress those who might oppose their regime.<sup>1</sup> At times during the occupation, U.S. Marines chose to focus their intelligence efforts on invalid targets that distracted them from real problems rising up around them. It is important to note that this narrative promotes the belief that both leadership and lower ranking members of the occupation had an effect on the development of intelligence methods. A great leap forward in intelligence occurred with

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<sup>1</sup> United States and Atlee Pomerene, *Treaty with Haiti. Treaty between the United States and Haiti. Finances, Economic Development and Tranquility Of Haiti. Signed at Port-Au-Prince, September 16, 1915.* (Washington, Govt. Print. Off., 1922), <http://archive.org/details/treatywithhaiti00pomegoog>, 8-9.



the implementation of a more systemized intelligence bureaucracy that could analyze, translate, and organize intelligence reports. The creation of improved reports allowed intelligence personnel to gain more effective information about the enemy. The changes brought about by the lower ranking members of the occupation force occurred because they constantly experimented with how they could use intelligence in the conditions they faced. Many examples of lower level adaptation dot this work, like the use of vigilantes and employment of individual agents. The uses of intelligence varied due to the changing circumstances of the occupation, the changes occurring in the outside world, and the Marines who applied them.

Carl von Clausewitz refers to military intelligence as information “which we have of the enemy and his country.”<sup>2</sup> Clausewitz goes on to describe the unpredictable nature of any information gained under military conditions. William P. Upshur, who served with the U.S. Marines in Haiti, later, went on to help write the *Small Wars Manual* after serving as commander of the Marine Corps training schools at Quantico. His definition of intelligence gives insight into how the Marines viewed it during the last few years of the occupation of Haiti. Upshur states, “Military Intelligence, in a broad sense, comprises the most complete and authentic information of a possible, potential, or actual enemy or theater of operations that can be obtained and the strategical or tactical conclusions reached by a critical analysis of that information.”<sup>3</sup> Upshur had developed this definition

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<sup>2</sup> Carl von Clausewitz, *On War* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013), 75.

<sup>3</sup> William P. Upshur, “Small Wars,” circa 1929, Herold H. Utley Papers, Series 14/D/5/1, Box 2, Folder 1, U.S. Marine Corps Archives, Quantico, VA.

by 1930.<sup>4</sup> His two tours in Haiti, among the most prominent moments of his career, influenced his definition.

The term “intelligence,” as used in this paper, refers to the same basic information defined by Clausewitz and Upshur, that of information about the enemy and his geography. The term is also extended beyond the military use because the Marines in Haiti were called upon to keep an eye on the political, social, and military conditions in Haiti. They did not immediately come to Haiti prepared to gather intelligence of a political or social nature, but the conditions they faced would force them to adopt this measure.

The intelligence methods employed at the start of the occupation appeared reminiscent of the Spanish-American War and, by the end, of many methods used during WWI. Usage of mounted horse patrols, runners to deliver new intelligence, and using unverified information from unfriendly peasants made up much of the intelligence repertoire. The commanding officer had to do all the analysis of information without supporting staff, and he had to pass it on using somewhat primitive means. After WWI aircraft or motorized patrols, wireless radio communication improved patrolling techniques, and the newly revitalized local sources led to a dramatic difference in how intelligence affected the Haitian campaign. The uses of full-time intelligence officers to analyze, organize, and maintain intelligence information gave the leadership an infrastructure that they could rely on to keep them up to date with changing circumstances. Experimenting with different types of patrolling, combat and

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

reconnaissance combined the benefits of two types of patrolling that had been attempted independently during the early phases of the occupation.<sup>5</sup> When used in conjunction, they were able to take advantage of the strengths of each and avoid the weakness inherent in both. Adaptation often resulted from trial and error, which all levels of the occupation participated in during their time in Haiti.

The scholarship about the occupation of Haiti contains many differing perspectives as well as narratives that agree on many of the relevant facts of the occupation. The aspects covered include the political, social, and military themes of the occupation. The political analysis addressed mainly by Hans Schmidt, and Brenda Plummer provided a view of how the occupation impacted the political elites of Haiti. The social themes thoroughly discussed by Mary Renda introduced how “Paternalism,” the dominant view of “U.S. Americans,” affected Haitian-American relations during the occupation.<sup>6</sup> The military analysis came in two groups, but both only partially cover events in Haiti. The first group of military analysis discusses the growing military bureaucracy and gives insights into how they began to influence the military establishment. These include Jeffery Dorwart’s *Office of Naval Intelligence and History of the Military Intelligence Division* by Bruce Bidwell. *Mars Learning* by Keith Bickel represents the second group of analysis, which describes military learning during the interventions of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.

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<sup>5</sup> Leo J. Daugherty III, *Counterinsurgency and the United States Marine Corps Volume 1, the First Counterinsurgency Era, 1899-1945* (Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland, 2015), 81-82.

<sup>6</sup> Mary A. Renda, *Taking Haiti: Military Occupation and the Culture of U.S. Imperialism, 1915-1940*, (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2001), 24.

Scholars agree that U.S. policy and implementation of that policy in Haiti provide a reliable basis for analysis. It is commonly believed that the Wilson administration saw Haiti as militarily and politically valuable. Most scholars see the German question as central in the minds of American policymakers. The German threat is depicted within the scholarship as overblown by the Americans because of the inability of any sizable German force to extricate itself from the fighting in Europe.<sup>7</sup> The scholarship shows Haitian instability resulted from weak financial conditions that are only increased by the chronic political instability. This cyclical effect is a simplification of the many difficult challenges facing the economic and political development of Haiti.

Historian Hans Schmidt published his diplomatic and political narrative about the occupation of Haiti in 1971. There had been sufficient time since the occupation to provide proper perspective and allowed the author to distance himself from the historical actors he depicted. He wrote during the reign of historical, narratives that focused on political events. When Schmidt discussed social or cultural issues like racism, he concentrated on the race relations between the Haitian elites and the American leadership.<sup>8</sup> The relationship between Marines in the field and the native population developed differently than Marines living in a segregated community in Port au Prince. Schmidt's depiction of the occupation shows a political or military system led from the top that was not influenced by the lower ranks. The lack of extensive theoretical analysis promoted a more source-driven narrative, and while this makes for very careful

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<sup>7</sup>Hans Schmidt, *The United States Occupation of Haiti, 1915-1934*, (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1995), 92.

<sup>8</sup>*Ibid.*, 139.

scholarship depicting events in Haiti, it does not attempt to explain a great deal about how individuals or the masses interacted with the occupation. Schmidt sees military actions as the means of subjugation but does not try to provide a thorough understanding of the methods used by the Marines to succeed. Schmidt's work remains useful because it methodically plods through the leadership's decisions and attempts to explain why they took the actions they did. This thesis will analyze these decisions and those of the lower ranks, providing answers as to why certain members of the occupation force chose to use some methods rather than others in Haiti.

Brenda Plummer in *Haiti and the Great Powers* bridges the gap between the nearly non-theoretical work of Schmidt and the highly theoretical works that came later. Plummer argues that the actions in Haiti by the "great powers" motivated by neomercantilism and the strategic location of Haiti vis-à-vis the Panama Canal forced them to act.<sup>9</sup> Plummer attempted to make Haitians agents in their history despite the apparent focus on foreign intervention. She sought to allow Haitian agency in their past by reviving and then silencing an old theory of Haitian modernity that postulates that the constant Haitian rebellion cycle that existed before the occupation was the road to a new Haiti.<sup>10</sup> *Haiti and the Great Powers* provides an interesting pre-occupation narrative that succeeded in telling the story of the years just before the occupation. Plummer strives to remind her reader that the Haitians did their best to build up their nation but faced irreconcilable factors that used prior systems of cacoism based in maroonage to make progress impossible. Cacos were rural fighters that fought against political and economic

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<sup>9</sup>Brenda Gayle Plummer, *Haiti and the Great Powers, 1902--1915*, (Baton Rouge: LSU Press, 1988) 11.

<sup>10</sup>*Ibid.*, 10.

subjugation. Plummer introduces an important idea discussed by Laurent Dubois and mentioned by C.L.R. James, that cacoism was a deeply cultural act with strong roots in Haiti's past.<sup>11</sup> When cacoism is better understood, it becomes easier to discover why some methods of intelligence were more efficient than others in the specific circumstances of the occupation in Haiti. This thesis connects maroonage and cacoism as methods of outcast sections of society attempting to maintain independence or even influence those at the center of power.

*Taking Haiti: Military Occupation and the Culture of U.S. Imperialism*, by Mary Renda, uses theory to analyze the culture of the occupation forces in Haiti. Renda employs a post-modern theory of discourse, which comes from the concepts introduced by Michel Foucault.<sup>12</sup> Renda favors the primarily paternalistic pattern of thought and she describes it as a "cultural mechanism by which the occupation conscripted men into the project of carrying out U.S. rule."<sup>13</sup> Paternalism is the view, similar to that of slaveholders, that certain peoples are child-like and therefore unable to govern themselves effectively. Renda uses statements from notable Marines like Smedley Butler to show how they viewed themselves as fathers to the unready Haitian people.<sup>14</sup> The evidence is convincing, and Renda provides valuable insight into Marine justifications for the occupation, but she portrays paternalism to be the ultimate "cultural mechanism" in

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<sup>11</sup> C. L. R. James, *The Black Jacobins: Toussaint L'ouverture and the San Domingo Revolution* (London: Penguin Adult, 2001), 20.

<sup>12</sup> Mary A. Renda, *Taking Haiti: Military Occupation and the Culture of U.S. Imperialism, 1915-1940*, (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2001), 24.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 13.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 24.

the minds of Marines without a great deal of further exploration.<sup>15</sup> The cultural analysis provided by Renda will intersect with this thesis because it will examine the motives and views of the Marines in Haiti in an attempt to explain why they chose the intelligence methods they did. This thesis will not completely refute nor totally rely on the concept of paternalism to explain the views of the Marines in Haiti. Race, nation, and class will be engaged to attempt to color more fully the views of the Marines. These categories should provide more explanatory power about individual choices.

The military scholarship that studies the occupation of Haiti does not completely cover the events in Haiti. There is one significant military history that deals with the more precise military doctrine and strategies used there. *Mars Learning* by Keith Bickel is a well-written and thorough look at how the Marine Corps changed during the “small wars” period from 1915-1940. Bickel does not focus exclusively on Haiti but instead uses the many different small wars of the period to illustrate the systematic changes in the Corps. Bickel’s scope prevents him from very specific military intelligence analysis, but his work is very useful for understanding the basic strategic and doctrinal concerns of the occupation in Haiti. *Mars Learning* studies how the small wars influenced the overall development of the Marine Corps.<sup>16</sup> My thesis will avoid drawing conclusions about the wider Corps but will address how Marines in Haiti coped with the realities of the Haitian campaign.

*World War I and Origins of US Military Intelligence* by James Gilbert provides a

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 24.

<sup>16</sup> Keith B. Bickel, *Mars Learning: The Marine Corps Development of Small Wars Doctrine, 1915-1940* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2001), 1.

fabulous source for information about what technical, tactical, and methodological changes took place in Europe in U.S. military intelligence. James Gilbert does not attempt to cover other conflicts occurring simultaneously, like Haiti, but focuses nearly exclusively on the Army developments occurring in Europe during WWI. The proposed thesis and this title may seem to “pass each other in the night,” but they have similar objectives. They include how technology developed during WWI and changed intelligence practices. My thesis will answer a more specific version of that question, explaining how that same technology and tactical development affected the occupation force in Haiti. Another clear difference between my approach and Gilbert’s is that I will be analyzing factors that are unrelated, or at least peripheral, to WWI. This aim and several others will make my thesis and Gilbert’s work related but separate. His narrative was focused mainly on the technological changes to military intelligence work, whereas this thesis will discuss the changes taking place in Haiti including those that do and do not relate to WWI. Gilbert demonstrated how the relationship between technology and information work became forever connected by the events of World War I.<sup>17</sup> Gilbert describes how European bureaucratic intelligence systems influenced and tutored the American system but does not afford that the same prominence as technology.

The military intelligence bureaucracy that today is a hallmark of the intelligence apparatus was in its infancy during the occupation of Haiti. *The Office of Naval Intelligence* by Jeffery Dorwart and *History of the Military Intelligence Division* by Bruce Bidwell both provide excellent sources as to how the fledgling military intelligence

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<sup>17</sup> James L. Gilbert, *World War I and the Origins of U.S. Military Intelligence* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2012), 220.



organizations influenced actions in the field. Dorwart and Bidwell write in an informative and thorough format that allows the reader to understand the changing mission of the military intelligence groups during their early days in the U.S. military. Neither paints their respective organization as exceptionally effective at training or greatly influencing the actions of field soldiers. Dorwart and Bidwell do provide evidence into how many of the changing ideas of members of the military leadership of the time could have influenced their actions. I will examine what influence, if any, the military intelligence organizations, which existed concurrently with the occupation of Haiti, had on the occupation force's use of military intelligence methods.

The primary sources researched for this project came from the U.S. Marine Corps archives at Quantico, VA and the National Archives in Washington D.C. The personal papers at the Marine Corps archives provide the context of how Marines felt and explained their experiences in Haiti. Some personal papers contain relevant reports and communications that never made it into the government records. Smedley Butler's papers, most notably, contain many of his professional documents that did not appear in the government record at the National Archives. The Marine Corps records there contain sporadic intelligence reports from the beginning to the end of the occupation. These reports are one of the main sources that this paper uses to determine how occupying forces gathered, documented, and analyzed intelligence. These primary documents show very clearly that documentation changed over time and dramatically improved during specific periods of the occupation.

The political motives for the occupation of Haiti had its roots in the complex

relationship the U.S. had with Latin America. The Marines landed in Haiti in July of 1915 after political upheaval resulted in the dismemberment of Jean Vilbrun Guillaume Sam, the president of Haiti. Chronic violence in Haiti had made him the seventh president that the people had forcibly removed from office since 1911, and the Wilson administration believed that the Haitian government could not continue functioning without intervention.<sup>18</sup> The Wilson administration did not make their decision to intervene in Haiti haphazardly. The possibility had been in play for some time. Concern for the stability of their country stemmed from several political and military problems. Haiti was geographically near to the United States, but its chronic instability had not been an important issue to the Americans until after the turn of the twentieth century. With the opening of the Panama Canal, Americans now viewed disturbances in the Caribbean as potentially threatening to their national interests.<sup>19</sup> The United States feared European intervention that could undermine the Panama Canal and U.S. control of the Caribbean.<sup>20</sup> German immigrants had built a small but influential foreign merchant class in Haiti that the Americans suspected had political designs. They assumed that the Germans were after Mole St. Nicolas, a potential port on the western coast of Haiti.<sup>21</sup> World War I had begun the year before and thanks to the U-boat campaign in the Atlantic, Americans were starting to see the Germans as a real threat. The evolution of the Monroe Doctrine also supported U.S. action in the Caribbean. The United States had employed its tenets only a

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<sup>18</sup> Hans Schmidt, *The United States Occupation of Haiti, 1915-1934*, (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1995), 55.

<sup>19</sup> Brenda Gayle Plummer, *Haiti and the Great Powers, 1902--1915*, (Baton Rouge: LSU Press, 1988) 11.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 11.

<sup>21</sup> Hans Schmidt, *The United States Occupation of Haiti, 1915-1934*, (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1995), 31.

few times during the nineteenth century including the French occupation of Mexico in 1865. After the Spanish-American War, the Monroe Doctrine became an important aspect of U.S. policy.

Some North Americans and Latin Americans had seen the Monroe Doctrine as a mutual defense treaty, but it was viewed very differently after the Spanish-American War.<sup>22</sup> The Spanish-American War of 1898 put the United States in charge of the former colonies of Spain and changed many Americans' views of their role in the Western Hemisphere. They now saw themselves as the big brother who should intervene to protect against European involvement in the region. The Roosevelt Corollary quantified that change and made it part of American strategic policy.<sup>23</sup> One of the problems with this system was that many of the threats of European involvement came from overdrawn financial responsibilities. Some of the basic tenets of American values affirmed property rights. Debt was considered a form of the property, so that meant Americans often sided with the European debt holders at the expense of the Latin American nation debtors. The Venezuelan incident of 1902 was typical of American intervention in Latin America. The Venezuelans owed a significant debt to several banks with ties to several different European nations.<sup>24</sup> A new caudillo or strongman, Cipriano Castro, took over Caracas and stopped payments on foreign debt. He took power through a long civil war that caused damage to foreign-owned property for which those governments expected

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<sup>22</sup> Robert A. Goldwin and Harry M. Clor, eds., *Readings in American Foreign Policy*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1971), 215.

<sup>23</sup> Dana Gardner Munro, *Intervention and Dollar Diplomacy in the Caribbean, 1900-1921* (Princeton University Press, 1964), 5.

<sup>24</sup> Alan McPherson, *A Short History of U.S. Interventions in Latin America and the Caribbean*, (Malden: Wiley-Blackwell, 2016), 48.

reparations.<sup>25</sup> Castro would not pay for either the damage to foreign capital or the debts incurred. The debt holding nations felt forced to respond and sent a joint fleet to Venezuela to force a resumption of payments.<sup>26</sup> Theodore Roosevelt sent a larger fleet under the command of Admiral Dewey to end the European incursion. The Americans prevented an invasion, but then helped to ensure that debt payments would resume.

Following the Roosevelt administration, the tone of the Latin American interventions changed and different types of action were used to achieve a new set of U.S. objectives. The Taft administration implemented “Dollar Diplomacy” which was supposed to bring Latin America deeper into the American sphere and draw it away from the Europe through economic ties.<sup>27</sup> Taft encouraged Americans to invest in Latin American nations, which he believed would push European interests out.<sup>28</sup> This strategic policy would make it so that European intervention would no longer occur in Latin America and the U.S. would not have to continue to enforce European grievances. The trouble with this policy is that it left the door wide open to military intervention because American property had to be protected, even at the expense of foreign sovereignty. The Wilson administration changed the foreign policy stance once again with dramatic results. He criticized the recent interventions in Latin America as abuses, but implemented some of the longest lasting interventions of the twentieth century. This contradiction was caused by the geopolitical realities that Wilson faced during his

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 48.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 48.

<sup>27</sup> Dana Gardner Munro, *Intervention and Dollar Diplomacy in the Caribbean, 1900-1921* (Princeton University Press, 1964), 162.

<sup>28</sup> “Milestones: 1899–1913 - Office of the Historian,” accessed April 21, 2017, <https://history.state.gov/milestones/1899-1913/dollar-diplo>.

administration. Troubles with Mexico would touch off Wilson's change in tone. Mexico was going through a long and bloody revolution that could not help but affect its neighbors. The intervention in 1914 at Vera Cruz, Mexico, showed how Wilson would interpret the Monroe Doctrine through a progressive lens. In a successful attempt to prompt a regime change in Mexico, he ordered the limited invasion of Mexico's most important trading port and the seizure of all customs revenues. Interestingly, a shipment of weapons from the German government to the despised Huerta government provoked his order to seize the port without congressional approval.<sup>29</sup> Venustiano Carranza overthrew the Huerta government during the short occupation of Vera Cruz which Wilson deemed a positive change in Mexico.<sup>30</sup> Wilson learned that intervention was a quick way to achieve foreign policy objectives.

Haiti's declining stability at the beginning of the twentieth century increasingly appeared to draw in European interest to a sensitive zone of U.S. influence. Haiti's political problems were not new, but the increased volatility with which it changed regimes gave the impression that it was reaching a crescendo. From 1911 to 1915 rebellions overthrew seven presidents, several of which received an untimely end.<sup>31</sup> Haiti's debt to France and more dangerously to Germany provided a context whereby several European powers felt justified in occupying the nation.<sup>32</sup> The strategic importance of the Panama Canal Zone and the increasingly devastating war in Europe made it

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<sup>29</sup> Dana Gardner Munro, *Intervention and Dollar Diplomacy in the Caribbean, 1900-1921* (Princeton University Press, 1964), 270.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 269.

<sup>31</sup> "Milestones: 1914-1920 - Office of the Historian," accessed July 28, 2016, <https://history.state.gov/milestones/1914-1920/haiti>.

<sup>32</sup> Brenda Gayle Plummer, *Haiti and the Great Powers, 1902--1915*, (Baton Rouge: LSU Press, 1988) 12.

imperative for American interests to maintain Haiti outside European influence.<sup>33</sup>

Specifically, the death of the American-backed Haitian President Jean Vilbrun Guillaume Sam forced the Wilson administration to act.<sup>34</sup> When French Marines landed to protect their interests after rebels broke into the French diplomatic building in Port au Prince to grab Sam from a closet and tear him apart. Once U.S. Marines landed in Port au Prince, they immediately issued statements to the foreign delegations there that they would protect all foreign interests and therefore any other nations would not need to land troops.<sup>35</sup>

U.S. Marine Corps involvement in Haiti began as a simple intervention and evolved into a complex occupation that lasted nearly two decades. The intelligence preparation for the occupation was based on several assumptions, including a belief that it would be a limited intervention like that in Vera Cruz. The plan, however, quickly escalated because of a shift in strategy made by the Wilson administration. This strategic shift created a framework, the Haitian-American Treaty of 1916, but the further details of the occupation were supposed to be worked out by the State Department. This organization's eventual lack of guidance to the military leaders of the occupation caused a break down in mission comprehension, which would cause adverse changes in military intelligence priorities. The chronic issues of intelligence gathering, sharing, and use provided a significant challenge for U.S. Marines in Haiti.

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<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 11.

<sup>34</sup> "Milestones: 1914–1920 - Office of the Historian," accessed July 28, 2016, <https://history.state.gov/milestones/1914-1920/haiti>.

<sup>35</sup> Hans Schmidt, *The United States Occupation of Haiti, 1915-1934*, (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1995), 65-66.

The Wilson administration changed the U.S. intervention in Haiti to an occupation based on its view of social change. The Wilson administration was a conglomeration of progressive politicians that believed almost religiously in implementing Progressivist policy. When Wilson stated that he would “teach the South American republics to elect good men,” he was speaking literally of some of them.<sup>36</sup> Haiti received a thorough “lesson” at the end of a U.S. Marine’s bayonet. Wilson chose to enforce his views on political reform with a government that could no longer resist. The mission handed down from the State Department through the U.S.-Haitian treaty of 1916 was a humanitarian/military mission.<sup>37</sup> The agreement indicated that the occupation would last ten years with a possible extension for another ten as needed. The U.S. would provide personnel to instruct the Haitian people how to run a “civilized” and progressive government. The provided services including infrastructure, schooling, and police were to be reformed by the U.S. occupation force.

The intelligence concerns of the Marines in Haiti were political, social, and military in nature. The Marines were eventually be left to their own devices in Haiti because of the State Department’s lack of interest, which this meant they would have to figure out how to maintain political control, which was parceled out among the occupation force. Marine Corps leadership in Port au Prince kept the national government in check, but the local Marine commanders supervised the local authorities. The political

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<sup>36</sup> Dana Gardner Munro, *Intervention and Dollar Diplomacy in the Caribbean, 1900-1921* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1964), 271.

<sup>37</sup> United States and Atlee Pomerene, *Treaty with Haiti. Treaty between the United States and Haiti. Finances, Economic Development and Tranquility Of Haiti. Signed at Port-Au-Prince, September 16, 1915.* (Washington, Govt. Print. Off., 1922), <http://archive.org/details/treatywithhaiti00pomegoog>.

intelligence required to maintain order and control over local authorities fell to the individual commander. At the beginning of the occupation there is little evidence that the Marines made specific reports as to the political activities of the Haitian officials, but as the occupation evolved, there would be weekly reports on the political situation in each district of Haiti. Social intelligence included reports about occupying forces concerning rebel forces brewing trouble. The early social intelligence approaches by the Marines were weak because most of the Marines did not take the caco threat seriously.<sup>38</sup> They referred to the cacos as bandits and did not understand how deep the cacos connected into the community. As with the political intelligence, Marines eventually began submitting timely reports on social conditions throughout Haiti.

The Marines in Haiti took military intelligence more seriously as the occupation progressed and their methodology improved. The methods used to obtain data in Haiti improved due to dramatic changes in technology, methodological improvements, and personal innovation. Horse patrols gave way to aerial surveillance, and military intelligence became more technically proficient. The use of human intelligence also changed due to perceived threats. The centralization of intelligence improved the distribution of intelligence among the dispersed garrisons. The political objectives, or lack thereof, from the State Department also played a role in how the Marines gathered and used military intelligence.<sup>39</sup> Finally, individual Marines had a significant effect on how intelligence work progressed. The changes that occurred during the occupation of

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<sup>38</sup> Lowell Thomas, *Old Gimlet Eye: The Adventures of Smedley D. Butler* (New York: Marine Corps Assn, 1981), 208.

<sup>39</sup> Keith B. Bickel, *Mars Learning: The Marine Corps Development of Small Wars Doctrine, 1915-1940* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2001), 82.



Haiti were not always improvements, but much improved as they learned from hard experience.

The occupation of Haiti had four distinct phases of action. The first major phase of the occupation was the initial stabilization followed by the second step, a short period of nation-building. The third phase was the suppression of a resurgence of widespread resistance to the occupation with the final phase lasting twelve years that saw the renewal of the nation-building mission in Haiti. Each of these phases saw changes to the military intelligence practices due to real or imagined problems.

As active resistance in Haiti slowed, the second phase of the occupation began. The new objective for the occupation force was to build a new Haiti. The U.S. policy was to create infrastructure, the education system, and retrain the Haitian people in good government.<sup>40</sup> The failure of Marine Corps leadership to keep a finger on the pulse of the political and social situation contributed to the rise of the caco revolt in 1919. Specifically, the incorrect intelligence focus on the German merchant minority in Haiti during the last years of WWI played an important role in distracting the U.S. Marines from their real mission. Due to incorrect perceptions about German capabilities and strategic designs in the Caribbean, many Marines considered the Germans living in Haiti to be their main threat after the caco defeat of 1916.<sup>41</sup> This incorrect assumption allowed a popular uprising to form and break out while they watched German merchants. Some sources, like Hans Schmidt's book on the occupation of Haiti, mention how the focus on

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<sup>40</sup> United States and Atlee Pomerene, *Treaty with Haiti*, 8.

<sup>41</sup> Hans Schmidt, *The United States Occupation of Haiti, 1915-1934*, (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1995), 91.

Germans as possible trouble makers caused problems for the Marines but this thesis will more directly prove that the intelligence work done on the German minority specifically contributed to the rise of the 1919 caco insurgency.<sup>42</sup> Completely unique to this thesis is the belief that the problems of the second phase were inflamed by the lack of systematized intelligence reporting and organization. The intelligence reports coming from the Marines stationed at distant command posts had little value to the leadership in Port au Prince and without intelligence personnel they did not get much attention. This meant that information received from outposts did not have much effect on occupation's ability to maintain order.

