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for Maldives 2A/12

Islands in the sun

By Rajeev Dhavan

The Maldives President, Abdul Gayoom, seems to regard Indian policies towards his regime as a protective political insurance. The time may have come to clear this misconception.

THE MALDIVES, comprising many beautiful islands, now faces an endemic crisis from which there is no predictable respite unless something is done about it. India's policies towards the islands range from strong intervention to a supportive role. On November 3, 1988 when there was a coup attempt, Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi despatched troops to help to put it down. Over the years, India has developed trade ties with the Maldives — with the balance of trade in India's favour. In 1996, bilateral trade yielded Rs.130.7 crores of exports to India and Rs. 0.52 crores to the Maldives. In 2001, Indian exports rose to Rs. 188.6 crores and Maldivian exports to India increased to Rs. 1.31 crores. India's economic interest in the Maldives is of limited significance even though the 13,000 Indians there form the largest expatriate community among the population of 3 lakhs. India has taken particular care to assist general education in the Maldives. An agreement signed in this regard in 1999 was negotiated afresh in 2001. Maldives is clearly within what India regards as its zone of influence. However, after India's assistance to put down the 1988 coup attempt, the President, Abdul Gayoom, seems to look over his shoulder for Indian support whenever his repressive policies result in democratic protest. Even if India does not intend this, Mr. Gayoom seems to regard Indian policies towards his regime as a protective political insurance. The time may have come to clear this misconception.

Converted to Islam in 1153, the Maldives was placed under direct colonial rule only by the Portugese from 1558 to 1573. It gained independence from Britain's protection in 1965. Following some turmoil, Mr. Gayoom took over in 1978. There were coup attempts against him in 1980, 1983 and 1988 — with increasing opposition from liberals and Islamic fundamentalists alike. After 17 years of relatively undemocratic rule, Mr. Gayoom's response was to promulgate a new Constitution in November 1997. Following the Indian and South African constitutions, while some post-colonial Constitutions seem to look forward, the 'Gayoom' constitution seems to look backwards. Under the Constitution, the President's

power surfaced into absolutism. He appoints eight of the 50 members of the legislature (Majlis), the Speaker and Deputy Speaker and, is empowered to return bills back to the Majlis for reconsideration. Apart from the usual power of pardon and amnesty, his presence dominates the work of the judiciary. High Court judges are appointed by him. The President is the final judicial appellate authority to return or overturn High Court decisions. Such powers make the Star Chamber seem mild. He does not have to exercise such powers whose shadow is inevitably cast on the rule of law. Even though the President has such vast powers, elections to the presidency are indirect — nominees by the Majlis are then accepted or rejected by the people in a referendum. This reduces competition for the post. Although South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) observers blessed the 1999 Majlis election, some doubts have been cast on that election. There is also nervousness about the coming Majlis election on December 31, 2004.

The Constitution contains a Bill of Rights. This has not stemmed the increasing violations of civil liberties. Over the years, there has been an increase in the number of prisoners of conscience, including writer Mohamed Nasheed, who was arrested and kept in solitary confinement for writing articles exposing corruption in 1990; and again in 1992-93, 1994, 1996 and 2001 — to also be confronted with various trumped up charges. The spate of arrests continues to include prominent activists and politicians such as Mohamed Zaki, Ahmed Didi, Fatimath Nisreen, Naushad Waheed and Ibrahim Fareed. In 2001, when 42 people signed a petition to form the Maldivian Democratic Party (MDP), the request eluded approval. Many of the signatories were harassed. The Maldives has virtually become a single-party state. From this point, repression was

increased. In May 2002, four journalists were arrested and given long prison sentences for inciting violence and defamation. In 2003, prison riots and street protests against custodial crimes were severely put down. After obtaining a sixth term in October 2003, the President's absolute power was exercised with relative absoluteness. In November 2003, reformist legislators and an Attorney-General were sacked for trying to form a new political party. In late 2003, access to the MDP's website was denied. The party leadership is in jail, effectively precluding its participation in the December 31 election. In February 2004, 15 MDP members were arrested. Repression increased to silence all forms of peaceful protest, free speech and political opposition.

In 2004, the European Union put pressure on Mr. Gayoom to cast the Constitution into a democratic framework. He responded by promising constitutional amendments in June 2004 whilst the regime continued to arrest persons and violate free speech. No absolutist gives up the path to absolutism easily. A constituent assembly was called but not allowed to function effectively. Protests that it be allowed to do so were taken as an excuse by Mr. Gayoom to declare a state of emergency in August 2004 — ordering arrests and suspending fundamental rights. No sooner did this happen than Mr. Gayoom sent his Health Minister, Ahmad Abdulla, to New Delhi which maintained a studied silence.

The E.U.'s reaction was to threaten sanctions which were not imposed. But the 'emergency' has increased the state's power over the press and protesters while those in the Opposition have either fled the country are under house arrest or in jail. Mr. Gayoom's 'South Asia' diplomacy has been good. At one point, there was pressure on Sri Lanka to deny refugee status to some of the dissidents, especially Mohamed Latheef. The MDP, unable to operate for various

reasons in Colombo, has now shifted its offices to London.

India cannot stand wholly aloof from the Maldives' crisis. Its intervention in Mr. Gayoom's favour — when the present National Security Adviser, J.N. Dikshit, was India's Ambassador to Sri Lanka — remains within the memory of laypersons and politicians from the Maldives. This is not to suggest that those fighting for liberal governance in the Maldives supported the coup attempt. To that extent, there was some internal support in the Maldives for India's actions in 1988. But, what was support in 1988 is now viewed as an invisible insurance favouring Mr. Gayoom's rule. The Maldives is part of both the Commonwealth and SAARC. Ironically, a former SAARC Secretary-General from the Maldives, Ibrahim Hussain Zaki, is now in prison — charged with treason. It is not customary for SAARC nations to lecture each other on democracy. Were that so, such lectures would be directed towards Bhutan, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and, no less, India — in greatly varying degrees. Before such matters are placed on the SAARC or Commonwealth agenda, some degree of consensus is needed. After due deliberations, the Commonwealth has been known to act collectively in such situations.

But India has a role to play. The rationale behind this role is not to perpetuate an international crisis in South Asia to confront the domestic crisis in the Maldives. Neither silence nor forbearance is an answer when there are voices that credit India with a protectionist policy in the light of its intervention in 1988 and, seemingly continuous support from 1988 till now. In 1995, America suspended Maldives' eligibility for tariff preferences because the Maldives did not grant internationally recognised rights to its own workers and trade unions. This was seen as American pressure for economic reasons. There is also some wariness about the E.U.'s initiatives to pressure the Maldives. But all international initiatives cannot be discredited. India needs to make a statement to clarify the ambiguity of its stance — formally and informally. This will help greatly in bringing the Gayoom regime to its senses and give courage to Maldivian democracy.

24 DEC 2004

THE HINDU

The Maldives in transition — II

By V.S. Sambandan

MALE: Among the serious issues confronting the Maldives in its proposed move to democratic governance, the immediate ones relate to strengthening the basic institutions — the legal system and the administration of justice. For a nation criticised by human rights watchdog Amnesty International, the existing legal system is a major lacuna. The lack of separation of powers between the judiciary, the legislature, and the executive is another.

Last September, the spotlight was on the human rights and prison conditions after the death of four inmates, resulting in unprecedented protests. At least one of the deaths is suspected to be a result of torture, but in a country where there is no provision for an autopsy, there is no way of legally declaring it so, say human rights

activists.

An immediate outcome of the prison deaths was the setting up of a Human Rights Commission, but its functioning is restricted by the existing law. The Maldivian Constitution, for instance, defines a "law" to include "the practices of the Government." This, according to legal opinion, gives a blanket legal sanctity to all acts of the state.

