



*From the Yak & Yeti  
to Port-au-Prince*

**ODA 155 Trains the Gurkhas**

by Kenneth Finlayson







The small country of Nepal lies between India and China, and is one of the poorest nations in the world. The economy of this nation of 29 million is largely dependent on agriculture and tourism.

1st Special Forces  
Group Flash



Two huge aircraft squatted on the runway as the soldiers began to file onboard. Around the perimeter of the airfield, anxious family members strained to catch a glimpse of their loved ones bound for a foreign land. As the last of the troops climbed into the airplanes, two groups of priests in full religious attire brought two goats to the front of each aircraft. Chanting prayers, waving flags, and swinging incense burners, they began blessing the aircraft. In the midst of the ceremony, the wicked *kukri* knives flashed and the goats were sacrificed. The priests then liberally anointed the soldiers inside and the noses of the airplanes with the goat's blood, to the delight of the crowd and consternation of the Air Force crews. Once properly blessed, the two aircraft lumbered up the taxiway, turned at the far end, and accelerated down the tarmac. As they roared down the runway, the crowds of people watching from the berms along the runway were blown backwards. The aircraft lifted off and the Gurkhas of the Nepalese Army were on their way to Haiti.



Nepalese in traditional Hindu religious attire. The blessing of the soldiers and the U.S. Air Force aircraft was done to ensure safe passage. To the dismay of the crew, the blood of sacrificed goats was used in the ceremony.

In 1995 the Nepalese Army contributed a 410-man battalion of Gurkha troops to the United Nations Mission in Haiti (UNMIH). They were trained and advised by Operational Detachment-Alpha 155 (ODA 155), 2nd Battalion, 1st Special Forces Group, Fort Lewis, Washington. This article will explain this unique mission, from its inception in November 1994 until ODA 155 returned from Haiti in April 1995. The story is one of coups, attempted coups, and strange foreign cultures with a touch of voodoo mixed in. All were part of the politically charged atmosphere of the shattered island of Haiti.

Nepal and then accompanied the Gurkhas to Haiti and advised them for four months.

The mission began with the Pre-deployment Site Survey (PDSS) in November 1994, the normal reconnaissance and coordination visit to establish rapport before the commencement of a mission. Captain (CPT) Maxey B. Carpenter, Commander, ODA 155 and six non-commissioned officers (NCOs) made up the PDSS. Enroute to Kathmandu, the capital city of Nepal, they stopped briefly in Dhaka, Bangladesh, to coordinate with the U.S. Defense Attaché and the Military Assistance Advisory Group (MAAG) which had responsibility for Nepal. Their coordination completed, the team flew to Kathmandu.

United Nations peacekeeping was not foreign to the Nepalese Army in 1995. They had supported thirteen UN operations since 1958.<sup>1</sup> Nepalese troops had worked in Lebanon, the Sinai, Somalia, Tajikistan, and Iraq. What was different this time was the presence of United States Army Special Forces (SF) soldiers as trainers and advisors to the Nepalese contingent. ODA 155 trained them in

The SF team was billeted in the famous Yak & Yeti Hotel, the renowned gathering place for Western mountaineering expeditions preparing to assault Mount Everest and the other giant Himalayan peaks. They began their initial coordination at the Nepalese Army





A taxi in Dhaka, the capital of Bangladesh. The first stop for the Special Forces team was Dhaka, to coordinate with the U.S. Military Assistance and Advisory Group that had responsibility for Nepal.



The bustling capital city provided a wealth of strange sights and sounds for the Special Forces soldiers.



A view of the famous Yak and Yeti hotel. The Nepalese economy is heavily dependent on dollars generated by tourism, particularly mountaineering and trekking.

headquarters in Kathmandu. It was here that they got their first exposure to the famous Gurkha troops who have played a prominent role in Nepalese history.

Nepal's history began as one of numerous small separate kingdoms dating back to 500 AD. In the 1700's Prithvi Narayan Shah of the Kingdom of Gorkha and his fierce warriors conquered the Kathmandu Valley. He moved on to conquer and unify the country.<sup>2</sup> The descendents of Prithvi Shah's Army, today's Gurkhas, have an outstanding reputation as soldiers, especially

during their long history of service with the British Army dating to 1841.<sup>3</sup>

"There are basically three levels of Gurkha troops, depending on whom they fight for," said CPT Carpenter. "The top tier goes to the British Army's Brigade of Gurkhas. The second goes to the Indian Army, and the third serve at home in the Nepalese Army. While you could say they were the 'third string', they were good soldiers."<sup>4</sup> The SF team was just getting their PDSS going when it was abruptly cut short in the first week.

