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HEARINGS

Before the

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ISCAP Appeal No. 2019-049, Document 1  
Declassification Date: August 31, 2026

Subcommittee on Sea Power and Force Projection

of the

Committee on Armed Services

## UNITED STATES SENATE

TO RECEIVE TESTIMONY ON S. 2453, A BILL  
TO ENHANCE THE CAPABILITIES OF THE UNITED  
STATES TO COMBAT TERRORISM AND OTHER FORMS  
OF UNCONVENTIONAL WARFARE

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BY: \_\_\_\_\_

Washington, D.C.

August 5, 1986

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C O N T E N T S

STATEMENT OF:

PAGE

Major General Richard A. Scholtes

United States Army (Retired)

Former Commander, Joint Special

Operations Command

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1 TO RECEIVE TESTIMONY ON S. 2453, A BILL  
2 TO ENHANCE THE CAPABILITIES OF THE UNITED STATES  
3 TO COMBAT TERRORISM AND OTHER FORMS OF  
4 UNCONVENTIONAL WARFARE

5  
6 TUESDAY, AUGUST 5, 1986

7  
8 United States Senate  
9 Committee on Armed Services  
10 Subcommittee on Sea Power &  
11 Force Projection  
12 Washington, D. C.

13 The Subcommittee met in executive session, pursuant to  
14 other business, at 11:55 a.m., in Room SR-222, Russell  
15 Senate Office Building, The Honorable William S. Cohen,  
16 (Chairman of the Subcommittee), presiding.

17 Members Present: Senators William S. Cohen and  
18 J. James Exon.

19 Committee Staff Member Present: Jeffrey H. Smith,  
20 Minority Counsel.

21 Professional Staff Members Present: George K.  
22 Johnson, Jr., James R. Locher, III, and Patricia L. Watson.

23 Staff Assistant Present: Barbara B. Brown.

24 Committee Members' Assistants Present: Christopher  
25 Mellon, Assistant to Senator Cohen; Allan W. Cameron,

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1 Assistant to Denton; and Jeffrey B. Subko, Assistant to  
2 Senator Exon.

3  
4 :Senator Cohen: General, why don't you proceed.

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1 STATEMENT OF MAJOR GENERAL RICHARD A. SCHOLTES

2 UNITED STATES ARMY (RETIRED)

3 FORMER COMMANDER, JOINT SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND

4 General Scholtes: I would address an issue that the  
5 Doctor mentioned a few minutes ago to Senator Exon with  
6 regard to the counterterrorist capability of our U. S.  
7 forces in comparison to those of our allies.

8 I would like to emphasize that we train with the  
9 German GSG-9, General Baker's organization, and General  
10 Frito's organization, and the French GIGM and British SAS  
11 on a continuous basis. From my experience from '81 to '84  
12 when we got into an extensive training program and at the  
13 same time trained our own FBAs in counterterrorist  
14 organization, none of those organizations could compete  
15 25X5

16 If I could, sir, one of the reasons for my feeling  
17 with regard to the House proposed reorganization concerns  
18 the fact that if we were to organize with an agency, we  
19 would confuse an already unclear command relationship. We  
20 would confuse it even further.

21 Plus, I am absolutely convinced, based on my  
22 experience, with only the one operation we conducted, the  
23 Grenada operation, but numerous ones we planned under the  
24 Joint Chiefs of Staff, that these must be completed and  
25 commanded through the military chain of command.

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1 I think the House proposal violates the simplicity and  
2 unity of command requirements. That is when I come, of  
3 course, to the Senate proposal because my only indication  
4 with regard to the need of the Unified Command is not so  
5 much that I think we need a four star, because most  
6 Unified Commanders are four stars, but I think we need  
7 the title and the position and the prestige associated with  
8 being a Unified Commander because of the problems that I as  
9 a Commander of JOSOC faced during the four years I  
10 commanded the command was the misunderstanding of the  
11 Unified Commanders as to my responsibility to the Chairman  
12 and to the Secretary of Defense and at that time and today  
13 the Joint Special Operations Commander works directly for  
14 the Chairman through the J-3 and, of course, for the  
15 Secretary of Defense.