The use of the *corvée* system, an old system of labor taxation, along with other oversights by the occupation helped to foment this new revolt of the *cacos*.<sup>43</sup> The *cacos* were able to cause significant problems for the occupiers who were forced once again to engage them in the countryside. The violence did not subside until the Marines hunted down the two main leaders of the revolt.

The resurgence of violence in Haiti provided the context for an increased focus on intelligence work. The Marines adapted to the changing campaign in Haiti and incorporated new intelligence methods learned during WWI. The technological advantages gained from that war included aerial reconnaissance and wireless

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<sup>42</sup>Ibid., 92; Mark R. Folse, "The Impact of the Great War on Marines in Hispaniola, 1917-1919" (Temple University 2014 James A. Barnes Graduate Student History Conference, Temple University: Army Heritage Foundation, 2014), 2.

<sup>43</sup>Lester D. Langley, *The Banana Wars: United States Intervention in the Caribbean, 1898-1934*, (Wilmington, Del: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2001), 159.

communications.<sup>44</sup> Improved methods included a more centralized intelligence infrastructure, better skills at documentation, and the use of intelligence officers. Adaptation in the field played an important role in the improving efficacy of intelligence work being done by the occupation. The use of local civilian militias called vigilantes gave vital information to the Marines and provided support on patrols. Most dramatically the assassination of Charlemagne Peralte, the main leader of the caco revolt, showed how individual Marines innovated and obtained victory.

This thesis will discuss how the Marines viewed their foe in contrast to what the actions of the Haitian opposition tell us about them. Military forces tend to define their enemies in starkly negative terms. They also ennoble their mission with the powerful ideology of their time and place. The Americans, and in particular the Wilson administration, assigned progressive values to the occupation that could resonate with most Americans. The occupation was to restore stability and introduce significant government reforms. The Wilson administration used force to export the progressive movement from the United States to Haiti. The goals to root out corruption and improve government services were basic doctrines of the progressive movement. These goals were put directly into the Haitian-American Treaty that legalized the American occupation.<sup>45</sup> Specifically, it gave the Marine Corps the task to improve infrastructure, schools, and create a new centralizing paramilitary police force.<sup>46</sup> These tasks turned the Marines into missionaries of progressivism and enforcers of political reform. Those who opposed the

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<sup>44</sup> Keith B. Bickel, *Mars Learning: The Marine Corps Development of Small Wars Doctrine, 1915-1940* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2001).

<sup>45</sup> United States and Atlee Pomerene, *Treaty with Haiti*, 7.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.

U.S. control were seen as the entrenched establishment merely seeking to maintain their power.<sup>47</sup> U.S. officials considered the main attributes of the Haitian political elite to be corruption, slothfulness, and selfishness, leading to Marines being ordered to secure all the main forms of national revenue from the Haitian government from the earliest stages of the occupation.<sup>48</sup> The Marine Corps interpretation of their enemy allowed them to underestimate their enemy on several occasions especially when it came to the gathering of intelligence.

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<sup>47</sup> Smedley Darlington Butler, Letter from Smedley Butler to John A. Lejeune, July 13, 1916, Smedley Butler papers, Series 9/A/5/1, Box 15, Folder 1, U.S. Marine Corps Archives, Quantico, VA

<sup>48</sup> Hans Schmidt, *The United States Occupation of Haiti, 1915-1934*, (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1995), 65.

## CHAPTER II

### INITIAL STABILIZATION 1915-1916

In the years leading up to the U.S. occupation of Haiti, the United States took an increasingly active role in international politics, especially in the Western Hemisphere. The Monroe Doctrine had been emphasized and expanded with the introduction of the Roosevelt corollary. The Spanish-American War had proven American power, initiating a period of growing influence coupled with an aggressive foreign policy that redefined America's role in geopolitics.<sup>49</sup> The U.S. Marine Corps was called upon to put down revolts in countries within the new U.S. sphere of influence while maintaining Europe at arm's length. The intervention in Haiti was not a unique experience for the Marine Corps that had participated in several interventions and occupations since the turn of the century. Their most recent action in Vera Cruz, Mexico, in 1914 had been a short-term localized punitive mission that helped to oust the Huerta government. Marine Corps doctrine, expressed in a few manuals, was in its infancy and did not formalize a system of intelligence.<sup>50</sup> The Marines sent to Haiti used intelligence-gathering methods that they had employed in the past and tried some new ideas to increase effectiveness. Changing technology, geopolitical events, and perceptions of the mission in Haiti forced the Marines to adapt military intelligence to their circumstances.

The military, social, and political situations on the ground in Haiti at the start of

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<sup>49</sup> G. J. A. O'Toole, *The Spanish War: An American Epic 1898* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1986), 17.

<sup>50</sup> Keith B. Bickel, *Mars Learning: The Marine Corps Development of Small Wars Doctrine, 1915-1940* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2001).

the occupation were complex. Haiti's President, Jean Vilbrun Guillaume Sam, had ordered the deaths of seventy-two political prisoners.<sup>51</sup> His support evaporated, and Sam fled to the French diplomatic building in Port au Prince; the families of his victims came for him. The crowd literally tore Sam to pieces and paraded the macabre trophies around Haiti's capital.<sup>52</sup> The government collapsed, leaving the Haitian military with little direction from the top. A mob of vengeful locals, including some of those involved in Sam's death, took over Port au Prince and formed a committee of public safety that could not establish solid control in the capital.<sup>53</sup> The anarchic state of the country was, in fact, the excuse that the Wilson administration employed to justify intervention in Haiti. The social conditions in Haiti were also in flux because of the political violence that exposed the traditional elite to real danger, as they looked to the committee of public safety to protect them. The Haitian lower class had either sided with the caco forces moving into Port au Prince or attempted to avoid the conflict. The caco groups mostly supported Dr. Rosolvo Bobo for the presidency, but the committee of public safety when several candidates within their organization that aspired to the post.<sup>54</sup> Social disunity had plagued Haiti like many nations at the turn of the century, but the conflict between classes in Port au Prince helped to create conditions whereby intervention seemed to be the only answer.

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<sup>51</sup> Hans Schmidt, *The United States Occupation of Haiti, 1915-1934* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1995), 65.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, 65.

<sup>53</sup> *Inquiry into Occupation and Administration of Haiti and Santo Domingo. Hearing[s] before a Select Committee on Haiti and Santo Domingo, United States Senate, Sixty-Seventh Congress, First and Second Sessions, pursuant to S. Res. 112 Authorizing a Special Committee to Inquire into the Occupation and Administration of the Territories of the Republic of Haiti and the Dominican Republic.* (Washington, 1922), 327.

<sup>54</sup> Hans Schmidt, *The United States Occupation of Haiti, 1915-1934* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1995), 71.

The intelligence bureaucracy in the U.S. military had planned for the occupation of Haiti in 1914. The Office of Naval Intelligence (ONI) had begun to compile information about potential threats during the late 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>55</sup> There were State Department officials in Port au Prince who could give basic intelligence of the events that led to the breakdown of the government in the city.<sup>56</sup> ONI and its work with the State Department was one of the first examples of joint intelligence efforts between more than one government agency. These first steps would contribute to the basic intelligence knowledge that U.S. forces had as they entered Haiti. ONI's practice at naval war planning had not had many chances for testing before 1915 (following the Spanish-American War). The ONI plan for a conflict with Haiti was, in fact, well suited to the political situation on the ground in 1915 because it had been planned on the basis of general anarchy.<sup>57</sup> When naval war planners had written their war plan for Haiti, they planned for chaos.<sup>58</sup> The original objectives established by the Office of Naval Intelligence were to seize control of the government buildings in Port au Prince and secure the international delegations in the main urban centers.<sup>59</sup> The overall plan by ONI was promising, but the intelligence resources in place to execute its plan were not up to date; geographic intelligence supplied old maps that were incomplete.<sup>60</sup> The confusion

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<sup>55</sup> Jeffery M. Dorwart, *The Office of Naval Intelligence: The Birth of America's first Intelligence Agency 1865-1918* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1979), 16.

<sup>56</sup> *Inquiry into Occupation and Administration of Haiti*, 306.

<sup>57</sup> Jeffery M. Dorwart, *The Office of Naval Intelligence: The Birth of America's first Intelligence Agency 1865-1918* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1979), 16.

<sup>58</sup> Hans Schmidt, *The United States Occupation of Haiti, 1915-1934* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1995), 64.

<sup>59</sup> Jeffery M. Dorwart, *The Office of Naval Intelligence: The Birth of America's first Intelligence Agency 1865-1918* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1979), 327.

<sup>60</sup> Lowell Thomas, *Old Gimlet Eye: The Adventures of Smedley D. Butler* (New York: Marine Corps Assn,

that ensued hampered the immediate security of Port au Prince while U.S. military personnel attempted to secure it. The sailors sent ashore as the first landing party became so confused due to poor intelligence that a friendly fire incident occurred that killed two of them.<sup>61</sup> This isolated incident was emblematic of the type of trouble the occupation force would have over the next two decades.

Marine military intelligence apparatus did not exist at the time they landed in Haiti, while the first steps towards military intelligence modernization had not yet occurred. In the U.S., The Marine Corps relied heavily on the Navy for intelligence about its targets during its overseas work at the start of the twentieth century. The Office of Naval Intelligence was operating several different attaché missions throughout the world by 1915, with some Marines attached to these missions.<sup>62</sup> This was the precursor to the rise of Marine Corps intelligence officers. The Corps did not have any specific doctrine for intelligence gathering so they gained it through experience.<sup>63</sup> Their general military doctrine was a hodge-podge of Army and Navy concepts unchanged for Marine use.<sup>64</sup> Most military lessons the Corps learned were through experience and sage-like advice from senior Marines; lessons from previous campaigns were applied but the experience and what these lessons might have taught varied on the individual. During the first part of the campaign in Haiti, the Marines could rely on their previous experience and their naval

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1981), 192.

<sup>61</sup> Hans Schmidt, *The United States Occupation of Haiti, 1915-1934*, (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1995), 67.

<sup>62</sup> United States. Office of Naval Intelligence, *Naval Attache's Reports, Office of Naval Intelligence* (Unpublished Manuscript, U.S. Naval War College, 1915), 141.

<sup>63</sup> Keith B. Bickel, *Mars Learning: The Marine Corps Development of Small Wars Doctrine, 1915-1940* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2001), 49.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid*, 49.



leadership for their basic intelligence needs, but as the naval leadership withdrew they were forced to adapt to their new role.

The broader events addressed previously were catalysts for the way the Marines and the Haitian people interacted with each other. Their exchanges militarily, politically, and socially provided the context for the military intelligence developments in Haiti. Marines in Haiti had to deal with troubles created by their predecessors and those already existing before they arrived. The tragic social conditions of Haiti helped to shape the typical American view of the Haitian people.<sup>65</sup> The view of the population dramatically affected the way Marines used intelligence during their time as occupiers. U.S. expeditions in other parts of the world like Nicaragua and the Dominican Republic progressed along similar strategic lines as those in Haiti, but there were some differences in how they adapted to the changing strategic circumstances specific to each region. The next section of this paper will address the military intelligence methods employed by the Marines in Haiti.

The initial phase of the U.S. occupation of Haiti was a joint effort of the U.S. State Department, the Navy, the Marine Corps, and the Haitian government. The intelligence duties for the occupation focused mainly on the Navy and State Department. The Marine Corps was eventually assigned the key tasks associated with the U.S. occupation, but in the beginning, it was under the command of Navy Rear Admiral

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<sup>65</sup> Mary A. Renda, *Taking Haiti: Military Occupation and the Culture of U.S. Imperialism, 1915-1940*, 1 edition (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2001), 104.

William Banks Caperton, who received direction from the U.S. State Department.<sup>66</sup> The occupation force adjusted its gathering methods to the new requirements as the first phase changed from an intervention to an occupation. The methods for intelligence gathering adjusted according to who was in command and what they viewed their objective to be at the moment. Informants within the political elite were used and then abandoned.<sup>67</sup> Information from unsubstantiated sources was given credence while attempts to develop long-term sources failed.

The initial phase of the occupation was successful, but it had within it the makings of the caco revolt of 1919. Intelligence shortcomings in the first steps of the occupation contributed significantly to the initial success of the uprising. Admiral Caperton was also much more practiced with diplomatic behavior with the Haitian elite than the Marine Corps leadership in Haiti.<sup>68</sup> The U.S. high command had sent Caperton to watch Haitian politics since the revolution of General Sam began back in January 1915.<sup>69</sup> Caperton recognized that to achieve his objectives from the State Department, he would have to work with the powerful and influential elites. He developed connections with the elite to acquire a sympathetic source for political information. Admiral Caperton referred to his source as Agent X.<sup>70</sup> Agent X gave Caperton information about the political conditions in Haiti, which gave the U.S. a significant advantage over the

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<sup>66</sup> *Inquiry into Occupation and Administration of Haiti*, 285.

<sup>67</sup> Hans Schmidt, *The United States Occupation of Haiti, 1915-1934*, (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1995), 73.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, 78-79.

<sup>69</sup> *Inquiry into Occupation and Administration of Haiti*, 291.

<sup>70</sup> Hans Schmidt, *The United States Occupation of Haiti, 1915-1934*, (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1995), 73.

fractured Haitian government.<sup>71</sup> Agent X brought information to Caperton that directly affected his choice for a Haitian presidential candidate and gave significant insight into the views and desires of the elite who could have had complex designs behind their actions.<sup>72</sup>

The Haitian political elite had maintained power through the use of intrigue, patronage, and violence. Some chose to support the American intervention so they could reform that political system, but others wanted to maintain Haiti's sovereignty. The proud history of resistance against foreign and especially white foreign aggression provided a powerful counterweight to cooperation. The individual motives within the elite are difficult to pin down in the U.S. sources because they were not often thoroughly explored. What is clear is that cooperation of the Haitian people improved U.S. military chances of success when they thoroughly exploited it.

The political and military intelligence gained from Haitian cooperation was invaluable in attaining control over the country. Their U.S. counterparts did not fully explore the motives of those who collaborated with the occupation after Caperton left Haiti. The preservation of U.S. control over the Haitian government relied on collaboration, and while forced cooperation was a tool used by the occupation, it was not the preferred method.<sup>73</sup> The lack of assistance meant that the maintenance of the collaborators should have been an urgent priority. Therefore the motives behind their

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<sup>71</sup> Ibid., 73.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid., 73.

<sup>73</sup> Lester D. Langley, *The Banana Wars: United States Intervention in the Caribbean, 1898-1934* (Wilmington, DE: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2001), 135.

collaboration would have been useful for understanding how to keep them friendly.

The lack of interest in motives and the eventual breakdown in relations with collaborators left the occupation force blind to the realities of their situation. The Marines did not attempt to maintain political contacts because they saw their mission in the countryside. They focused on the cacos that the Marines viewed as the cause of all of the instability in Haiti. The cacos, a long-standing Haitian insurgency, had caused the political chaos that now enveloped the country.<sup>74</sup> Most cacos were poor farmers supervised by a chieftain. Chiefs kept the government of Haiti from consolidating power throughout the entire country by raiding, preventing any improvement in infrastructure, and constantly destabilizing the central government.<sup>75</sup> Haiti's small and poorly supplied military could not root out the cacos because they used hit-and-run tactics to avoid direct engagements unless facing a far weaker force.<sup>76</sup> These tactics would be used against U.S. forces with mixed results throughout the occupation. The challenge of finding the enemy became the single most vital intelligence objective of the campaigns.

Cacoism also enforced regionalism because it allowed for regional rebel groups to operate without federal interference. Cacos became so powerful in Haiti that they could replace sitting presidents through violence; presidential aspirants hired them to come down into Port au Prince and force out the established ruler.<sup>77</sup> Cacoism had its roots

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<sup>74</sup> Ivan Musicant, *The Banana Wars: A History of United States Military Intervention in Latin America from the Spanish-American War to the Invasion of Panama*, (New York: Macmillan Pub Co, 1990), 160.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, 160.

<sup>76</sup> Leo J. Daugherty III, *Counterinsurgency and the United States Marine Corps Volume 1, the First Counterinsurgency Era, 1899-1945* (Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland, 2015), 51.

<sup>77</sup> Ivan Musicant, *The Banana Wars: A History of United States Military Intervention in Latin America from the Spanish-American War to the Invasion of Panama*, (New York: Macmillan Pub Co, 1990), 160

in maroonage, which were communities of escaped slaves living on the edge of colonial Haiti. These groups resisted the central colonial authority and maintained separate communities that lived in opposition to the established economic practices.<sup>78</sup> The tactics that these groups used against attempted recapture by colonial authorities very much resembled those employed by the cacos. They were guerrilla fighters with a few poor weapons but they used numbers and surprise to overcome these disadvantages.<sup>79</sup> Not until the introduction of modern automatic weapons used by occupation forces did the age old tactics meet their match. Cacos successfully removed seven presidents from 1911 and 1915.<sup>80</sup> It is unknown whether the cacos purposefully made the Haitian political system weak or if they achieved it unintentionally, but they were certainly the main cause of the political instability. Some Marines came to respect and even like the cacos more than the political elites because they felt the cacos had purer motives for resistance.<sup>81</sup>

In the meantime, the cooperation of officials and government agencies proved effective in giving the occupation force control of the major cities in Haiti. The military had some cases of resistance, but they were compelled to capitulate by their civilian leadership. The prominent future caco leader Charlemagne Peralte was a military commander in Leogane where he resisted the U.S. take over.<sup>82</sup> The Marines and

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<sup>78</sup> Ibid., 160.

<sup>79</sup> Leo J. Daugherty III, *Counterinsurgency and the United States Marine Corps Volume 1, the First Counterinsurgency Era, 1899-1945* (Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland, 2015), 51.

<sup>80</sup> Hans Schmidt, *The United States Occupation of Haiti, 1915-1934*, (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1995), 55.

<sup>81</sup> *Inquiry into Occupation and Administration of Haiti*, 683.

<sup>82</sup> Georges Michel and Douglas Daniels, *Charlemagne Peralte and the First American Occupation of Haiti: Charlemagne Peralte : UN Centenaire, 1885-1985*, (Dubuque, Iowa: Kendall Hunt Pub Co, 1995), 16.

Peralte's civilian leadership informed him that he had to surrender his command and his garrison. Peralte refused, but the Haitian government removed him from his position and placed a more cooperative commander who promptly surrendered the garrison at Leogane.<sup>83</sup>

The U.S. Marines at the beginning in Haiti did not concern themselves very much with political or social intelligence because it was not yet operationally significant. They were called in to stabilize the country and so viewed their mission as military enforcement. Only Rear Admiral Caperton concerned himself with political and social intelligence because he had to implement State Department policy. He used the Marines as a blunt instrument to enforce some of his political or social maneuvers, but he did not keep them informed about his motives.<sup>84</sup> The Marine's lack of participation in the social and political intelligence during the first phase of the occupation hampered their ability to maintain control in the years after Caperton left Haiti.

The first phase of the occupation focused on reestablishing order in the population centers and then consolidating U.S. control. The Marines occupied Port au Prince, disarmed the citizens, drove cacos out of the city, and initiated a curfew. U.S. forces used probing actions to discover the limits of their local control.<sup>85</sup> These probing actions also helped to familiarize the Marines with the land that they had occupied. At times they used

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<sup>83</sup> Ibid., 16.

<sup>84</sup> Hans Schmidt, *The United States Occupation of Haiti, 1915-1934* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1995), 78.

<sup>85</sup> 13th Company, 1st Brigade, "Patrol from Port Au Prince," Box Office of Commandant 1915-1923, folder 23, U.S. National Archives, Washington D.C.

their third party status in regional or national conflicts to avoid confrontation.<sup>86</sup> As the state department and military high command changed the intervention into an occupation, Haitian troubles became American ones. This responsibility placed the cacos on a direct collision course with the Marines because they were a serious problem for their new objective to consolidate centralized power. The cacos had long been an instrument of decentralization and regional power struggles; individual cacos were loyal to their patrons, but their chiefs or patrons were often bought by the highest bidder.<sup>87</sup> The changing loyalties of the cacos made them a force for political change in Haiti, but also made them highly unpredictable. The political aspirant would hire chiefs to gain power and promise a payment from the treasury.<sup>88</sup> The cacos would come down from the rural regions of Haiti and take over the major cities to force the sitting president to flee the country. The new president would take power, but would immediately have to pay off his former allies to satisfy them.<sup>89</sup> This process repeated itself when chiefs did not receive enough payment or were offered more money by another presidential aspirant.<sup>90</sup> The recurring insurrection was one of the main causes for the political instability leading to U.S. intervention. To end the cycle of regime change and centralize power in Port au Prince, the Marines had to eliminate the cacos. The way to remove the cacos became a cause for contention among the leadership of the Marines.

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<sup>86</sup> Ibid.

<sup>87</sup> Hans Schmidt, *The United States Occupation of Haiti, 1915-1934* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1995), 83.

<sup>88</sup> Ivan Musicant, *The Banana Wars: A History of United States Military Intervention in Latin America from the Spanish-American War to the Invasion of Panama*, (New York: Macmillan Pub Co, 1990), 160.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid., 160.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid., 160.

Littleton W.T. Waller and Eli Cole were the leaders of the Marine Corps presence during the early days of the occupation. Waller was an overly zealous Marine who had been accused of and investigated for using extreme measures against the Filipino people during the revolt of 1902.<sup>91</sup> He was later acquitted by a court martial, but his methods did not seem to change. Waller's time in the Philippines had taught him that harsh measures against a resistant foe produced results. He allowed his racist views of the Haitian population to cloud his judgment, often describing them in disparaging terms.<sup>92</sup> There are no reports of actions he took against civilians in Haiti, but he did not give his caco opponents any peace. Cole had a different military experience and opinion on how to deal with his opponents. General Lejeune had assigned Col. Cole as the assistant to the Commandant of the Marine Corps from 1911 to 1915 and had attended many of the newly instituted military schools in the U.S.<sup>93</sup> Cole later admitted he viewed the cacos as patriots and felt that they would have made better allies than the political elites.<sup>94</sup> Major General Smedley Butler served under both members of the occupation leadership.

Waller, Cole, and Butler agreed that the Haitian elite were corrupt and self-serving incompetents.<sup>95</sup> While Caperton developed a political agent within the circles of the politically powerful, the Marine Corps leadership ignored or bullied them.<sup>96</sup> Caperton

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<sup>91</sup> Hans Schmidt, *The United States Occupation of Haiti, 1915-1934*, (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1995), 79.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, 79.

<sup>93</sup> Lowell Thomas, *Old Gimlet Eye: The Adventures of Smedley D. Butler* (New York: Marine Corps Assn, 1981), 189.

<sup>94</sup> *Inquiry into Occupation and Administration of Haiti*, 683.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*, 609, 683, 516.

<sup>96</sup> Hans Schmidt, *The United States Occupation of Haiti, 1915-1934*, (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1995), 79.



did not help the Marines develop good relations with the Haitian elite because he used them as a blunt instrument to get the dirty jobs done.<sup>97</sup> He avoided being present at the confrontations between the occupation forces and the political elites that had to be “brought into line.” Butler and Waller were usually part of the rough implementation of the policy, including disbanding the Haitian legislative branch; however, they were not privy to the overall strategizing of Caperton with his navy personnel. The lack of involvement in overall strategy combined with their personal participation in the rougher aspects of the occupation predisposed them to a harsher treatment of the upper classes that was worsened by their personal bias. The fractured relationship between the elites and the Marine Corps leadership continued to affect the political and social conditions of the occupation for several years after the departure of the original leaders.

The only military actions required after the seizure of population centers in Haiti were the rooting out the caco opposition. The initial attempts by the occupation leadership under Admiral Caperton to end cacoism relied on bribing chiefs for the surrender of weapons and promises to remain peaceful.<sup>98</sup> The policy failed to pacify the entire countryside, but it did reduce the number of arms and groups that needed to be engaged. This military pacification was accomplished using basic intelligence methods that often caused problems for the Marines. The main intelligence issue was that the cacos were on their home turf and smart enough to avoid pitched battle with the better-armed foe. The Marines used extensive patrols to root out the enemy but were often frustrated. Continued failure forced the Marines to try to find information on the cacos.

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<sup>97</sup> Ibid., 83.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid., 83.

Relying on the local population for intelligence produced pathetically unreliable information that had to be communicated either through interpreters or gestures due to a lack of language proficiency in Creole.<sup>99</sup> Some sources were civilians that Marines pressed into service as guides, but these frightened individuals were either uninformed or poorly motivated to provide useful geographic intelligence.<sup>100</sup> Eventually, the Marines were able to piece together information given by sources that led them to an important engagement at Fort Riviere where Smedley Butler led his men into a twenty-minute melee that ended in the deaths of fifty-one cacos.<sup>101</sup> While this was not the final battle in the bush, it was a significant moment in the minds of the Marines and their foes. Resistance continued on but lacked direction or staying power.

The problems with the relationship between the Marine Corps and the Haitian elite began to hamper the occupation when the naval leadership left. Previously, some of the elites had been instrumental in the success of the occupation, but as relations soured, they began to resist. Not long after instructions from the State Department ceased and the Marines were left on their own to prosecute the occupation did the lack of direction become apparent. The agent that had helped Caperton to navigate the intricacies of the Haitian political system was no longer mentioned either in personal sources or official government records following Caperton's departure. It is unknown whether Caperton purposefully did not mention his source or if the Marine Corps leadership simply ignored

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<sup>99</sup> Keith B. Bickel, *Mars Learning: The Marine Corps Development of Small Wars Doctrine, 1915-1940* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2001), 82.

<sup>100</sup> Lowell Thomas, *Old Gimlet Eye: The Adventures of Smedley D. Butler* (New York: Marine Corps Assn, 1981), 191.

<sup>101</sup> Hans Schmidt, *The United States Occupation of Haiti, 1915-1934*, (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1995), 85.

it, but now those in charge of the occupation were on the wrong footing in unfamiliar territory and bereft of any guide. This development allowed for the relationship between the forceful Marines and the subtle Haitian elite to deteriorate rapidly. Problems of race, class, and nationalism combined to add insult to injury.