Political unrest had plagued Nepal since 1990 when a parliamentary form of government replaced the absolute monarchy of the Nepalese King. A growing Maoist insurgency and a strong Communist Party representation in the Parliament threatened stability after the November 1994 elections. King Birendra dissolved the parliament and moved to restore the power of the monarchy. This reverse coup had the capital in chaos. *(Continued on page 34)*

The Nepalese capital city of Kathmandu sprawls across the valley of the same name. Conquered by the King of Gorkha in the 1700's, it remains the center of Nepalese cultural, economic, and government activity.





# Operation UPHOLD DEMOCRACY



The USS *Harlan County* was prevented from docking at Port-au-Prince by armed mobs instigated by General Raoul Cedras. This action ultimately resulted in the deployment of U.S. and UN forces to Haiti to restore the Aristide government.

The overthrow of Haiti's elected President Jean Bertrand Aristide on 30 September 1991 by Lieutenant General Raoul Cedras' military coup set off a chain of events that culminated in Operation UPHOLD DEMOCRACY. The United Nation's response to the coup was to pass UN Resolution 970 placing a trade embargo on Haiti. The embargo devastated the economy and triggered an exodus of more than 21,000 citizens. Many tried to enter the United States. On 3 July 1993, the UN and the Organization of American States (OAS) brokered the Governors Island Accords, a ten-point program designed to restore democracy to Haiti.<sup>1</sup> Both Cedras and Aristide signed the Accords, prompting the UN to lift the embargo. However, the reconciliation was short-lived.

When 220 U.S. and UN advisors arrived in Port-au-Prince aboard the USS *Harlan County* to begin the mission of training and advising the Haitian Army and police forces on 8 October 1993, an armed mob refused to allow the vessel to dock. The conditions in Haiti continued to deteriorate and resulted in a humanitarian crisis. On 31 July 1994 the UN Security Council passed Resolution 940 authorizing "application of all necessary means by member nations" to restore the elected Aristide government.<sup>2</sup> President William J. Clinton committed the United States to lead the multi-national effort.

The XVIIIth Airborne Corps at Fort Bragg, North Carolina was given the task of planning and executing the campaign called Operation UPHOLD DEMOCRACY. The Corps first formed Joint Task Force 180 (JTF-180) giving the 82nd Airborne Division the mission of invading the island to enforce the UN mandate to restore the Aristide government. The Corps then established JTF-190 around the 10th Mountain Division as the follow-on force for the long-term occupation of the country. Included in JTF-190 was the 3rd Special

U.S. Coast Guard personnel interdicting a boat load of Haitians attempting to reach the United States. The flood of refugees was in large part responsible for the U.S. and UN reaction.



Forces Group (3rd SFG), whose mission was to establish a presence in the countryside and provide a secure environment for the return of the Aristide regime and the subsequent follow-on elections. On 19 September 1994, JTF-180 aboard the USS *Eisenhower* was poised off the coast of Haiti to conduct an airmobile assault into Port-au-Prince. Aircraft loaded with paratroopers of the 82nd were in the air bound for the island. A last-minute diplomatic effort by former President Jimmy Carter, Senator Sam Nunn, and General Colin Powell convinced LTG Cedras to honor the Governors Island Accords. JTF-180 entered the now permissive environment and established control of Port-au-Prince. President Aristide arrived on 15 October 1994. His return triggered the transition between JTF-180 and the UN forces. JTF-180 was replaced by JTF-190 and on 24 October 1994, the 10th Mountain Division and the UN-authorized Multi-National Force (MNF) took over



3rd Special Forces Group Flash



10th Mountain Division SSI



the mission. JTF-190 and the MNF formed an interim force that was replaced in April 1995 by the United Nations Mission in Haiti (UNMIH).

JTF-190 was composed of the 10th Mountain Division, the 3rd Special Forces Group (3rd SFG) and the MNF. 1,500 troops from the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), Bangladesh, Guatemala, and Costa Rica joined with the 21,000 U.S. soldiers to restore order and provide security for the population that was riven with civil unrest.<sup>3</sup> The 10th Mountain Division and the MNF concentrated their effort in the capital city of Port-au-Prince while the 3rd SFG dispersed its operational detachments throughout the country. 3rd SFG adopted a "Hub and Spoke" organization that concentrated the teams in certain towns (the Hub) from which they radiated out to the remote outlying villages (the Spokes), in an economy of force role that provided the widest possible coverage for the Group's resources. The mission of UPHOLD DEMOCRACY was to establish a secure environment for the return of the Aristide government and the subsequent follow-on national elections stipulated by the UN.

Operation UPHOLD DEMOCRACY formally ended on 31 March 1995 when the United States transferred the peacekeeping responsibility to the United Nations Mission in Haiti (UNMIH). By then the U.S. 25th Infantry Division which replaced the 10th Mountain Division in January 1995, was leading the U.S. forces.