16 Most of our problems were in the parochialism of the  
17 Unified Commanders, that they did not want us playing on  
18 their turf. They were afraid if we got in their turf, we  
19 would be able to talk directly to Washington and as a  
20 result, we would possibly not do what they wanted us to  
21 do.

22 Fortunately, they are all professionals and we never  
23 encountered a situation that even got close to being out  
24 of hand.

25 The problem in the Grenada operation was not so much

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1 the fact that anyone did not do his job well. There were  
2 certain problems associated with that mission that were  
3 not of a military nature that no one, I think, has ever  
4 really understood that caused part of the problems with  
5 regard to the success of the operation and in some people's  
6 minds possibly even some for of failure.

7 There is a little known fact that the mission of the  
8 Special Operations Forces, the Special Forces associated  
9 with that operation, changed approximately nine times from  
10 the time I received the first call from the Chairman of  
11 the JCS, which was on Thursday, the 20th of October.

12 As you may recall, and, of course, it is clear in my  
13 mind, but some of the people who did not live it may not  
14 be so clear, on the 19th of October Bishop was murdered.  
15 At that time we were putting on a demonstration for the  
16 Secretary of Defense's personnel of our capabilities. I  
17 was at that time flying back in a 141 with John Vessey.  
18 We got a message with regard to the death of Bishop and  
19 immediately began a process which we begin anytime there  
20 is a crisis or potential crisis, of looking at where is  
21 this place called Grenada, what implications could it  
22 have on Americans who are living there.

23 We knew where the island was, how many were there. We  
24 knew there were certain education facilities for so-called  
25 medical schools.

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1           On the 20th of October the Chairman called me and  
2 indicated there was a potential problem in Grenada and asked  
3 us to develop a unilateral plan as to how we could go in  
4 and review American citizens, particularly the students,  
5 should the need arise.

6           We worked all that night. We developed a plan. Early  
7 the next morning we learned that the Chairman, and he  
8 called me again, thought that the situation was such that  
9 he was going to put this under the operational command of  
10 CINCLANT, Admiral McDonald's headquarters. We were told  
11 to go brief Admiral McDonald on our concept of the operation,  
12 which I had given to General Vessey.

13           We had developed a target list based on guidance I  
14 had received from the Chairman. We determined all that we  
15 thought was critical. We briefed Admiral McDonald. He  
16 concurred in most areas, but again was not familiar totally  
17 with the capabilities of the command since he had never  
18 witnessed the Joint Special Operations Command in any of  
19 its activities.

20           He modified some of -- I should not say modified --  
21 he asked us to modify some of what we were doing because  
22 he could not quite understand how we could do it all at  
23 night under cover of darkness.

24           We as a command felt we should never operate in  
25 daylight. We concentrated all our training during the

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1 hours of darkness. We wanted to launch at 0200. We felt  
2 we needed to rehearse the plan and bring the forces  
3 together which presented a problem to you because one of  
4 our Ranger battalions was in Seattle, Washington, at Fort  
5 Lewis and we had to somehow bring it to the East Coast,  
6 and we had to bring all of the other forces together and  
7 then launch.

8 We felt that the earliest we could do was probably in  
9 the neighborhood of 72 hours considering we needed to  
10 rehearse some of the forces. We were told by Admiral  
11 McDonald we would probably have 56 hours to pull the mission  
12 off from the time of the decision to go.

13 We continued the planning with his staff throughout  
14 Friday, the 21st, Saturday, the 22nd. We had a target  
15 listing which was pretty good. The intelligence support was  
16 much better than most people believed it was.

17 We, because of our relationship with the intelligence  
18 community, had a much closer tie to each one of the  
19 intelligence agencies than any of the Unified Commanders  
20 did because we had to work with them on a continuing basis  
21 and because we had at our headquarters direct communications  
22 with each of the intelligence agencies, CIA, DIA, et cetera.

23 On Sunday, the 23rd of October, Admiral McDonald, and  
24 again Admiral McDonald had on Saturday talked to me about  
25 using the Marines, incorporating the Marines into the

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1 opetation. The Marines were at that time steaming toward  
2 the island of Grenada. They had been going to Beirut, had  
3 been diverted and were steaming toward the Island of  
4 Grenada.

5 Sunday, the 23rd, Admiral McDonald was to brief the  
6 Service Chiefs in the Tank on the operations plan. We went  
7 in there and, of course, that Sunday, as you may recall,  
8 is also the Sunday the Marine barracks in Beirut were  
9 blown up. We went in there.