The relationship between the poorer people of Haiti and the occupation force was complex. The Haitian poor were often highly adaptable to the changing governments of their island nation, but the occupation of a foreign power provided a unique challenge to their adaptability. The people now faced an occupation by individuals that could not speak their native tongue and did not understand their cultural systems.<sup>102</sup> Those who chose not to join with the caco groups in the wilderness had to decide whether to resist, wait for an eventual withdrawal, or help the invader. The majority simply chose to wait it out and learned to deal with the temporary annoyance of a foreign occupation. This group did, at times, take sides through passive resistance or even brief active participation, but they largely allowed the occupation to play out. The next largest group was those that chose to resist in the spirit of their brave ancestors who had struggled against slavery and foreign incursions.<sup>103</sup> The final smallest group decided to support the occupation and played a major role in its successes. These individuals were diversely motivated to join the American cause, arriving with their ideas of what the occupation should accomplish. Some of them would become vital intelligence sources and even double agents for the American Marines in Haiti. They provided intelligence that thwarted major attacks,

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<sup>102</sup> Mary A. Renda, *Taking Haiti: Military Occupation and the Culture of U.S. Imperialism, 1915-1940*, 1 edition (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2001), 28.

<sup>103</sup> Hans Schmidt, *The United States Occupation of Haiti, 1915-1934* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1995), 68.

informed on the disposition of caco forces, and even brought down their leaders.

The lack of respect for the caco fighters was one of the most prominent problems that the Marines faced with intelligence work. The Marines did not consider the cacos a military foe but, rather, as bandits, and this may have helped the Marines to consider them less of a threat (this underestimation affected how they operated against their enemy, especially how they gathered intelligence). The cacos did not have real weapons but relied on old breach loading rifles for which they often had the wrong caliber of ammunition.<sup>104</sup> They made up for the caliber difference by strapping some leather around the cartridge to enlarge it in the barrel.<sup>105</sup> The modified ammunition made their fire extremely inaccurate and problematic for sniping or ambushes, but the cacos were not deficient in courage or cunning. The Marines even referred to patrols as hunts and cacos as apes.<sup>106</sup>

The complex relations between all classes of Haitian people and their occupiers placed military intelligence in a dangerous situation. The trouble for Marines was to determine whether or not the information they received from Haitian sources was valid. Early in the campaign, there were many Haitians that came forward to offer contradictory information. Before the attack on Fort Riviere, the Marines happened upon a Haitian man and forced him to provide the location of the fort. Butler later accused this source of

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<sup>104</sup> Hans Schmidt, *Maverick Marine: General Smedley D. Butler and the Contradictions of American Military History*, (Lexington, KY.: University Press of Kentucky, 1998), 78.

<sup>105</sup> Hans Schmidt, *The United States Occupation of Haiti, 1915-1934* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1995), 82.

<sup>106</sup> Lowell Thomas, *Old Gimlet Eye: The Adventures of Smedley D. Butler* (New York: Marine Corps Assn, 1981), 191.

having provided information that was meant to trap the Marines.<sup>107</sup>

Cole and Waller represented the two plans to deal with the remaining cacos in the countryside after the Marines secured the main towns of Haiti. Cole called for paying the caco chiefs to avoid bloodshed and gain allies in rural Haiti.<sup>108</sup> Opposed to the plan was Colonel Littleton Waller, who saw the violent subjugation of the cacos as the only permanent solution to the chronic political instability in Haiti.<sup>109</sup> The Marines ended up combining the two approaches, which left them vulnerable to the problems of both. The U.S. extended an olive branch to the caco chiefs allowing them to turn in their arms and those of their comrades for bounties. The problems that came from these “disarmed” cacos during the revolt of 1919 proved that they had not fully given in to the U.S. occupation scheme. The Marines hunted down the cacos who did not comply. Several chieftains assisted from the start, but many chose to resist. Many of the caco leaders had been unchallenged for years and understood that their networks of loyal Haitians would be difficult for a foreign invader to convert. They also knew that the poor infrastructure and difficult terrain would be to their advantage against the unguided U.S. Marines. Many of the main roads that connected the major cities of Haiti had not been well maintained.<sup>110</sup> The intelligence challenges to the Marines were severe, but they were able to implement some methods that had worked in other counterinsurgency conflicts.

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<sup>107</sup> Ibid., 191.

<sup>108</sup> Hans Schmidt, *Maverick Marine: General Smedley D. Butler and the Contradictions of American Military History* (Lexington, KY.: University Press of Kentucky, 1998), 75.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid., 75.

<sup>110</sup> Jon T. Hoffman, *Chesty: The Story of Lieutenant General Lewis B. Puller, USMC*, (New York: Random House Trade Paperbacks, 2002), 26.

The missions to destroy the cacos that had not sold their guns to the Marines were tactically successful but provided few strategic results. The intelligence collected during the missions was directly connected to the prosecution of the tactical goals and were, therefore, not well recorded for later use. There was little or no attempt to establish permanent sources of intelligence in areas where the caco presence was strongest, and the Marines did not diligently record the names of their sources that had given them good information. The Marines focused on destroying the strongholds of their enemies and that goal they achieved very well.<sup>111</sup> The forts that had for years been under the control of the caco rebels fell in rapid succession to a determined and well-armed adversary. Even though the massive hilltop fortresses of the countryside were hard to locate due to the poor maps and lack of valuable sources, nevertheless the Marines eventually stumbled into them. The intelligence methods they used to make contact with the enemy were large patrols, local guides, and informants. These sources proved dubious and even resulted in some near military disasters.<sup>112</sup> Taking the series of caco-held forts in the interior was an important step toward ending their hold on the countryside. It was also an attempt to eliminate weapons caches.

Col. Waller assigned Butler and Cole to the northern military district of Haiti to begin the hunt for cacos in the interior.<sup>113</sup> First, they established control in Cap Haitian on the north coast. Haitian government officials handed control of Cap Haitian over to the

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<sup>111</sup> Keith B. Bickel, *Mars Learning: The Marine Corps Development of Small Wars Doctrine, 1915-1940* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2001), 72.

<sup>112</sup> Lowell Thomas, *Old Gimlet Eye: The Adventures of Smedley D. Butler* (New York: Marine Corps Assn, 1981), 191-193.

<sup>113</sup> Smedley Butler, "Report of Operations, October 9th, 1915, to November 27th, 1915, Inclusive." May 8, 1931, Series 9/A/5/1, Box 15, Folder 1, U.S. Marine Corps Archives, Quantico, VA, 1.

Marines who landed unopposed from the sea.<sup>114</sup> After a few days of sending out intermittent patrols of varying sizes, he decided to take on the cacos directly. Butler understood that the cacos would continue to hold the initiative until he could make direct contact with their forces. The cacos used the old forts as strongholds in the north; Waller planned to take them out to break caco resistance. Butler used large long-range patrols to disrupt the caco rebels' hold on the countryside and to break up troop concentrations.<sup>115</sup> These excursions would have been able to achieve results if they had first sought out specific intelligence on their enemies before the operations began. They seemed to know the general locations of the main forts in the region, but they lacked several key details about their enemies that could have been useful. There were many more improvised forts in the area than they expected and as they cut through the countryside, the Marines remained under constant fire during their several days of marching.<sup>116</sup> The cacos did not often stand and fight, even in their strongholds. The Marines could not fully trap the cacos in their forts because of their lack of geographic intelligence. Their inadequate preparation allowed the cacos to avoid destruction during the early days of the occupation which later came back to haunt the Marines in 1919.

The first fort to fall to Butler's Marines was Fort Dipitie on October 24, 1915.

They stumbled into a night ambush but recovered and charged the defense at daybreak.<sup>117</sup>

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<sup>114</sup> Hans Schmidt, *Maverick Marine: General Smedley D. Butler and the Contradictions of American Military History* (Lexington, KY.: University Press of Kentucky, 1998), 74.

<sup>115</sup> Keith B. Bickel, *Mars Learning: The Marine Corps Development of Small Wars Doctrine, 1915-1940* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2001), 72.

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*, 72.

<sup>117</sup> Smedley Butler, "Daily Reports October 24, 25, 26 1915," Military (Fort Liberte, October 26, 1915), Smedley Butler papers, Series 9/A/5/1, Box 15, Folder 3, U.S. Marine Corps Archives, Quantico, VA., 1;

Next, Fort Capois fell on November 8, but the majority of the garrison escaped due to intelligence failures.<sup>118</sup> The last to be taken was Fort Riviere on November 17, which signaled the beginning of the end of the first phase of Marine involvement in Haiti. Knocking out the forts was an important Marine objective because these strongholds often held many of the weapons the cacos hoarded until they decided to attack. The Marines believed that if they could track down the major stashes of arms, the cacos would cease resisting or at least would be severely hampered. The timeline of the fall of the forts makes the campaign in Haiti appear very simple and well executed, but in reality, these operations suffered from intelligence weaknesses.

Fort Dipitie was a small, well-defended fortification making its destruction anything but smooth. The target that the Marines sought when they destroyed Fort Dipitie was Fort Capois.<sup>119</sup> The Americans in northern Haiti did not report how they discovered that Fort Capois existed, but somehow they heard that it was in the interior and that it was a staging area for caco raids into Marine-controlled regions. The men under Smedley Butler's command went on horseback to find the fort. Butler later described the one map he had as valueless, but at the same time, he failed to procure a guide before he loped off into the countryside.<sup>120</sup> This failure to gain specific intelligence before going to an unknown location in unfamiliar territory could have been a military disaster. Butler had

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Keith B. Bickel, *Mars Learning: The Marine Corps Development of Small Wars Doctrine, 1915-1940* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2001), 89.

<sup>118</sup> Lowell Thomas, *Old Gimlet Eye: The Adventures of Smedley D. Butler* (New York: Marine Corps Assn, 1981), 198.

<sup>119</sup> Smedley Butler, "Daily Reports October 24, 25, 26 1915," Military (Fort Liberte, October 26, 1915), Smedley Butler papers, Series 9/A/5/1, Box 1, Folder 1, U.S. Marine Corps Archives, Quantico, VA, 1.

<sup>120</sup> Lowell Thomas, *Old Gimlet Eye: The Adventures of Smedley D. Butler* (New York: Marine Corps Assn, 1981), 189.



previously relied on fallen orange peels from the cacos to track them, but on this expedition, he could find none.<sup>121</sup> He eventually found a lone Haitian man of fighting age in the path of the patrol. His location should have been suspect, but instead, the Haitian was immediately pressed into service to locate the elusive Fort Capois.<sup>122</sup> Interestingly this source of intelligence was not mentioned in the after-action report that Butler submitted, but he refers to the source in his memoir, *Old Gimlet Eye*.<sup>123</sup> It may be because he later discovered his guide was a caco agent that betrayed the Marines to an ambush.<sup>124</sup>

Butler mentions in his report that as they crossed a river, four hundred cacos fired on them from three sides taking the Marines completely by surprise.<sup>125</sup> Worse still, the unit's machine gun was lost in the river as the horse carrying it was shot during the crossing. Luckily for Butler and his men, Sergeant Dan Daley bravely retrieved the gun in the river, but the Marines remained under fire the rest of the night by an elusive enemy.<sup>126</sup> When daylight broke, the machine gun reversed the Marines' fortunes and allowed them to pursue their assailants. The cacos had successfully provided misleading intelligence that landed the Marines in a tight spot. The cacos did not kill anyone, and Fort Dipitie turned out to be just up the hill from where the Marines were attempting to

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<sup>121</sup> Ibid., 189.

<sup>122</sup> Ibid., 191.

<sup>123</sup> Smedley Butler, "Daily Reports October 24, 25, 26 1915," Military (Fort Liberte, October 26, 1915), Smedley Butler papers, Series 9/A/5/1, Box 15, Folder 3, U.S. Marine Corps Archives, Quantico, VA.

<sup>124</sup> Lowell Thomas, *Old Gimlet Eye: The Adventures of Smedley D. Butler* (New York: Marine Corps Assn, 1981), 191.

<sup>125</sup> Smedley Butler, "Daily Reports October 24, 25, 26 1915," Military (Fort Liberte, October 26, 1915), Smedley Butler papers, Series 9/A/5/1, Box 15, Folder 3, U.S. Marine Corps Archives, Quantico, VA.; Smedley Butler, "Report of Operations, October 9th, 1915, to November 27th, 1915," May 8, 1931, Series 9/A/5/1, Box 15, Folder 1, U.S. Marine Corps Archives, Quantico, VA, 3.

<sup>126</sup> Ibid.

cross the stream. Lieutenants Upshur and Ostermann charged up the hill, scattering the cacos and destroying the fort.<sup>127</sup> The Marines burned the fort along with several huts nearby to ensure its continued disuse. Marines walked into this ambush because of listening to corrupted intelligence. The action was considered highly successful, but Butler did not inform his superiors about how his intelligence failure had caused the ambush that compromised his command's operational security.<sup>128</sup> The courage and far superior firepower of the Marines allowed them to extricate themselves from what could have been a dangerous tactical situation.

During Butler's patrol, he had seen Fort Capois in the distance and reported its position to Waller who gave him permission to attack, but it was not a total success since Butler once again failed to gain sufficient intelligence about his target. Luckily he knew the fort's location because he had seen it, but he did not fully reconnoiter the area before his attack.<sup>129</sup> Butler's intelligence gap may have been because he feared his presence in the area was already known. He failed to cover all of the escape routes, allowing the bulk of the garrison to flee.<sup>130</sup> Four columns approached the fort in an attempt to surround the hill, but they had not gained sufficient intelligence about the trails leading to the top. Two columns finally arrived at the same time near the summit, but the other two columns were still two hours off.<sup>131</sup> Overall the objective to take out the fort was achieved, but the

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<sup>127</sup> Smedley Butler, "Daily Reports October 24, 25, 26 1915," Military (Fort Liberte, October 26, 1915), Smedley Butler papers, Series 9/A/5/1, Box 1, Folder 1, U.S. Marine Corps Archives, Quantico, VA, 1.

<sup>128</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.

<sup>129</sup> Smedley Butler, "Report of Operations, October 9th, 1915, to November 27th, 1915, Inclusive.," May 8, 1931, Series 9/A/5/1, Box 15, Folder 6, U.S. Marine Corps Archives, Quantico, VA, 1.

<sup>130</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

<sup>131</sup> Harold Utley, "Small Wars Manual, Historical Examples Section" (Military Manual, 1930), Harold

former occupants escaped due to an intelligence failure. As aforementioned, an immediate attack may have been the only course of action open to Butler under the circumstances.

Fort Riviere was the final and most difficult challenge of this aggressive campaign in northern Haiti. It had been built by the French during the early 19<sup>th</sup> century and was widely considered impregnable by the local population due to its high stone walls and construction on a large hill that had a commanding view of the area. One of the local caco generals, Josefette, held it with a huge band of his men.<sup>132</sup> Colonel Cole sent a reconnoitering party to examine the defenses and gain information as to how to approach the hilltop fortress.<sup>133</sup> Cole employed several larger columns to gather intelligence on the fort, which cacos saw from their advantageous position.<sup>134</sup> The enemy chose to stay and fight because they considered their position unassailable. The attack on Fort Riviere was one of the few times that large patrols gathered valuable, actionable intelligence because of caco tactical withdrawals. Cole and several of his staff considered an attack strategy that used the field artillery in conjunction with an overwhelming assault force to take the fort.<sup>135</sup> Smedley Butler, with the support of Col. Waller, chose a frontal assault without waiting for the field artillery to arrive. Col. Cole outlined a plan that called for four separate company-strength columns to push into the valley around Fort Riviere and drive

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Utley Papers, Series 14/D/5/1, Box 3, Folder 9, U.S. Marine Corps Archives, Quantico, VA, 7.

<sup>132</sup> Lowell Thomas, *Old Gimlet Eye: The Adventures of Smedley D. Butler* (New York: Marine Corps Assn, 1981), 207.

<sup>133</sup> *Ibid.*, 201.

<sup>134</sup> Eli Cole, "Operations Fort Riviere District," Military Order, (November 15, 1915), Smedley Butler papers, Series 45/2/5, Box 1, Folder 1, U.S. Marine Corps Archives, Quantico, VA.

<sup>135</sup> Lowell Thomas, *Old Gimlet Eye: The Adventures of Smedley D. Butler* (New York: Marine Corps Assn, 1981), 201.

the cacos into the fort, followed by a four-pronged assault on the heights; it was a simple plan of action.<sup>136</sup> His involvement in the last two serious engagements with the cacos had convinced him that his Marines could use superior firepower to overwhelm the more numerous enemy forces. Butler chose one hundred men for the assault and set off for the fort.

When Butler's Marines arrived at the foot of the mountain of Fort Riviere several Marine patrols had already reconnoitered and softened up the position by driving the cacos out of the valley areas.<sup>137</sup> Cole had ordered several Marine detachments to scour the area around Grande Riviere since Oct. 22, 1915.<sup>138</sup> They searched for any concentrations of cacos, but they knew of two major forts in the region, Fort Capois, and Fort Riviere.<sup>139</sup> The detachments used guides from the local population and examined every trail they came upon in the Fort Riviere region. Cole had led a systematic search in known caco territory that eventually narrowed down the location of the enemy. His search for intelligence appears in direct contrast to the haphazard Butler patrol that found Fort Capois. Both operations found their objective, but the Marines took Fort Riviere with its garrison intact which meant a complete victory.

Cole achieved success because of the intelligence that he doggedly gained through long and challenging patrolling. Cole's recon found Fort Riviere and then Cole

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<sup>136</sup> Eli Cole, "Operations Fort Riviere District," Military Order, (November 15, 1915), Smedley Butler papers, Series 45/2/5, Box 1, Folder 1, U.S. Marine Corps Archives, Quantico, VA.

<sup>137</sup> Ibid.

<sup>138</sup> Chandler Campbell, "13th Company Diary, Artillery Battalion, 1st Brigade, U.S. Marine Corps, Cape Haitian, Haiti, October 14, 1915-November 29, 1915," Chandler Campbell papers, Series 12/G/3/4, Box 1, Folder 2, U.S. Marine Corps Archives, Quantico, VA.

<sup>139</sup> Ibid.

used his separate companies to drive the cacos toward the fort where he cut off any escape routes.<sup>140</sup> The cacos were now bottled up in Fort Riviere, giving Butler the edge he needed. He took his one hundred hand-picked men and divided them into sections for the attack. The three companies started up their separate trails at the same time; the first company began at Grande Riviere, the second company from Bahun, and the last company from San Rafael.<sup>141</sup> The attack began at a preselected time and when Butler blew his whistle the men around him charged the hill.<sup>142</sup> The Marines had not thoroughly reconnoitered the other sections of the steep trail on the mountain where the other companies were supposed to advance. The two companies, unable to advance, provided suppressing fire that allowed Butler's section from San Rafael to move forward without taking casualties.<sup>143</sup> Butler ensured increased covering fire by placing two machine guns under one of his Marines named Marston to shield the charge.<sup>144</sup> The accurate cover fire gave the Americans a decisive advantage over the inaccurate rifles of the cacos on the ramparts. The cacos held their ground against the heavy fire and did everything they could to stop the stubborn assault. The only injury occurred when a caco, while desperately fighting to hold the fort, hit a Marine in the face with a rock.<sup>145</sup> Butler and his men finally made it to the wall but found there was only one way into the fort by an old drain culvert, which led directly into the inner courtyard. Butler admitted, years later, that

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<sup>140</sup> Ibid.

<sup>141</sup> Lowell Thomas, *Old Gimlet Eye: The Adventures of Smedley D. Butler* (New York: Marine Corps Assn, 1981), 202.

<sup>142</sup> Ibid., 204.

<sup>143</sup> Ibid., 204.

<sup>144</sup> Ibid., 204.

<sup>145</sup> Hans Schmidt, *The United States Occupation of Haiti, 1915-1934*, (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1995), 85.

he felt great fear at the prospect of entering into the culvert but two of his men, Iam and Gross, rushed in.<sup>146</sup> Butler followed them closely before they burst into the fort's courtyard in the midst of a vast number of enemy fighters. Several cacos fell dead as Butler and his men fired into them at close range. They then grappled hand-to-hand for fifteen minutes. The last of the cacos tried to flee by jumping over the ramparts of the fort but were shot down by automatic fire covering the walls. The engagement was a complete success.<sup>147</sup> The first campaign against the cacos of Haiti did not end directly after the fall of the fort, but the resistance in the northern part of Haiti petered out.

The fort campaign illustrates the troubles the Marines had in gathering intelligence in a region that was hostile. The tools that they had at their disposal did not allow them to cover many miles efficiently and they did not have adequate maps to help them navigate in unfamiliar territory. The caco rebels wisely chose to constantly harass their enemy as they patrolled, forcing the Marines to rely on large recon patrols that were ineffective at gathering actionable intelligence. Big patrols could not provide intelligence because the cacos could see them easily and simply move to an uncompromised area. The success of the attack on Fort Dipitie occurred because the cacos allowed the Marines to find them. The well-executed ambush could not provide a victory because of the technological and armament advantage of the Marines. The modified caco rifles produced an extremely inaccurate fire that had little effect on the Marines. The cacos had used massive amounts of poorly aimed fire to break up enemy formations and then they would

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<sup>146</sup> Lowell Thomas, *Old Gimlet Eye: The Adventures of Smedley D. Butler* (New York: Marine Corps Assn, 1981), 207.

<sup>147</sup> *Ibid.*, 207.

charge them with improvised arms to overwhelm their enemy. The tactic had worked successfully for many years against foreign and local forces. The superior Marine firepower, which was more accurate, proved decisive in keeping the cacos from closing in for hand-to-hand combat.<sup>148</sup> Later, the attack on Fort Capois showed that the cacos understood that a direct confrontation against the superior arms and training of the Marines was folly. Retreat did, however, allow them to keep the majority of their forces intact for future campaigns. The deficiency of intelligence on the enemy positions proved problematic and even dangerous. The few times the Marines gathered sufficient intelligence before attacks helped them capitalize on their successes. The Marines temporarily broke the caco threat with the fort capturing campaign in northern Haiti, but the threat would quickly rise again when given a cause in 1919.

The next campaign had its seeds in the intelligence failures of the first, but for the time being the cacos in Haiti melted back into the community. The Marines could not document established connections for the long term. Many of the Haitians who provided intelligence on the forts lived in rural communities and were too far away to be within the limits of the occupation's control. The distance from the widely dispersed garrisons in the countryside made any possible network difficult to maintain or even establish. The remaining cacos in the countryside could terrorize anyone they thought was working for the occupation while it was impossible to protect them if they lived outside of the garrison towns. The changing mission or objectives multiplied this problem. The

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<sup>148</sup> Butler refers specifically to how the Marines only fired to keep the cacos from closing on their position; Smedley Butler, "Daily Reports October 24, 25, 26 1915," Military, October 26, 1915, Smedley Butler papers, Series 9/A/5/1, Box 1, Folder 1, U.S. Marine Corps Archives, Quantico, VA.1.

intelligence that once mattered most became obsolete when the Marines changed their aims. The shifting intelligence requirements of the few sources the Marines maintained could not meet the needs for the first caco campaign; the misdirected intelligence objectives would create many of the problems that allowed the second caco campaign to occur.



## CHAPTER III

## INTER-VIOLENCE PERIOD 1916-1919

While the standard view that the *corvée* system was responsible for the *caco* revolt is accurate, it does not explain why the Haitian people confronted the Marine Corps and its allies and effectively blindsided the Marines. The failure of Marine Corps leadership to keep its finger on the pulse of the political and social situation in Haiti contributed meaningfully to the rise of the revolt, which nearly succeeded because the Marines chose to follow an incorrect intelligence priority. There is no evidence that Marines serving there received any training in political or social analysis, but they were still expected to maintain political and social order. Many of them were also given oversight over political organizations without much of an understanding of how they functioned.<sup>149</sup> Further, there was no language requirement for those given political responsibilities in Haiti.<sup>150</sup> The lack of systemized forms for intelligence reports meant that many lacked pertinent details and passed on useless information. The unmet need for consistent guidance from the State Department resulted in the Marines looking to the Haitian-American Treaty of 1916 for strategic direction and then discerning how to implement a general policy in specific circumstances. A shift in operational objectives in response to perceived threats caused significant intelligence failures. The Marines sought information about a foreign threat and allowed a local insurgency to flare up. The traditional view that the *corvée* system caused the *caco* revolt of 1919 remains an

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<sup>149</sup> Jon T. Hoffman, *Chesty: The Story of Lieutenant General Lewis B. Puller, USMC*, (New York: Random House Trade Paperbacks, 2002), 25.

<sup>150</sup> *Ibid.*, 26.

important explanation, but several military intelligence failures allowed Haitian rebels to operate without disruption, giving the rebellion a head start.

The Marine Corps command in Haiti split in early 1916 with the formation of Gendarmerie d`Haiti. The first group, led at the beginning by Col Butler, was assigned to train and supervise this new military police organization.<sup>151</sup> The second group remained as a Marine Corps brigade stationed in Port au Prince under the command of Col. Cole. The Gendarmerie d'Haiti took control of the countryside and the majority of the treaty duties while the brigade in Port au Prince supported the gendarmerie when attacked.<sup>152</sup> The majority of the field intelligence work was done by those serving in the native forces because they were the ones in direct contact with the population, but the brigade eventually maintained intelligence networks and surveillance on political conditions in Port au Prince. The Gendarmerie d'Haiti had the natural advantage of native Haitian members that could give geographic, social, and military intelligence. The Marines did not initially exploit this resource, but when they eventually did the results were impressive.

Violence in Haiti diminished rapidly from the start of 1916 as the cacos were hunted down or chose to accept bribes to lay down their arms. As a response, the U.S. State Department switched the Marines' mission from guerrilla fighters to instruments of political oversight. The Marine brigade stationed in Port au Prince maintained order and

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<sup>151</sup> Littleton Waller, "Order to Organize Haitian Constabulary," December 3, 1915, Smedley Butler papers, Series 45/2/5, Box 4, Folder 3, U.S. Marine Corps Archives, Quantico, VA.

<sup>152</sup> Keith B. Bickel, *Mars Learning: The Marine Corps Development of Small Wars Doctrine, 1915-1940* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2001), 83.

functioned as a reserve force for the police force. The Treaty of 1916 assigned the Marine-trained Gendarmerie d'Haiti to keep order in the countryside, improve infrastructure, and carry out the orders of the client government; it patrolled for cacos, led work crews, and enforced Haitian local law.<sup>153</sup> The Marines that officered the Gendarmerie drew their pay directly from the Haitian government and the treaty ostensibly placed them under the command of the President of Haiti, but they remained under the actual direction of the U.S. Marine Corps.<sup>154</sup> The Marines working there stayed in the field with military objectives, but they also had oversight of the local governments. The Haitians in the gendarmerie came mostly from the lower classes.<sup>155</sup> Only a few were elites who joined the occupation police, and most of them found their treatment intolerable because the Marines did not allow them the privileges of their station.<sup>156</sup> Many elites also recognized that the Americans would eventually leave and if they “threw in” with the occupation they would have little chance at political support after they left.