The interpretation of the law, a difficult task for the Maldivian even during normal times, raises further apprehensions during the current state of emergency. Vocal advocates of democracy speak on conditions of anonymity. "I know the laws are strict, but someone has to speak up," said a youngster, who wants a visible and functioning democracy.

Weak legal system

Critics of the Government

point out the action after the August 12 public protests as a case in support of the weak legal system. Sections of civilians in Male referred to the protest as *fini fenmaa*, which in the Maldivian language, Dhivehi, means "Rose Revolution." For the impatient youth, it symbolised some form of a new beginning. "But it just ended and the protesters were arrested. For what, we don't know."

The Human Rights Commission is still based on an executive decree and its members are appointed by the President, making its tenure uncertain. A draft bill sent to Parliament to pave the way for an enabling legislation has been referred to a committee.

Expressing disappointment at the delay in passing the bill, Ahmed Mujithaba, chairperson of the Human Rights Commission, said the present situation "does not comply with the Paris

Principles," as the institution is dependent on an executive order.

Urge for change

The urge for a political change among the politically restive Maldivians, however, is matched by the uncertainty over what lies ahead. Pointing out that some of the pro-democracy activists also include former Ministers, a Maldivian youth said: "They could all be the same finally. We still are not sure." But he is emphatic that democracy is the need. "There is no other option. We have to have our say."

One other concern is the possible emergence of Islamic hardliners. "They are fanatics and they are increasing. If that happens, it could be dangerous," said a senior Maldivian, who also wants democratic reforms.

The President, Maumoon Abdul Gayoom, has conceded that

the fundamentalists do not have a critical mass. His critics, however, fear it will be used as "an excuse to delay reforms."

The Government spokesman, Ahmed Shaheed, is emphatic there is no such intention. "The President has no desire to delay reforms," he said, adding that a series of measures had been put in place.

"We are [a] young democracy, and it can only be built by constructive, legitimate and non-violent political processes," he said.

Much of how the Maldives transforms into a democracy will depend on the speed with which its basic institutions are strengthened and public confidence that the promised political reforms would be delivered is built. "Democracy has to be in letter and in spirit," a senior Maldivian said. "Otherwise it will be of no use."

(Concluded)

8 SEP 2004

19-11 The Maldives in transition — I *Islam*

By V.S. Sambandan

MALE: After placid acceptance of a 25-year rule by their leader, President Maumoon Abdul Gayoom, a prosperous, but politically restive Maldivian citizenry now wants a transition to full-fledged democracy. On the streets of its capital, Male, appreciation for Mr. Gayoom's economic transformation is matched by political weariness and apprehension of what lies ahead.

Officially, the Maldives is a democratic republic, but the basic building block of present-day democracies — a political party — is not permitted. "We have undoubtedly gained on the economic front, but it is time for some form of basic political rights," is a feeling commonly and increasingly

voiced in Male, the main island of the Maldives, spread across a total of 1,192 islets. The country's 2.85 lakh population lives in 199 islands, but its main source of income is from the 87 tourist resorts that cater to top-bracket global clientele.

Uncertainty

Mr. Gayoom promised far-reaching reforms, but there is uncertainty if reforms will unfold as promised. Last month's arrests of dissidents who called for greater reforms, including a former Minister and former SAARC Secretary-General, Ibrahim Hussain Zaki, came as a cause of concern for the pro-democracy activists.

President Gayoom says the protestors were arrested "to safeguard public property." The pro-

democracy activists disagree: "The entire reformist movement is in jail. They have not violated any law," asserts Mohammed Latheef, one of the pro-democracy activists, based in Colombo.

Push for reforms

Demanding that Mr. Gayoom push ahead with reforms, pro-democratic activists in Male want the President to "adhere to the Constitution in letter and in spirit" and to "sincerely go ahead with the reforms." Though the President set out his reform package to the nation, legislative progress has been halting.

A Special Majlis (equivalent of a Constituent Assembly) was sworn in this July, but its first sitting was a non-starter as 23 members walked out demanding a secret

ballot to elect the new president of the Special Majlis. Their demand for a secret ballot is based on Art. 133 of the Constitution which says that "voting in elections and public referendums stipulated in the Constitution shall be by secret ballot."

Public protests

The second sitting of the Special Majlis, scheduled for August 16, was also a non-starter as public protests broke out on August 12 and 13, culminating in the arrests of MPs and members of the Special Majlis, including Mr. Zaki.

The public protests, according to several sources in Male, comprised a mix of several ideologies, all with the common end of political change. Moderates and pro-democrats such as Mr. Zaki

shared the public space with a small group of vocal religious fundamentalists such as Ibrahim Fareed, a preacher. The protesters, including Mr. Zaki, Mr. Fareed, some other MPs and members of the Special Majlis, were jailed and a state of Emergency imposed on Male and nearby islands. Pro-democratic dissenters are emphatic that they do not endorse fundamentalist calls: "When there is a public platform, people with divergent views would come and voice their grievances. We don't endorse Islamic extremism," said Mr. Latheef. On the official position that the arrests were made to safeguard public property, he said: "none of what the President says justifies such a clampdown and deprivation of fundamental rights."

Maldives ready for change, says Gayoom

9/20/16
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AFTER A MIRACULOUS economic graduation from a scattering of poor fishing islets to South Asia's richest country in just over two decades, the Maldives now demands democracy. With multi-party governance still to sprout in the nation of atolls ruled by President **Maumoon Abdul Gayoom**, vox populi in the capital, Male, is emphatic that it is time for political change.

Last month, Mr. Gayoom (66) imposed a state of Emergency following public protests by pro-democracy dissidents and political opponents. As the world watches how the reforms unfold, Mr. Gayoom justifies the arrests of dissidents saying he did so to contain "mob violence."

Courteous but firm, soft-spoken but assertive, Asia's longest-serving head of state says he wants to replicate the economic miracle on the political front. Excerpts from an interview with **V.S. Sambandan** in Male on September 2:



President Maumoon Abdul Gayoom during the interview to *The Hindu*.

Question: President Gayoom you have promised reforms and separation of powers. What is your time-frame for reforms?

Mr. Gayoom: I have explained my reform proposals to the general public on June 9. I propose to change the Constitution to make a greater separation of powers, including the separation of the post of President from a new post created for a Prime Minister, strengthen the role of the Parliament, limit the terms of presidency, now unlimited. I am in my sixth term; I want to limit it to two terms and also have a Supreme Court and introduce a multi-party system, which is going to be quite new to this country.

These are the major reforms I am thinking of. I have compiled a lot of draft articles to be presented to the Special Majlis [constituent assembly] so that they can consider these to be incorporated into our present Constitution.

What are the difficulties you expect? For instance, democracy itself is something new in the Maldives.

I think the country is now ready for a transition from traditional systems that we have known to a new, modern system. I think, for one thing, there are more educated people in the country. The country is now ready for change. I think we have reached a stage where political reforms are needed and will be received well by the general public.

"We have regular Cabinet meetings and everything is discussed. This is actually a collective leadership."

That does not mean that there will not be any resistance to certain aspects of reforms. For one thing, there are a lot of people who don't believe that a multi-party system can work here. For that reason, I have prepared certain background papers on how these systems work abroad. I have already compiled these papers and distributed [them] among the Special Majlis members. I am also inviting a team from America [the National Democratic Institute] to help us create a system where a multi-party system can be viable.

Amnesty International has been quite critical of prison conditions. Then there are the unfortunate incidents of last September. How do you see these?

For one thing, though Amnesty International has been critical of us, they have not come here at all. They have not seen the situation for themselves. No one, to my knowledge, has come from that organisation. All their reports have been based on hearsay from a few vocal dissidents — Maldivians based abroad, five people, not more. I can name them.