10 There was a considerable amount of discussion. After  
11 this discussion, it was decided the plan as briefed by  
12 Admiral McDonald where we were to take Point Salinas and  
13 Pearl Airfield which we felt was absolutely essential to  
14 get to the students.

15 If I may refer to the map, this airfield is right here.  
16 True Blue Campus is a thousand meters, less than a mile,  
17 off Point Salinas Airfield. Those were the most important  
18 things we had to do.

19 We also had Pearl Airfield located in this part of  
20 the island as backup. We felt we had to get it. All the  
21 other targets were around St. George, right in this area.  
22 It had to be the Governor-General's mansion because we had  
23 to get the Governor-General and secure him immediately.

24 We had to seize and possibly destroy the radio  
25 station. These were the things we felt were essential if

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1 we were to stop the Grenada Government and the military  
2 from interfering with us in the rescue of the students.

3 At the discussion around the table that morning in  
4 the Tank --

5 Senator Cohen: Sunday morning?

6 General Schlotes: Yes, sir. -- it was decided that  
7 the Marines would have to go ashore. Again, after  
8 considerable discussion, it was decided that they would  
9 take the northern half of the island. There were no  
10 targets in the northern half of the island except for  
11 Pearl, which was to us very important.

12 In essence, in they decided to divide the island. The  
13 Marines were to take the northern and JSOC was to take the  
14 southern half of the island.

15 The command and control issue then became a critical  
16 one, sir, because now we had a two-star purple-suited  
17 General, myself, in command of the southern half of the  
18 island, Joint Special Operations Forces, and a Marine  
19 amphibious task force commander, a Colonel, in charge of  
20 the Marines in the northern half of the island.

21 The question came as to who would run the operation.  
22 There was considerable discussion. It was decided by  
23 General Vessey and the CINC that the three-star would be  
24 put in charge and that was Admiral Metcalf.

25 Admiral Metcalf at this time was, I think, down in

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1 Florida and was not aware of the operation.

2 Senator Cohen: Was he part of your original JSOC  
3 plan?

4 General Scholtes: No, sir. I had never met Admiral  
5 Metcalf.

6 This was now Sunday, sir, and we were told we had to  
7 launch Tuesday morning, not launch, but D-Day, HR was  
8 Tuesday morning. We still were asking for 0200 H-Hour.

9 It was decided with the advent of the Marines going  
10 ashore we had to go so that it was just about daylight. In  
11 fact, we were told we would go at 0500. We had to go back  
12 and go to CINCLANT headquarters next morning and brief  
13 Admiral Metcalf.

14 Here I think is a key point, sir, that part of the  
15 potential for screwups with regard to organizational structure  
16 is not just the military because it was at that briefing  
17 at CINCLANT headquarters when I was briefing Admiral  
18 Metcalf and Admiral McDonald was there, that we had three  
19 members of the State Department present. They showed us  
20 a plan which was considerable length which was a step-by-  
21 step, hour-by-hour how we would take Grenada.

22 Senator Cohen: This was Monday?

23 General Scholtes: This was Monday, sir. I do not  
24 know the date of it, but it was at least 14 days old, to  
25 the best of my recollection.

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1 We had never seen that plan. It was also at this  
2 meeting Monday morning that we were told that the Richmond  
3 Hill Prison was a priority target and had to be taken.  
4 This was a State Department representative who said it had  
5 to be taken.

6 We did not think Richmond Hill was that important, but  
7 based on that guidance, we had to change the mission 25X5  
8 25X5 This was not a target, initial assault target, 25X5  
9 25X5

10 This was less than nine hours to their launch time  
11 they had to change their mission. I knew it; the 25X5  
12 commander did not. It also meant the Ranger missions had  
13 to be changed and a considerable number of other missions.

14 The CIA at that time also indicated they were certain  
15 that the airfield was not blocked, that there might be  
16 some minor blockages. In fact, that was erroneous  
17 information. What shocked us was that we were just getting  
18 the information and it was the same, it was less than 24  
19 hours before the assault.

20 We worked all that morning, went back to our  
21 headquarters, flew down, briefed our Ranger Commanders, 25X5  
22 25X5 We launched about 1800 hours.