Col. Littleton Waller assigned Maj. Smedley Butler to “recruit, instruct, organize, and equip... the constabulary of Haiti.”<sup>157</sup> Butler dove into the project and became a powerful advocate for State Department objectives itemized in the Treaty of 1916.<sup>158</sup> He

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<sup>153</sup> United States and Atlee Pomerene, *Treaty with Haiti*, 8.

<sup>154</sup> Keith B. Bickel, *Mars Learning: The Marine Corps Development of Small Wars Doctrine, 1915-1940* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2001), 83.

<sup>155</sup> Hans Schmidt, *The United States Occupation of Haiti, 1915-1934*, (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1995), 87.

<sup>156</sup> *Ibid.*, 87.

<sup>157</sup> Littleton Waller, “Order to Organize Haitian Constabulary,” December 3, 1915, Smedley Butler papers, Series 45/2/5, Box 4, Folder 3, U.S. Marine Corps Archives, Quantico, VA.

<sup>158</sup> Smedley Butler, “Letter from Major Smedley Butler to James Mann,” Letter, April 4, 1916, Series

wrote many letters to his father's fellow congressmen inviting them to visit Haiti and to support the work the Marines were doing there. In a letter to House Minority Leader, James Robert Mann, Butler outlined the essential nature of the American mission in Haiti, "The people have been much oppressed by their former dishonest officials through an illegal squeeze system, which we have put an absolute stop to. The treaty provides, and we hope it will come true, that in a few years all of us will be able to leave Haiti and the constabulary entirely officered by their people, but at present, owing to their traditions and the previous bad government, we are certain that this is impracticable."<sup>159</sup> Butler's letters all speak of exterminating corruption and improving the lives of the poor classes. From these letters and his writings of Haiti, it is evident that he genuinely cared for those he referred to as the "shoeless classes."<sup>160</sup> Butler described a system of corruption in Haiti in his letter to Congressman Mann in which he associated exploitation (as well as all of Haiti's other chronic problems) with the elites.

Butler's feelings towards the powerful of Haiti compounded by the lopsided demographic of poorer Haitians in the gendarmerie created some serious challenges for the occupation. His entire command received pay, and in theory, orders directly from the client-government of President Dartiguenave but in reality, they focused on U.S. treaty objectives. The Gendarmerie d'Haiti was intended to be the source of centralized power after the occupation left, but it nearly left out an important part of the demographic picture. A natural hostility developed between the elites and the police that negatively

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45/2/5, Box 20, Folder 8, U.S. Marine Corps Archives, Quantico, VA.

<sup>159</sup> Ibid.

<sup>160</sup> Hans Schmidt, *The United States Occupation of Haiti, 1915-1934*, (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1995), 80.

affected the way they dealt with one another.<sup>161</sup> The Haitian political elite eventually shut themselves off from the representatives of the occupation to defend themselves from further erosion to their political position.

Political oversight established by the Treaty of 1916 further hampered relations between the ruling elite and the occupation force. A young Marine NCO had the authority to override any government official within his jurisdiction and was the paymaster for all civil servants.<sup>162</sup> This tremendous power over the more experienced native officials by young foreigners caused a rapid reduction in support and made it difficult to inspire cooperation from the local government. The oversight held by American Marines over experienced Haitian politicians seemed to validate some commonly held views of American superiority. The Marines were not disciplined under Haitian law but had U.S. Naval trials if they broke with military standards.<sup>163</sup> This gave the Americans in remote parishes the appearance of legal impunity that may have contributed to the rise of abuses before the congressional investigation.

The widely accepted cause of tensions between Americans and Haitians was the use of the *corvée* system. The *corvée* system was a Haitian law that allowed the poor to pay their taxes through labor. The French had used it during the 18<sup>th</sup> century to improve their roads, and the Marines figured it was a cheap way to get work done.<sup>164</sup> The biggest

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<sup>161</sup> Ibid., 116.

<sup>162</sup> Smedley Darlington Butler, "Orders for Non-Commissioned Officers In charge of Parishes," unknown, Smedley Butler papers, Series 9/A/5/1, Box 20, Folder 5, U.S. Marine Corps Archives, Quantico, VA.

<sup>163</sup> Ann Cipriano Venzon, *General Smedley Darlington Butler: The Letters of a Leatherneck, 1898-1931*, (New York: Praeger, 1992), 171.

<sup>164</sup> Keith B. Bickel, *Mars Learning: The Marine Corps Development of Small Wars Doctrine, 1915-1940* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2001), 79.

problem with using the *corvée* system was that it was as close to slavery without actually being slavery as it could possibly be. Some road detachments forced Haitians into *corvée* service without notice; they were guarded by occupation forces, and received no pay.<sup>165</sup> The problem was compounded by the numerous reports of mistreatment and abuses of workers created a dangerous public relations disaster. Some workers were chained, and others were kept well over the time limit established by law, but even if the occupation forces had not mistreated the *corvée* workers, the system was still a powerfully misguided solution for their country.<sup>166</sup>

Haitians had fought several bloody wars to gain and then maintain their freedom from slavery. Haitians quickly recognized that a white man forcing their countrymen to labor without pay was an affront to all they had fought for throughout their history. The occupation tried to gain allies by reforming corrupt government institutions and improving internal infrastructure, but none of that mattered if it was at the cost of injustice. Somehow the Marines did not consider the problematic nature of an American run *corvée* system. Their failure to understand the people they came to serve cost them lots of support and allowed the *caco* rebellion to take on a nationalistic stance. The *caco* rebellion of 1919 was different from the previous self-serving regime-changes perpetrated in an earlier year. Young, idealistic Haitians joined the struggle because they saw the occupation as a clear violation of their national sovereignty and cultural dignity.<sup>167</sup> The nationalist fervor made it more like a revolution than a mere rebellion;

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<sup>165</sup> Ibid., 79.

<sup>166</sup> Ibid., 79.

<sup>167</sup> Georges Michel and Douglas Daniels, *Charlemagne Peralte and the First American Occupation of*

therefore, it was much harder to put down.

Marines were given little training in maintaining political and social control over civilian populations. The tools the Marines had at their disposal for gathering political or social intelligence had severe limitations. They had to find a way to avoid hurting the pride of the Haitian elites while still reforming their government. The poor had to be taxed and helped, but occupation forces also had to avoid arousing deep cultural fears of white oppression. Many Marines did not attempt to toe this tough line, but those that did found it difficult.

Cultural misunderstandings and prejudice put pro-occupation Haitians in an impossible position that caused many to shift allegiance. Butler's instructions to the far-flung Marines commanding the Gendarmerie d`Haiti garrisons consisted of twenty points.<sup>168</sup> These points included care for uniform, instruction on how to behave towards local political officials, and how they should treat prisoners.<sup>169</sup> Most of the instruction discusses the last problem and attempts to instruct the Marines on not using excessive force.<sup>170</sup> This document illustrates that constabulary duty was a difficult shift in the job description for the Marines. They had been trained to kill without hesitation, and now they were being told that they could only use violence as a last resort or "when their life was in peril."<sup>171</sup> During the investigation done by the U.S. Congress in 1921-22, Haitian

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*Haiti: Charlemagne Peralte : UN Centenaire, 1885-1985*, (Dubuque, Iowa: Kendall Hunt Pub Co, 1995), 24.

<sup>168</sup> Smedley Darlington Butler, "Orders for Non-Commissioned Officers In charge of Parishes," unknown, Smedley Butler papers, Series 9/A/5/1, Box 20, Folder 5, U.S. Marine Corps Archives, Quantico, VA.

<sup>169</sup> Ibid.

<sup>170</sup> Ibid.

<sup>171</sup> Ibid.

citizens accused Marines of unlawful executions, random violence against civilians, and unjustified arrests. The order by Butler seems to confirm this problem because of its thoroughness in addressing this issue. Butler did not take the time to describe how the Marines should gather social, political, or even military intelligence for those in charge of garrison units. Instead, he tried to combat the problem of abuses against the civilian population. However, the failure to resolve the abuses allowed resentment to grow among all levels of society in Haiti. The lack of intelligence instruction and direction gave that growing sentiment the opportunity to fester unchecked.

While the use of the *corvée* system played a major role in increasing tensions between the American occupation forces and native Haitians, the lack of well-focused military intelligence gave the Haitians a better chance of success. One of the greatest weaknesses of the occupation's intelligence strategy was its focus on foreign threats. U.S. strategic thought in the Caribbean revolved around the Monroe Doctrine and protecting the Panama Canal.<sup>172</sup> The Monroe Doctrine guaranteed the exclusion of European forces from the Americas. When the U.S. completed the Panama Canal in 1914, it complicated U.S. foreign policy by requiring its protection and the vital routes to it.<sup>173</sup> These concerns justified the occupation of Haiti and framed how the Marines approached their intelligence mission. Strategic concerns and personal concerns were equally responsible for the perception of the German threat. The initial American view of the war in Europe suggested that it was not their problem. The subtle shift towards supporting and then joining the Allies against the Central Powers occurred over several years. The major

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<sup>172</sup> Brenda Gayle Plummer, *Haiti and the Great Powers, 1902--1915*, (Baton Rouge: LSU Press, 1988), 11.

<sup>173</sup> *Ibid.*, 11.



factors that caused this change included unrestricted submarine warfare, German subversion, and growing U.S. commercial connections to the Allies. As the general public began to see Germany as a danger to the U.S., the military naturally began to take any possible German threat seriously.

The Marines occupying Haiti were not immune to this shift, which only worsened with U.S. entry into WWI. The feeling was exacerbated by how many Marines felt that their skills and efforts were wasted on a sideshow campaign.<sup>174</sup> Once internal control was established in Haiti, and the gendarmerie took on the countryside responsibilities, the Marines cast about looking for a purpose in Haiti. Many of them saw the war in Europe as the main theater of operations even before the Americans became involved. U.S. strategic concerns about German aggression in the Caribbean influenced the Marines' belief that there might be an incursion. Smedley Butler, once a committed believer in the U.S. mission in Haiti, now complained bitterly about the uselessness of his work in Haiti.<sup>175</sup> Butler was not the only Marine spoiling to fight the Germans, but his position as commander of the gendarmerie gave him influence among his men. Many of the Marines serving in the Gendarmerie d'Haiti agreed with Butler, but even if some of them did not, they were obliged to seek intelligence on German activities in Haiti. Col Cole, the commander of the Marine Brigade in Port au Prince, also took the German threat very

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<sup>174</sup> Mark R. Folse, "The Impact of the Great War on Marines in Hispaniola, 1917-1919" (Temple University 2014 James A. Barnes Graduate Student History Conference, Temple University: Army Heritage Foundation, 2014), 1.

<sup>175</sup> Ann Cipriano Venzon, *General Smedley Darlington Butler: The Letters of a Leatherneck, 1898-1931*, (New York: Praeger, 1992), 196.

seriously.<sup>176</sup>

The danger of a German invasion in the Caribbean during World War I seems minimal in retrospect, but at the time the threat seemed very real. The German Reich had been expanding its influence aggressively since its adoption of Weltpolitik in 1891, and there was a minority of German merchants in Haiti with significant impact. The British blockade of the German armada limited the possibility of German troops making it to Haiti. The minor German squadrons of pocket battleships let loose in the Mediterranean, and the Pacific could have caused damage to the ports of Haiti, but did not as they caused havoc elsewhere before the British tracked them down. The U-Deutschland, a specialized merchant submarine, was big enough to carry much more than a conventional submarine and had been created specifically to cross the Atlantic.<sup>177</sup> This vessel did make voyages past the British blockade to arrive in the United States but as relations between Germany and the U.S. deteriorated, the trading missions ceased.<sup>178</sup> The U-Deutschland, in theory, could have landed a limited German force in Haiti by passing underneath the British blockade. None of this occurred, but Germans in other sections of the world attempted to foment rebellion, much as Germans in German Southwest Africa convinced Boers in British South Africa to revolt for the second time in recent history. They also convinced their Ottoman allies to declare a jihad against the Entente powers hoping to start revolts in India, North Africa, and Southern Russia. The Germans provided the guns used by the

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<sup>176</sup> Hans Schmidt, *The United States Occupation of Haiti, 1915-1934* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1995), 92.

<sup>177</sup> Dwight R. Messimer, *The Baltimore Sabotage Cell : German Agents, American Traitors, and the U-Boat Deutschland During World War I* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 2015), 46.

<sup>178</sup> *Ibid.*, 90.

Easter Rising in Ireland, 1916.<sup>179</sup> Lieutenant Colonel Paul Emil von Lettow-Vorbeck ran a guerrilla war in German East Africa that lasted longer than the combat on the Western Front.<sup>180</sup> World War I did not seem to have a geographical limit, and Haiti appeared to be a vulnerable target for the ambitious German forces. Many Marines saw this vast and aggressive power as the greatest threat to their control of Haiti, which played a crucial role in how they pursued intelligence work.

Much of the intelligence gathered after April 1917, when the U.S. entered WWI, focused on the German threat. The Germans in Haiti were cataloged and watched until the U.S. officials deported them in 1919.<sup>181</sup> In the meantime, many were imprisoned or placed under house arrest. The harshness of their treatment stemmed from the belief that the Germans actively supported and inflamed the caco revolt. There has never been a thorough investigation of whether there was much German support for the revolt of 1919 but the sources describing the revolt hold that there was little possibility or need for German support.<sup>182</sup>

The lack of focus on the real danger unfolding in Haiti remained unknown until it had grown to enough strength to challenge the occupation forces directly. Part of the problem stemmed from a lack of systemization for intelligence reports. The reporting system for intelligence reports changed several times during the occupation, but during

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<sup>179</sup> Marie Coleman, *The Irish Revolution, 1916-1923*, (New York: Routledge, 2013), 18.

<sup>180</sup> Thomas A. Crowson, *When Elephants Clash: A Critical Analysis of General Paul Emil von Lettow-Vorbeck in the Great War* (CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2003), 4.

<sup>181</sup> Hans Schmidt, *The United States Occupation of Haiti, 1915-1934*, (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1995), 94-96.

<sup>182</sup> *Ibid.*, 95.

the first few years, many of the reports were inconsistent. Haiti had been divided into three military districts each having a command structure that reported to the main occupation leaders in Port au Prince.<sup>183</sup> By the early twenties the reports were written weekly, but before that, they could be monthly or even annually. There was not a consistent format for reports during the early part of the occupation, which meant that each commander would report whatever seemed interesting in a letter. Later, as the reports became formalized, there were specific subheadings for the different aspects of the intelligence that was required by the high command. Those subheadings showed the garrison commanders exactly the type of information for which they should seek and helped them inform their high command specifically about those issues. The lack of structure and inconsistency of the reporting, before the intelligence reform in the nineteen twenties, meant that unless a Marine had been specifically trained to report on the political, social, and military conditions of his district, his information was often useless.

Some of the technology pioneered during the early years of World War I was available to the Marines in Haiti, but it was often not fully exploited. The airplane was the most notable example. The occupation forces in Haiti used airplanes as transportation and delivery mechanisms.<sup>184</sup> The flight logs of several Marine pilots in Haiti from 1916 to 1918 show that they did not engage in intelligence work.<sup>185</sup> The reasons for this may have been two-fold. First, the jungle made aerial intelligence tough to ascertain, and

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<sup>183</sup> Keith B. Bickel, *Mars Learning: The Marine Corps Development of Small Wars Doctrine, 1915-1940* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2001), 81.

<sup>184</sup> *Ibid.*, 71.

<sup>185</sup> Walter Brown, Flight log books, circa 1919, Walter V. Brown Collection, series 1/B/4/1, Box 1, Folder 2-3, U.S. Marine Corps Archives, Quantico, VA

second, the Marines were not concerned about a possible caco uprising. Other technologies were not as useful against a guerrilla force because they focused on communications. The Haitian fighters had been wise in choosing to employ an ancient communication method using drums and conch shells to pass information right over the heads of the Marines.<sup>186</sup> Only with the use of double agents could these messages be deciphered and due to a lack of trust, the gendarmerie did not employ double agents until the revolt was in full swing.

The tension between the occupation forces and the Haitian population was born out of cultural misunderstanding. The U.S. Marines did not make serious attempts at understanding or accommodating Haitian society. The use of the *corvée* system was an important symbol of the overall problems that the occupation faced. A lack of focused intelligence and poor reporting methods combined to keep the Marine high command in Haiti ignorant of the growing revolt in 1918. The Marines in Haiti did learn a great deal from their lapse in military intelligence, and they would implement those lessons throughout the rest of their time in Haiti. Their improvements would prove decisive in putting down the revolt of 1919 and maintaining order until the withdrawal of 1934.

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<sup>186</sup> Keith B. Bickel, *Mars Learning: The Marine Corps Development of Small Wars Doctrine, 1915-1940* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2001), 71.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE CACO REVOLT OF 1919

The Caco Revolt of 1919 gave the Marines in Haiti the perfect opportunity to learn from their previous intelligence missteps. World War I ended on November 11, 1918, providing Haitian occupation forces better focus on the problems affecting stability. The technologies used and techniques learned on the battlefields of France also gave the Marines an advantage over the isolated caco forces. New leadership with military intelligence experience, namely John H. Russell, also came to Haiti in early 1919 and oversaw the creation of a more efficient method of communicating intelligence learned in the field. The introduction of intelligence staff officers changed the intelligence reporting process, provided systematic analysis, and distributed information to those that needed it. Men outside of the leadership also contributed significant military intelligence victories that changed the course of the conflict. Their contributions included the use of civilian militia to gather intelligence and participate in patrolling. Occupation forces made substantial changes as to how they practiced military intelligence and sealed the fate of the caco revolt.

World War I ended in November 1918, allowing Marine Corps leadership along with other U.S. forces to begin demobilizing the majority of its troops. One of the few opportunities left for ambitious Marines searching combat duty service in Haiti. The policy that allowed enlisted Marines to serve as officers in the gendarmerie enticed those in the Corps that hoped to get a little extra money more importantly; they could get real

combat leadership experience that would help them advance in military rank.<sup>187</sup> The occupation of Haiti was now one of the only places a Marine could continue to render military service to his country outside of the United States. Service there became valuable again and allowed the Marines to reorient their intelligence priorities. This shift did not occur automatically, but the rise of Charlemagne Peralte gave the occupation forces the needed push to refocus on the mission at hand. Peralte led the most effective resistance movement in Haiti from 1918 until his assassination in 1919.

The caco revolt was born out of Haitian frustrations with the U.S. occupation and the Haitian client-government. The U.S. military leadership chose not to prioritize domestic intelligence so the source of mounting frustration remained unknown. The *corvée* system showed Haitians that the Americans were only there to take advantage of natural resources and enslave them. Communication problems created by language barriers and cultural misunderstanding made the Haitian people feel alienated.<sup>188</sup> The increasing centralization under the direction of the foreign power made their future oppression clear. The U.S.-backed authorities enslaved Haitian citizens as road workers, which exacerbated regional jealousies and tarnished national pride. Caco fighters experienced in combating government forces believed that a short, sharp, overwhelming assault on centers of power could topple an unpopular regime. This method had worked for them many times, and they expected to be able to do the same to the new central power. The caco method required scores of troops and local support, both of which

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<sup>187</sup> Hans Schmidt, *The United States Occupation of Haiti, 1915-1934* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1995), 88.

<sup>188</sup> *Ibid.*, 90.

Peralte seemed sure to have, but the new government enemy was not subject to popular support as had been the previous ones. The Haitian client-government remained in power not because of regional or national support but through the force of U.S. arms. Peralte understood this, which is why he declared a national rather than regional war against the occupation to drive the invaders into the sea.<sup>189</sup> Peralte did not fully succeed in his vision of creating a national resistance, but he did successfully inflame the northern and central sections of Haiti. Peralte used agents to gather intelligence about the sizes and disposition of the gendarmerie garrisons in each town in northern Haiti.<sup>190</sup>

A young minor Haitian elite named Charlemagne Peralte enflamed a revolt in central Haiti and allied with the cacos of the north. Peralte had military experience and a history of resisting the American occupation, and resisted surrendering his command at the beginning of the occupation only to be fired by the client-government for his loyalty.<sup>191</sup> Marines later imprisoned Peralte for suspicion of participation in a robbery of the government paymaster at Hinche.<sup>192</sup> Peralte, a member of the rural elite that was both educated and experienced in military administration, turned out to be an exceptional adversary for occupying forces in Haiti. The humiliation he experienced at the hands of the U.S.-backed forces gave him all the motivation he needed to fight the occupation until his death. He inflamed the countryside to widespread revolt and deftly fought off

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<sup>189</sup> Georges Michel and Douglas Daniels, *Charlemagne Peralte and the First American Occupation of Haiti: Charlemagne Peralte : UN Centenaire, 1885-1985*, (Dubuque, Iowa: Kendall Hunt Pub Co, 1995), 26.

<sup>190</sup> Robert Debs Heintz and Nancy Gordon Heintz, *Written in Blood: The Story of the Haitian People 1492-1995*, (Lanham MD.: UPA, 2005), 462.

<sup>191</sup> Georges Michel and Douglas Daniels, *Charlemagne Peralte and the First American Occupation of Haiti: Charlemagne Peralte : UN Centenaire, 1885-1985*, (Dubuque, Iowa: Kendall Hunt Pub Co, 1995), 21.

<sup>192</sup> *Ibid.*, 21.



attempts to subdue his troops. Many give Peralte the majority of the credit for inspiring a strong resistance to the U.S. occupation.<sup>193</sup>

The cacos had to rely on superior numbers and their knowledge of the countryside to overcome their disadvantages. Courageous but suicidal machete charges could not remain the only method of attack. Haitians had to use caution to avoid the tragic failures of the last campaign. If the cacos could not completely surprise their enemy, the Marines mowed them down with overwhelming firepower. Charlemagne Peralte understood this and avoided pitched battles in daylight and only attacked at night when he believed he had the element of surprise on his side.<sup>194</sup> The strength of the cacos, as in most insurgencies, was their knowledge of their native land. Peralte's forces deftly avoided Marine and gendarmerie patrols, which frustrated military leadership in Port au Prince. The use of natural land barriers such as rivers and mountains maintained the occupation at an arm's length. Knowledge of the trails provided opportunities to ambush patrols and negate Marine fire superiority. As pressure mounted from patrols, Peralte relied more and more on the local people for intelligence about the occupation forces.<sup>195</sup>

The Marine forces had an advantage over their caco foes for several reasons including arms, technology, and training. Smedley Butler had ensured that the gendarmerie carried effective weapons, which the Marine brigade used a broad range of

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<sup>193</sup> Georges Michel and Douglas Daniels, *Charlemagne Peralte and the First American Occupation of Haiti: Charlemagne Peralte : UN Centenaire, 1885-1985*, (Dubuque, Iowa: Kendall Hunt Pub Co, 1995), 25.

<sup>194</sup> Keith B. Bickel, *Mars Learning: The Marine Corps Development of Small Wars Doctrine, 1915-1940* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2001), 73.

<sup>195</sup> Robert Debs Heintz and Nancy Gordon Heintz, *Written in Blood: The Story of the Haitian People 1492-1995*, newly revised edition (Lanham MD.: UPA, 2005), 419.

effective weapons that the allies had perfected during WWI. The Browning Automatic Rifle (BAR), was both accurate, powerful, and could be operated by only one man, providing a particular advantage in firepower.<sup>196</sup> The cacos of 1919 were no better armed than those that had fought in 1915, which meant that they used obsolete rifles, improvised ammo, and no machine guns. Improved aircraft and air tactics gave the occupation forces the ability to bomb and strafe a defenseless enemy at will and provide intelligence on the locations of caco encampments.<sup>197</sup> The jungle and the broken landscape often nullified a pilot's ability to spot camps, but despite this challenge, many encampments were located by aircraft. The psychological effect of facing a hostile airplane without any means of defense or attack proved immeasurable. The movement of pilots and planes from one section of Haiti countered flare-ups without requiring a large air contingency.<sup>198</sup> The Gendarmerie d`Haiti was also trained by the U.S. Marines, and received pay for full-time service. Cacos were ordinary citizens that had families to maintain; chieftains paid their men in loot, which was difficult to obtain under the conditions of the 1919 revolt.<sup>199</sup> Cacos stayed and fought when they could, but they often had to leave for their regular duties.<sup>200</sup> The unreliable nature of caco armies meant that caco leadership could not rely on a consistent force and had to adjust tactics based on frequent changes in their rosters.

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<sup>196</sup> Gary Paul Johnston, "John Browning's Automatic Rifle," accessed April 21, 2017, <https://www.americanriflemans.org/articles/2015/8/25/john-browning-s-automatic-rifle/>.

<sup>197</sup> Walter Brown, "Orders governing Pilots and Operation of Airplanes, in the District of Mirebalais," September 19, 1919, Walter V. Brown Collection, series 1/B/4/1, Box 1, Folder 1, U.S. Marine Corps Archives, Quantico, VA.

<sup>198</sup> Herman Hanneken, Request for air support, August 3, 1920, Records of U.S. Marine in Haiti, series 127.8.1, Box Intelligence Reports 1920-1923, folder 5, U.S. National Archives, Washington D.C.

<sup>199</sup> Brenda Gayle Plummer, *Haiti and the Great Powers, 1902--1915*, First Edition (Baton Rouge: LSU Press, 1988), 37.

<sup>200</sup> *Ibid.*, 37.

Military training and experience had taught the occupation forces in Haiti that constant patrolling kept insurgency on its toes.<sup>201</sup> The cacos had to live in fear that patrols or aircraft could encounter them at any time.

Peralte's revolt began around his hometown of Hinche, which gave him access to his community for support and provided an occupation target that was isolated but still significant. Hinche was where the gendarmerie had arrested him for allegedly attacking the government paymaster, and where he went after his escape from prison.<sup>202</sup> Hinche lays in a basin between two sets of mountains and in 1918 had only limited roads connecting it to the rest of Haiti. Hinche was also the district command center that oversaw the client-government in the surrounding area.<sup>203</sup> The Hinche district was in the Central Department, which was one of the three sections dividing up the zones of occupation.

Peralte understood that if he could take Hinche with his local supporters that others would flock to his banner, while occupying forces would be discredited in the eyes of his countrymen. Hinche could also be a good central base for Peralte's forces because of local support and its isolated central position in Haiti. From Hinche, he could connect with the caco bands of the north and potentially attack the capital of Port au Prince in the south. He gathered a significant force to overwhelm the gendarmerie detachment at

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<sup>201</sup> Keith B. Bickel, *Mars Learning: The Marine Corps Development of Small Wars Doctrine, 1915-1940* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2001), 80.

<sup>202</sup> Georges Michel and Douglas Daniels, *Charlemagne Peralte and the First American Occupation of Haiti: Charlemagne Peralte : UN Centenaire, 1885-1985*, (Dubuque, Iowa: Kendall Hunt Pub Co, 1995), 19.