This is a very sad thing that an international organisation of the stature of Amnesty International should take hearsay for fact, without referring to us. We have told them to discuss these things with us, to visit our prisons.

Is the invitation open even now?

Yes, it is open even now. They can come, visit our prisons, talk to prisoners and see how they are being treated.

The arrest of Special Majlis members has also drawn criticism.

Yes, I know, this is a very unfortunate incident and I regret very much that there are two members of Parliament [Citizen's Majlis] plus some members of the Special Majlis in detention at the moment. But what happened on the 12th and 13th of August was something quite unexpected and unlawful and the mob became violent.

This situation was a very tragic and unlawful situation, where the Government had to take action to safeguard public property and lives.

Unfortunately, these members were there in the meeting; they had remained there for up to 16-17 hours. Repeatedly we have been warning them to go home peacefully. If they have any complaints or demands, they could have submitted their complaints to me personally or to any other government authority, according to the procedure laid down. But they remained there. They wanted to force the Government to do certain things, which no government can do. In the end we had to take action.

Everybody has to respect the law. Nobody is above the law, whether you are MPs or not. You oppose inside the Parliament, you have immunity; but outside, on the road, you are like any other citizen. If you break the law, you will have to answer that.

Your Special Envoy to India and Sri Lanka said that the Emergency would be reviewed and lifted at the earliest. Have you taken any decision?

I have not taken any decision yet, but it is being reviewed continuously. I have a ministerial committee overseeing the present situation. They meet almost every day and they will recommend to me when they

deem it fit for the state of Emergency to be lifted. I do hope that it won't take too long for us to lift it.

One criticism is that everything is with the President. The President, your critics say, is all-powerful and the separation of powers does not translate into much. Would you like to comment?

I think it is an entirely wrong conception. The Parliament here is quite independent in the sense that certain proposals I made in the past have been rejected. Although we don't have a party system, it does not mean that the Government has its way, because every member is quite independent. He can either speak or vote whichever way he wants to. That has happened in the past. So the Parliament is completely independent, and they enjoy full immunity.

The Special Majlis had difficulty over secret ballot. The view is that a secret ballot would have come out with a different opinion and that is why it was not allowed...

It isn't the case of not being allowed because the Constitution does not specifically say that for the speaker of the Special Majlis to be elected, it has to be a secret ballot. Our tradition so far has been that the Speaker of the Citizen's Majlis is elected by a show of hands. So that's what the temporary Speaker wanted to do, but there was an objection from the floor.

The people who objected staged a walkout for the first time in the history of this country. They came here. I met them. I listened to their views. Of course, the sitting had to be adjourned because the Speaker did not want to make a decision in the absence of these 23 members out of a 108... although they are a minority, but quite a sizable one. So he said he would like to reconvene the first sitting, with the presence of the 23 members. He scheduled it for August 16, but before that [the protests] happened, so we had no option but to conclude that the mob violence was staged to derail the reform agenda I proposed.

If you are introducing more reforms, why would your dissidents want to derail that very process?

There are several groups here that are not of one opinion. There is a religious fundamentalist group, who don't want to see, for instance, a woman becoming the President. One of the proposals that I am making is removing the gender bar on the presidency. These people don't want that. Those people want all women to be kept in their houses, that no woman can hold a job. So, they are

INTERVIEW

against my proposals for that particular reason.

Maybe there could be others who have their own political agenda, who see this as some sort of a barrier towards achieving their personal goals and a third group was a group of criminals, who have criminal records, who had been in prison and pardoned. Some people, still serving sentences, who had freed themselves, just came and attended the meeting. So these were the different elements which had gathered.

You have been the leader for 26 years now. Do you think that you've been around for a long time and it is time to call it a day after putting in some reforms?

Well, I know 25 years is a long time for any one man to be President. That's why I am now proposing that a President should serve at the maximum for 10 years — two terms of five years each. I think I have been here at a time when the country needed somebody to take hold of the country and to push it forward. The country has seen substantial change in all walks of life, in the way people think, in our interaction with the outside world. We have seen a complete transition. I think I must feel somewhat happy that this had taken place during my time as President.

Even now according to our Constitution, if the people don't like the President, they can, of course, have their say. The Presidential election takes place every five years and if the people are not happy with how the President runs the country, they can just say so, which is a secret ballot. They haven't done that.

What is your view on the trade-off between democracy and development? Do you think they are at cross-purposes?

I think they would help each other. They are not at cross-purposes because democracy

react to such labels?

I don't think these labels tell you the truth. It so happens in the media that one person might write an article and others follow suit. Somebody must have written that I rule the country with an iron fist and every other person who reads that will pick it up. You can ask people around here. I am not such a person. I have these institutions and I rule through these institutions. Even we have regular Cabinet meetings and everything is discussed. This is actually a collective leadership. Whether you believe it or not, it is a collective leadership.

You referred to religious fundamentalists. Do you think they have the critical mass to change the Maldives?

No. They don't have a critical mass, but I think this is a potential threat we have to be very careful about. These could infiltrate into the country gradually and all of a sudden you are faced with a situation when you see that there are a lot of these people around and they become violent. Before that happens, you have to nip it in the bud; you have to control the situation.

Since the last elections there have been popular calls for change. Popular dissent is out on the streets. There is a feeling among the people that things have to change, but they don't know how. What is your view of things to come?

Change is something that is necessary. Not only now, I have been changing since I came to power 25 years ago. Nothing has stood still. I have been changing and we need more change. That I agree. I am making changes, I will be making more changes and I think the vocal dissidents are very few. There are five Maldivians abroad. Three of them are fugitives from justice. I can name them. Two of them were in prison and they had applied to go abroad for medical treatment, which we did at government expense [and they fled]. There are two other people who are not fugitives but they have personal grudges against the Government. These are the people who are very vocal abroad. These are very few people, but a majority know that the Government is serving them well. They are supportive.

Even those who are detained do not have access to lawyers. They don't have legal support...

In this particular case, in a state of Emergency, the President has the power to suspend certain rights. I had to do it in

"I am proposing that a President should serve at the maximum for 10 years — two terms of five years each."

will lead to further progress and prosperity and also, further development leads to democracy. That's what is happening here. In 1978, we were a very poor country. We are still a poor country but we have developed very fast. There are so many things that have been achieved here in the past 25 years. I think that has paved the way for further liberal democracy to be introduced here.

How do you see the transition path to liberal democracy? Are there going to be hurdles to delay the onset of the multi-party system?

I don't think there are going to be any hurdles but we must have the legal framework... that we have to develop. If a multi-party system is approved by the Special Majlis, then we have to have a law governing political parties here before political parties can be formed.

The Maldives is referred to as being ruled by a strong man with an iron fist. How do you

the interest of investigations being carried forward quickly. But that is in this particular case. Otherwise all other detainees have access to legal counsel. As soon as the Emergency is lifted, these people will also have access to legal counsel.

They would not be denied that?

No, they will not be denied that.

How do you see international relations of the Maldives, particularly with India?

Our relations with India are on an excellent basis. We have had very good relations over the past 25-26 years. I plan to visit India in the near future to meet Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and our friend Sonia Gandhi. The relationship is on an excellent basis. In addition [to the bilateral projects], there is people-to-people contact, with 15,000 Indians working here. Our relations are on a very firm and strong basis, and I wish India all prosperity.

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U.S. Begins Transfer of a Shaky Haiti to U.N. Hands

By **TIM WEINER**

Published: June 2, 2004

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti, June 1 - United States commanders began turning over this anarchic, flood-ravaged, starving nation 500 miles from Florida to a handful of United Nations troops on Tuesday.