23 Our first aircraft got everybody up and moving towards  
24 their targets and, unfortunately, our lead bird, as you may  
25 know, lost its inertial Nav system. The initial aircraft

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1 was to go in and drop and clear the runway, take the  
2 obstacles off the runway. That was their primary  
3 responsibility. Unfortunately, the lead aircraft lost its  
4 inertial Nav. It was a black bird. The average black bird  
5 in the Air Force today which is critical to the success of  
6 a SOF operation is about 20 years old. It is not state of  
7 the art, to say the least.

8 She lost her inertial Nav. We were running in stormy  
9 weather at the time. It was raining over the island. The  
10 number two bird could not pick up on the wing of number one.  
11 We had to berth what we called our clearing unit and bring  
12 the next three aircraft which were 30 minutes. It takes  
13 30 minutes to clear the runway, based on our experience.

14 By the time we brought our other three aircraft in, it  
15 was starting to get daylight. As a result, we came under  
16 fairly intense 23.2 cannon and 51-cal fire. Ironically,  
17 none of them were radar guns. They all had to be fired  
18 by eyeball. If it had been dark, they could not have seen  
19 the aircraft. Fortunately, they hit only a couple aircraft,  
20 none of them seriously. We were able to get to True Blue  
21 Campus.

22 Senator Exon mentioned with regard to this second  
23 group of students. It was only after we secured the True  
24 Blue Campus and had the students together and talking with  
25 them that we learned for the first time there was at

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1 Grand Arnse Campus a larger group of students. We sent  
2 patrols out to fix their location, reported that to Admiral  
3 Metcalf and prepared a helicopter assault for the next  
4 morning as soon as it was dark again.

5 We, unfortunately, had no helicopters left. I brought  
6 nine BLACKHAWKS in on the mission from Barbados. We flew  
7 them down in a C-5. They assaulted the Governor-General's  
8 mansion. They successfully seized the Governor-General  
9 and secured him.

10 They assaulted the radio station which they  
11 successfully seized and subsequently destroyed. They  
12 attempted to assault the Richmond Hill Prison. We found  
13 out later there was no one in the prison, although the State  
14 Department had given that to us as a priority target.

15 Unfortunately, all the aircraft that went to the  
16 Richmond Hill Prison were combat lost by enemy gunfire,  
17 23.2 and 50-cal. Only one of them crashed. The rest of  
18 them were unflyable as a result of those circumstances.

19 So, we could not launch with our Army Helicopters  
20 25X5 [REDACTED] We had to rely on Marine helicopters which  
21 they gave us the next morning.

22 By this time I had to pull my forces off the island  
23 because of the nature of our business. The 82nd Airborne  
24 Division had moved in. The 82nd elected to keep the  
25 Ranger battalions and use them in the assault role which

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1 they successfully concluded the next morning and were able  
2 to get the students from Gran Arnse Campus.

3 Senator Cohen: Can you explain why it was important  
4 or why you had to land about daybreak, change of plans?

5 General Scholtes: It was one of those things, sir,  
6 where even the Unified Commander in this case did not know  
7 the capabilities of his own forces. I am talking about  
8 somebody on Admiral McDonald's staff told the Admiral or  
9 convinced someone that the Marines that were launching from  
10 the LPH did not have the night vision capability to launch  
11 during the hours of darkness.

12 We did not know because we had never worked with that  
13 Marine unit. Later in talking to the Marine Commander of  
14 the LIC unit they, in fact, did have their goggles with  
15 them and were capable of doing a night operation, not in  
16 night assault, but they could have landed the Marines on  
17 the beach or near the airfield and could have done it at  
18 night. The point being that here again a Unified Commander,  
19 and I am not knocking Admiral McDonald, I did not know the  
20 capability of the Marines either. He did not know our  
21 capability.

22 Our primary emphasis in everything we did was to do it  
23 at night because, obviously, we have an advantage. We have  
24 sophisticated equipment. Our ACs can fire well at night,  
25 although again, sir, that is an old ship, but fortunately

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1 it was there that morning because it kind of pulled our fat  
2 out of the fire.

3 Senator Cohen: Basically your initial plan did not  
4 include the Marines at all?

5 General Scholtes: No, sir. My second battalion, 75th  
6 Rangers, was to take Pearl and from Pearl the SEALs would  
7 launch to seize their objectives by both the combination  
8 of little birds and BLACKHAWKS.