<sup>203</sup> Patrick F. Kelly, "Attack on Hinche," October 15, 1918, Records of U.S. Marine in Haiti, series 127.8.1, Box Intelligence Reports 1918-1919, folder 4, U.S. National Archives, Washington D.C.

Hinche, but confided his attack plan along with its date to Philecles Lacraix.<sup>204</sup> Lacraix immediately sent his wife to the gendarmerie garrison to inform it that Peralte's force would attack on the 15<sup>th</sup> of October between 9 and 10 pm.<sup>205</sup> This intelligence was co-opted by several other villagers in Hinche and became so well known that all the people of that town asked for protection. The men slept in the "Bureau of the Gendarmerie" while the women were given quarters in the local prison.<sup>206</sup>

Both the cacos and the gendarmerie prepared for the attack with effective plans, which allowed the cacos to believe that their night attack would be upon an unprepared sleeping enemy. The cacos' attack, undoubtedly planned by Charlemagne Peralte, was a three-pronged assault designed to instill panic upon an unprepared enemy force. One band would approach from behind the sentry post while another one would cross the Guyamouc River, with the third group coming from the brickyard to arrive at the other end of town. The idea was that they could converge on the gendarmerie garrison as members rose from their beds in order to prevent their escape.<sup>207</sup> The gendarmerie commander Lt. Patrick Kelly also divided his forces, stationing a force under a native sergeant named Jean Eucher at the barracks while Kelly and two other lieutenants took separate forces into the town. Lt. Kelly's force patrolled the settlement while Lt. Freeman Lang, with fifteen men, remained at the cemetery, at a junction point in the city.<sup>208</sup>

The attack began at 9:40 pm as planned with each side having some difficulty

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<sup>204</sup> Ibid.

<sup>205</sup> Ibid.

<sup>206</sup> Ibid.

<sup>207</sup> Ibid.

<sup>208</sup> Ibid.

engaging the other. The sentry at the barracks fired upon the group coming from behind before the other two caco bands were in position.<sup>209</sup> This shot from the gendarmerie sentry forced the cacos to engage despite poor positioning because their plan relied heavily on surprise.<sup>210</sup> Luckily for the gendarmerie, Lieutenant Lang's men in the cemetery found themselves in the perfect position to flank the attacking cacos. Lang rushed his men into position and ordered them to fire into the attacking cacos, but due to their lack of experience, the gendarmerie in the rear section of the firing line killed two of their own, and nearly killed Lang; these were the only two losses the gendarmerie suffered that night.<sup>211</sup> Lang regained control after being grazed by a bullet and ordered a charge that drove off the remaining cacos attackers. The gendarmerie counted up 35 dead cacos signaling a crushing defeat for Peralte's first major attempt at fighting his enemy.<sup>212</sup>

Prior to this, Colonel John H. Russell, Jr. had arrived in Haiti in April 1917, like many Marines, focused greatly on getting off the island. Russell had bombarded Marine Corps Headquarters with requests for a transfer to France but did not get reassigned until December 1918. His focus for intelligence during this first brief period in Haiti was on the German minority population; he said: "The recent war has afforded an opportunity for the elimination of this class [Germans] from commerce and politics."<sup>213</sup> Russell missed the war in France and remained in Haiti long enough to be there when the October 15,

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<sup>209</sup> Ibid.

<sup>210</sup> Ibid.

<sup>211</sup> Ibid.

<sup>212</sup> Ibid.

<sup>213</sup> Hans Schmidt, *The United States Occupation of Haiti, 1915-1934*, (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1995), 95.

1918, attack on Hinche occurred. As the commander of the 1st Provisional Marine Brigade stationed in Port au Prince, he noted incorrectly that, “This affair has no political or military significance whatsoever.”<sup>214</sup> Russell had, like most Marines in Haiti, focused on the possibility of a German incursion onto the island rather than the “bandits” of the hinterland. He would remedy this misjudgment about his future enemy when he returned to Haiti on October 1, 1919.

Charlemagne had managed to grab the attention of the Gendarmerie d`Haiti, who continued to report his position and possible connections with locals.<sup>215</sup> Their leadership in Port au Prince had not expected a direct assault on one of its garrisons and so launched an immediate investigation. Haiti had not experienced many outright attacks on military authority since 1916. The deputy chief of the gendarmerie went personally to assess the situation. He described the courage of both native and U.S. gendarmerie but found that they had not located Peralte’s forces.<sup>216</sup> The gendarmerie continued to seek intelligence on Peralte’s location. They used local civilians as vital sources of intelligence and soon began to organize their sources into informal units of vigilantes.

The establishment of the vigilantes, a pro-occupation militia force, took a page directly out of the caco handbook. The occupation’s use of local civilians was a major innovation that occurred organically in the field. Vigilantes sought intelligence on cacos

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<sup>214</sup> Robert Debs Heinl and Nancy Gordon Heinl, *Written in Blood: The Story of the Haitian People 1492-1995*, (Lanham MD.: UPA, 2005), 417.

<sup>215</sup> District Commander, “Report,” December 31, 1918, Records of U.S. Marine in Haiti, series 127.8.1, Box Intelligence Reports 1918-1919, folder 3, U.S. National Archives, Washington D.C.

<sup>216</sup> Assistant Gendarmerie Commander, “Report of operations,” October 19, 1918, Records of U.S. Marine Corps in Haiti, Series 127.8.1, Box Office of Gendarmerie Commander, folder 17, U.S. National Archives, Washington D.C.

in their area and even got into minor scrapes with the cacos. Vigilantes received pay for their service and often aggressively tracked down their neighbors that opposed the occupation.<sup>217</sup> The use of these informal militias was, in part, a formalization of the informant network that the occupation had been working to form since it came to Haiti. The use of vigilantes began naturally, thanks to the initiative of Marines leading the gendarmerie. Many of these Marines had learned to rely on intelligence given by civilians but many of those exchanges had been random and often resulted in poor intelligence. Vigilantes were full time agents for the occupation that drew pay and even participated in some small fights.

The district commander at Hinche created some of the first vigilantes when he came upon some villagers that had their homes looted by cacos not long after Peralte's attack on Hinche. He described how he recruited them: "[We] called together men whose homes had been ravished by the cacos. These men were used to form a secret service corps and were sent out to obtain information as to the whereabouts of the main band of cacos."<sup>218</sup> The Hinche commander received correct intelligence from one of his new "secret service corps" that a great band of cacos was at La Plage. When a patrol acted on the intelligence, it proved correct.<sup>219</sup> This episode, and others like it, proved to the occupation forces that they could rely on untrained allies in the hinterlands of Haiti for valuable intelligence. Vigilantes limited the places cacos could go for support and slowly

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<sup>217</sup> Leo J. Daugherty III, *Counterinsurgency and the United States Marine Corps Volume 1, the First Counterinsurgency Era, 1899-1945* (Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland, 2015), 81.

<sup>218</sup> Calhoun Ancrum, Operations in and around Hinche, November 26, 1918, Records of U.S. Marine in Haiti, series 127.8.1, Box Intelligence Reports 1918-1919, folder 1, U.S. National Archives, Washington D.C.

<sup>219</sup> Ibid.

eroded the ability of rural citizens to help cacos in the field. These occupation supporters also went out on patrols with gendarmerie and supplemented their forces when needed.<sup>220</sup>

The information that the Haitian occupation supporters provided the Marines gave them a distinct advantage in preventing the caco surprise attacks. Intelligence efforts began exposing most of Peralte's surprise attacks in advance. The cacos had to rely largely on safe havens and economic support from locals to maintain their small war tactics against the occupation. As these areas of support shrunk due to spreading use of vigilantes, the cacos ability to strike at occupation forces decreased dramatically. Contributions by vigilantes and other Haitian supporters that formed an essential intelligence network for the occupation proved decisive in defeating the caco threat.

Despite his defeat at Hinche, Peralte made an alliance with many caco leaders and gained a following that extended his influence throughout much of the North and Central Departments of Haiti.<sup>221</sup> His widened influence increased the size of his force, but it remained dispersed. Caco forces were part-time warriors that had to consider family obligations when choosing to fight. They could not centralize their troops for long without serious attrition from men leaving to care for their families. Peralte also feared to bring his full forces to bear because they would be in danger of being wiped out by superior Marine firepower.<sup>222</sup> These conditions forced him to harass the occupation

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<sup>220</sup> Walter N. Hill, "Memo for the Chief of the Gendarmerie d'Haiti," February 16, 1920, Records of U.S. Marine in Haiti, series 127.8.1, Box Intelligence Reports 1920-1923, folder 1, U.S. National Archives, Washington D.C.

<sup>221</sup> Robert Debs Heinl and Nancy Gordon Heinl, *Written in Blood: The Story of the Haitian People 1492-1995*, (Lanham, MD.: UPA, 2005), 418.

<sup>222</sup> Keith B. Bickel, *Mars Learning: The Marine Corps Development of Small Wars Doctrine, 1915-1940* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2001), 73.



forces in many places simultaneously. It is possible that Peralte was trying to thin out occupying forces by requiring them to protect everything. Peralte claimed that he now had control in Valliere, Fort Liberte, Grande Riviere du Nord, Le Trou, the Cap, St. Michel del`Atalaye, Gonaives, Petite Riviere du l`Artibonite, Lascahobas, and Mirebalais.<sup>223</sup> Peralte enlisted more caco members as his influence grew and now he felt ready to expel the “blans” from his native land.<sup>224</sup>

As Peralte gained strength, the leadership of the 1<sup>st</sup> Provisional Brigade began to understand the depth of the problem he posed. Due to the decentralized intelligence system of the occupation, they did not know how large Peralte’s revolt had gotten until he began to take aggressive action against his enemy. Charlemagne Peralte had become a major problem for the Marines in Haiti because he had been able to show the world that all Haitians did not support the occupation of Haiti and that it had not been a purely benevolent action by the U.S.<sup>225</sup> Peralte also provided a military challenge to the Marines because of the size of his forces and his growing popularity. Peralte believed that if he could maintain his rebellion or take ground against the occupation, the foreign powers would have to side with him against the U.S.<sup>226</sup> His letter to the British charges d’affaires in Port au Prince paints an impressive picture that encouraged the British to side with him

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<sup>223</sup> Robert Debs Heinl and Nancy Gordon Heinl, *Written in Blood: The Story of the Haitian People 1492-1995*, (Lanham, MD.: UPA, 2005), 419.

<sup>224</sup> Blans was the creole word used to describe Americans or white people. Translated literally, it just means white.

<sup>225</sup> Robert Debs Heinl and Nancy Gordon Heinl, *Written in Blood: The Story of the Haitian People 1492-1995*, (Lanham, MD.: UPA, 2005), 418.

<sup>226</sup> *Ibid.*, 419.

and turn over the city before attacked.<sup>227</sup> Peralte understood that to make a real impression on these powers he had to prove that his force was more than a “bandit” army but rather a legitimate and lasting revolution. Peralte understood that his base of supply was limited and that he could not flee because the Dominican Republic was already under the control of the U.S. Caco supplies were decreasing because of vigilante efforts in the hinterland and the growing number of offensive patrols launched by the Marines.<sup>228</sup> If he could not gain international recognition the stranglehold of the Marines on his supplies would eventually force Peralte to yield.

Peralte, therefore, had to make a real territorial gain or be chipped away through attrition. His first attack on Hinche proved disastrous. One of the greatest challenges he faced was keeping his plans secure from occupation sources. His forces could not be screened effectively because vigilantes and informants were everywhere.<sup>229</sup> The traditional caco action to take power in Haiti had always been the seizure of Port au Prince. Peralte now had to risk bringing his forces together in order strike a decisive blow against the client-government.

Just as Port au Prince entered his sights, Russell returned to command the 1<sup>st</sup> Marine Provisional Brigade on October 3, 1919.<sup>230</sup> Russell’s time in the Office of Naval Intelligence and the Naval War College had taught him solid techniques on how to

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<sup>227</sup> Ibid., 419.

<sup>228</sup> Leo J. Daugherty III, *Counterinsurgency and the United States Marine Corps Volume 1, the First Counterinsurgency Era, 1899-1945* (Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland, 2015), 81.

<sup>229</sup> Ibid., 91.

<sup>230</sup> Leo J and I. I. I. Daugherty, *Pioneers of Amphibious Warfare, 1898-1945: Profiles of Fourteen American Military Strategists* (Jefferson, N.C: McFarland, 2009), 250.

collect, analyze, and distribute intelligence. Educated at Annapolis Naval Academy and experienced in administrative roles, he knew how to improve a command, having just finished demobilizing U.S. troops returning from WWI.<sup>231</sup> Russell began by establishing a pattern of sharing valuable intelligence between the gendarmerie and the Provisional Brigade in Port au Prince.<sup>232</sup> He also set up Marine and gendarmerie posts throughout the hostile zones of Haiti to gather intelligence. Radios at these posts allowed secure intelligence to be shared immediately even though Russell still expected timely typed reports. The function and structure of the reports also changed.

The regular reporting of German civilian whereabouts and vain attempts to connect them with future German landing attempts ended as client-government deported most of the suspicious Germans in 1919.<sup>233</sup> The reports focused on Haiti and conditions affecting its stability. The reports had not reached their zenith, but they had become far more useful than those few reports that had reached the leadership in the early days of the occupation. The intelligence reports began to take on a more formal shape and include more details about how events took place. Improved records being shared up and down the chain of command allowed mutually beneficial information to be pooled through the command structure and ensured that pertinent information would get to where it those that needed it. The use of intelligence officers, a concept developed during WWI, allowed Russell to create a dedicated military intelligence bureaucracy that could be called upon

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<sup>231</sup> Ibid., 251.

<sup>232</sup> John H. Russell, "General Operations," January 2, 1920, Records of U.S. Marines in Haiti, series 127.8.1, Box Office of Commandant 1915-1923, folder 18, U.S. National Archives, Washington D.C.

<sup>233</sup> Hans Schmidt, *The United States Occupation of Haiti, 1915-1934* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1995), 96.

to maintain and analyze the intelligence record.<sup>234</sup> WWI had taught U.S. military personnel to collect and analyze documents found on dead enemy.<sup>235</sup> The archival record had many such documents from Peralte and his compatriots, providing invaluable intelligence.<sup>236</sup>

Patrolling remained central to the intelligence-gathering mission of the occupation forces. They innovated on the previously more cumbersome large sized horse patrols. They now introduced the use of two types of patrols: intelligence gathering or recon patrols that were lightly armed and avoided direct engagements where possible.<sup>237</sup> The combat patrol formed the second category and followed up on the intelligence gathered by the patrol. The combat patrol carried machine guns such as the Benet gun or automatic rifles like the BAR.<sup>238</sup> They also used larger numbers of Marines. The combination of these two methods allowed cacos to be located without making contact and losing the majority of the camp. Now a recon patrol could locate a group of cacos and then inform the better-armed combat patrol. The combat patrol could engage the cacos with foreknowledge rather than stumbling through the bush into accidental and brief contact. Better preparation and more importantly intelligence, gave the combat patrol the opportunity to take entire bands at once. The joint assault on a hill in 1920 provides a thrilling example of how combat patrols could use the intelligence given to them by a

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<sup>234</sup> James L. Gilbert, *World War I and the Origins of U.S. Military Intelligence* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2012), 128.

<sup>235</sup> *Ibid.*, 120.

<sup>236</sup> Charlemagne Peralte to Benoit Batrville, circa July 1919, series 127.8.1, Box Intelligence Reports 1918-1919, folder 20, U.S. National Archives, Washington D.C.

<sup>237</sup> Leo J. Daugherty III, *Counterinsurgency and the United States Marine Corps Volume 1, the First Counterinsurgency Era, 1899-1945* (Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland, 2015), 81.

<sup>238</sup> *Ibid.*, 81.

reconnaissance patrol.<sup>239</sup> Occupation forces surrounded a large group of cacos that sat comfortably on a hill and then a coordinated air attack scattered the native force into the guns of the waiting combat patrol.<sup>240</sup> Combat and reconnaissance patrols proved a deadly combination that covered more ground at an increasingly rapid pace.

The technological innovations from WWI also gave the Marines an advantage over their caco enemies. The occupation used the airplane for patrols that could identify the location of a caco concentration without much risk of attack. All the deaths of Marine pilots in Haiti were accidents.<sup>241</sup> Most occurred during taking off and landing because of the fragile nature of the newfangled aircraft.<sup>242</sup> The weakness of air patrolling was the jungle, which covered much of the caco held areas and prevented the pilots from seeing any clear targets. Jungles also made navigation difficult and thus made it more difficult to report sightings accurately. A Marine that would become one of the most decorated of the twentieth century, Lewis “Chesty” Puller, helped to reduce this problem when he served as a young gendarmerie junior officer by riding along in a plane to show the pilot the indigenous landmarks that could show him his approximate location.<sup>243</sup> Still this technology only produced some limited results in patrolling which forced the Marines to rely on tried and tested techniques for more consistent information. The dissemination of intelligence received a huge boost due to technology. The use of wirelesses and even

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<sup>239</sup> Keith B. Bickel, *Mars Learning: The Marine Corps Development of Small Wars Doctrine, 1915-1940* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2001), 90.

<sup>240</sup> *Ibid.*, 90.

<sup>241</sup> *Ibid.*, 90.

<sup>242</sup> *Ibid.*, 90.

<sup>243</sup> Jon T. Hoffman, *Chesty: The Story of Lieutenant General Lewis B. Puller, USMC*, (New York: Random House Trade Paperbacks, 2002).

telephones meant that information gleaned anywhere throughout the occupation zone could be shared faster than ever before.<sup>244</sup> This technology became even more helpful as gendarmerie and Marine units shared intelligence more dependably. These technological improvements made it possible to track the movements of an enemy from province to province without ever needing to make contact. Even when a caco group managed to elude patrols, aircraft, and native agents, their attacks revealed their position to the entire occupation force. Russell's use of improved communication and cooperation between occupation forces made military intelligence a strong weapon against the caco threat.

Although Russell's changes had not yet been fully implemented by the time Charlemagne Peralte attacked Port au Prince, they still managed to provide intelligence about the impending attack.<sup>245</sup> The exact source of the information is not given in reports, but just like the caco attack on Hinche in 1918, someone friendly to the occupation came forward. It is assumed by some that Peralte's letter to the British charges d'affaires in Port au Prince turned over the letter sent to him threatening an eminent attack.<sup>246</sup> There is no paper trail to prove this but it seems plausible. At 4:00 a.m. on October 7, 1919, three hundred cacos advanced on the city in loose formation, funneling through the streets and alleyways.<sup>247</sup> Entering Port au Prince from the north, the cacos came into contact with gendarmerie and Marine machine gun positions flanked by entrenched riflemen.<sup>248</sup> The

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<sup>244</sup> Keith B. Bickel, *Mars Learning: The Marine Corps Development of Small Wars Doctrine, 1915-1940* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2001),

<sup>245</sup> Ivan Musicant, *The Banana Wars: A History of United States Military Intervention in Latin America from the Spanish-American War to the Invasion of Panama*, (New York: Macmillan Pub Co, 1990), 215.

<sup>246</sup> *Ibid.*, 215.

<sup>247</sup> *Ibid.*, 215.

<sup>248</sup> *Ibid.*, 215.

caco assault broke up within two minutes and soon after Marine-led patrols pursued the beaten rebels away from the capitol. The following day, a gendarmerie patrol led by Lieutenant Kemp C. Christian attacked and took Peralte's command post.<sup>249</sup> The gendarmeries killed thirty-five cacos and captured the only artillery piece that they possessed.<sup>250</sup> Peralte escaped but had to recover his reputation in order to gain political ground against the client-government.

Just as Russell took command of the 1<sup>st</sup> Provisional Brigade in October of 1919, one ambitious Marine serving in the gendarmerie was making plans to overthrow the chief caco in Haiti. Peralte had become target number one for all occupation forces.<sup>251</sup> They believed that if they could kill him, they could get the rest of the cacos to stop fighting. Peralte compensated by keeping himself guarded by at least thirty men at all times and by staying clear of military engagements. He also never remained in the same spot more than three days at a time to avoid patrols and vigilantes, using female supporters to carry his numerous communications to allies and supporters in order to avoid any possible betrayal.<sup>252</sup> Peralte's clever maneuvers to protect himself and his cause proved difficult to overcome, and time after time, he slipped through the Americans' fingers.

Herman Hanneken, an enlisted Marine commissioned as captain in the

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<sup>249</sup> Ibid., 215.

<sup>250</sup> Ibid., 215.

<sup>251</sup> Robert Debs Heintz and Nancy Gordon Heintz, *Written in Blood: The Story of the Haitian People 1492-1995*, (Lanham, MD.: UPA, 2005), 420.

<sup>252</sup> John H. Russell, Interrogation report, circa 1919, John H. Russell personal papers, Series 6/H/3/1, Box 2, Folder 3, U.S. Marine Corps Archives, Quantico, VA.

Gendarmerie d`Haiti, took it upon himself to take down the elusive caco. Hanneken had served in Haiti since 1915 and spoke Haitian Creole well.<sup>253</sup> He served in Grande Riviere du Nord in 1917-1918 and had already begun to gain allies there before headquarters assigned him as the commander of the garrison in August of 1919.<sup>254</sup> While stationed near Hinche, Hanneken had participated in the failed hunt for Peralte in the wake of his first attack.<sup>255</sup> Peralte's cacos mostly resided in central Haiti, but Grande Riviere was in the North. Peralte's willingness to go north can be explained by his defeat at Port au Prince in October of 1919 and his need to show foreign powers he could achieve a victory.

Hanneken believed that he could draw Peralte into attempting to take Grande Riviere under the right circumstances. If Grande Riviere could be seized and there was sufficient local caco help, Peralte would be foolish not to act. Hanneken determined to create the illusion of conditions favorable to Peralte by setting up a fake caco army at Fort Capois.<sup>256</sup> Hanneken understood that the use of vigilantes had been efficient and so he chose to use his native allies to trap the chief of the cacos. Jean Conze had been a caco chief before the occupation began but had lived peacefully among occupying forces for the previous few years. Conze also knew and respected Hanneken from his previous time in Grande Riviere.<sup>257</sup> Hanneken drew up a secret plan with Conze, a local Gendarmerie

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<sup>253</sup> Account of H. H. Hanneken in Haiti, circa 1920, Lewis B. "Chesty" Puller Collection, Series 9/A/5/1, Box 1, Folder 1, U.S. Marine Corps Archives, Quantico, VA.

<sup>254</sup> Ibid.

<sup>255</sup> Ibid.

<sup>256</sup> Ibid.

<sup>257</sup> Ibid.



named Jean Edmond Francois, and another Haitian named Cherubin Blot.<sup>258</sup>

First, Hanneken publicly insulted Conze by cursing at him in the public market in Grande Riviere.<sup>259</sup> Conze promptly went up to the old fort Capois; this same fort had been used as a resort when the Marines first landed in Haiti but had been abandoned after the cacos were defeated there by Smedley Butler. Conze made it known that he would drive the “blans” into the sea and recruited local men into his caco force.<sup>260</sup> Soon, Francois, a gendarmerie private joined Conze after being hit by Hanneken with his riding crop.<sup>261</sup> All of this pageantry had to be backed up with booty or Conze’s men would leave him, so Hanneken used his money to fund Conze’s caco band. Hanneken later applied for a refund of over \$823 U.S. currency for his expenses in supporting the fake caco band.<sup>262</sup> The list of materials provided included suits for Conze, gift suits for General Papillon, and even cola.<sup>263</sup>

Conze began to send letters to Charlemagne Peralte as soon as he established his force and invited him to come to Fort Capois to join in an assault on Grande Riviere. The letters insisted that not only was the target ready to be taken but that it was valuable because it was at the end of a narrow gauge railway line which supplied all occupation

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<sup>258</sup> Herman H. Hanneken, “Death of Charlemagne Peralte,” November 2, 1919, Records of U.S. Marine in Haiti, series 127.8.1, Box Intelligence Reports 1918-1919, folder 4, U.S. National Archives, Washington D.C.

<sup>259</sup> Account of H. H. Hanneken in Haiti, circa 1920, Lewis B. “Chesty” Puller Collection, Series 9/A/5/1, Box 1, Folder 1, U.S. Marine Corps Archives, Quantico, VA.

<sup>260</sup> Ibid.

<sup>261</sup> Ibid.

<sup>262</sup> Herman Hanneken, “Reimbursement of \$832.00 of personal funds expended to effect the death of Charlemagne,” November 5, 1919, Records of U.S. Marine Corps in Haiti, Series 127.8.1, Box Office of Gendarmerie Commander, folder 17, U.S. National Archives, Washington D.C.

<sup>263</sup> Ibid.

forces in the north.<sup>264</sup> Conze insisted that Peralte should bring men to help him take the town and then be there to preside over the triumphal entry into the defeated city. To prove the fighting efficiency of Conze's caco band, Hanneken orchestrated several attacks on Fort Capois. Hanneken did not press his attacks past 500 yards beyond the fort and only used small numbers of his gendarmerie force.<sup>265</sup> Conze always knew when and where the attack would come so that he would not be surprised.<sup>266</sup> Caco leadership began to recognize Conze as a real and valuable leader after defending his fort from gendarmerie attack. He received visits from some caco chiefs, but Peralte remained aloof. During the final assault on Fort Capois, Hanneken separated himself from his men and created a fake wound on his shoulder using blood that he had brought with him.<sup>267</sup> He returned to his men with his fresh "wound" and called off the attack.

As the gendarmeries returned to Grande Riviere, Hanneken took great pains to appear to be weak and very seriously injured. Conze claimed to have been the one to have wounded him and therefore became even more legitimized in the eyes of other cacos.<sup>268</sup> Hanneken remained in his quarters for a week and used a sling on his arm for three more weeks. Peralte's agents in Grande Riviere now had solid evidence of Conze's legitimacy.

Just before the battle at Fort Capois, Peralte sent his Minister of War, Papillon,

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<sup>264</sup> Account of H. H. Hanneken in Haiti, circa 1920, Lewis B. "Chesty" Puller Collection, Series 9/A/5/1, Box 1, Folder 1, U.S. Marine Corps Archives, Quantico, VA.

<sup>265</sup> Ibid.

<sup>266</sup> Ibid.

<sup>267</sup> Ibid.

<sup>268</sup> Ibid.

with two hundred men to investigate Conze and kill him if Papillon suspected anything. Conze showed off his victory to Papillon and quickly won his trust with bribes of suits. Papillon returned to Peralte's camp in central Haiti and suggested that he move his headquarters to Fort Capois. Charlemagne and several of his generals remained suspicious, but he chose to follow his minister's advice.<sup>269</sup> Charlemagne arrived at Fort Capois on October 26, 1919, with 1200 men prepared to take the weakened garrison at Grande Riviere.<sup>270</sup>

Hanneken had been forced to stay in contact with Conze through the use of Francois as a messenger. Francois, and sometimes even Conze, would have to sneak down from the fort at night to meet personally with Hanneken to report on their progress.<sup>271</sup> This process was not terribly efficient, but due to lack of personal radios, it was the safest option available to their little conspiracy, avoiding the pitfall of exposing their plan.