The 3,600-member American-led military force brought a measure of stability to Haiti after the first Marines landed Feb. 29, the day President Jean-Bertrand Aristide was forced from power under rebel attack and American pressure.

Despite its best efforts during the past three months, it leaves behind a mess. The United Nations mission is to help make Haiti a functioning democracy capable of holding national elections sometime next year. That task may take longer than the mission's six-month mandate.

The rebels first rose up against President Aristide in February, and they still hold much of the countryside. Since their rebellion began, Haiti has been hit by disasters both natural and man-made.

In March, political chaos led to looting and burning in the capital, destroying government offices, hospital clinics and warehouses holding food for the hungry in the poorest nation in the Western world. In April, a transitional government installed with American backing proved unable to provide most basic public services, surviving on a lifeline of foreign money and military force.



Thony Belizaire/

Gen. Augusto H. Pereira, of Braz Alexandre, Hait president, at a yesterday marking power to the Un



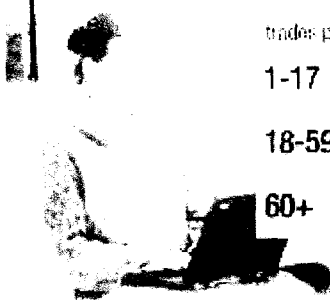
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NYT

Then came the torrential rains that killed thousands and left tens of thousands homeless a week ago.

The United Nations force, now a few hundred soldiers but intended to become 8,000 strong, confronts the immediate crisis of the flood. The toll is more than 2,600 dead and missing in Haiti, 700 dead and missing over the border in the Dominican Republic. The missing are presumed dead.

Some 75,000 people affected by the flood will need help to get through the rainy season, which officially started Tuesday.

International aid agencies will bear the brunt of that task. They say they initially underestimated the scale of the disaster and are scrambling for food, money and transportation to flood-struck villages, where roads have been eradicated.

American helicopters carrying tons of food to 15,000 survivors ceased flying Monday, a week after the floods struck.

"The U.N. peacekeeping mission doesn't have helicopters right now, and it will take weeks for them to deploy some," said Íñigo Álvarez, a spokesman for the United Nations World Food Program, which was already feeding half a million Haitians before the flood. "Without them, we have a big problem to solve. The helicopters were essential."

Guy Gauvreau, the food program's director in Haiti, added, "We deeply deplore that the multinational force has other priorities."

The aid workers are talking about using mules to ferry aid to thousands of victims. Given the state of Haiti's interim government, the agencies say they may have to rent bulldozers and rebuild the ruined roads themselves.

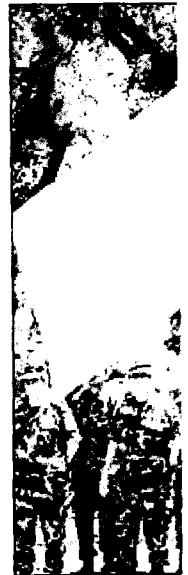
All the while, Haitian politics continues, a discourse often carried out at gunpoint.

The interim Haitian government is outgunned by rebel forces, who control many Haitian towns and villages. The rebels include former soldiers of the Haitian military, a force corrupted by Colombian cocaine kingpins and charged with political killings. In 1991, the military helped overthrow Mr. Aristide, Haiti's first - and only - democratically elected leader.

These rebels are calling for the resurrection of the Haitian Army, disbanded by Mr. Aristide in 1995.

American commanders say the last thing Haiti needs is the return of its military, long an instrument of political terror. Armed Aristide loyalists remain a force in Port-au-Prince, though Mr. Aristide is in exile in South Africa, and unlikely to be allowed to return anytime soon.

Only a handful of the soldiers for the force cobbled together by the United Nations are now in Haiti. They have no headquarters and little money.



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6/2/2004

Some troops from Canada, France and Chile, nations now in the American-led force, will remain in Haiti. A handful of Americans here might stay past June 30, the deadline for their withdrawal.

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Haiti: this time we must get it right

By Kofi A. Annan

"NOT AGAIN!" was the instinctive reaction of officials in the United Nations and in national governments early this year, when it became apparent that Haiti, the poorest country in the western hemisphere, was sinking rapidly into chaos, and the idea of a new international intervention began to be discussed.

We had been there, and done that, ten years before. In 1994, a multinational force entered Haiti, with the blessing of the U.N. Security Council, and restored the elected president, Jean-Bertrand Aristide to power. Six months later, the U.N. itself assumed responsibility for the mission. A real — but, with hindsight, too brief — effort was made to put the country back on its feet and enable it to maintain stability, notably by forming, equipping and training a professional police force.

Yet here we are again. By February 28, when President Aristide left, the police force had disintegrated and the country was, to all intents and purposes, in the hands of armed thugs. The following day the Security Council again authorised intervention by U.N. member-states, this time giving the U.N. itself only three months to take on the security burden. A preliminary U.N. team is now in Haiti, assessing what needs to be done, and what form the future U.N. presence should take. We can be sure the task will be a complex one. The Security

Council has promised humanitarian and economic assistance as well as help in the areas of governance, human rights, and the rule of law.

If anything, the situation looks even more daunting today than ten years ago. Weapons have proliferated and drug trafficking has gained a foothold. Haitians are frustrated and disappointed with the international community as much as with their own leadership. The events of February have exacerbated the polarisation,

The spectacle of human misery is harder to ignore than it used to be, but the crucial difference from the past is that chaos can no longer be contained by frontiers. It tends to spread, whether in the form of refugee flows, terrorism, or illicit trafficking in drugs, weapons and even human beings. No one wants to intervene, but ultimately there is no choice.

As we do so, we have many lessons to learn from past attempts. One is that no one organisation, donor or in-

given real opportunities and jobs in the civilian economy. Without economic growth, militias all too easily re-form, and the cycle of poverty, violence and instability starts again.

But the most important lesson is that there can be no quick exit. Haiti will need our resources and our support for a long time. The current crisis is at least as much the result of irresponsible behaviour by the Haitian political class as of omissions or failures in previous international efforts. This means that true success will involve helping new and more responsible political groups to emerge — building on the role played in the crisis by civil society. That cannot be done quickly. A long-term effort — ten years or more — is needed to help rebuild the police and the judiciary, as well as basic social services such as health care and education.

Too often, such crises command our attention only when they are at their most acute — when the television images are too startling, the violence too appalling and the suffering of millions of people too much to bear. In a country like Haiti it is only by sustained engagement, with both government and civil society, that we can help to build the institutions that enable democracy to take root. The stakes are high — above all for Haitians, but also for us. Getting it right this time means doing things differently. Above all, it means keeping international attention and resources engaged for the long haul.

(The author is Secretary-General of the United Nations.)

There can be no quick exit. Haiti will need our resources and our support for a long time.

international partner can go it alone. We in the United Nations must work closely with our colleagues in CARICOM and the Organisation of American States, adopting an integrated and common approach. They have played a leading role in the current crisis. And they will have to remain engaged in Haiti, as regional partners, long after the blue helmets have left. Haiti must not again be isolated in its own neighbourhood as it was in the past.

Another lesson is the importance of dealing effectively, and in good time, with potential spoilers. Experience in other countries emerging from chaos and conflict has taught us that large numbers of alienated and armed individuals can only be kept out of trouble if, as well as being disarmed, they are

making it hard to form a new government that both opponents and supporters of Mr. Aristide will accept as legitimate.

Should we have learnt by now that outsiders cannot solve Haiti's problems? This, after all, is a country that has just celebrated the bicentenary of its self-emancipation from slavery and colonialism. For a time in the early 20th century it was a U.S. protectorate. Should it not now be left alone to sort itself out?

That proposition is attractive only in the abstract. Haiti is clearly unable to sort itself out, and the effect of leaving it alone would be continued or worsening chaos. Our globalised world cannot afford such a political vacuum, whether in the mountains of Afghanistan or on the very doorstep of the sole remaining superpower.