**The heavily armed infantrymen of the U.S. 10th Mountain Division landed at Toussaint L'Ouverture International Airport in Port-au-Prince to restore order in the country. Operating outside the capital, the 3rd Special Forces Group covered the remote villages. Haiti is a small country that shares Hispaniola island with the Dominican Republic.**

**President Jean-Bertrand Aristide. It was the overthrow of the democratically elected Aristide by General Raoul Cedras that triggered the UN embargo and Operation UPHOLD DEMOCRACY.**



Thirty-four nations sent contingents to the UNMIH, which in June 1995 reached its peak strength of 6,000 troops and 900 civilian police.<sup>4</sup> UNMIH continued to carry on the mission of providing a secure environment for the reestablishment of democratic government in Haiti until it was replaced in June 1996 by the United Nations Support Mission in Haiti (UNSMIH). The charter of the UNSMIH was to provide humanitarian assistance and take the lead in rebuilding the Haitian economy.

#### Endnotes

- 1 U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, Combined Arms Research Library, "Governors Island Accords", appendix D, <http://www-cgsc.army.mil/carl/resources/csi/kretchik/appendixd.asp>.
- 2 United Nations Security Council Resolutions 1994, <http://www.un.org/docs/scres/1994/scres94.htm>.
- 3 Lieutenant Colonel David Bentley, "Operation UPHOLD DEMOCRACY: Military Support for Democracy in Haiti," in *The Strategic Forum*, Institute for National Strategic Studies, National Defense University Number 78, June 1996, [http://www.ndu.edu/inss/strforum/SF\\_78/forum78.html](http://www.ndu.edu/inss/strforum/SF_78/forum78.html).
- 4 United Nations Mission in Haiti Fact Sheet, [http://www.un.org/Depts/dpko/dpko/co\\_mission/unhifacts.html](http://www.un.org/Depts/dpko/dpko/co_mission/unhifacts.html).



The SF team was forced to leave the Yak & Yeti and move into the U.S. Embassy. After several days, they flew back to Fort Lewis. The mission was on hold.

Six weeks later, the situation in Nepal stabilized and the mission was back on for January 1995. On 13 January, CPT Carpenter and seven NCOs returned to the Kathmandu and the Yak & Yeti for a three-week training period before the Gurkhas deployed to Haiti. Sergeant First Class (SFC) Brian L. Jaenicke, the team sergeant, and the two remaining team members would meet them in Haiti.<sup>5</sup> Staff Sergeant (SSG) Randy Derr, one of the two team medics recalled; "The hotel was supposed to be the best in town. Two of the team came down with dysentery that incapacitated them for three days. We usually ate in town, but we did eat in the hotel restaurant once. They had borscht, which I thought was interesting."<sup>6</sup> Once on the ground, the team began training the Nepalese battalion at their barracks on the outskirts of Kathmandu. The three-week training period in Nepal was designed to prepare the Gurkhas for their mission in Haiti.

The UN peacekeeping mission in Haiti was to establish a safe and secure civil environment for the return of President Aristide. As such, the SF training concentrated on crowd control and security measures, the establishment of checkpoints, roadblock procedures, searches, and riot control. U.S. Kevlar helmets and riot control equipment,

face shields, batons, and shields were issued. U.S. troop leading procedures were taught as well as intelligence preparation of the battlefield (IPB) specific to Haiti.<sup>7</sup> Medical training was also part of the preparation, as the Nepalese deployed with their own medical personnel.

"The two team medics, SSG Nate [Nathan] Evans and myself, concentrated on training with the medical personnel who would be deploying with us," said SSG Derr. "We primarily did trauma management training with about twelve medical personnel. Except for one doctor and one physician's assistant, they were medics. We trained at the local military hospital."<sup>8</sup>

The SF soldiers found that most of the Gurkha officers spoke English. "We dealt with the officers in training," recalled CPT Carpenter. "They would do most of the translation for the troops."<sup>9</sup> The short preliminary training period completed, the battalion prepared to leave for Haiti. The flight proved to be memorable.

Transportation was provided by six C-141B Starlifters from the U.S. 12th Air Force, Scott Air Force Base, Illinois. Kathmandu's Tribhuvan International Airport could only accommodate two of the huge aircraft at one time so the deployment was conducted in three lifts of two airplanes spread over three consecutive days. One SF soldier accompanied the seventy Gurkhas on each aircraft. CPT Carpenter and SSG Derr escorted the first group.

## Nepalese Army



The Chief of Staff of the Nepalese Army inspects a contingent of troops prior to their deployment for UN service in Bosnia. The Nepalese Army has been supporting UN operations since 1958.



A member of the Royal Guard Brigade on duty at one of the entrances to the palace complex. In 1995, the Nepalese Army numbered 46,000, with a brigade dedicated to guarding the Royal Family.