As Conze and Peralte prepared their assault on Grande Riviere, Conze also planned how to ambush Peralte with Hanneken at Mazare thirty minutes from Grande Riviere.<sup>272</sup> Hanneken knew that he could not afford to be directly involved in the fighting at the town and so chose this site. Lieutenant William Button and Captain Hanneken

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<sup>269</sup> Ibid.

<sup>270</sup> Herman H. Hanneken, "Death of Charlemagne Peralte," November 2, 1919, Records of U.S. Marine in Haiti, series 127.8.1, Box Intelligence Reports 1918-1919, folder 4, U.S. National Archives, Washington D.C.

<sup>271</sup> Account of H. H. Hanneken in Haiti, circa 1920, Lewis B. "Chesty" Puller Collection, Series 9/A/5/1, Box 1, Folder 1, U.S. Marine Corps Archives, Quantico, VA.

<sup>272</sup> Herman H. Hanneken, "Death of Charlemagne Peralte," November 2, 1919, Records of U.S. Marine in Haiti, series 127.8.1, Box Intelligence Reports 1918-1919, folder 4, U.S. National Archives, Washington D.C.

planned to surround the area with twenty men and a machine gun. Button, a Marine much like Hanneken, was innovative and spoke Creole well. Button had even, one time, dressed as a market woman to gain intelligence on caco whereabouts.<sup>273</sup> As Hanneken's junior officer at Grande Riviere, Button was now learning of the plot to kill Peralte and wanted to be involved. Hanneken assigned Conze the task of getting Peralte to Mazare. Conze suggested to Peralte that he send Conze and the other generals to attack Grande Riviere on October 31, 1919, while he established his command post at Mazare.<sup>274</sup> Peralte accepted but also decided to split his forces to attack Le Trou, Ti-Jacques, Bahon, and Grande Riviere. Hanneken did not like this attack plan because it forced him to defend all these minor cities at once. He could not spread his men so thin and still draw out an assault team for the ambush.

On October 29, Peralte adjusted the plan by deciding to go with the men attacking Le Trou.<sup>275</sup> Whether this was because he did not trust Conze or he simply wanted to be part of the assault is not known. Hanneken had to respond to these changes, so he and Conze paid Peralte's cousin who lived at Le Trou to convince Peralte to focus on taking Grande Riviere.<sup>276</sup> This cousin flattered him by insisting that his many supporters in Grande Riviere would want to see him arrive soon after the attack. Hanneken received

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<sup>273</sup> Mary A. Renda, *Taking Haiti: Military Occupation and the Culture of U.S. Imperialism, 1915-1940*, (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2001), 176.

<sup>274</sup> Account of H. H. Hanneken in Haiti, circa 1920, Lewis B. "Chesty" Puller Collection, Series 9/A/5/1, Box 1, Folder 1, U.S. Marine Corps Archives, Quantico, VA.

<sup>275</sup> Ibid.

<sup>276</sup> Ibid.

word on October 30<sup>th</sup> that he had decided to go ahead with the first plan.<sup>277</sup>

To counter the attack on Grande Riviere, Hanneken had to ask for help from other gendarmerie detachments. Cap Haitian sent a group of twenty gendarmeries with two Marine officers and a machine gun to help defend Grande Riviere.<sup>278</sup> Hanneken also spread the news that Peralte was going to attack there so other gendarmerie units could cut off his possible escape to his base in central Haiti. In a telegram sent out to the gendarmerie at Hinche (Central Haiti), the details of Peralte's clothing and transportation were given to ensure that his escape, if attempted, could be hindered. This did not include the names of those that acquired the information.<sup>279</sup>

Peralte remained suspicious and once again threw a curve ball at Hanneken's agents. He assigned Conze to lead the attack on Grande Riviere and informed him that he would remain behind at Fort Capois.<sup>280</sup> The cacos established a passcode ("General Jean") to go through the pickets around the fort. Conze understood that Peralte remained suspicious, so when he had left the fort he sent two scouts back to watch his leader.<sup>281</sup> When the two scouts caught up with Conze just before the supposed attack on Grande Riviere, they informed him that Peralte had moved his camp to a hill in between Fort Capois and Grande Riviere. Conze immediately sent Francois to Hanneken and Button at

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<sup>277</sup> Ibid.

<sup>278</sup> Herman H. Hanneken, "Death of Charlemagne Peralte," November 2, 1919, Records of U.S. Marine in Haiti, series 127.8.1, Box Intelligence Reports 1918-1919, folder 4, U.S. National Archives, Washington D.C.

<sup>279</sup> Randolph C. Berkeley, telegram to Central Department, October 30, 1919, Records of U.S. Marine Corps in Haiti, Series 127.8.1, Box Office of Gendarmerie Commander, folder 10, U.S. National Archives, Washington D.C.

<sup>280</sup> Account of H. H. Hanneken in Haiti, circa 1920, Lewis B. "Chesty" Puller Collection, Series 9/A/5/1, Box 1, Folder 1, U.S. Marine Corps Archives, Quantico, VA.

<sup>281</sup> Ibid.

Mazare to report the changes in circumstances. Francois also gave them the code word so they could make it through the pickets.<sup>282</sup>

Hanneken reacted to these developments coolly and chose to trust his intelligence agents. He decided to proceed to the top of the hill and kill Peralte if possible. Luckily both Marines in the assault team spoke creole and had dressed as cacos with faces blackened with burnt cork.<sup>283</sup> Their disguises functioned well enough due to the night but also because Peralte was expecting word from Conze about the success of the attack on Grande Riviere. Hanneken's party pretended to be representatives from Conze sent to inform him of a great victory.<sup>284</sup> Peralte's hilltop command post was three hours march away in the dark of night, but Francois knew the way.<sup>285</sup> When they arrived at the first outpost, the code word was given, and Francois went alone to tell Peralte the news of Conze's success. Francois returned a short time later and let Hanneken know that Peralte had given them passage through the rest of the outposts to escort the caco leader to town. They passed the first four outposts without incident, but at the fifth outpost they lost their cover. Lt. Button had worn a poncho to cover the large BAR that he was carrying up the hill. The observant caco sentry noticed the bulge and grabbed at Button's poncho and asked where he had obtained such a nice gun.<sup>286</sup> Button jerked his automatic rifle away from the sentry and responded in fluent Creole, "Let me go. Don't you see my general is

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<sup>282</sup> Ibid.

<sup>283</sup> Ibid.

<sup>284</sup> Ibid.

<sup>285</sup> Ibid.

<sup>286</sup> Herman H. Hanneken, "Death of Charlemagne Peralte," November 2, 1919, Records of U.S. Marine in Haiti, series 127.8.1, Box Intelligence Reports 1918-1919, folder 4, U.S. National Archives, Washington D.C.

getting away from me?”<sup>287</sup> Luckily that was enough to throw off the sentry’s suspicion, and the group continued until they reached the final sentry post only a few yards from Peralte’s position. There an argument broke out between Francois and the sentries about whether the whole group should be allowed through or just Hanneken.<sup>288</sup> Hanneken, pretending to be a high-ranking caco, simply pushed his way past the argument with Button and walked towards a fire in the middle of the camp.

Beside the fire were several men and a woman brewing coffee. There were two men armed with rifles, most likely Peralte’s bodyguards, and in between them a man Hanneken recognized as Charlemagne Peralte himself.<sup>289</sup> As Hanneken and Button approached the party by the fire, one of the bodyguards pointed his rifle right at Hanneken.<sup>290</sup> The caco yelled for Hanneken to halt or he would shoot, so Hanneken grabbed his .45 caliber semiautomatic pistol and fired directly at Peralte. The bodyguard fired back, Peralte fell to the ground, while the fire went out instantly. A woman had spilled coffee on it, extinguishing the flame. Whether or not it was an accident remains unclear, but it certainly provided the intruders with the opportunity to get low and avoid being overwhelmed.

In the next moment, Hanneken was hit in the shoulder by the butt of one of the

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<sup>287</sup> Ibid.

<sup>288</sup> Account of H. H. Hanneken in Haiti, circa 1920, Lewis B. “Chesty” Puller Collection, Series 9/A/5/1, Box 1, Folder 1, U.S. Marine Corps Archives, Quantico, VA.

<sup>289</sup> Account of H. H. Hanneken in Haiti, circa 1920, Lewis B. “Chesty” Puller Collection, Series 9/A/5/1, Box 1, Folder 1, U.S. Marine Corps Archives, Quantico, VA.

<sup>290</sup> Ibid.

guard's rifles, forcing his pistol to the ground.<sup>291</sup> Hanneken drew out his second pistol firing at any enemy targets, while Button sprayed the area with his BAR to deadly effect. The gendarmeries back at the sentry post joined Hanneken on the ground at the center of the hostile camp.<sup>292</sup> These well-trained men maintained a constant fire into the darkness. The cacos reformed and charged their enemy but were thrown back by overwhelming firepower. After the attack failed, Hanneken dashed to the body of the man he had shot and felt a pistol on him which he used to fire into the trunk of the body two more times.<sup>293</sup> Now sure his victim had expired, he dragged the body to the middle of the gendarmerie circle.<sup>294</sup> Immediately after Hanneken returned, there was a second charge from the darkness that the small party repelled with little difficulty.<sup>295</sup> With their leader dead, the cacos broke and ran. The gendarmerie remained there throughout the night, waiting for a counter attack, which never came. Once the sun rose, they identified the body as Peralte, tied him to a mule, and took any documents or weapons left behind then headed to town. They counted 35 bodies of cacos, which they did not remove from the hill; the brave charges of the cacos had cost them dearly.<sup>296</sup> They arrived at Grande Riviere at 9:00 a.m. on November 1, 1919, and reported their success to Colonel Meade.<sup>297</sup> Peralte's body was verified by some who knew him well and Hanneken took a

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<sup>291</sup> Ibid.

<sup>292</sup> Herman H. Hanneken, "Death of Charlemagne Peralte," November 2, 1919, Records of U.S. Marine in Haiti, series 127.8.1, Box Intelligence Reports 1918-1919, folder 4, U.S. National Archives, Washington D.C.

<sup>293</sup> Account of H. H. Hanneken in Haiti, circa 1920, Lewis B. "Chesty" Puller Collection, Series 9/A/5/1, Box 1, Folder 1, U.S. Marine Corps Archives, Quantico, VA.

<sup>294</sup> Ibid.

<sup>295</sup> Ibid.

<sup>296</sup> Ibid.

<sup>297</sup> Herman H. Hanneken, "Death of Charlemagne Peralte," November 2, 1919, Records of U.S. Marine in



picture to ensure that all would know his fate.<sup>298</sup>

Hanneken's use of intelligence is just the type of individual adaptation that helped to slowly change how the Marines engaged in the task of collecting, distributing, and capitalizing on it. Headquarters studied his use of intelligence and counter-intelligence, which influenced how they adapted their previous use of military intelligence. His use of intelligence and counter-intelligence proved that in counter-insurgency one of the greatest weapons is solid information. Hanneken had proved the value of double agents by completely controlling Peralte's moves from Fort Capois all the way to the attack on Grande Riviere. This expert use of counter-intelligence constantly fed him false information that severely affected his decisions. Hanneken's inspired ruse about his injury and the use of Peralte's cousin proved decisive in convincing the caco leader that his information had remained sound. While he stayed in the dark despite his extensive use of agents, Hanneken knew most of what was happening in Peralte's camp.

Hanneken's security of intelligence remained sound; he did not report the names of his sources with the intelligence he shared and did not report that he had double agents in the field. Widening his conspiracy could have been dangerous to his double agents, but he was the sole commander for the sub-district in which he had situated them, so Hanneken must have felt confident that he would be informed before any actions would be taken against them. Hanneken took long risks by employing a cousin of Peralte to trick him, but he felt the possible change in plan from Peralte might destroy all of his hard

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Haiti, series 127.8.1, Box Intelligence Reports 1918-1919, folder 4, U.S. National Archives, Washington D.C.

<sup>298</sup> Ibid.

work. In the end, the use of solid intelligence and calculated risks by Hanneken placed him in a false sense of security. In this false reality, Peralte had been led to believe by his followers and agents that he had the tactical upper hand. His decisions relied on his false intelligence and those incorrectly informed decisions placed him in the range of Hanneken's Browning 1911 pistol.

The documents gathered after Peralte's death provided significant insight into his intelligence network. Peralte had made connections within the traditional elite and other allies, even some in Port au Prince.<sup>299</sup> The practice of collecting documents paid great dividends. The client-government arrested those that the documents exposed as having aided or secretly supported the caco leader.<sup>300</sup> The blow to caco support in the capitol and among the political elites proved another key misfortune for the caco revolt.

Hanneken and Button were emblematic of the type of Marine that changed the Haitian Gendarmerie at this time. Both spoke fluent Creole and developed relationships with local people.<sup>301</sup> Both innovated, sometimes in strange ways, and both used intelligence as their main weapon against the cacos. They had both chosen to join the gendarmerie to gain experience as officers in the field. The improved morale and opportunities that became evident after the end of WWI increased the number of Marines in Haiti and allowed them to focus on the task at hand. Intelligence skills learned in previous bush fighting or in WWI gave them an advantage that some of the early

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<sup>299</sup> Robert Debs Heinl and Nancy Gordon Heinl, *Written in Blood: The Story of the Haitian People 1492-1995*, (Lanham, MD.: UPA, 2005), 422.

<sup>300</sup> *Ibid.*, 422.

<sup>301</sup> Account of H. H. Hanneken in Haiti, circa 1920, Lewis B. "Chesty" Puller Collection, Series 9/A/5/1, Box 1, Folder 1, U.S. Marine Corps Archives, Quantico, VA.

occupation forces did not have. The subtle changes that this new generation of Marines brought about combined with the administrative improvements by the leadership, created many more military intelligence successes.

Despite improvements in intelligence and the dramatic killing of Charlemagne Peralte, the cacos continued to resist in parts of Haiti. One of Peralte's major allies Benoit Batraverse was a dangerous and elusive foe. Russell described Batraverse as "a much more aggressive man than Charlemagne but lacking in intelligence and leadership."<sup>302</sup> Russell brought his full force and improved intelligence to bear on Batraverse. Airplanes continued regular recon flights and even participated in one of the first joint air-to-ground operations noted in Marine Corps' history. Knowing that almost all resistance had ended in the North with the death of Peralte, Russell focused on the known caco regions of Central Haiti. Reconnaissance patrols scoured potential caco locations with no let-up. Colonel Little, the commander of Gendarmerie, worked in close concert with Russell's provisional brigade. Shared intelligence and combat strength allowed them to bring maximum force to bear in the moments of greatest need. Their combined strength amounted to 2,700 Gendarmerie and 1,346 Marines. Batraverse may have had up to 2,500 cacos in his service throughout the several months' long campaign but he never once brought all that strength to bear on his enemy.<sup>303</sup>

Facing the same logistical challenges of a part-time civilian army, Batraverse used the intelligence he could gather through traditional caco sources. Batesville's wife was

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<sup>302</sup> Robert Debs Heinl and Nancy Gordon Heinl, *Written in Blood: The Story of the Haitian People 1492-1995*, (Lanham, MD.: UPA, 2005), 422.

<sup>303</sup> *Ibid.*, 422.

one of his best agents and gathered much-needed supplies while sifting through local gossip for actionable intelligence. She even boldly ventured into Port au Prince with contingencies on other caco wives when supplies were in high demand.<sup>304</sup> Batrville could not rely on many political insiders like his former leader had because the Marines had rounded up many of them thanks to the documents gathered by Hanneken in the wake of Peralte's assassination. As occupation forces improved counter-insurgency and information security, they maintained low-level enemy intelligence sources at an arm's length where they could not discover as much useful information.

Batrville's aggressive military action and lack of high-level sources caused a caco defeat that would signal the beginning of the end of his revolt. He decided to attack Port au Prince only a few short months after Peralte's death. Certainly, he intended to strike a decisive blow against the occupation, but he also must have hoped to rally new support for his cause after the loss of a charismatic leader. Batrville attempted to use deception by dressing some of his men in gendarmerie uniforms, but it could not protect them from poor information security.<sup>305</sup> Russell in Port au Prince, was acutely aware of Batrville's intention and prepared a solid defense. As 300 cacos neared Port au Prince with conch shells blaring and marching in column formation, they met no resistance until the outskirts of town.<sup>306</sup> As they reached that point, occupation forces opened up on them with machine guns and rifles from behind a strong barricade. The caco fighters could not stand in the path of that firepower without being cut down. Few remained after the first

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<sup>304</sup> Ibid., 423.

<sup>305</sup> Ibid., 423.

<sup>306</sup> Ibid., 423.

volley, but those who did took cover in homes and behind buildings to return ineffective fire from their old weapons. The occupation forces had killed sixty-six cacos and cut off many more. The caco commander in charge of the advance fled to his home in Port au Prince where U.S. Marines arrested him. Robert and Nancy Heinl in their book, *Written in Blood*, describe the results on caco morale, “Surviving cacos ever after referred to this... as ‘La debacle.’”<sup>307</sup> Many of the captured cacos gave up valuable intelligence on their leadership and possible places to find them.<sup>308</sup> Many of the caco chiefs began to give themselves up to the Marines to save their lives and even helped them convince others to turn themselves in to the occupation forces. Aggressive patrols by vigilantes and the regular occupying forces in the vicinity of Port au Prince eliminated any remaining cacos or caco allies in that region.<sup>309</sup> Captain Hanneken in the North continued to erode Batraille’s potential supporters. He killed a caco leader named Oseris Joseph on April 1, 1920, while the caco hid without much support of his own men.<sup>310</sup>

Batraille remained undeterred and fought against increasingly desperate odds. Long chances may have contributed to his barbaric displays. Batraille continued to collect intelligence using women and local civilians to gain an edge over American forces. Finally, his work led to information about a reconnaissance patrol that would pass through his area. Reconnaissance patrols, if properly surrounded and surprised, could be

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<sup>307</sup> Ibid., 423.

<sup>308</sup> Major Raymond, “Memorandum for the Chief of the Gendarmerie D’Haiti,” January 21, 1920, Records of U.S. Marine in Haiti, series 127.8.1, Box Intelligence Reports 1918-1919, folder 5, U.S. National Archives, Washington D.C.

<sup>309</sup> Walter H. Hill, “Memo for the Chief of the Gendarmerie D’Haiti,” February 16, 1920, Box Office of Commandant 1915-1923, folder 18, U.S. National Archives, Washington D.C.

<sup>310</sup> H.H. Hanneken, “Death of Oseris Joseph,” April 1, 1920, Records of U.S. Marine in Haiti, series 127.8.1, Box Intelligence Reports 1918-1919, folder 5, U.S. National Archives, Washington D.C.

taken by caco forces. The lightly armed members of a reconnaissance patrol could not respond with machine guns against an overwhelming force. Batrville laid a trap for the patrol and waited for his victims, hoping for a dramatic victory. On April 20, 1920, Lieutenant Lawrence Muth led the fateful patrol and came into contact with the enemy first. A caco bullet struck him, and his men could not reach him before the cacos forced them to retreat.<sup>311</sup> Batrville took Muth half alive into the bush and used voodoo ceremonies to play up his minor victory.<sup>312</sup> Batrville began by making a speech to his men and then beheaded Muth against a tree.<sup>313</sup> Batrville cut off Muth's genitals, cut out his heart, and finally broke open his skull. Cacos captured later reported that some of those in attendance consumed Muth's heart and spread his brain on their bullets.<sup>314</sup> Batrville's increasingly dangerous military position may have contributed to the disturbing behavior he displayed with Muth's body. He attempted to call upon the supernatural power of voodoo to increase his influence in Haiti. He believed that if he could connect his dying revolt with that of the ancient native dogmas, many would flock to his banner. However, Batrville could not save his insurgency from Colonel Russell and the improved intelligence apparatus of the U.S. occupation. The full-time intelligence officers in Port au Prince compiled all the names of the caco chiefs discovered after the failed attack in January 1920. On their list, they described known facts and locations of

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<sup>311</sup> Robert Debs Heinl and Nancy Gordon Heinl, *Written in Blood: The Story of the Haitian People 1492-1995*, (Lanham, MD.: UPA, 2005), 423.

<sup>312</sup> Methuis Richard, Interrogation report, April 18, 1920, Records of U.S. Marine in Haiti, series 127.8.1, Box Intelligence Reports 1920-1923, folder 5, U.S. National Archives, Washington D.C.

<sup>313</sup> Ibid.

<sup>314</sup> Ibid.

the caco leadership.<sup>315</sup> These lists were updated and distributed until shortly after the death of Benoit Batraverse. Many of the former caco leadership turned quickly to informing on their former allies and as the list of informants for the occupation grew, Batraverse's shrank.

A solid tip from a local Haitian gave the gendarmerie Batraverse's position on May 19, 1920.<sup>316</sup> In the early morning of that day, Marines and gendarmerie surrounded the camp on top of Morne Ti Bois Pin. One of the first bullets from occupation forces went into Batraverse and as he tried to stand up one of the attackers finished him off at close range with a pistol.<sup>317</sup> The death of Charlemagne Peralte and Batraverse signaled the end of the caco revolt. In the next few months the few cacos still resisting either surrendered or died in the struggle. By the end of the year, few examples of revolt or even violence remained throughout Haiti.

Marines like Smedley Butler had very successfully defeated the first caco rebellion in 1915 with the use of constant long range patrols, excellent training, and efficient weapons. These methods made the caco bands melt into the background, but the lack of consistent, reliable intelligence allowed them to rise up again shortly after. The use of local vigilantes and other civilian sources for intelligence gave the occupation a more lasting victory against the cacos. More importantly, the information gathered by lower echelons was reviewed and saved by the Marine leadership. Improvements in

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<sup>315</sup> District Commander, "Report of Bandit chiefs and Leaders," May 1, 1920, series 127.8.1, Box Intelligence Reports 1918-1919, folder 6, U.S. National Archives, Washington D.C.

<sup>316</sup> Robert Debs Heintz and Nancy Gordon Heintz, *Written in Blood: The Story of the Haitian People 1492-1995*, (Lanham, MD.: UPA, 2005), 424.

<sup>317</sup> *Ibid.*, 424.

reporting and distribution made the intelligence gathered useful to all levels of the occupation forces. The improved morale of those coming to Haiti gave them more ambition in fulfilling their mission. The increased conflict also gave proper motivation to those serving in Haiti to rise to the occasion. The path to improved military intelligence did not take a direct route in Haiti, but as occupation forces grappled with the challenges of their fight, they adapted using outside improvements, individual initiative, and technological advances. The Marines in Haiti achieved their desired military objectives in 1919 and 1920 because they used intelligence to change the game.



## CHAPTER V

## THE FINAL DAYS

As the violence in Haiti decreased rapidly by the beginning of 1921, the U.S. Marines and their allies had to discover how to maintain political control of Haiti without using violence. Violence had brought the Marines to Haiti and it had kept them there when President Wilson wanted to take them out in 1919 but now, without violence, Marines would have to adapt to a different kind of mission.<sup>318</sup> They recommitted to the original nation-building objectives that had initially motivated some of them. The U.S. State Department after the violence of 1919 and 1920 decided that it needed to take a more direct approach in Haiti. Their establishment of a high commissioner allowed them to receive regular updates and exercise their power on the ground.<sup>319</sup> While rural violence slowed, the political and social resistance in urban areas increased. The intelligence required to keep these developments in check changed what intelligence the occupation forces needed. The collection methods also had to adjust to new circumstances and new objectives. This thesis emphasizes the importance of individual agency throughout and the innovations in intelligence work during the final phase of the occupation provide ample evidence of personal initiative. The changing political circumstances provided the motive for some of the changes in intelligence but outside sources of information also give the process of improvement a boost.

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<sup>318</sup> Hans Schmidt, *The United States Occupation of Haiti, 1915-1934*, (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1995), 114.

<sup>319</sup> *Ibid.*, 123.

Hans Schmidt in his excellent work, *The United States Occupation of Haiti, 1915-1934*, describes the period directly after the caco revolt as the “Reorganization and Rationalization” of the occupation.<sup>320</sup> His explanation is apt; Schmidt describes a reaction to the caco rebellion in the U.S. The political fallout stateside proved severe as Republicans decried the obvious unpopularity of the occupation. Some opposed the occupation on principal, but others did so because the previous administration handled it poorly. Senator Medill McCormick of Illinois, a strident critic of the U.S. occupation of Haiti, described how “administrative reorganization” would be preferable to a complete withdrawal.<sup>321</sup> McCormick was the leading Senator on the Investigation into the U.S. occupation of Haiti sent by the Senate in 1921. His investigation led him to believe that Haiti still needed U.S. direction but the occupation also needed new leadership and reorganization under a central authority. Russell had worked to bring his position as commander of the Marine Brigade in Port au Prince some level of supremacy over the Gendarmerie d`Haiti, but they could also receive direct orders from the President of Haiti.

Russell expressed his displeasure with this policy when he said, “The absurdity of dual control, or of two nations administering the affairs of a country is too obvious to need comment.”<sup>322</sup> Eventually, in 1922, Russell would be made High Commissioner of Haiti with power to override the president. The High Commissioner answered only to the State Department directly. Before his appointment as High Commissioner, Russell

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<sup>320</sup>Ibid., 108.

<sup>321</sup>Ibid., 122.

<sup>322</sup>Ibid., 124.

established his authority over military operations through the principle of natural U.S. military supremacy over the Haitian Gendarmerie. Russell passionately reformed the occupation from top to bottom but most notably he improved the military intelligence practices of the Americans and their allies. These developments made the function of the intelligence apparatus reach its highest level since the inception of the occupation.

As the caco threat receded in rural Haiti, the 1<sup>st</sup> Provisional Marine Brigade withdrew into Port au Prince.<sup>323</sup> The gendarmerie remained in the field, still led by U.S. Marines, and they continued the work of provincial administration.<sup>324</sup> Cacos remained in rural Haiti, but these groups did not represent an effective danger to the occupation. Patrols searched and found minor conflicts with these small bands. The term “bandit” applies more accurately to these remaining groups than those of 1919. Most of them robbed and harassed any that seemed vulnerable.<sup>325</sup> Cacos no longer led by a single leader or a higher ideal devolved into simple brigands. While there may have been some that still hoped to rid their island of U.S. forces, their illicit actions belie any noble motive. Cacos that had been drawn to the cause because of the dastardly acts of the occupation now sadly acted out similar ways. Any rural support Haitian rebels had once enjoyed almost completely dissipated after the people realized they would have to support them indefinitely.<sup>326</sup> Worse still, many of the cacos gave up the names of their

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<sup>323</sup> Leo J. Daugherty III, *Counterinsurgency and the United States Marine Corps Volume 1, the First Counterinsurgency Era, 1899-1945* (Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland, 2015), 95.