Haiti gets interim President

Associated Press

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PORT-AU-PRINCE, March 9. — Haiti's interim President took the reins of his country's shattered government yesterday, as ousted President Mr Jean-Bertrand Aristide restated his claim to be Haiti's true leader from his faraway African asylum and his supporters shouted demands for his return.

"Aristide or death!" the ousted leader's followers yelled from the gates of the National Palace, their voices carrying into the room where President Mr Boniface Alexandre was being installed and urged the chaotic country to remain calm. "We are all brothers and sisters," said Mr Alexandre, who has served as President for a week and was officially sworn in on Sunday. "We are all in the same boat, and if it sinks, it sinks with all of us."

Military helicopters circled overhead and U.S. Marines in armoured cars patrolled the streets outside the palace where Mr Aristide's followers declared: "Like it or not, Aristide must come back!"

"What the Americans did was a sham," said Mr Bertrand Exilus, a 32-year-old tailor. "We elected Mr Aristide. We did not elect Mr Alexandre. Mr George W Bush does not respect democracy."



A pro-Aristide demonstration erupts in Port-Au-Prince even as US marines patrol the Haitian capital on Monday. — AFP

Mr Alexandre did not address Mr Aristide's claim that he still is Haiti's President, made at a his first public appearance since he arrived on 1 March in Central African Republic, aboard a plane chartered by the US government. In Washington, State Department spokesman Mr Richard Boucher insisted that Mr Aristide had voluntarily resigned. "If Mr Aristide really wants to serve his country, he really has to, we think, let his nation get on with the future and not try to stir up the past again."

The USA denies Mr Aristide's charge that Washington forced him to step down. But the 15-nation Caribbean Community has called for an international investigation.

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LESSONS FROM HAITI

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HAITI'S DESCENT INTO chaos may just have been averted by the unlamented departure of its President, Jean-Bertrand Aristide, but normality is a long distance away for this tiny Caribbean republic. Mr. Aristide had little choice, with his presidency under siege by rebel militias that had vowed to overthrow him, and with international support effectively blocked by the United States. Instead of making a last ditch stand, which would have brought more death and destruction on his people, he accepted exile. Once hailed as the man who could deliver peace and freedom to his people, the radical priest who became his country's first democratically elected President hastened his own departure through an intolerance of political dissent and resort to authoritarian methods. He had, besides, fallen foul of the U.S., which a decade ago restored him to the presidency after he was ousted in a military coup. In an attempt to sustain the fairy tale of a 'nation-building' intervention, Washington worked out an arrangement under which Mr. Aristide could retain his presidency and share power. His opponents rejected the plan, evidently convinced that Washington would ultimately want Mr. Aristide out.

The ousted President's flight into exile signals the failure of that much-touted American initiative launched under the Clinton presidency. The episode raises some embarrassing questions about Washington's readiness to sacrifice democracy and sidestep its obligations. If the U.S. had acted early enough in support of a President who was once a favourite, the fledgling democracy in Haiti would have received a booster dose, much life and property would have been saved, and Haitians would have been spared the trauma of mindless violence. Once order was restored, Mr. Aristide could have been asked to prove his democratic credentials. Considering that Wash-

ington allowed the wound to fester, the conclusion is inescapable that the policy of delay had only one goal: regime change and the ouster of a democratically elected President. Washington's strategy of denying military support to the beleaguered regime and public repudiation of appeals for despatch of its soldiers to help restore order served indirectly to boost the campaign of the anti-government militias. Composed mainly of political opponents and renegade members of the army that was disbanded by Mr. Aristide in retaliation for its role in the 1991 coup, these forces were emboldened enough to threaten to attack the capital, Port au Prince. Once Mr. Aristide agreed to leave, the U.S. acted swiftly, moving in its soldiers and getting the United Nations Security Council to agree to form an international peacekeeping force.

Haiti enters its third century as an independent republic with no end in sight to the political turmoil that Mr. Aristide once attributed to "democracy in the making." Instead of letting one country decide, the international community must actively assist the tormented nation and its people. The U.N. is putting together a mainly Latin American peace force that will face the challenge of restoring order and putting democracy back on the rails. The American contingent did similar duty when Mr. Aristide was restored to power a decade ago. However, there were complaints then that the job was only partially done as Washington was in a hurry to pull back its soldiers. This time the U.N. should be fully and solely involved in rebuilding the nation. After its successes in East Timor and Bosnia, the world body has its credentials well and truly established. Haiti, among the most impoverished of nations in the Caribbean, needs a decent chance to come out of its time of troubles.

Haiti rebels to lay down arms



Rebel chief Guy Philippe

PORT-AU-PRINCE, March 4. — Haiti rebel chief Mr Guy Philippe has said his fighters will lay down their arms after receiving security guarantees from the international community.

Mr Philippe made the announcement yesterday after meeting a top US military officer, who, according to a diplomatic source, warned the rebel leader that his followers who control half the country would have no political role and should therefore disband.

Mr Philippe, a former police commissioner, set out the reasons for the disarm order to his men in an interview following a press conference to announce the move.

"Now that President Aristide, the main problem for democracy, has gone; now there are foreign troops who are going to guarantee security, and as we have no intention of taking power with weapons, we thought it would be best for the Haitian people to lay down our arms," he said.

The rebel chief, dressed in military uniform, said the arms "will be put at the disposition of the republic's President".

The USA has warned Mr Philippe that he has no place in Haiti's political future and should drop any ambition to assume control over the country. — AFP

5 5 MAR 2000

Haiti rebels ask people to put pressure on America

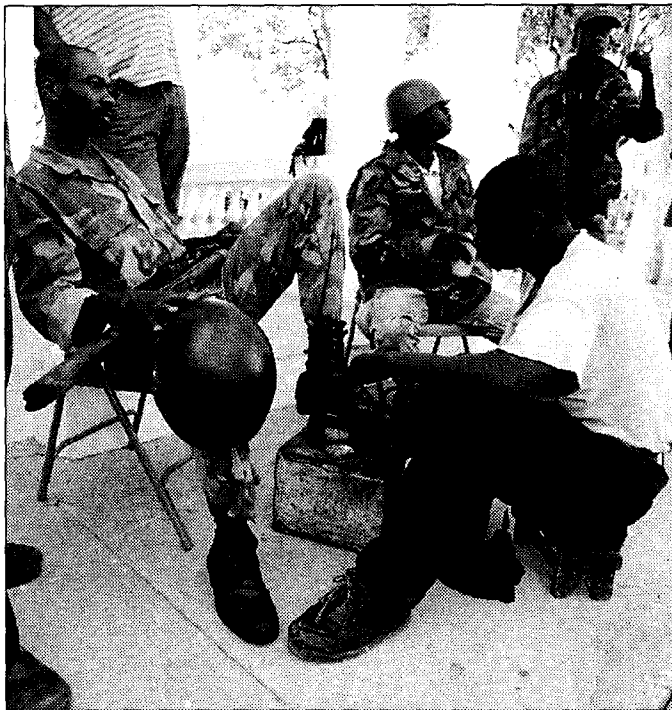
Port-au-Prince, March 2 (Reuters): Rebels sought to consolidate their position in Haiti today, urging people to demonstrate support for their "army" in the face of a power vacuum after the ouster of President Jean-Bertrand Aristide.

While US troop reinforcements were arriving to spearhead an international force and Washington worked on political plans for restoring order, rebel leader Guy Philippe, an ex-police chief, went on local radio to call for public backing.

"We need the population to give us the mandate to provide them with security. Once we get the mandate we will assume our responsibility," declared Philippe, whose rag-tag backers took over the police headquarters yesterday.