In 1995 the Nepalese Army was a force of 46,000 active soldiers. The primary units in the Army were seven infantry brigades, a Special Forces brigade, an artillery brigade and an engineer brigade. The separate Royal Guard Brigade, which included a Military Police battalion provided security for the Nepalese Royal family. In addition to the combat brigades there was a cavalry squadron with British Ferret armored cars, and forty-three independent infantry companies dispersed throughout the country. The Special Forces Brigade consisted of one airborne battalion and two independent Special Forces companies. A minuscule air wing of 215 personnel flew and maintained one

British Aerospace BAe-748 turbo-prop cargo aircraft, two 20-seat Short SC-7 Skyvans and a fleet of eight French Aérospatiale Puma, Super Puma and U.S. Bell helicopters. In addition to the Army, there was a paramilitary reserve of 40,000 men. The Nepalese National Police force numbered 40,000. In 1995-96, Nepal sent forces to Bosnia, Croatia, Lebanon, and Liberia as well as Haiti in support of UN operations.<sup>1</sup>

### Endnote

<sup>1</sup> *The Military Balance, 1995-1996* (London: Adlard and Sons Ltd., 1996), 139.



"That plane ride was probably my favorite ever," said Derr. "All the planes and soldiers got blessed so there was blood everywhere. None of the Nepalese knew how to buckle their seat belts so when we got on, I buckled all seventy before we could go."<sup>10</sup> The first leg of the journey was to Mumbai (formerly Bombay), India. When the two aircraft landed, they were immediately surrounded by Indian Army soldiers in gun jeeps. The Indians had not received notification that armed soldiers from another nation would be transiting the country. "We had a few tense moments before we got that sorted out," said Carpenter. Following the negotiations, the Indians allowed the planes to refuel and they left for their next intermediate stop, Rota, Spain.<sup>11</sup>

"We did our first in-flight refuel on the way to Spain," said CPT Carpenter. "Prior to that, the troops had all eaten an MRE [Meals Ready-to-Eat], which is pretty rich food compared to their normal diet. By the time we finished the refuel, the MREs were all over the inside of the aircraft. This did not endear us to the crew chief."<sup>12</sup> At the U.S. Naval Station, Rota, Spain, "We got a warm welcome from the Air Force colonel from AMC [Air Mobility Command] who took us into the terminal," said Carpenter. This gave the troops a chance to clean the aircraft as well as themselves.

"This was the funniest part of the trip," said Randy Derr. "The Nepalese had never had access to running water and they were taking baths in the sinks to wash the blessing blood and MRE [vomit] off. Pretty soon there was about an inch of red standing water all over the latrine. It was probably the only time I ever saw my team leader get upset."<sup>13</sup> After thoroughly cleaning up the flooded latrine, the troops boarded the C-141s for the final long leg to Haiti. "Needless to say, when we left that colonel was no longer our friend," said Carpenter.<sup>14</sup> The



last leg was as bad as the previous two.

"We had two in-flight refuels to make before we got to Haiti. I offered Benadryl® to the officers to give to the troops

**Buddhist and Hindu temples (shown) are numerous throughout the city of Kathmandu. The Hindu Gurhkas received a ceremonial blessing before their departure.**