9 The first battalion, 75th, was going to go to Point  
10 Salinas and 25X5 would seize a number of  
11 targets. Then we envisioned -- hopefully, we did not know  
12 at that time that the 82nd Airborne Division would in fact  
13 come in -- we had hoped the 82nd would come in and take  
14 over the positions for us.

15 We did not want to keep 25X5 any of our  
16 Special Operations, unique Special Operations units, there  
17 when the media and everyone else arrived.

18 Senator Cohen: How did you feel as a two star in the  
19 Tank arguing your position?

20 General Scholtes: Admiral McDonald was helping me  
21 very well, sir. That is why I say I honestly believe either  
22 the OSD or JCS proposal for a minimum of a three star, but  
23 he had better have a great deal of authority because even  
24 with General Vessey there, who was the godfather of our  
25 outfit during that entire excursion, was not capable of

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1 swinging the day.

2 Senator Cohen: Will you tell us a little bit more  
3 about the interference by the State Department? Is this,  
4 in your experience, a normal activity?

5 General Scholtes: No, sir. That was the first time  
6 I ever witnessed anything like that. The State Department  
7 rep said to me --

8 Senator Cohen: Who was that?

9 General Scholtes: I wish I knew, sir. He made the  
10 comment to me -- I had asked for a 24-hour delay because I  
11 was convinced we did not know enough about the airfield  
12 at Point Salinas, as to its condition, how much was it  
13 blocked and could it take C-141 type aircraft.

14 I asked for a 24-hour delay. The State Department  
15 indicated that he was absolutely convinced that the Army  
16 was viewed by the people of that region, our Army was  
17 viewed by the people of that region as impotent. My request  
18 for delay was one more indication that it was.

19 Senator Cohen: Do you know who put together that  
20 State Department plan?

21 General Scholtes: I do not know, sir.

22 Senator Cohen: Is that the plan you ultimately  
23 followed?

24 General Scholtes: No, sir. One element of it we  
25 followed which we did not want to follow. The State

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1 Department rep that morning indicated that the assault  
2 elements <sup>25X5</sup> [REDACTED] which was to go in had two missions.

3 One group was to go in and seize the Governor-General's  
4 mansion. It is a very rough piece of terrain where the  
5 Governor-General's mansion is.

6 And one team was to go and seize the radio station.

7 We were told at this Monday morning session at CINCLANT  
8 that that force going to the Governor-General's mansion  
9 would take three civilians, State Department representatives,  
10 who would have with them a letter to give to Governor-  
11 General Schoon.

12 I commented since we were going into an assault, maybe  
13 we should takt the letter and leave the three individuals  
14 off. As it turned out, the helicopter which was carrying  
15 three individuals took intense gunfire, both of the pilots  
16 were wounded.

17 The reason we had a problem is we had to land these  
18 people. All of our people could fast rope so they could  
19 get on the ground in a hurry. We had to find a place to  
20 land the helicopter. The helicopter got shot up fairly  
21 severely and finally crashed on the deck of the carrier and  
22 stayed there until such time as I could give a lift bird  
23 and take it off the carrier and save it for us because I  
24 wanted the bird to give it back to Sikorsky os that he  
25 could look at the battle damage and see how we ended up.

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1 Senator Cohen: Those three civilians never made it?

2 General Scholtes: No, sir, they never did. The  
3 Governor-General did not need the letter. He was glad to  
4 see our people. He was very cooperative with our people.

5 Senator Cohen: Any concern on your part about the  
6 JCS having influenced this plan unnecessarily?

7 General Scholtes: The JCS did not really influence  
8 the plan. Most of the influence came from some changes in  
9 missions and associated with -- if I understand what you  
10 are getting at, sir, it would have been a little better had  
11 we not split the island in half at the last minute and set  
12 up a new whole command structure.

13 The Joint Operations Command by design has a superb  
14 communications ability, the JCU. It talks to Washington  
15 and it talks to Fort Bragg, regardless of where it is in  
16 the world. That day we were able to talk to Washington  
17 and to Fort Bragg, the assault day, but I could not talk  
18 to Admiral Metcalf, even though I had sent liaison teams  
19 to him, because he was relying on Wisky 3 fixed satellite  
20 antenna which does not communicate with our portable type  
21 systems.