He called on Haitians to demonstrate outside the US-guarded national palace, the gleaming white presidential office in the middle of this peeling and impoverished city which was long a symbol of Aristide's power. Many people returned to work and the streets were crowded with vehicles today, but there was still occasional shooting and some looting in the anarchic port area.

In Washington defence secretary Donald Rumsfeld said: "The situation clearly is more stable and quieter today." US forces were securing the airport, the palace area and the coast guard station. He added: "The forces that were opposing Aristide seem to have made a conscious decision to behave and that's a good thing. That is a result of the



A Haitian rebel gets his boots polished in Port-au-Prince. (Reuters)

presence of international and multinational forces."

Philippe made clear his forces did not intend to melt away, despite his statement shortly after Aristide fled on Sunday that his forces would put down their weapons and stop fighting. "The army was never disbanded," he said.

Aristide disbanded the army in the 1990s after a series of military coups, leaving law and order to a poorly equipped police force which collapsed in the face of the rebels campaign in the last month.

Hundreds of armed rebels, some in military fatigues with automatic weapons and others in T-shirts with Second World War rifles, have entered the capital. Haiti was convulsed by an uprising that began on February 5 when an armed gang took over the northwestern city of Gonaives and was later joined by former soldiers and paramilitaries.

Aristide has charged from the Central African Republic that he was kidnapped in an American coup d'etat, an allegation US officials dismissed as

baseless nonsense but which may give a political boost to Aristide supporters.

"Our vote was stolen. We elected Aristide for five years. His term was not completed so he is still our President," 19-year-old Patrick Sanon said in a poor district that was a centre of an Aristide state housing project.

Vice-President Dick Cheney said today Aristide had "worn out his welcome" as Haiti's President but that the US did not force him to leave as he claims. "He made the choice to leave. He resigned the office of his own free will and left on a civilian aircraft which we chartered for him. He left with his security detail. This was his decision to go," Cheney told the Fox News Channel.

There were reports of more killings, despite the presence of US troops in the city who said barricades prevented them from entering the port. Colonel David Berger, commander of the international forces, said 300 Marines were in Haiti and "more will be flowing in today."

One man's body lay by a crossroads, a bullet hole in his head in an execution-style killing. Overnight there was sporadic gunfire, including outside the presidential palace. About 80 people have been killed in the month-long uprising.

Hundreds of Marines and 100 French troops are camped out at the airport in the first stage of a UN-sanctioned effort to restore order.

The US force was to grow to 1,500 to 2,000 as part of an international force of some 5,000.

Bloody Tuesday

51-8 In 1973
Muharram attacks shed blood in Pakistan and Iraq

The devastating attacks on Shia crowds celebrating Muharram in Iraq and Pakistan appear to have a similar pattern. In Pakistan the Shias are a minority who have been targeted by Sunni extremists since the days of General Zia ul-Haq. It became fashionable for the establishment to cultivate ties with Sunni extremists for the sake of foreign policy goals in Afghanistan and Kashmir. In Iraq Shias had been a majority in numerical terms who, however, had been shut out of power elites throughout the 20th century. The ban on Muharram celebrations by Saddam Hussein had been a sign of their powerlessness, but the Shias have emerged as one of the few organized and disciplined groups in post-Saddam Iraq. Representing 60 per cent of Iraqis, they are bound to stake a large claim in any future political arrangement. Given the vacuum created in Iraq by the demise of Hussein's rule, someone obviously thought that the turnout of millions of Shias in one of the first sanctioned Muharrams in a long time presented too tempting a target.

Of the two, Pakistan's sectarian strife appears to be the easier to address. It requires the establishment to cut its links with and clamp down on the *jehadis*, which would be an act of self-preservation as well because they have now turned their guns on General Musharraf. India may be bled through cross-border terror, but in effect Musharraf faces the same problem as Pakistan's Shias — he too is a target, and his assassination would portend chaos for Pakistan. That is not even to mention that using *jehadis* to escalate cross-border terror would bury the promising peace process with Delhi and turn the clock back to war. It is Iraq which looks like a tougher nut to crack. Sustained bombings of Shia holy sites are provocative and appear designed to touch off a wider civil war, and the coalition authorities, much like the British in India in 1947, look clueless on how to handle the violence. A constitution has been cobbled together pending the transfer of power but it is an "interim" one, which is oxymoronic as constitutions are meant to be long lasting documents that provide structure to governance. Some key questions are evaded by the constitution, such as Islam being the source of some laws but not all law (which ones?), or the status of Kurdish-controlled territories. These are precisely the controversial issues on which Iraq's divided ethnic groups need to come to an agreement.

Haiti Aristide flees Island St

Haiti's political vacuum must be filled quickly

Order has broken down in Port-au-Prince and other Haitian cities with the advance of rebel militias and flight of President Jean-Bertrand Aristide, much as Baghdad was sacked by looters upon the fall of President Saddam Hussein. The difference between the two situations is that the sack of Baghdad was precipitated by the US invasion, while US Marines landing in Haiti may offer the only hope of heading off a bloody confrontation between pro- and anti-Aristide gangs and anarchy on the streets. Aristide's career looks very much like something out of a cynical political novel by VS Naipaul or Mario Vargas Llosa. Once hailed as the Haitian Mandela for his opposition to the vicious dictatorship of the Duvalier family, the methods Aristide adopted when in power reeked of authoritarianism and corruption. Above all, this leftwing demagogue did nothing to address Haiti's desperate economic conditions, letting it fester as the poorest country in the western hemisphere.

When a rebel movement got underway to oust him, which included among its numbers former henchmen of the Duvaliers, his regime collapsed quickly. Police guarding the main prison in Haiti, near the National Palace where Aristide lived, have run away, emptying the jails into a virtually unpoliced capital city. Washington too appears to have had a hand in Aristide's removal as it refused to step in unless Aristide left the country. A dangerous political vacuum has developed. Despite the swearing in of Supreme Court chief justice Boniface Alexandre as President, one doesn't know whether the rebels will recognize his authority or consider him to be a stooge of Aristide. The international community needs to step in and restore some semblance of order. The UN Security Council has reacted to the crisis and voted to send in a US-led multinational peacekeeping force. There is a familiar drill with failed states it must implement in Haiti — disband the armed gangs both pro-and anti-Aristide; set up an interim authority; hold democratic elections.

Haiti being as close to the US as it is, such an effort will succeed or fail depending on the degree of American cooperation. Indeed, the political crisis has been worsening for some time and it is a moot point why nothing has been done so far, despite the past history of US interventions in Haiti. Aristide himself had been re-installed by US troops after being driven out by a coup, but the international community did not stay long enough to stabilize his regime, whose upshot is the current crisis. The Bush administration is even more averse to nation-building efforts than the previous Clinton administration was, and Haiti is a poor country with no oil or obvious economic assets. But there is one factor that could conceivably concentrate minds in Washington — the prospect of desperate boat people washing up on American shores if order is not speedily restored in Haiti.

THE STATESMAN 3 MAR 2004

Marines arrive, so do Haiti rebels

Port-au-Prince, March 1 (Reuters): Armed rebels who helped oust President Jean-Bertrand Aristide paraded around the National Palace in central Port-au-Prince today, greeted by thousands of cheering Haitians as US Marines began a mission to restore order.

The rebels, whose leaders said they would lay down their arms and halt their 24-day uprising, had begun arriving in the chaotic city yesterday, hours after Aristide fled the country.

A convoy of pickup trucks and sport utility vehicles raced through the streets of the capital and were greeted by joyous supporters who waved flags and flashed V for victory signs.

The rebels, heavily armed and wearing military fatigues, sounded a police siren as they moved through the streets.