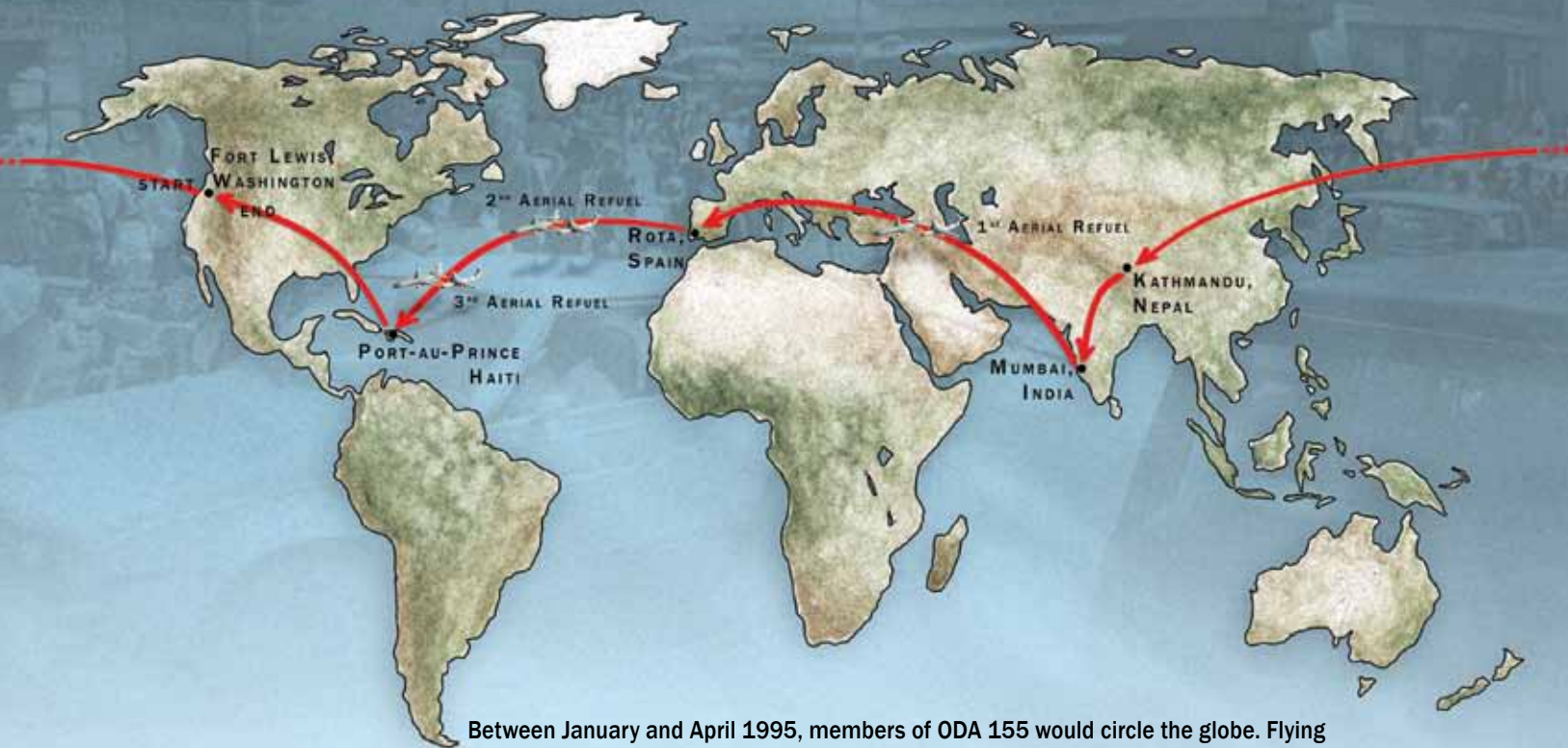


**The Special Forces advance party was forced to leave their hotel for the U.S. Embassy during the aborted attempted coup in Kathmandu. After several days, the team flew back to the United States with their mission "on hold."**

**C-141B Starlifter. After being properly blessed in Kathmandu, U.S. Air Force C-141B's carried the Nepalese contingent halfway around the world to Haiti.**







Between January and April 1995, members of ODA 155 would circle the globe. Flying westward from Fort Lewis, Washington to Nepal, the team stopped in India and Spain enroute to Haiti. In April, the team then flew back to Fort Lewis.

to ward off airsickness,” remembered Carpenter. “The officers said their tough Gurkhas didn’t need them. So we had a repeat of the first refuel. Everyone got sick. When it came time for the third refuel, they changed their minds.”<sup>15</sup> By then the two Starlifters were nearing Port-au-Prince, Haiti.

“The officers gave each guy two or three pills. Now they only weigh about ninety pounds so pretty soon it looked like the ‘Night of the Living Dead,’ with bodies strewn all over,” chuckled Carpenter. “Most of them were still out when we landed.”<sup>16</sup> Once on the ground, the best was yet to come.

---

*“The officers gave each guy two or three pills. Now they only weigh about ninety pounds so pretty soon it looked like the ‘Night of the Living Dead,’ with bodies strewn all over,”*  
*—CPT Maxey B. Carpenter*

---

“As we touched down and headed for the terminal, I was up in the cockpit in UDT shorts, a T-shirt, and Oakleys®,” remembered Carpenter ruefully. “The pilot asked who was meeting us and I said just my team with some trucks. He said, ‘So who is that?’ I looked down to the end of the runway and I saw the 25th ID commander’s flag, the 25th Division Band, and all kinds of people milling around. I pleaded with the pilot to take a long slow taxi around the airfield and dove down into the cargo hold to change clothes and wake everybody up. When we stopped, the Gurkhas were still groggy. They came stumbling out, helmets askew, and dragging their weapons. My guys

descended on them and hustled them onto the trucks. I ducked a CNN reporter with a quick ‘no comment’ and we got out of there.”<sup>17</sup> The convoy went straight to the UN camp in Port-au-Prince.

In Haiti, the Nepalese battalion shared a compound with the Bangladeshi battalion. It was across the road from Warrior Base, the main U.S. facility and the headquarters for the 25th Infantry Division (25th ID). ODA 155 was joined by ODA 145, led by Chief Warrant Officer Three (CW3) Thomas C. Dawson. Another 1st SFG team, ODA 154, was already working with the Bangladeshis. The 1<sup>st</sup> Group teams were controlled by the 3<sup>rd</sup> Special Forces Group Commander, who was responsible for all SF teams in country.