<sup>324</sup> *Ibid.*, 95.

<sup>325</sup> *Ibid.*, 87.

<sup>326</sup> *Ibid.*, 87.

supporters and allies when pressed by the occupation.<sup>327</sup> The dangers and economic cost of supporting the rebellion grew too high. The actions against the remaining cacos occupied some space in a few reports throughout the rest of the occupation, but most reports began to discuss political intelligence.<sup>328</sup> The Marine Brigade watched and reported on the political elites in Port au Prince while the gendarmerie focused on the provincial minor elites. Both still kept a look out for possible uprisings but kept their main focus on possible political resistance.

Political intelligence in Haiti did not suddenly appear as a top priority for the occupation after the death of Batrville. Rear Admiral Caperton had used his agent “X” to gather political intelligence during the first days of the occupation.<sup>329</sup> As the State Department withdrew its support and direction, the Marine Corps leadership in Haiti resorted to using their strength of arms to guarantee compliance. Colonels Waller and Butler did not consider political intrigue in Haiti to be their concern.<sup>330</sup> They did not believe that it could amount to much, but the new Marine Corps leadership in Haiti after 1919 saw how effective Haitian resistance could be, so they began to track political developments.

The political intelligence gathered from 1917 to 1919 often focused on possible German involvement rather than shifts in native support. The communications of Dr.

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<sup>327</sup> District Commander, “Weekly Report of Bandit chiefs and Leaders,” September 1, 1920, series 127.8.1, Box Intelligence Reports 1918-1919, folder 6, U.S. National Archives, Washington D.C.

<sup>328</sup> R.L. Shepard, “Intelligence Report subject-Grand Gosier,” May, 19 1921, Records of U.S. Marines in Haiti, series 127.8.1, Box Intelligence Reports 1921-1934, folder 17, U.S. National Archives, Washington D.C.

<sup>329</sup> Hans Schmidt, *The United States Occupation of Haiti, 1915-1934* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1995), 73.

<sup>330</sup> *Ibid.*, 79.

Rosalvo Bobo, who represented the northern political powers of Haiti, with his allies and representatives passed freely under their noses. Even Caperton had not considered the regional politics of Haiti when he opted for Philippe Sudre Dartiguenave for president of Haiti. The southern political elites backed Dartiguenave while the northern political elites backed Bobo.<sup>331</sup> When Dartiguenave received American backing and then quickly won the vote in the Assemblée Nationale, Bobo's supporters revolted. The cacos of northern and central Haiti had already come to Port au Prince to topple the government of President Jean Vilbrun Guillaume Sam.<sup>332</sup> The previously described U.S. Marine campaign of 1915-1916 ended that regional rebellion. Bobo and other northern political elites supported Charlemagne Peralte's rise in 1918, but Peralte attempted to connect his movement to a more nationalistic cause. Peralte's quasi-national resistance against the occupation succeeded in many sections of Haiti but failed to penetrate south of the plain of the Cul-de-Sac and Port au Prince.<sup>333</sup> Hanneken recovered many letters from Bobo and other political elites in support of Peralte. The letters even exposed some political supporters among the elites in Port au Prince.<sup>334</sup> This discovery along with a newfound understanding of Haitian potential for resistance showed the occupation leadership the need of monitoring the political leaders more closely. The new military intelligence leadership had emphasized the collection of documents from the dead during WWI and

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<sup>331</sup> Robert Debs Heinl and Nancy Gordon Heinl, *Written in Blood: The Story of the Haitian People 1492-1995* (Lanham, MD.: UPA, 2005), 417.

<sup>332</sup> Hans Schmidt, *The United States Occupation of Haiti, 1915-1934* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1995), 65.

<sup>333</sup> Robert Debs Heinl and Nancy Gordon Heinl, *Written in Blood: The Story of the Haitian People 1492-1995*, (Lanham, MD.: UPA, 2005), 425.

<sup>334</sup> Account of H. H. Hanneken in Haiti, circa 1920, Lewis B. "Chesty" Puller Collection, Series 9/A/5/1, Box 1, Folder 1, U.S. Marine Corps Archives, Quantico, VA.

leadership in Haiti took on the procedure by 1919.<sup>335</sup>

The occupation met the need to observe political elites by using pro-occupation agents, intercepting their mail, and general surveillance. The Marines had used these methods against the German minority during the days leading up to the revolt of 1919.<sup>336</sup> The addition of full-time intelligence officers increased the efficiency of these methods. The intelligence officers could also act as full-time handlers for the agents they employed and could protect their identities while getting their information to the right sources. Political intelligence altered their attention to the Haitian political elites after the evidence discovered on Peralte showed that some political elites had supported him. The change in focus from the German minority to the native Haitian elites made the surveillance useful for occupation leadership. The changing mission in Haiti also provided valuable context for the shift in focus.

The haitianization that had always been the goal of the occupation could now begin in earnest with the end of the caco revolt.<sup>337</sup> The gradual handover of power to the Haitian people meant that Marines had to find trustworthy, educated, and pro-American candidates for the newly available government posts.<sup>338</sup> The intelligence gathered on the different families and individuals gave the occupation leadership a better judgment of whom the occupation forces could trust among the educated elites. The increased number

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<sup>335</sup> James L. Gilbert, *World War I and the Origins of U.S. Military Intelligence* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2012), 119.

<sup>336</sup> Hans Schmidt, *The United States Occupation of Haiti, 1915-1934* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1995), 91.

<sup>337</sup> Robert Debs Heinl and Nancy Gordon Heinl, *Written in Blood: The Story of the Haitian People 1492-1995* (Lanham, MD.: UPA, 2005), 457.

<sup>338</sup> Benjamin R. Beede, ed., *The War of 1898 and U.S. Interventions, 1898-1934: An Encyclopedia* (New York: Routledge, 1994), 223.

of military intelligence officers delivered the needed infrastructure to provide an agency capable of gathering, organizing, and analyzing the needed intelligence.

The growing interest in military intelligence personnel began during WWI with the counter-intelligence efforts against German agents on U.S. soil. The U.S. Military Intelligence Division or MID reacted to the increasing number of sabotage attacks in America by creating a counterintelligence force from scratch.<sup>339</sup> Attention to positive intelligence increased as the American Expeditionary Force arrived in Europe.<sup>340</sup> Learning from French and British intelligence officers, the Americans developed doctrine for intelligence officers.<sup>341</sup> The introduction of intelligence officers as part of the Marine brigade began as early as 1918. These officers would dramatically increase the amount of information that could be processed and then used.

While MID developed the counterintelligence, the Office of Naval Intelligence or ONI developed a great deal of positive intelligence. Positive intelligence is a term that refers to gathering information on potential or real enemies as opposed to counterintelligence, which is geared towards stopping the enemy from gaining intelligence on friendly forces.<sup>342</sup> The Naval Attaches program established in 1882 collected information on naval developments abroad, which included some political analysis.<sup>343</sup> The U.S. Marine Corps had only recently begun to develop relations with

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<sup>339</sup> James L. Gilbert, *World War I and the Origins of U.S. Military Intelligence* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2012), 113.

<sup>340</sup> *Ibid.*, 121.

<sup>341</sup> *Ibid.*, 71.

<sup>342</sup> *Ibid.*, 104.

<sup>343</sup> Jeffery M. Dorwart, *The Office of Naval Intelligence: The Birth of America's first Intelligence Agency*

ONI; John H. Russell was one of the first to begin this process. His assignment to ONI under the innovative leadership of Naval Captain James H. Oliver provided the perfect seeding ground for Russell's ideas about how to improve military intelligence.<sup>344</sup>

Working with Lieutenant Commander John P. Jackson, Russell applied the theories of scientific management to the budding ONI bureaucratic system.<sup>345</sup> Their reforms separated ONI into three main sections focused on the different types of work. In Jeffery Dorwart's thorough analysis of ONI's history, he quotes Russell describing the changes he made in ONI, "[We] eliminated duplication of work and the enormous waste of labor occasioned by the reading of all papers and periodicals received in the Office by every officer attached thereto."<sup>346</sup> Russell also drew up mobilization plans for Naval and Marine Corps mobilization to Europe while serving in ONI.<sup>347</sup> Russell's time in ONI gave him a unique insight into modern military intelligence.

As Russell took command of the 1<sup>st</sup> Provisional Brigade in Port au Prince on October 1, 1919, he focused on developing actionable intelligence in the field. Russell chose to solve his most immediate intelligence problems first. As previously mentioned in Chapter 3, the sharing of intelligence between the gendarmerie and the 1<sup>st</sup> Provisional Brigade gave Russell a much-needed boost in understanding the situation in Haiti.<sup>348</sup> The gendarmerie units' experience in the rural areas of Haiti provided valuable insights into

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*1865-1918* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1979), 12.

<sup>344</sup> *Ibid.*, 96.

<sup>345</sup> *Ibid.*, 97.

<sup>346</sup> *Ibid.*, 97.

<sup>347</sup> *Ibid.*, 103.

<sup>348</sup> John H. Russell, "General Operations," January 2, 1920, Records of U.S. Marines in Haiti, series 127.8.1, Box Office of Commandant 1915-1923, folder 18, U.S. National Archives, Washington D.C.



the situation throughout the countryside. Russell used separated radio intelligence posts to help increase the amount of intelligence he received and improve the speed at which he received it.<sup>349</sup> Russell also used intelligence officers efficiently to collect and analyze the massive amounts of information that began to roll into headquarters.

Russell applied the lessons he learned in ONI, and many of his innovations changed the way the Marines practiced military intelligence in Haiti. The most important change introduced during and after the end of WWI was the use of intelligence officers. They helped Russell make changes to the intelligence system at headquarters. Eventually, as violence slowed in Haiti, the intelligence officers redirected their efforts away from the few remaining bandits. “All quiet, nothing to report,” is one of the sentences most repeated in intelligence accounts after 1920. Eventually, there would appear a letter from some gendarmerie unit with someone decrying one of their neighbors as anti-American or as attempting to start a new revolt, but most of these accusations turned out to be overblown.<sup>350</sup> Russell also changed the system for organizing incoming intelligence by clearly establishing his authority over the gendarmerie and thus forcing all new intelligence to go through his office.<sup>351</sup> This made the intelligence system far more efficient by providing a central location for the analysis and organization of new information. The command could then make decisions about veracity and vitality of the intelligence. It could also be more efficiently distributed to those that needed the

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<sup>349</sup> Keith B. Bickel, *Mars Learning: The Marine Corps Development of Small Wars Doctrine, 1915-1940* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2001), 85.

<sup>350</sup> A. B. Drum, “Unrest in Plaine Du Cul de Sac,” November 19, 1921, Records of U.S. Marines in Haiti, series 127.8.1, Box Intelligence Reports 1921-1934, folder 5, U.S. National Archives, Washington D.C.

<sup>351</sup> John H. Russell, “General Operations,” January 2, 1920, Records of U.S. Marines in Haiti, series 127.8.1, Box Office of the Commandant 1920-1923, folder 18, U.S. National Archives, Washington D.C.

intelligence. Finally, Russell attempted to improve relations with the Haitian upper classes to gain more intelligence on the changing political situation.

The introduction of full-time intelligence staff officers greatly enhanced the ability of occupation forces to gather, interpret, analyze, and distribute relevant information. The use of full-time intelligence personnel had been a tactic employed by the U.S. on and off since the revolution, but it had not taken on a major role in the Marine Corps during the early twentieth century until WWI.<sup>352</sup> Corps leadership assigned intelligence officers to the brigade headquarters in Port au Prince. They had stewardship over the intelligence reports that garrison commanders submitted and they took on the role of reformers of intelligence methods. Intelligence officers, in conjunction with Russell, implemented a series of reforms that enabled the intelligence reports to be more efficient. Under Russell's direction intelligence, reports began to improve by taking on a uniform arrangement.<sup>353</sup> Russell, a natural progressive, attempted to rationalize the documentation process through experimentation.<sup>354</sup> At one point the form became a fill-in-the-blank page that had spaces for relevant information. Evidently, this method became too restricting because leadership replaced it not long after its introduction.<sup>355</sup> The structure of the reports became more formal and less like a letter. Sections appeared and became standardized to improve efficiency. The standardization instructed those

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<sup>352</sup> Jeffery M. Dorwart, *The Office of Naval Intelligence: The Birth of America's first Intelligence Agency 1865-1918* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1979), 135.

<sup>353</sup> L.N. Bertol, After Action Report, March, 8, 1920, Records of U.S. Marines in Haiti, series 127.8.1, Box Intelligence Reports 1920-1923, folder 5, U.S. National Archives, Washington D.C.

<sup>354</sup> Hans Schmidt, *The United States Occupation of Haiti, 1915-1934* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1995), 124-125.

<sup>355</sup> L.N. Bertol, After Action Report, March, 8, 1920, Records of U.S. Marines in Haiti, series 127.8.1, Box Intelligence Reports 1921-1934, folder 5, U.S. National Archives, Washington D.C.

writing the reports as to which topics headquarters deemed most relevant. Sections like political, military, and even social conditions became required elements.<sup>356</sup>

The Headquarters of the 1<sup>st</sup> Provisional Brigade began using officers in intelligence staff positions in 1919. In 1920, Major Ralph Shepard received a military award for “his activity, his intelligence, and his courage in the conduct of the intelligence service.”<sup>357</sup> Shepard also received praise from Russell for his leadership of the intelligence section.<sup>358</sup> It has been challenging to gather much information about the intelligence staff officers that served under Russell, but their names, especially the name of Walter N. Hill, appear on every report that came through his office.<sup>359</sup> They went through intelligence reports and analyzed the information. They passed on their analysis and copies of the reports with their signature of approval to Russell. This gave Russell a far superior system of intelligence than his predecessors. Intelligence officers sent to Haiti often knew French, which some of them had employed during the Great War as intelligence officers. Their ability to translate documents and personally work with native agents made them a valuable asset to the occupation.<sup>360</sup> Their training in intelligence analysis was unique at the time and made them helpful in Russell’s improvement projects. They worked with district commanders to increase the efficacy of the reports

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<sup>356</sup> R.L. Shepard, “Intelligence Report subject-Grand Gosier,” May, 19 1921, Records of U.S. Marines in Haiti, series 127.8.1, Box Intelligence Reports 1921-1934, folder 17, U.S. National Archives, Washington D.C.

<sup>357</sup> *Inquiry into Occupation and Administration of Haiti*, 1718.

<sup>358</sup> *Ibid.*, 1742.

<sup>359</sup> Records of U.S. Marines in Haiti, series 127.8.1, Box Intelligence Reports 1921-1934, folder 1-20, U.S. National Archives, Washington D.C.

<sup>360</sup> Agent Paul, “Intelligence Report #24,” circa 1927, Records of U.S. Marines in Haiti, series 127.8.1, Box Commandant of Gendarmerie, folder 20, U.S. National Archives, Washington D.C.

they received and instructed Marines on the conditions they faced in the hinterlands of Haiti. Intelligence personnel worked on a national level, so they could interpret the information they received based on that bird's eye view. If violence surged in certain districts, warnings could be distributed to surrounding areas, or if an informant came forward to share information, they could be referred to HQ for processing by a fluent speaker of the native tongue.

During the last days of the second caco revolt, the occupation forces captured many cacos while others simply turned themselves in when they realized the revolution had failed. The occupying forces held each of these cacos and interrogated some of them for information about continuing caco activities.<sup>361</sup> Many provided information on their former friends that remained at large.<sup>362</sup> The intelligence staff at headquarters used the information they provided to create a list of cacos that they circulated to all the garrisons during the summer of 1920.<sup>363</sup> The list of cacos allowed the Marines in each district to know who was still at large and who was already taken care of by the other garrisons. The intelligence staff did interrogate former cacos, but it is not clear from the sources whether it was systematic. What is clear is that information gathered from former cacos made up a significant source base that helped to track down the few remaining fighters.<sup>364</sup> In January of 1920, before the death of Batrville, a former caco came forward and claimed that one of his fellow prisoners was a chief in the caco organization. Major

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<sup>361</sup> A. A. Vandergrift, "Activities of Bandit Leaders," April 24, 1920, Records of U.S. Marines in Haiti, series 127.8.1, Box Intelligence Reports 1921-1934, folder 5, U.S. National Archives, Washington D.C.

<sup>362</sup> Ibid.

<sup>363</sup> Ibid.

<sup>364</sup> Ibid.

Walter Hill of the intelligence section received and approved the report, which he sent up the chain of command.<sup>365</sup> Interestingly, in that same report, it is disclosed that scores of cacos turned themselves into the occupation forces, but none brought weapons with them.<sup>366</sup> They claimed that only chiefs or sub-chiefs had weapons. More than likely, based on other reports, they had buried their weapons for future use. Like most rural forms of resistance, cacos used tools like machetes as their main weapons and therefore their value extended beyond the needs of warfare.

Tracking those former cacos became an important mission of the intelligence staff at headquarters. They used their advanced communications technologies to inform the different garrisons and to get information from them about the movements of their former enemies. Papillon, the former Minister of War to Peralte, had given himself up not long after the death of his leader.<sup>367</sup> The gendarmerie held on to him until after the death of Batrville. They released him on August 14, 1920, but then immediately began to keep track of his travels, associates, and anything that could betray a revolutionary design.<sup>368</sup> The gendarmerie worked in cooperation with the 1<sup>st</sup> Provisional Brigade to maintain surveillance throughout all of Haiti. The Brigade focused on keeping the political elites in Port au Prince under surveillance while the gendarmerie covered the rest of the country. Most of those under observation by the occupation forces did not attempt to renew a

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<sup>365</sup> Walter N. Hill, "Memorandum for Chief of Gendarmerie," series 127.8.1, Box Intelligence Reports 1921-1934, folder 3, U.S. National Archives, Washington D.C.

<sup>366</sup> Ibid.

<sup>367</sup> Alan McPherson, *Encyclopedia of U.S. Military Interventions in Latin America* (ABC-CLIO, 2013), 709.

<sup>368</sup> Colonel Meade, Telegram report 8/22/1920, series 127.8.1, Box Intelligence Reports 1921-1934, folder 6, U.S. National Archives, Washington D.C.

rebellion, but some of the political intrigues that had been occurring all along began to be noticed by the Americans.

The accurate mapping of Haiti had long been the dream of Marine commanders who continued to work with incomplete and dated maps. The project to create an accurate map of the entire nation began in earnest after the end of the second caco campaign.<sup>369</sup> The intelligence section of the brigade worked with the aviation section, which provided aerial photos of the towns.<sup>370</sup> The intelligence section would later use those pictures in their culminating work, the *Monograph of Haiti*. A survey already ongoing in Haiti seemed like the perfect partner for their project, but cooperation proved difficult. Eventually, they created several maps one of which showed the locations of every known caco camp. Another map created during this period depicted the dimensions of the old Fort Riviere that Marines had stormed in 1915.<sup>371</sup> The intelligence staff made these maps as a response to the very poor maps that the Marines had to use when they first landed in Haiti.

The intelligence officers in Port au Prince, under Russell's direction, began a project to provide a deeper context for future regional intelligence reports. The intelligence officers began a project in 1921 that would provide background information for all subsequent intelligence reports.<sup>372</sup> They went to the towns and cities of Haiti one

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<sup>369</sup> *Inquiry into Occupation and Administration of Haiti*, 1732.

<sup>370</sup> *Ibid.*, 1732.

<sup>371</sup> Marine Brigade Intelligence section, "Map of Fort Riviere," Scott D. Allen Collection, Series 2460, Box 1, Folder 1, U.S. Marine Corps Archives, Quantico, VA.

<sup>372</sup> R.L. Shepard, "Intelligence Report subject-Grand Gosier," May, 19 1921, Records of U.S. Marines in Haiti, series 127.8.1, Box Intelligence Reports 1921-1934, folder 17, U.S. National Archives, Washington D.C.

by one to gather as much information as possible. This project helped to complete the improved maps of Haiti. The list of topics included Terrain/General aspect, Strategic Importance, Communications, Accommodations, Food, Fuel, Forage, Climate, Water Supply, Inhabitants, Occupation/Industries, Facilities for repairs/Munition making, Public Utilities/civic improvements, Buildings, and Fortifications.<sup>373</sup>

These town-by-town reports provided the context for future reports and therefore focused on more constant attributes of each area. This wise adaptation to their previous system of intelligence reporting gave headquarters a deeper understanding of the conditions of places it could not visit often. When a new intelligence report came from a district commander or even a sub-district chief, intelligence officers could now combine reports with the information already gathered about that area. The total sum of the situation was more easily seen by intelligence officers situated far from those reporting to them. The use of radio stations, mail air delivery, and motorized vehicles all made the time it took to report to headquarters narrow dramatically.<sup>374</sup> Intelligence personnel distributed lists of potential troublemakers and received updates on their whereabouts and actions.<sup>375</sup> The effect of these reports furnished the information about current events with a contextualized understanding of each town due to the long-term information they provided.

Cooperation with the local people in obtaining intelligence proved a vital

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<sup>373</sup> Ibid.

<sup>374</sup> Keith B. Bickel, *Mars Learning: The Marine Corps Development of Small Wars Doctrine, 1915-1940* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2001), 90.

<sup>375</sup> A. A. Vandergrift, "Activities of Bandit Leaders," April 24, 1920, Records of U.S. Marines in Haiti, series 127.8.1, Box Intelligence Reports 1921-1934, folder 5, U.S. National Archives, Washington D.C.

innovation that had been encouraged since the beginning by the occupation leadership but which only truly blossomed in the last years. Marines' subtle increase in collaboration took place over several years and occurred in varying degrees. The leadership had stimulated this teamwork through orders like Smedley Butler's command to NCOs that specifically called for the cultivation of good relationships with the local people.<sup>376</sup> Individuals had to take action to fulfill those orders with a special level of dedication if they wished to win over the oft abused Haitian people. Natural suspicions of authority from Port au Prince, and worse still a white foreign power, made it difficult for the rural Haitian population to trust the Americans. Success depended on the open-mindedness, compassion, and sincere desire of the Marine and the local Haitian people. Treaty programs attempted to cultivate a sense of charity for the local population and aspects of U.S. reasons for being in Haiti related to the improvement of the lives of the poorer classes of people, but the use of the *corvée* had gone a long way to nullifying any good feeling those programs produced. Many successes were achieved because both groups could see how they could benefit from the relationship.

Cooperation with local people continued to increase, and in some cases, led to mutual respect. The different occupation forces in Haiti, the Marine Brigade, and the *gendarmerie* created very different experiences for the Marines that served in them. Marines attached to the *gendarmerie* had to adapt to working with native Haitians under their command. Not every American assigned to the *gendarmerie* learned to respect those

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<sup>376</sup> Smedley Darlington Butler, "Orders for Non-Commissioned Officers In charge of Parishes," circa 1916, Smedley Butler papers, Series 9/A/5/1, Box 20, Folder 5, U.S. Marine Corps Archives, Quantico, VA.



with whom he served, but the successful ones did figure out how to create a feeling of mutual esteem. The command in the gendarmerie relied on the compliance of native troops to maintain order. Many Marines like Lewis “Chesty” Puller, Herman Hanneken, and others like them chose to work with their subordinates, achieving tremendous effect. Hanneken’s greatest success in intelligence work only came about because he trusted and relied on his Haitian troops.<sup>377</sup> He understood that without mutual respect he could not hope to achieve exceptional results. Hanneken established a relationship with Jean-Baptiste Conzé well before he called on him to risk his life for the benefit of the occupation.<sup>378</sup> Puller had his first combat experience at the head of a mule supply train that accidentally came upon a much larger caco force. Puller’s men followed his reckless charge into the massive enemy force without flinching.<sup>379</sup> He also noted the exceptional quality of his NCOs who proved loyal to him to a fault.<sup>380</sup> At one point, while on patrol on the border with the Dominican Republic, Puller mentioned that he would love to have the white horse of a man he could see riding on the other side and his second in command Second Lieutenant Augustin B. Brunot immediately ordered a man to shoot the rider. Before Puller could react the gendarmerie shot the rider and, although Puller was upset, he did not punish his subordinate because Brunot explained that he assumed that Puller’s statement had been a command.<sup>381</sup> Some Marines, like Puller, learned to appreciate those that served alongside them in the gendarmerie, but others did not to absorb the lesson.

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<sup>377</sup> Account of H. H. Hanneken in Haiti, circa 1920, Lewis B. “Chesty” Puller Collection, Series 9/A/5/1, Box 1, Folder 1, U.S. Marine Corps Archives, Quantico, VA.

<sup>378</sup> Ibid.

<sup>379</sup> Jon T. Hoffman, *Chesty: The Story of Lieutenant General Lewis B. Puller, USMC*, (New York: Random House Trade Paperbacks, 2002), 28.

<sup>380</sup> Ibid., 30.

<sup>381</sup> Ibid., 30.

Racism remained an endemic problem for those serving in Haiti, which prevented some Marines from effectively working with those they had come to help. The deep-rooted racism in some Americans blinded them to the dangers of the growing caco rebellion in 1918. Occupation leadership had to reassign those that could not overcome their feelings. Lieutenant Colonel Jon T. Hoffman describes the attrition rate for enlisted Marines serving in the gendarmerie as “nearly one third” of all those assigned from 1919 to 1920.<sup>382</sup> That was even after the end of WWI, which had drawn out scores of Marines that wanted to be in the real fight rather than a backwater. Even until the end of the occupation reports of racism or inappropriate treatment of local people remained a problem.<sup>383</sup> The Marine brigade may have had a more difficult time adapting to the racial conditions of Haiti because of their isolation in Port au Prince, where it existed in a segregated society within the greater city of Port au Prince.<sup>384</sup> The Marines serving in the far-flung gendarmerie had the advantage of being forced to associate with none but the Haitian people.

The instances of mutual respect and cooperation among the gendarmerie are much more widespread than those serving in the isolated brigade. Faustin Wirkus successfully fought against the cacos during the revolt of 1919 but when the gendarmerie leadership reassigned him to a peaceful outpost, he gained a reputation as a just and caring administrator. Wirkus grew so at home on the Island La Gonave that the local people

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<sup>382</sup> Ibid., 25.

<sup>383</sup> Robert Debs Heintz and Nancy Gordon Heintz, *Written in Blood: The Story of the Haitian People 1492-1995* (Lanham, MD.: UPA, 2005), 442-443.