22 Even though our liaison personnel were on the top deck,  
23 he was five decks below. By the time we get a message to  
24 him -- I finally landed on the island and went out on one  
25 of my birds to talk to him on the ship.

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1 Senator Cohen: Senator Exon.

2 Senator Exon: Thank you very much for your interesting  
3 comments.

4 I guess in the first place, why the Marines? Can you  
5 tell us why they were called in?

6 I took it from your statement that they probably were  
7 not needed, in your opinion.

8 General Scholtes: They were sent down there, sir, and  
9 I cannot specify the exact date, but I believe the Marines  
10 were diverted --

11 Senator Exon: You said they were on the way to Beirut.

12 General Scholtes: They were diverted to Grenada. I  
13 assume it was about the same time we began our planning.

14 Senator Exon: I suppose also they did not want them  
15 to go on toward Beirut. The bomb had just killed 220.

16 General Scholtes: Yes, sir. Well, it was Sunday  
17 morning, sir.

18 Senator Exon: Do you think they decided they had to  
19 have something to do, so they sent them down there to help  
20 you out?

21 General Scholtes: I do not know, sir.. I cannot  
22 answer that. I was not in that decision-making process.

23 Senator Exon: What we are getting at is what fears  
24 we have had that there was a general foul-up in overall  
25 command and control and they kept moving the people in.

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1 I was shocked about the top officer who was in Florida  
2 who knew nothing about the mission evidently was put in  
3 charge of that mission within 48 hours of your assault.

4 Is that right?

5 General Scholtes: Yes, sir. I hope you will understand,  
6 sir, this was also from the time we first got the first  
7 mission which was in fact Friday and we launched on Monday.  
8 This was a somewhat compressed time schedule for this type  
9 of operation.

10 I honestly, having served 32 years in the Army, did  
11 not think any Unified Command could put that together that  
12 fast.

13 Senator Exon: Why was it necessary to go on one  
14 Sunday or Monday or Tuesday?

15 General Scholtes: I do not know sir. That decision  
16 was made. The impression I got, in talking to Admiral  
17 McDonald, it was above his level.

18 Senator Cohen: Presumably there was something going  
19 on. There was fear about the lives of the students, the  
20 island becoming radicalized, and so forth.

21 Senator Exon: Did that come through the State  
22 Department?

23 General Scholtes: I do not know, sir.

24 Senator Exon: I think that is the fear. When we got  
25 in there, I think we found out that was not a legitimate

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1 fear. Certainly if they wanted to harm the students, they  
2 had ample time to harm the students when you were shooting  
3 up the airfield, did they not?

4 General Scholtes: I would say they would have been  
5 hard pressed, Senator.

6 Senator Exon: Hard pressed to do what?

7 General Scholtes: Hard pressed to harm the students  
8 unless they had them lined up, which they did not. If they  
9 were in fact being held hostage under gun, the minute the  
10 firing commenced, certainly if they had wanted to harm the  
11 students, they could have.

12 Senator Exon: They did not have a way to get troops  
13 over there, is that what you are telling me?

14 General Scholtes: They were busy with troops in a  
15 lot of other areas at that time, sir.

16 Senator Exon: Is it customary in your military  
17 training to have the State Department officials sitting at  
18 your elbows?

19 I took it from your testimony that they were kind of  
20 co-planners.

21 General Scholtes: I cannot say, sir, from the Joint  
22 Special Operations Command's perspective, but I do know the  
23 Unified Commands habitually have elements of the State  
24 Department in the intelligence community in all of their  
25 planning because it covers the entire spectrum of diplomacy

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1 as well as intelligence in the military aspects.

2 Senator Exon: Was the CIA involved?

3 General Scholtes: Yes, sir.

4 Senator Exon: Thank you very much.

5 Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

6 Senator Cohen: I think that is all we will ask for  
7 the record, General. I would like to impose on you later  
8 with Senator Nunn and Senator Exon.

9 General Scholtes: Yes, sir.

10 Senator Cohen: We stand adjourned.

11 [Whereupon, at 12:25 p.m., the Subcommittee adjourned,  
12 subject to the call of the Chair.]

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