“Our living conditions were primitive, but adequate. We lived in GP medium tents, six guys per tent. The tents had electricity so everyone had a fan,” said Randy Derr. “Whoever the genius was that put the Hindu Nepalese in the same small compound with the Muslim Bangladeshis had a warped sense of humor. You could feel the tension build five times a day during call to prayers which the Bangladeshis put out over a loudspeaker.”<sup>18</sup> On more than one occasion the loudspeaker pole was chopped down by a Nepalese *kukri*.<sup>19</sup>

SFC Brian L. Jaenicke, the Team Sergeant for ODA 155, had deployed directly to Haiti from Fort Lewis with the rest of the team as the advance party for Haiti. Both ODA 155 and 145 were nearly at full strength and training started the day after the last lift arrived. “We had a thirty-day POI [Program of Instruction] established that concentrated on infantry tactics, particularly patrolling. We ran ranges, trained the Gurkhas on demo, mostly for EOD [explosive ordnance disposal] and on the communications they would use for missions,” said Jaenicke. “We did more





Marksmanship training with the Nepalese Army's Belgian FN rifles was a major portion of the Special Forces program of instruction in Haiti.



Pistol marksmanship with the U.S. M-1919 .45 caliber pistol. The slightly-built Nepalese soldiers braced themselves for the recoil of the pistol.

training on crowd control, detainee operations, and medical evacuations.<sup>20</sup> While the UN specified that participating nations provide operationally ready troops for peacekeeping missions, prudence dictated that the Nepalese receive further training before working in the politically sensitive arena of Haiti.

"SSG Rick [Richard] Hillyer put together a training program with the MPs [Military Police] from the 25th ID," said SFC Jaenicke. "They worked on crowd control with the riot equipment, shields, batons and formations."<sup>21</sup> Medical training was geared toward casualty evacuation. "We did training on the medical evacuation [MEDEVAC] procedures and on loading and off-loading patients from a MEDEVAC helicopter," said SSG Derr. "We got air assets and the Gurkhas really seemed to enjoy the hot loading [using a running helicopter], especially the soldiers that got to go for a ride."<sup>22</sup>

The Nepalese mission was two-fold; guard duty at the port facility of Port-au-Prince and security patrols throughout the city. The UN provided the Nepalese with



Training on loading and unloading MEDEVAC patients was part of the training in Haiti. It was particularly popular because the soldiers usually got a helicopter ride.

fifty white U.S.-made M-1009 Commercial Utility Cargo Vehicles (CUC-Vs). "We met a RORO [roll-on/roll-off] ship at the port and picked up 50 CUC-Vs," said CPT Carpenter. "They were all beat up, most had over 200,000 miles on them. We had all we could do to keep them running."<sup>23</sup> The SF had to give the Nepalese driver's training before using the vehicles.

The teams trained the Gurkhas intensively on mounted and dismounted patrolling techniques. "The Gurkha officers generally spoke some English, but we had to use interpreters with the soldiers," said SFC Brian Jaenicke. "The troops were good; the Nepalese Army had 'stacked the deck' with these guys. They were head and shoulders above the Bangladeshis in terms of professionalism and energy."<sup>24</sup> By the end of February, with the thirty-day training period completed, the Nepalese began to assume their share of the UNMIH operation.

---

*"The troops were good; the Nepalese Army had 'stacked the deck' with these guys... in terms of professionalism and energy."  
—SFC Brian Jaenicke*

---

The guard mission at the harbor of Port-au-Prince involved patrolling the perimeter of the port facility, which was surrounded by a wall of shipping containers, stacked four high. The vast quantity of humanitarian aid flowing into the country made the port a prime target for thieves. Once off-loaded, the Gurkha troops escorted the convoys that went into the country to distribute the food and other aid. This was a fairly simple security mission and was easily handled by the Nepalese. Tougher were the presence patrols into all parts of the city to provide a semblance of law and order for the people. The worst were the patrols into Citi Soleil, the notorious Port-au-Prince slum home to more than 200,000 impoverished people.



Military Police from the U.S. 25th Infantry Division assisted the Special Forces teams in training the Nepalese on riot control procedures.



Safeguarding the tons of food and humanitarian aid that flowed into the port at Port-au-Prince was one of the missions given to the Nepalese. The port was cordoned off by a wall of shipping containers stacked four high, but active patrolling was needed to prevent thieves from entering the port facility.

"Our troops were out there to maintain civil order. We would send two SF guys with each patrol, which was under the control of a Nepalese lieutenant platoon leader," said SFC Brian Jaenicke.<sup>25</sup> The Gurkhas responded well to the SF advisors and had little difficulty on the daytime patrols. Getting them to operate at night was another story.

"Like many soldiers from other countries, the Gurkhas were 'solar powered' and didn't like to move around at night," said CPT Maxey Carpenter. "It was a challenge to get them up for night patrols."<sup>26</sup> The mystical culture of Haiti played a role in their reluctance. Night was when the practitioners of voodoo were active.

---

*"It was pretty eerie, with the candles, costumes, and all. I'm not prone to superstition, but you could feel the evil in the air."*

—SFC Brian Jaenicke

---

"I was on a patrol one night that came upon a real-live voodoo ceremony," said SFC Jaenicke. "It was pretty eerie, with the candles, costumes, and all. I'm not prone to superstition, but you could feel the evil in the air."<sup>27</sup> The Gurkha presence patrol quietly left the area after this first-hand experience with the shadowy voodoo rituals of Haiti. The incredible poverty of the common people was emphasized when the Gurkhas were assigned the mission to guard the UN garbage trucks.

