

ARISTIDE FLEES HAITI

U.S. Considers Its Role in a New Haiti

Lawmakers weigh investing in the poor neighbor's future in hopes of preventing further chaos and waves of boat people.

By PAUL RICHTER
Times Staff Writer

WASHINGTON — After helping oust a president it once supported, the Bush administration now confronts the question of whether to take a larger and long-lasting role in Haiti in hopes of ending the cycle of political collapse that has again brought the U.S. Marines to its shores.

President Bush has long vowed to avoid such nation-building. Any U.S. effort would be burdensome now, when U.S. troops, aid money and attention are focused on Iraq. Yet the United States has already shouldered a significant role in trying to bring about a new political order in the country and is committed to lead an international peacekeeping contingent that would seek to safeguard the emergence of a new leadership.

Even some Republicans wary of foreign aid are asking whether it would be wiser to accept greater involvement in Haiti's long-term development rather than risk further eruptions of chaos and waves of emigration. Every new crisis underscores for the United States the implications of having a failed state and center of misery on its doorstep.

"You're going to have the burden, no matter how you slice it," said Rep. Mark Foley (R-Fla.). "I don't think anybody's going to walk away from this."

The Bush administration has agreed to send in hundreds of troops, who may remain for weeks. The administration is also likely to send hundreds of peacekeepers to help train and support new police organizations in the country.

Whether to expand the role



CAROLYN COLE Los Angeles Times

DANGEROUS STREETS: Two men lie dead in Port-au-Prince after being shot by police. Witnesses said the men had stolen a car.

further is likely to be hotly debated in the weeks and months ahead — perhaps soon in Congress — as lawmakers consider restoring some aid to Haiti that they started cutting three years ago to show U.S. displeasure with President Jean-Bertrand Aristide.

The crisis that began Feb. 5 has already brought wide criticism of the way the Clinton administration scaled back its commitment to Haiti after invading in 1994 to restore Aristide after he was ousted by a military coup.

The Clinton administration poured in hundreds of millions of

dollars in each of the first years after the invasion. But sensing a lack of political support for the mission, Clinton withdrew the forces by 1996, and left the job of stabilization to a United Nations force, which departed in 2000.

Critics have contended that the withdrawal undermined the effort to strengthen Haiti's feeble government institutions. Aid, which has been cut back steadily to show U.S. displeasure — over election irregularities, Aristide's support for violent gangs and police repression — will be \$55 million this year.

Advocates of an increased commitment say \$200 million to

\$300 million in annual U.S. aid is necessary. James Dobbins, a special envoy to Haiti in the Clinton years, said in a recent interview that such an investment would probably be needed for a generation to put Haiti solidly on the right track.

By comparison, Israel and Egypt each receive several billion a year in U.S. aid.

Foley said Haiti needed close attention from U.S. and international aid and technical organizations, such as the Peace Corps, CARE, the U.S. Agriculture Department and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, to make

sure the aid produces results.

Some congressional conservatives who have opposed Haiti aid will probably resist investing large new sums, citing the budget deficit and the money wasted in the country in the past.

But Richard Haass, former director of policy planning in the Bush State Department, said that by its effort in recent weeks, the United States has already committed itself to doing more.

"The United States is now a part of it," he said on ABC's "This Week" television show. "Haiti is a reminder that failing states and weak states can be as much of a problem . . . as strong states. It

could become a power vacuum where drug agents or terrorists could set up shop," and refugees could "destabilize the Caribbean."

"I think the issue now is for the United States, working with other countries in the region, working with the United Nations, to essentially make sure this doesn't happen again."

William Kristol, former chief of staff to Vice President Dan Quayle and editor of the Weekly Standard, predicted that President Bush will have little choice but to accept deeper commitment to Haiti.

"We will have to go on to prevent, simply, replacement of one thug by another group of thugs, to prevent civil war," he said on "Fox News Sunday." "There will be another exercise in nation-building, which the president ran against in 2000, but now he's going to end up having to do."

A senior diplomat closely involved in the recent crisis, and who has worked on Haiti's problems for years, said he believed the United States and other countries would be drawn into a prolonged effort.

Since the last U.S. occupation, "Haiti has just gone from one crisis to another," said the diplomat, who asked to remain unidentified. He said other countries will want a system of accountability from Haiti before getting involved because they have "spent billions there since 1994, and when they look at Haiti today, they can't tell where all the money went."

Daniel P. Erikson, director of Caribbean programs at the Inter-American Dialogue think tank in Washington, said the depth of the American commitment could depend on whether the United States is able to find Haitians it trusts as partners.

If it fails to find such partners, and the effort is "a long, murky mess," the U.S. officials may try to limit their involvement. But the effort could grow if it finds leaders in whom it has confidence.

Southland Haitians Vent Through Radio Program

Weekly broadcast from Riverside County brings music and news from home. Reaction to latest political turmoil on the island is mixed.

By REGINE LABOSSIERE AND FAYE FIORE
Times Staff Writers

Hours before President Jean-Bertrand Aristide resigned, Haitians throughout Southern California were getting their Saturday night blend of Caribbean music and news from back home on a radio show broadcast from Riverside County.

Throughout the hourlong program, listeners called in to make their feelings known.

"Democracy can't do anything with him just sitting on his throne while people are dying," one caller said in Creole. "He must accept that he must go."