One of their leaders, former senior police chief Guy Philippe, was in the convoy, which halted at a police station near the palace. Thousands of people were gathered nearby celebrating, some shouting: "Guy Philippe, Guy Philippe."

Outside town, US Marines secured Haiti's main airport and unpacked gear as they began

their mission to halt the turmoil in the country, the poorest in the Americas, that began even before the uprising against Aristide erupted on February 5.

Aristide, once a champion of Haiti's fledgling democracy who was driven out by the rebel uprising and foreign pressure to quit, left for Africa early yesterday in a hasty departure arranged by the US. Looting and gun battles erupted in the wake of his departure. Looters struck shops, police stations and the homes of Aristide supporters, carting off refrigerators, doors, televisions and clothing.

The contingent of 150 to 200 Marines, joined by over 100 French troops, unloaded machine guns, grenade launchers and bottles of Evian water at the airport today, prepared to guard key sites and restore order.

"I have no clue how we're going to be received," 21-year-old US Lance Corporal Eric Hatford said as he munched candies atop a Humvee at the airport. The Marines force is expected to grow to about 1,000.

"They're going to welcome us and we're glad to be here," said Colonel Dave Berger. Marines lounged on couches in the VIP

section of the airport as Humvees were unloaded from planes onto the airport tarmac.

On the road to the airport, some Haitians held up two fingers in a "V for victory" sign. Others held up three fingers, a sign of dismay that Aristide's presidency ended after three years of a five-year term.

With the city returning to a semblance of normality, a street market was packed with people and "tap-taps," the colourful Haitian taxis fashioned from pick-up trucks, although traffic was lighter than usual because of fuel shortages.

Aristide, a former radical priest who preached against Haiti's dictators in the 1980s and was exiled by a military coup in 1991 during his first term as president, arrived today in the capital of the Central African Republic. "By toppling me they have cut down the tree of peace, but it will grow again," he told state radio in Bangui.

The arrival of the US Marines was the third major deployment of US troops to Haiti in the past century. Ten years ago President Bill Clinton sent 20,000 Marines to restore Aristide to power.



A rebel looks for armed supporters of President Aristide during a search in Port-au-Prince. (Reuters)

America sends Haiti President packing

Port-au-Prince (Haiti), Feb. 29 (Reuters): Haiti's President Jean-Bertrand Aristide quit his chaotic Caribbean country today, driven out by a bloody revolt that put rebels near the capital and by pressure from the US and France.

Aristide said he resigned to avert "a bloodbath," but turmoil persisted in Port-au-Prince where shooting rang out as armed Aristide supporters roamed the streets and looters ransacked a police station.

Aristide, 50, whose role in a popular uprising that ended decades of dictatorship in the 1980s once made him a hero of Haitian democracy, left early this morning, 24 days after the uprising began in the poorest country in the Americas.

The US, which invaded the country in 1994 to restore Aristide to power, has been criticised for acting too slowly in the current crisis. It failed last week to negotiate a compromise between the politicians in Port-au-Prince meant to avert a collapse of the government.

But by the end of the week Washington had made clear it had lost faith in Aristide and his

departure became just a matter of time. The US was concerned at the mounting chaos and also the potential for a wave of boat people fleeing to America.

Aristide's departure was arranged by US officials. "At his request, we facilitated his safe departure," a state department official said in Washington.

Within hours, Haitian chief justice Boniface Alexandre was named to replace Aristide as laid out in the constitution.

Aristide's destination was unclear but Haiti's consul in the capital of the neighbouring Dominican Republic said that he travelled to the eastern Caribbean nation of Antigua and

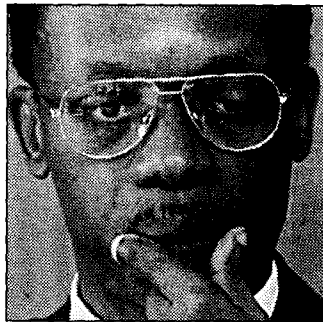
Barbuda to refuel and then was planning to travel to Morocco. But Morocco said it would not grant Aristide asylum.

With the rebels closing in on Port-au-Prince, many had feared a bloody battle for control between them and Aristide's militant supporters. The revolt, which flared in the city of Gonaives on February 5, has already killed nearly 70 people.

Speaking at a ceremony at Neptune's home, US Ambassador James Foley urged the rebels to lay down their arms.

Rebel soldiers in Cap Haitien, the rebel stronghold in the north overrun last weekend, celebrated in the streets. The rebels, led by a former police chief and a former death squad leader, had said they were advancing on the capital.

But reaction to news of Aristide's departure in the streets of Port-au-Prince was swift and angry. Armed bands of Chimeres, the most militant and ruthless of Aristide's supporters from the slums roamed the city in pickup trucks, armed with shotguns and other weapons. Looters also hit the streets in some places.



Aristide: Out

9/12/00
8/12

HAITI CRISIS / REBELS READY TO DISARM

HD-14 1/3

Aristide flees bowing to pressure

PORT-AU-PRINCE (HAITI), FEB. 29.

The Haitian President, Jean-Bertrand Aristide, resigned and fled Haiti on Sunday, bowing to pressure from a rebellion at home and governments abroad, U.S. and Haitian officials said.

Boniface Alexandre, Chief Justice of Haiti's Supreme Court, said he was Haiti's new leader as hundreds of angry Aristide militants armed with old rifles and pistols converged on the National Palace, the presidential seat in Port-au-Prince. Gunfire rang out in the area.

Asked why he chose to assume the presidency, Mr. Alexandre said, "I assume it because the Constitution indicates it."

A jet carrying Mr. Aristide landed on the island Antigua for refuelling and headed to South Africa, local radio stations reported. His Prime Minister, Yvon Neptune, said at a press conference that the ex-leader resigned to "prevent bloodshed".

Despite Mr. Alexandre's declaration that he was in charge, the Haitian constitution calls for Parliament to approve him as leader and the legislature has not met since early this year when lawmakers' terms expired.

In Cap-Haitien, Haiti's second-largest city in the north that has become a base for the rebels, crowds danced and sang in the street and a rebel com-



People celebrate the departure of the Haitian President, Jean-Bertrand Aristide, in Cap-Haitien on Sunday. — AP.

mander said his fighters were ready to disarm once a new government was in place. — AP

U.S. move ended crisis?

By Sridhar Krishnaswami

WASHINGTON, FEB. 29. The Haitian President, Mr. Aristide may seek asylum in Morocco, Taiwan or Panama, according to

first reports. On Saturday, the White House issued an unusual statement to increase pressure on Mr. Aristide blaming him for the mess in the country.

And that statement came after the U.S. President, George Bush's National Security Team felt that Washington must signal Mr. Aristide to go. At least 70 persons died in the three weeks of violence.

In its blunt message, the

White House said, "This long simmering crisis is largely of Mr. Aristide's making. His failure to adhere to democratic principles has contributed to the deep polarisation and violent unrest that we are witnessing in Haiti today.

"We urge him to examine his position carefully, to accept responsibility and to act in the best interests of the people of Haiti."

Anarchy in Haiti as rebels close in on capital

Port-au-Prince: Rebels pushed to within 40 km of Haiti's capital on Friday and chaos spread as militants loyal to President Jean-Bertrand Aristide torched barricades, hijacked cars, looted and attacked the capital's sole operating hospital.

Mr Aristide said he would not step down, even as the US urged him to cede power. "As an elected president, I have the responsibility to stay where I am. My life is linked to eight million people," he said, pleading with a small contingent of foreign peacekeepers to protect Haiti's democracy.

Meanwhile, about 2,200 US

AP



People loot at the seaport in Port-au-Prince on Friday

Marines were put on alert as Pentagon officials weighed the possibility of sending troops to the waters off Haiti to guard against any flood of refugees and protect the estimated 20,000 Americans in the country.