Daily garbage collection from the UN compound and the American bases resulted in several Haitian deaths during its disposal. When the trucks attempted to empty



25th Infantry Division SSI



The slums of Citi Soleil were patrolled by the Nepalese and their Special Forces advisors. The squalor and poverty of Citi Soleil was a shock even for the economically poor Nepalese.

their loads at the Port-au-Prince city dump, they were mobbed by the frenzied poor attempting to get at the choicest bits of refuse. After a number of people were crushed by bales of garbage, the Nepalese battalion was tasked to secure the dump when the trucks arrived.

"For a while we had the mission to accompany the garbage trucks to the dump," recalls SSG Randy Derr. "Our Nepalese were responsible for establishing a cordon [in full riot control gear around each vehicle] so the trucks could dump their load of trash. After that, it was chaos as the Haitians fought over the garbage. It was absolutely crazy."<sup>28</sup>

ODAs 155 and 145 continued their advisory mission until April 1995, when the UN relocated the Nepalese contingent from Port-au-Prince to the smaller coastal city of Saint-Marc, fifty miles north of the capital. The 3rd Special Forces Group decided that a single ODA was sufficient. ODA 145 remained with the Nepalese until their national commitment ended in August 1995 and ODA 155 returned to Fort Lewis. Two weeks later, ODA 155 deployed to Exercise COBRA GOLD in Thailand.

The Special Forces mission in support of the Nepalese Army Gurkhas was somewhat unique, but in many ways typical. ODA 155 literally circled the globe by the time



they returned to Fort Lewis in April 1995. They lived and worked with the soldiers of one of the world's poorest nations and deployed with them on a mission to another even more destitute. No strangers to desperate poverty themselves, the Nepalese Gurkhas acquitted themselves well when confronted by chaos and violence in Haiti. While it was in many ways routine, the experience was a memorable one for ODA 155. ♣

*The author would like to thank COL Maxey Carpenter, CPT Randy Derr, and SGM Brian Jaenicke for their generous assistance in the preparation of this article.*

---

*Kenneth Finlayson is the USASOC Deputy Command Historian. He earned his PhD from the University of Maine, and is a retired Army officer. Current research interests include Army special operations during the Korean War, special operations aviation, and World War II special operations units.*

---

## Endnotes

- 1 Nepalese Army in UN PKOs, [http://www.nepalesearmy.mil.np/na\\_un.php](http://www.nepalesearmy.mil.np/na_un.php).
- 2 History of Nepal, <https://www.thamel.com/htms/history.htm>.
- 3 An excellent source of information on the Gurkhas and their service in the British Army can be found in the works of John Masters. Masters served with the pre-War British Army in India, in the Gurkha regiments. His two volume autobiography recounts his wartime experiences and the history of the Gurkhas in the British Army. See John Masters, *Bugles and a Tiger: My Life in the Gurkhas* (New York: Viking Books, 1956); John Masters, *The Road Past Mandalay* (New York: Harper & Sons, 1961).