<sup>384</sup> Hans Schmidt, *The United States Occupation of Haiti, 1915-1934*, (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1995), 137, Mary A. Renda, *Taking Haiti: Military Occupation and the Culture of U.S. Imperialism, 1915-1940*, (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2001), 105.

gave him the honorary title of “White King of La Gonave.” Wirkus’s theory of working with the Haitian people essentially became one of being on “friendly terms” with all classes of the population.<sup>385</sup> Some Marines also learned to hide their negative racial views to avoid causing problems in their command. Most notable in this group was John Russell, who worked closely with the Haitian political elite as the High Commissioner of the U.S. State Department. He believed in American laws of segregation, but acted with courtesy towards the Haitian people.<sup>386</sup> Russell has been called a racial moderate for his time, but his views did not include full racial equality between people of different ethnicity and skin color.<sup>387</sup> He achieved impressive results in Haiti to a significant degree because he could put aside unenlightened personal feelings to accomplish the task required of him. It is not known the exact number of Marines that learned to work efficiently with the Haitian people, but those who did achieved much greater success militarily, socially, and politically.

Political intelligence did not provide accurate information about the intentions of those under surveillance. Even Marines willing to work with the Haitian people failed to understand the native viewpoint because of their worldview. This challenge especially affected the work of intelligence. In her cultural analysis of the occupation of Haiti, Mary Renda explains, “Marine Corps intelligence officers’ conducted extensive investigations to ascertain what Haitians thought. Yet... the intelligence they gathered was always

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<sup>385</sup> Faustin Wirkus, *The White King of La Gonave* (Ishi Press, 2015), 109.

<sup>386</sup> Hans Schmidt, *The United States Occupation of Haiti, 1915-1934*, (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1995), 125.

<sup>387</sup> *Ibid.*, 125.

filtered through the lens of their discursive frameworks.”<sup>388</sup> The use of cultural information, though at times tainted by bias, still contributed to intelligence objectives of the occupation. The 1921 city analysis started the process of describing the circumstances of daily life in each of the different garrisons around Haiti.<sup>389</sup> Intelligence staff would catalog further information in the *Monograph of Haiti* that the intelligence officers at Port au Prince compiled in 1932.

The intelligence officers of the Marine Brigade in Port au Prince reacted to the instability of the Borno regime by using targeted political intelligence. Previously this information received had come from gendarmerie reports, intelligence personnel reports, and randomly scattered reports voluntarily given from local citizens. The gendarmerie reports provided vital information about political or social conditions in the many garrison towns throughout Haiti.<sup>390</sup> This report gave insight into specific individuals from those localities and helped to paint a picture of major shifts.<sup>391</sup> The weakness of these reports was that they were the observations of the military leadership rather than inside information. The intelligence from this source also lacked a national perspective that now had become vital. Intelligence personnel serving in Port au Prince could provide intelligence on nationally significant targets, but they remained outside the inner circles of nearly all of those who were now politically influential. The voluntary citizen reports

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<sup>388</sup> Mary A. Renda, *Taking Haiti: Military Occupation and the Culture of U.S. Imperialism, 1915-1940*, (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2001), 86.

<sup>389</sup> District Commander, “Report of District of Las Cohabas,” December 31, 1918, Records of U.S. Marines in Haiti, series 127.8.1, Box Commandant Gendarmerie, folder 7, U.S. National Archives, Washington D.C.

<sup>390</sup> Ibid.

<sup>391</sup> Ibid.

had primarily consisted of folks exposing their neighbors, often without much result in vital political or military intelligence.<sup>392</sup> The previous methods had led to somewhat of a shotgun spread of political intelligence that worked fine under the Dartiguenave regime, which gave deference to the American High Commissioner Russell. Louis Borno, a pro-American politician that worked to improve Haiti's economic situation, replaced Dartiguenave in 1922 as president of Haiti.<sup>393</sup> The changing political situation required a more targeted approach that gave specific intelligence on the political movements in the capital.

The use of secret agents that had access to the top levels of the political hierarchy provided the needed information. Among the first "secret service" agents found in the record was a Mr. Rupert who described anti-American speeches in his reports as early as May 18, 1921.<sup>394</sup> The most prolific of these new agents were Agent Paul and Robert Lan. The intelligence reports did not give any other description of either of them other than that they had significant political influence and were sympathetic to the goals of the occupation. Lan's reports began to appear sporadically in the record in September 1919, but he became a regular informant in January of 1923 and ended his service around December of 1924. Some of the earliest reports from Paul begin to appear in the record from 1927 and stop coming in May of 1930. Robert Lan gave significant insight into the

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<sup>392</sup> A. B. Drum, "Unrest in Plaine Du Cul de Sac," November 19, 1921, Records of U.S. Marines in Haiti, series 127.8.1, Box Intelligence Reports 1921-1934, folder 5, U.S. National Archives, Washington D.C.

<sup>393</sup> Hans Schmidt, *The United States Occupation of Haiti, 1915-1934* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1995), 126.

<sup>394</sup> Mr. Rupert, Intelligence Report, May 18 1921, Records of U.S. Marines in Haiti, series 127.8.1, Box Office of Commandant 1915-1923, folder 18, U.S. National Archives, Washington D.C.-The term "secret service" is specifically written on the transcription along with a handwritten note adding to the information typed up.

new regime under President Borno. Some of the intelligence that Paul gave included the names of the founding members of the opposition party, the Union Patriotique, founded by the U.S. NAACP.<sup>395</sup> By 1927 the Borno regime had started to lose ground with the population, and Paul often provided information about how they attempted to remain in power.<sup>396</sup>

The increased reliance on political agents shows the breakdown of relations between the Borno-Russell regime and the people. Russell maintained his authority, first as brigade commander and then as High Commissioner, through force and intrigue. The intelligence staff of the Marine brigade maintained political agents right up until the end of the Borno regime.<sup>397</sup> At this point, the occupation forces turned over political control to the Stenio regime and did not attempt to interfere seriously in Haitian affairs. They focused instead on Haitianization and preparing an exit strategy that would leave Haiti robust enough to stand on its own.<sup>398</sup>

For much of the occupation the Americans maintained political stability by leaving the Assemblée Nationale dissolved, but after the strikes and student rallies of late 1929, the Americans felt forced to allow free popular elections.<sup>399</sup> Much like the North Vietnamese Tet offensive of 1968, the strikes of 1929 changed American policy in the occupied nation. The State Department rapidly implemented a program of Haitianization

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<sup>395</sup> Agent Paul, Confidential Intelligence Report, Circa 1930, Series 127.8.1, Box Office of Commandant of the Gendarmerie, folder 20, U.S. National Archives, Washington D.C.

<sup>396</sup> Ibid.

<sup>397</sup> Ibid.

<sup>398</sup> Robert Debs Heintz and Nancy Gordon Heintz, *Written in Blood: The Story of the Haitian People 1492-1995* (Lanham, MD.: UPA, 2005), 457.

<sup>399</sup> Hans Schmidt, *The United States Occupation of Haiti, 1915-1934*, (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1995), 204.

without regard to the training of those given new responsibilities.<sup>400</sup> Before that point, Haitianization had been slow and laborious but now it took on a tone of desperation.<sup>401</sup> Finding those willing to work with the unpopular American regime became increasingly difficult as the inevitability of the end of the occupation became clear. The Forbes Commission, sent by President Hoover because of the deaths of Haitian civilians during the demonstrations, sought to replace Russell and Haitian President Louis Borno.<sup>402</sup> The Forbes plan suggested that the Haitians vote in a new temporary President in the interim before free elections.<sup>403</sup> Much of the unrest in Haiti had occurred due to Borno's unpopularity and the people's desire for free elections after waiting nearly fifteen years. Eugene Roy took the Presidency in May 1930 while legislative elections took place in October of 1930.<sup>404</sup> The votes went against the pro-American and even moderate candidates. Many of the new anti-occupation legislators received support from the people because of the prison sentences they had served for speaking out against the occupation.<sup>405</sup> The nationalist assembly chose Stenio Vincent as the new President.<sup>406</sup> This new political power of the opposition combined with rapid Haitianization created the potential for the loss of military autonomy for the American occupation.

The dramatic shift in the authority seemed to require increased surveillance of the

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<sup>400</sup> Ibid., 207.

<sup>401</sup> Robert Debs Heinl and Nancy Gordon Heinl, *Written in Blood: The Story of the Haitian People 1492-1995* (Lanham, MD.: UPA, 2005), 456.

<sup>402</sup> Hans Schmidt, *The United States Occupation of Haiti, 1915-1934* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1995), 208.

<sup>403</sup> Ibid., 215.

<sup>404</sup> Ibid., 219.

<sup>405</sup> Ibid., 219.

<sup>406</sup> Ibid., 219.

new political elite, but instead, there is a notable decrease in the information collected about the political movements in Haiti after 1930. There are several reasons for this change; the first is simply that intelligence personnel focused on the exit strategy and what they could do to develop intelligence that would help future military endeavors in Haiti. The creation of the *Monograph of Haiti* is a clear response to this problem. Intelligence officers did not finish it until 1932, and its purpose is clearly to prepare for future expeditions to Haiti.

The second reason for the lack of political intelligence post-1930 is that few had time to worry about a forgone conclusion. The need for intelligence had existed because the High Commissioner had attempted to keep the Haitian government under his influence, but now that an anti-American regime had taken over, few felt that the intelligence would be worth their time to collect. Finally, the agents that came forward to provide intelligence on the Borno regime had been sympathetic to the occupation; now the Haitian government did not include hardly any that believed the occupation should continue.<sup>407</sup> Marine Corps intelligence officers simply had no potential sources for political intelligence after 1930.

In 1921, the intelligence staff officers attached to the 1<sup>st</sup> Provisional Brigade began a project that resulted in an impressive catalog of information on Haiti. The *Monograph of Haiti* stands as a pinnacle of intelligence work done by U.S. Marines in their country. The information contained in the monograph provides an in-depth view at the total sum of intelligence the Marines gathered during their time nearly twenty years of

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<sup>407</sup> Ibid., 219.



occupation. They did not complete the monograph until 1932, but the intelligence reports of 1921 played a major role in the creation of this work. This large unpublished book contains an intelligence analysis of the nation as a whole and each town individually. Statistics and general statements by intelligence officers attempted to describe the society, politics, economics, infrastructure, military, and even environmental conditions.<sup>408</sup> In the preface, the authors clearly define the purpose of their compilation.

“The object of this book is to provide operative, and war plans information upon the Republic of Haiti. A monograph aims to be so thorough a description of the country upon which it is written that the commander of an expedition approaching its coast will have at his disposal all the information obtainable to commence active operations in case of hostile invasion or a peaceful occupation, and to facilitate his diplomatic and routine mission in time of peace.”<sup>409</sup>

The intelligence personnel created a document they believed could be used when the U.S. returned to Haiti. The monograph did not long serve a function as a living document because of the removal of U.S. forces only two years after its original

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<sup>408</sup> Issuing body United States. Marine Corps. Division of Operations and Training. Intelligence Section and former owner NcD Marine Corps University (U. S.), *Monograph Republic of Haiti Compiled 1932 : (Revisions Regularly Made from the Date of Compilation)* (Washington, D.C. : Intelligence Section, Division of Operations and Training, Headquarters, U.S. Marine Corps, 1932, 1932), <http://archive.org/details/MonographOfHaiti1932>,

<sup>409</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

completion. The first major topic in the monograph covers the environment of Haiti.<sup>410</sup> Lists of islands, mountain ranges, bodies of water, and plains with brief analysis help the reader gain a thorough view of the general physical conditions in Haiti.<sup>411</sup> The intelligence officers included an up-to-date map in this section.<sup>412</sup> Clearly, they had learned from the challenges of the early days of the occupation when inaccurate maps of unfamiliar territory resulted in ambushes and a series of challenges in tracking enemy movements.

An analysis of the political conditions in Haiti centered on U.S. views about Haiti's chronic political problems. The Marines included a copy of the constitution of Haiti drafted in 1932.<sup>413</sup> This information could be very useful to future occupation forces looking to avoid constitutional faux pas. The descriptions of the national situation begin with a brief history of the political evolution since the start of the occupation in 1915.<sup>414</sup> Each political office and its powers make up the next twenty pages. Then they described how the Haitian political system functioned in their experience.<sup>415</sup> The next part of that section covered the political factions. The previous use of sources like Agent Paul and Robert Lan certainly made this analysis possible. The following brief political history of a pre-occupation of Haiti shows how the intelligence officers still acknowledged the basis of the occupation. They depicted Haiti as an unstable and poorly led republic that lacked

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<sup>410</sup> Ibid., 3.

<sup>411</sup> Ibid., 49.

<sup>412</sup> Ibid., 51.

<sup>413</sup> Ibid., 61.

<sup>414</sup> Ibid., 89.

<sup>415</sup> Ibid., 89.

the political continuity to succeed economically.<sup>416</sup> The writers warn against the use of newspapers by the opposition under a section labeled “Propaganda.” The author relates, “The propogands against Louis Borno was admittedly well done.”<sup>417</sup> He goes on to bemoan the loss of popular support, ascribed almost exclusively to the use of propaganda by the opposition. Overall political conditions in Haiti appear to be similar to those at the start of the occupation.

The section on social conditions in Haiti conforms to the view that many Marines espoused of two split classes. The monograph states, “Haiti is essentially divided into two great classes, the elite or educated class, and the peon, or uneducated class.”<sup>418</sup> In this part intelligence personnel interestingly encourage the courteous treatment of the educated classes. Then the monograph goes on to compare the salons to France to the homes of the elites and rural hinterland to Africa.<sup>419</sup> This view is not all that different from initial impressions described by the Marines that first landed in 1915.<sup>420</sup> The lack of change in perspective seems to belie a lack of intellectual engagement in the question of social conditions in Haiti. It is not too surprising that this analysis is simplistic due to the clerical nature of intelligence staff officer’s duties and the deeply held cultural perspective about Haiti that did not meet with much opposition.

The environmental and economic conditions take up the rest of the section on

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<sup>416</sup> Ibid., 130.

<sup>417</sup> Ibid., 202.

<sup>418</sup> Ibid., 237.

<sup>419</sup> Ibid., 237.

<sup>420</sup> Mary A. Renda, *Taking Haiti: Military Occupation and the Culture of U.S. Imperialism, 1915-1940*, (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2001), 5.

national circumstances. The topics of this section are intertwined by how deeply the groups affected one another in the view of the writers. Mostly this section uses statistics gathered during the occupation to illustrate the weak but improving economic potential of the island nation.

The basic descriptions of the three main military districts established as part of the military occupation precede reports on the many towns throughout Haiti.<sup>421</sup> The use of regional and the area-specific analysis is an effective method. Haiti remained a regionally divided place even throughout the occupation. The political alliances, economic centers of gravity, and the culture could be different from region to region.<sup>422</sup> The regional level view of Haiti also gives the region a more thorough description of how individual cities related to one another economically and politically. The writers explained the important distinctions between economic and political centers.<sup>423</sup> The analysis of each town in alphabetical order, complete with aerial photos and road maps, gives real insight into how an occupation force could again direct those towns.<sup>424</sup> The lists of great citizens and communications equipment show the priorities that had developed during the occupation.<sup>425</sup>

The information contained in the monograph clearly shows the final peak of the development of Marine Corps intelligence in Haiti. The in-depth analysis of political,

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<sup>421</sup> Keith B. Bickel, *Mars Learning: The Marine Corps Development of Small Wars Doctrine, 1915-1940* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2001), 81.

<sup>422</sup> Robert Debs Heinl and Nancy Gordon Heinl, *Written in Blood: The Story of the Haitian People 1492-1995* (Lanham, MD.: UPA, 2005), 417.

<sup>423</sup> Marine Corps University (U. S.), *Monograph Republic of Haiti Compiled 1932*, 484.

<sup>424</sup> *Ibid.*, 317.

<sup>425</sup> *Ibid.*, 506.

social, economic, environmental and military conditions illustrate how officers, tasked with intelligence duties, had come to fulfill their role effectively. Further, the wide-ranging topic coverage shows that the poor organization of intelligence had given way to systematic processes for keeping records. The geographical intelligence is especially interesting because it proves that they had learned the value of good maps and robust environment intelligence. The foresight for creating a single source for intelligence information shows how the reforms of intelligence organization under Russell had affected the way the staff interacted with intelligence data. The Marines that many believed would have to return in only a few years would be better prepared than those that came before them because they would have access to this incredible compendium of intelligence.

The *Monograph of Haiti* proves the improvement of intelligence methods and technologies from the beginning of the occupation to the end. Marines in Haiti had learned that they could avoid the pitfalls of the past through intelligence work. Marines trying to get out of Haiti during the last few years of the occupation took the time to compile all their collected intelligence into one volume for future use; this project shows how much some had come to value intelligence information.

There is little evidence that the intelligence staff did much intelligence work beyond the creation of the monograph. The complex nature of the monograph project more than likely took up much of the time that the intelligence staff had to accomplish its tasks. The Intelligence staff had to type all the pages of the monograph, and do all the research on the different topics covered within the over 900 pages of content. It is logical

that when facing an inevitable withdrawal, the intelligence staff would focus on intelligence work that could be useful during future operations in the region. The use of political agents ends abruptly after the elections of 1930, and, interestingly, that coincided with Russell's reassignment to the "Planning Section" at Quantico.<sup>426</sup> The intelligence staff then focused on their withdrawal plans and the monograph.<sup>427</sup> It's hard to measure the efficacy of the Monograph of Haiti because the U.S. did not intervene in Haiti again until the Clinton administration in 1994. Intelligence officers compiled the information thoroughly cataloged and analyzed it to provide context to future occupations. If the Marines landing in Haiti in 1915 had had access to a work such as the monograph, they could have easily avoided some of the intelligence pitfalls of the early years.

The improvements in intelligence during the final years of the occupation took on many of the chronic problems inherent in occupation duties. The intelligence staff greatly aided the progress of the intelligence work done by all Marines in Haiti. These staff officers provided substantial improvements to the documentation process and organized incoming information to make it useful to the high command. Russell's centralization of intelligence reporting system greatly amplified efficiency. The intensified use of technology, including the airplane and wireless communications, made collecting intelligence in a centralized way possible. The political shifts in the central government of Haiti and the new arrangements of the occupation leadership made political

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<sup>426</sup> Hans Schmidt, *The United States Occupation of Haiti, 1915-1934* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1995), 220.

<sup>427</sup> Robert Debs Heintz and Nancy Gordon Heintz, *Written in Blood: The Story of the Haitian People 1492-1995* (Lanham, MD.: UPA, 2005), 457.

intelligence increasingly pursued. The grand finale, the *Monograph of Haiti* provided information about Haiti for future generations. Few Marines at the outset of the occupation could have imagined how military intelligence would change during their mission and how they would play a part in its changes.

## CHAPTER VI

## CONCLUSION

Changes wrought over time by human beings occur in messy and unpredictable ways. The improvements in intelligence methodology and technology developed slowly during the occupation of Haiti. Few Marines, in the beginning, could have imagined the way intelligence would change the campaign. At times throughout the campaign individual Marines sped up the process due to necessity or because of a personal belief. The documentary evidence shows how the desire to serve, personal beliefs, and previous experience all affected the way each Marine contributed to the changes in intelligence practices. More often than not, outside events (most importantly WWI), altered the way Marines viewed and accomplished intelligence work.

The initial intelligence techniques used by the Marines relied heavily on the local population with which they could only rarely communicate. Naval officers and State Department officials used agents to collect political intelligence about the Haitian elites but the names of any agents employed and even the information they collected never made it into the possession of the Marines.<sup>428</sup> The forced guides of the large patrols at times proved useful, but in other moments turned out to be dangerous.<sup>429</sup> The ambush of Smedley Butler's patrol outside Fort Capois nearly gave a victory to the caco bands.<sup>430</sup> The disparity in arms proved to be the deciding factor of the first caco campaign because

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<sup>428</sup> Hans Schmidt, *The United States Occupation of Haiti, 1915-1934* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1995), 73.

<sup>429</sup> Lowell Thomas, *Old Gimlet Eye: The Adventures of Smedley D. Butler* (New York: Marine Corps Assn, 1981), 191.

<sup>430</sup> *Ibid.*, 193.



even the best-laid traps of the rebel forces could not overcome automatic weapons. The offers of bribes, the obvious superiority of Marine weaponry, and the belief that the intervention would only be temporary all motivated the cacos to end their resistance. The lack of any cataloging information relating to the caco bands including, locations, names, and possible source list about caco activities turned out to be a folly that would only be fully felt during the second caco campaign. A quick victory over an enemy that the U.S. perceived as illegitimate may have also given the impression that the collection of intelligence on cacos was not needed. The lack of consistent intelligence doctrine or even full time intelligence staff did not help to motivate the use of intelligence. After the abandonment of the Marines by the U.S. State Department, the political agents they employed ceased to be known, and Marine Corps leadership in Haiti made no attempt to obtain new agents of that sort.

The treaty-related duties of the Marines in Haiti became the central focus of the occupiers shortly after the reduction of hostilities with the cacos. Smedley Butler and others jumped at a chance to build a new and improved Haiti.<sup>431</sup> Unfortunately, in the process of trying to improve the infrastructure and reform government systems, the Marines caused a good deal of harm to their cause. The high-handed means used by them and condoned by the State Department undermined much of the potential goodwill the occupation could have enjoyed from reform-minded middle and upper class people. The use of the *corvée* system alienated many of the lower class members of society by essentially being white-driven slavery by another name. The deeply felt fear of slavery

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<sup>431</sup> Hans Schmidt, *The United States Occupation of Haiti, 1915-1934* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1995), 86.

from the not-so-distant past and the strong national pride in the revolution against the tyranny of slavery gave any Haitian motive to hate the occupiers. Despite some good desires to improve Haiti, much of the work accomplished by the occupation in this period made finding intelligence sources more difficult. The little intelligence work that the Marines did do in this period focused on the German minority. The outbreak of WWI in April of 1917 increased the pace of this intelligence work and blinded the occupation to the growing dissatisfaction among the Haitian people. This misdirected focus of intelligence proved costly when, without much forewarning, a revolt began in Hinche in October of 1918.

The intelligence failures of the previous period provided an opportunity to learn a great deal from the combat that was to come during the caco revolt of 1919. The intelligence priority eventually became the tracking down of Charlemagne Peralte, the main leader of the uprising.<sup>432</sup> The leadership at headquarters started to implement policies to improve the gathering, analysis, and distribution of intelligence but most of these did not come into play until after a single Marine acted out an incredible feat of intelligence work to kill Peralte. The use of counterintelligence and positive intelligence proved the most crucial tool in Hanneken's plot to assassinate Peralte. Agents, planting false intelligence, creating a fake army, and making deceptive assaults on enemy positions all created a false reality for Peralte that he could not see through.<sup>433</sup> Peralte changed the game multiple times, but because of well-placed intelligence sources,

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<sup>432</sup> Robert Debs Heintz and Nancy Gordon Heintz, *Written in Blood: The Story of the Haitian People 1492-1995* (Lanham, MD.: UPA, 2005), 420.

<sup>433</sup> Account of H. H. Hanneken in Haiti, circa 1920, Lewis B. "Chesty" Puller Collection, Series 9/A/5/1, Box 1, Folder 1, U.S. Marine Corps Archives, Quantico, VA.

Hanneken countered him without missing a step. Eventually, the ability of Hanneken and his chief lieutenant to use the native language also proved highly valuable to the operation.<sup>434</sup> The occupation leadership took note of Hanneken's skills and intelligence activities that produced such a dramatic success. They internalized many of those lessons and incorporated them into the reform that they planned for the occupation forces in Haiti.

The reforms of John H. Russell Jr. gave occupying forces their first real intelligence apparatus in the modern sense of the term. Russell streamlined the intelligence reporting system by establishing his authority as commander of Marine brigade to receive all reports even those of the separate commander Gendarmerie.<sup>435</sup> His use of intelligence officers, or at least Marine Corps officers that had intelligence duties provided a group responsible for the analysis and distribution of intelligence. The use of intelligence staff for headquarters had become commonplace during WWI and Russell's time at ONI helped him to understand the importance of this type of work.<sup>436</sup> The improved form of documentation for intelligence reports also aided those serving in the far-flung commands of the gendarmerie garrisons know precisely what information the headquarters wanted to receive. Headquarters renewed the use of agents to keep track of political maneuverings among the Haitian elites. These agents mostly came forward of their own accord, but this time the Marines recruited them for full-time espionage rather

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<sup>434</sup> Ibid.

<sup>435</sup> John H. Russell, "General Operations," January 2, 1920, Records of U.S. Marines in Haiti, series 127.8.1, Box Office of Commandant 1915-1923, folder 18, U.S. National Archives, Washington D.C.

<sup>436</sup> Jeffery M. Dorwart, *The Office of Naval Intelligence: The Birth of America's first Intelligence Agency 1865-1918* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1979), 96-97.

than send them on their way with simple thanks.<sup>437</sup> The new intelligence officers analyzed and translated the documents that the political agents submitted to the occupation. Then they sent them to the leadership of both the gendarmerie and the Marine Brigade. The intelligence officers also took on a project to catalog any pertinent intelligence information about all towns of any note throughout Haiti.<sup>438</sup> The project began in 1921 and gave vital context to weekly intelligence reports that continued to come in from garrison commanders in those areas. Eventually, this project turned into the *Monograph of Haiti*. The intelligence staff intended this publication to provide intelligence information for incoming Marines serving in Haiti. Once the occupation ended the creators' hoped the monograph could guide any future expeditions to Haiti.

The dramatic improvements in intelligence over time in Haiti contain an important story. Human attempts to improve often occur in the context of strife and this is certainly the case here. The greatest breakthroughs occurred because conflict forced the occupation forces to adapt. Changes that came from outside sources also, most importantly, resulted from WWI, one of the most difficult conflicts of the twentieth century. The failures of the first few years of the occupation related to intelligence but they did not occur exclusively because of a lack of intelligence. Improved military intelligence facilitated the defeat of rebel forces in Haiti, but once again intelligence did not play the only role in the Marines' victory. This paper has explained how and why the

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<sup>437</sup> F. E. Evens, "Confidential" Report, January 22, 1920, Records of U.S. Marines in Haiti, series 127.8.1, Box Intelligence Reports 1915-1920, folder 35, U.S. National Archives, Washington D.C.

<sup>438</sup> R.L. Shepard, "Intelligence Report subject-Grand Gosier," May, 19 1921, Records of U.S. Marines in Haiti, series 127.8.1, Box Intelligence Reports 1920-1923, folder 17, U.S. National Archives, Washington D.C.

use of intelligence changed over time during this particular campaign. Many of the improvements that the Marines instituted during their time in Haiti did not get translated into larger doctrine but some lessons did go on in the lives of those who learned from personal experience. Future works on the Haitian campaign should seek to define how and why military success came to the Marines when political success remained elusive.

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