The international community has demanded that Haiti's government and opposition reach a political settlement before it intervenes. A senior US official said the Bush administration felt that the best way to prevent insurgents from seizing control was for Mr Aristide to transfer power to supreme court chief justice Boniface Alexandre, his constitutional successor. In a country where jurists are known for corruption, he is respected for his honesty.

"We urgently call upon President Aristide to issue the necessary instructions so that his supporters stop the violence," the US embassy said on Friday night, adding that his honour, legacy and reputation were now at stake. The US government also urged all Americans still in Haiti to move out. AP

H10-18
25/2

Haiti Opposition rejects U.S. plan

PORT-AU-PRINCE (HAITI), FEB. 25. Militant supporters of the Haitian President, Jean-Bertrand Aristide, set flaming barricades blocking roads in the capital on Wednesday against a threatened rebel attack and Opposition leaders took a last stand against a U.S.-backed peace plan, adding to pressures for Haiti's leader to resign.

With a motley group of rebels overrunning half the country — led in part by Haitians accused in past massacres — Tuesday's stalemate caused alarm in the international community.

France's U.N. Ambassador, Jean-Marc de La Sabliere, said diplomats were considering proposing "a police force, or a civilian force" for approval by the U.N. Security Council.

Canada confirmed that a team of soldiers from the Canadian Armed Forces flew into Port-au-Prince on Tuesday to help in case of a possible evacuation of some 1,000 citizens in Haiti, said the Foreign Affairs spokesman, Reynald Doiron, in Ottawa.

Amid the chaos, Radio Metropole reported on Wednesday that police were searching hotels in Port-au-Prince's Petionville suburb for the rebel leader, Guy Philippe. But an Associated Press reporter saw Mr. Philippe on Wednesday morning having his boots polished outside a hotel in Cap-Haitien, Haiti's second-largest city in the north which the rebels seized on Sun-

day and are making their base. Two leading hotels said police had not been there.

Britain and Australia on Tuesday urged their citizens to get out of Haiti, following similar warnings from the United States, France and Mexico. There are about 30,000 foreigners in Haiti, 20,000 of them Americans. Last-ditch efforts by the U.S. Secretary of State, Colin Powell, did not save the peace plan because the Democratic Platform coalition said Mr. Aristide — who has lost much popular support amid accusations he condoned corruption, failed to help the poor and brutally suppressed the Opposition — must go. The plan would have kept Mr. Aristide as President, but with diminished powers and compelled to share government with his rivals.

Opposition leaders said they sent Mr. Powell their rejection on Tuesday along with a counterproposal to install a Supreme Court justice as an interim president and appoint a new Prime Minister along with the "orderly departure" of Mr. Aristide.

"There will be no more delays. Our answer remains the same. Aristide must resign," said Maurice Lafortune, president of the Haitian Chamber of Commerce that is part of the Democratic Platform.

The Opposition coalition said it would officially announce its decision at a news conference on Wednesday morning. — AP

THE HINDU 26 FEB 2004

Haiti rebels eye capital

9 March 87 - HD-13
CAP-HAITIEN (HAITI), FEB. 23. Rebels overran Haiti's second-largest city in their biggest victory of a bloody uprising and said soon they would attack the capital in their campaign to oust the President, Jean-Bertrand Aristide.

As thousands of looters rampaged through Cap-Haitien on Sunday, rebel leader, Guy Philippe, predicted a quick victory over Mr. Aristide's partisans, who sought to block any advance by erecting flaming barricades on the highway into the capital, Port-au-Prince, from the north.

"I think that in less than 15 days we will control all of Haiti," Mr. Philippe said at a Cap-Haitien hotel as he swigged from a bottle of beer.

Sources close to the Government said several Cabinet Ministers in Port-au-Prince were asking friends for places to hide in case the capital is attacked.

After rebels drove government troops from Cap-Haitien, a city of some 500,000 on Haiti's north coast, thousands went on a looting spree. — AP

It is black market, says Iran

TEHERAN, FEB. 23. Iran on Monday acknowledged for the first time that it had bought nuclear equipment on the black market.

A Foreign Ministry spokesman said certain items were bought from international dealers, including from the Indian subcontinent.

Hamid Reza Asefi, however, did not say what had been bought or from

which countries. A. Q. Khan, father of Pakistan's nuclear bomb, sold Iran nuclear centrifuge parts for \$3 million in cash and also arranged to send enriched uranium to Libya when he was at the helm of Pakistan's nuclear programme. This was disclosed by a Sri Lankan businessman, identified by the U.S. President, George W. Bush, as the deputy of Dr. A. Q. Khan. — AP

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HAITI: ANOTHER CASE STUDY

Jordan Grales

CALL IT COINCIDENCE. A 10-year-old experiment by the United States in "nation-building" is unravelling rapidly at the very time it is engaged in another purported nation-building exercise of an awful kind. Haiti is not as far away from the U.S. as Iraq, or as big or as complex. It is a tiny country on an island off the Florida coast. In the last few days, Haiti has been tormented by internal violence with armed gangs taking over towns and opposition groups demanding the ouster of President Jean-Bertrand Aristide whose election in 2000 they refuse to recognise as legitimate. This is President Aristide's second term in office. His first, between 1990 and 1995, was interrupted by a military coup and he could reclaim office only after an armed intervention by U.S. forces removed the junta. He may get no such help this time, having fallen out with his patron in the intervening years. Without directly calling for the ouster of Mr. Aristide, the U.S. has sent out signals that have encouraged his opponents, rightly raising questions about the Bush administration's support for the removal of an elected leader. Even though there has been some erosion in support for the Haitian leader, he remains deeply popular among his people. Apart from the armed militias, the main opposition is a loose coalition called the Democratic Convergence that has links to a U.S. organisation representing Republican Party interests. Not surprisingly, comparisons are also being drawn with what was enacted in Venezuela two years ago. But more than anything else, Haiti's crisis has reinforced disturbing questions about the U.S. style of nation-building abroad and its motives behind such ventures.

Haiti is a classic case of the tension between the stated aim of the U.S. to build democracies around the world and its desire to ensure that such governments remain pliant and reflect its own policies. After nine decades of U.S. involve-

ment, Haiti is the poorest country in the western hemisphere. For 30 years from 1958, Washington nurtured the tyrannical regimes of the Duvaliers (father and son) so that they remained allies during the Cold War. After a popular revolt deposed Baby Doc Duvalier in 1986, U.S. policy towards Haiti has largely been determined by the thousands of illegal Haitian immigrants who wash up on American shores, fleeing the economic and political instability at home. This was one of the main reasons behind the Clinton administration's 1993 intervention to reinstall Mr. Aristide, and it definitely helped that he was democratically elected. But working to a quick "exit strategy," the U.S. then abandoned Haiti; the new Government found itself without either support structure or financial resources to enable it to revive the economy and restore political stability. Not enthused by President Aristide, the Bush administration has exacerbated Haiti's plight by blocking international aid, and with its recent calls for a "thorough change" in governance, is now seen as backing a dubious opposition. Naturally, Haitians who want to see a genuine democracy take root in their country fear a return to the free-for-all chaos that reigned in the late 1980s.

In this election year for President George Bush, the course of his administration's policy towards Haiti is certain to be influenced by the presence of a sizeable Haitian migrant community in at least three States in the U.S. and the possibility of another surge of refugees and illegal immigrants should the impasse between President Aristide and his opponents continue. But as the Bush administration struggles to extricate itself from the horrible mess it has created in Iraq, the troubles in Haiti give Americans an opportunity to reflect on yet another of Washington's interventions in the name of freedom and democracy producing nothing but tragedy for the alleged beneficiaries.

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