By noon Sunday, the program's co-host, Claudine Francois, had been on the phone with relatives in Haiti. Everyone, she said, was safe but scared.

"I think it was for the best," Francois, 36, said. "Him staying there would have been a bloodshed."

For almost a year, people from San Rafael to Los Angeles to San Diego and all over the Inland Empire have been tuning in to Francois and Remy LaCroix on Caribbean Magazine, a Saturday evening show that tries to bring together the sprawling Haitian community.

At another station across the country in Miami, program director Harold Staco was preparing to air a Sunday afternoon of

news, analysis and debate for a Haitian community deeply conflicted about the sudden fall of Aristide.

"The general reaction is a lot of division among Haitian people in South Florida," said Staco, program director at Radio Carnivale, a radio station in Miami's Little Haiti.

Little Haiti was subdued Sunday night. There were no crowds on 2nd Avenue, its main street, nor cars bearing Haitian flags celebrating his departure.

Those willing to comment appeared supportive of Aristide.

"Aristide had said he was ready to die for his country," said Derik Prince, 28. "What sense does it make for him to leave? If you're president, you're supposed to stay."

Estinvil Edouard, 34, said he wasn't thinking about Aristide. He said he had been in the United States for four years and had no idea where his wife and three children were in Haiti at the moment. He hasn't been able to communicate with them. "Aristide is a political problem. Me, I have too many personal problems to worry about him."

Staco said he was glad to see Aristide go. "He was in power for 11 years, and the country is poorer, there is no infrastructure, no hope for the future. He should have been able to manage it better."

But, like several other Haitians, he said he was disturbed by the chaotic nature of Aristide's departure, which he said seemed more like a coup. "Our history is that every time something happens, they send the president into exile . . . with no retribution at the end," Staco said. "Aristide was poor, now he's rich and he leaves behind a

country in chaos."

Edouard Duvalle Carrie, a 54-year-old Miami artist who has lived in the U.S. for 11 years, echoed that sentiment: "I think Aristide's gone for his gross incompetence, but it's unfortunate that the democratic process was interrupted in such an unpalatable way. I don't think there's any rejoicing in the neighborhood. Everyone's annoyed and unnerved about how things were done."

In New York, where one of the nation's largest Haitian communities is concentrated, the Rev. Joseph Voltaire said there was "no happiness" among the 45 members of his congregation who attended services Sunday morning at the Haitian Ministry Theophile Church in Christ.

"We feel there's a lot of shame to always have problems in our country. It's not a good thing for our people," he said. "The guy was elected democratically. The fact is not that I support Aristide, but we thought that we could start a democratic system. . . . Now we are confused about what is democracy."

Francois and LaCroix, who have lived in Southern California for decades, created the Inland Empire program last March. Unlike Miami, New York and other cities on the East Coast and in Canada, the 4,000 or so Haitians living in Southern California have never had a strong community base. "We're here to glue the community together," LaCroix said.

Caribbean Magazine is broadcast in French and Haitian Creole on KHPY-AM (1670) from Moreno Valley from 7 to 8 p.m. Saturdays. The show's format is simple: Play music from Caribbean islands — mostly *kompas*,



GLENN KOENIG Los Angeles Times

NICHE AUDIENCE: Remy LaCroix, left, and Claudine Francois are co-hosts of Caribbean Magazine, a weekly radio show that serves Haitian Americans living in Southern California.

racine and *zouk* — have a doctor from San Diego call in to educate people on medical issues, and listen to a correspondent in Haiti deliver the news. The show also lets listeners call in.

"You're so far away from home, and you can hear everything in your own language," LaCroix, 51, said. "It's quite a feeling for you."

The first broadcast was March 30, 2003, and Francois was the only host. She soon asked LaCroix to join her. Because polling the number of listeners is too expensive for the station, Francois said she could only estimate the size of the audience. Judging from e-mails and phone calls, she said, there are probably 1,000 to 2,000 listeners on any given Saturday.

Listeners said that although the show can sometimes sound unpolished, the idea is a good and necessary one.

"Haitians have a lot of affinity, a lot of connection with ra-

dio," said Louis Dorvilier, who lives in Los Angeles. "In Haiti, because of the literacy and educational problems that we have, radio is important."

Dorvilier, who left Haiti in 1999 because of political and social unrest, said that tuning in once a week gave people a sense of identity.

"From what I've heard from people, they said that's the best thing that's happened to the community, because we didn't have anything before that," Dorvilier said.

One caller Saturday wondered, "Why can democracy work in this country but not in our country? I would like democracy to be the same way in Haiti as it is here."

Claude Alexandre, who lives in Covina, said he was "sad that Haiti has to continue to go through what it's been going through for so many years."

Alexandre said Aristide should have resigned long ago.

"There is no way you can govern under these conditions," he said.

Though they take it seriously, the show is a hobby for Francois and LaCroix. Francois, who lives in Corona, is an accountant. LaCroix lives in Riverside and is a director of an electronics manufacturing plant and head of a nonprofit organization, Friends of Croix des Bouquets, which raises money to build schools and medical centers in Haiti.

In the midst of hearing the news in French and listening to callers discuss Aristide, some people just wanted to say thanks.

"It's a very moving program," one caller said Saturday. "Thank you very much for keeping us in touch with what's going on in Haiti."

Times staff writers Lisa Getter contributed from Washington and Anna M. Virtue from Miami. Labossiere reported from Los Angeles and Fiore from Washington.



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