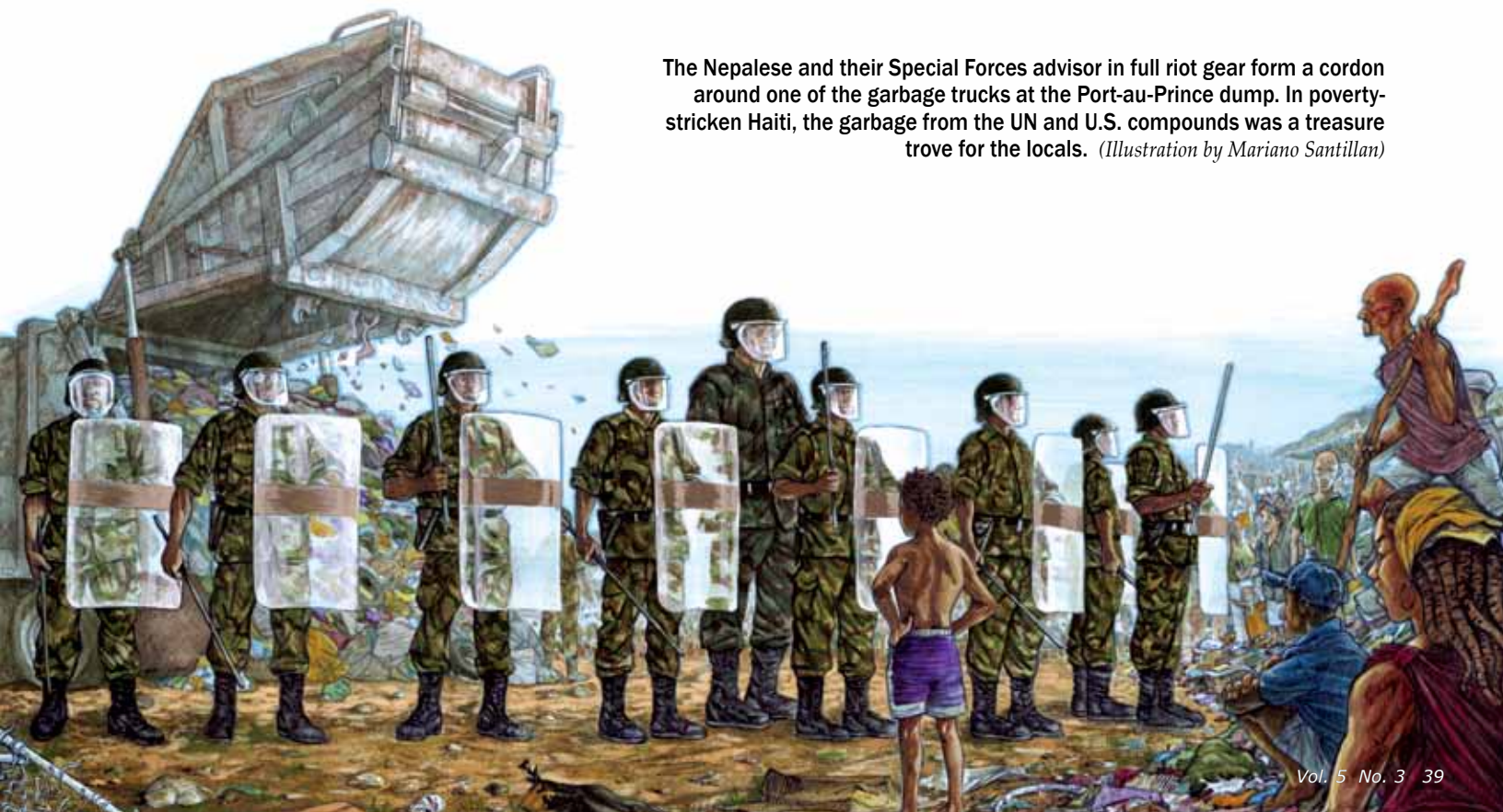


The Nepalese in full riot gear preparing to escort the garbage trucks into the city dump. Their training in crowd control was necessary to prevent riots and injuries at the dump.



The garbage dump at Port-au-Prince was the scene of several riots and injuries as the poverty-stricken Haitians fought over the garbage from the UN compounds.

The Nepalese and their Special Forces advisor in full riot gear form a cordon around one of the garbage trucks at the Port-au-Prince dump. In poverty-stricken Haiti, the garbage from the UN and U.S. compounds was a treasure trove for the locals. (Illustration by Mariano Santillan)





- 4 Maxey B. Carpenter, ODA 155, 1st Special Forces Group, interview by Dr. Kenneth Finlayson, 9 April 2009, Missoula, MT, digital recording, USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC. **The 3,600-man Brigade of Gurkhas in the British Army annually selects roughly 300 out of thousands of applicants for service. The Indian Army has over 100,000 Gurkhas in 44 battalions. The salaries and pensions of the British Gurkhas are a significant source of income in the poor villages of Nepal.**
- 5 Brian L. Jaenicke, ODA 155, 1st Special Forces Group, interview by Dr. Kenneth Finlayson, 16 June 2009, Fort Bragg, NC, digital recording, USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC.
- 6 Randy Derr, ODA 155, 1st Special Forces Group, interview by Dr. Kenneth Finlayson, 13 July 2009, interview notes. USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC. **The Yak & Yeti Hotel with its famous Chimney Restaurant was established in 1947 by the legendary White Russian expatriate and former ballet dancer, Boris Lissanovitch. The entrepreneurial Lissanovitch was the one essential contact for Westerners in Kathmandu. The presence of borscht on the menu reflects his Russian heritage.**
- 7 Carpenter interview.
- 8 Derr interview.
- 9 Carpenter interview.
- 10 Derr interview.
- 11 Carpenter interview.
- 12 Carpenter interview.
- 13 Derr interview.
- 14 Carpenter interview.
- 15 Carpenter interview.
- 16 Carpenter interview.
- 17 Carpenter interview.
- 18 Derr interview.
- 19 Carpenter interview. **The kukri is the large curved knife that is the traditional symbol of the Gurkha soldier.**
- 20 Jaenicke interview.
- 21 Jaenicke interview.
- 22 Derr interview.
- 23 Carpenter interview.
- 24 Jaenicke interview.
- 25 Jaenicke interview.
- 26 Carpenter interview.
- 27 Jaenicke interview.
- 28 Derr interview.

A street sign in Kathmandu. Little did the Nepalese know that defending garbage trucks would be one of their most important missions.



The Haitian capital city of Port-au-Prince.

