

ARISTIDE FLEES HAITI

# Many Hail President's Departure

[Haiti, from Page A1]

In his 60s, Alexandre has a reputation for honesty. He was appointed chief justice by Aristide 10 years after becoming a member of the Supreme Court in 1990.

Aristide, in a letter of resignation left behind and read by Prime Minister Yvon Neptune two hours after his furtive departure, made clear he resented being driven out but said he left to avoid more bloodshed. "The constitution must not drown in the blood of the Haitian people," he said.

For weeks, Aristide had insisted on fulfilling the last two years of his term despite pressure from armed rebels and political rivals who charged that the former priest had turned into a corrupt and repressive leader.

Aristide's rule disappointed many poor Haitians who voted for the former priest in the hope that he would lead this nation of 8.5 million out of despair.

As a fighter for the poorest of the poor in this desperate country, Aristide built a reputation for intellect and compassion. In the 1990 election, he captured roughly two-thirds of the popular vote in a field of more than a dozen candidates.

But his stay in the presidency lasted less than a year before the Haitian military forced him into his first exile, principally in the U.S., where he was a ceaseless advocate for intervention in Haiti. By 1994, the Clinton administration agreed to restore Aristide, sending about 20,000 troops to the nation. Violence was averted when the key members of the junta fled and Aristide returned to the presidential office.

As the economic situation in Haiti plunged, so did Aristide's popularity. As a number of dictators before him, Aristide became more autocratic and human rights advocates stepped up their criticism, saying he had resorted to violence against foes. One of the people reportedly killed was a gang leader whose colleagues launched the offensive that led to Sunday's ouster.

There were also reports that Aristide's government received bribes from drug dealers using Haiti as a safe haven to move their contraband to the U.S. Aristide, according to some testimony, personally benefited from the deals. The former president has denied those charges.

But it was the government's inability to maintain security that was Aristide's biggest problem. As rebels marched across the island, his poorly armed police fled or joined the uprising. The capital was wracked by armed gangs supporting the president, but inciting looting and anarchy.

With the exception of a five-year term when a close ally was president, Aristide remained in power until Sunday morning.

Many U.S. and Western officials hailed Aristide's latest departure as a new chance for Haiti to escape its legacy of poverty and repression, but some friends of the deposed president — and members of the U.S. Congress — accused the Bush administration of actions tantamount to a coup d'etat. Senior U.S. officials worked through the weekend to secure Aristide's departure.

Mainstream political opponents, who for years fought for Aristide's departure, said they were pleased with his resignation but warned that there was much work ahead to ensure that another despot doesn't succeed him.

"Today is a day of deliverance, a day of freedom, a conquest of the freedom we've been waiting for since 1804 and one achieved thanks to all the people of Haiti," said Mischa Gaillard, an activist with the Group of 184 movement. He called for national reconciliation between the opposition and Aristide's Lavalas Party to rebuild the nation and respect for all its citizens.

"We are pleased the tyrant has left the country. But we are worried about the way security matters are being handled. We have a situation of chaos here at the moment," said Leopold Berlangier, director of the opposition Foundation for a New Haiti and owner of a radio station attacked in recent days by pro-Aristide militants.

As opposition leaders planned to create a transitional government, pro-Aristide gangs raided businesses and warehouses, set fire to property owned by wealthy industrialists and used old rifles and machetes to threaten journalists and police.

At least one person was shot to death outside the National Palace.

Aristide left with about 40 members of his government and security detail, said Evans Paul, an opposition leader once closely allied with the deposed president. Paul managed Aristide's wildly successful campaign for



**HANDS FULL:** A man wielding two machetes carries goods from a store amid heavy looting in Port-au-Prince, the capital of Haiti.

CAROLYN COLE Los Angeles Times



**LEADERS:** Prime Minister Yvon Neptune, center, and newly appointed President Boniface Alexandre, right, take questions.

JOHN LEE Chicago Tribune

the presidency in 1990 but broke with him after corrupted election results in the 2000 parliamentary vote gave Aristide's Lavalas Party total control of the country.

The whereabouts of Aristide's wife, Haitian American lawyer Mildred Trouillot, was not immediately clear, although many here assumed that she accompanied him to Africa. On Wednesday, the Aristides sent their two young daughters to stay with relatives in New York.

From all accounts, the U.S. played the major role in securing Aristide's resignation.

U.S. Ambassador James Foley, whose uncharacteristic morning stubble testified to all-night negotiations that ended in Aristide's flight, said the United States and other countries would ensure Haiti progressed toward democracy, prosperity and the rule of law.

"President Aristide made a decision for the good of Haiti, and I think he spoke eloquently in his letter of resignation," Foley said at a news conference.

Foley denied that U.S. and other diplomats strong-armed Aristide into stepping down. Aristide had stated that he would die before being forced out by rebels who began a deadly uprising Feb. 5.

Since then, the violence has claimed about 100 lives. The rebels, among whom are members of gangs once loyal to Aristide and returned exiles who served in the armies and death squads of the nation's former dictators, announced that they would come to the capital to restore order. That prospect, likely to further enrage armed thugs left behind by Aristide, was believed to have expedited the deployment of the Marines here to prevent bloodletting.

Rebel leader Guy Philippe, told CNN in an interview that "the worst is over" and that he would cooperate with international forces headed for Haiti.

Philippe's insurgents face an uncertain future. They had vowed to lay down their arms as soon as Aristide left office and had threatened to march on this capital if he didn't leave.

Authorities in the Dominican Republic, where some of the rebels had been living in exile since Aristide disbanded the army in 1995, have said they would arrest any of the fighters caught trying to reenter the country, with which Haiti shares the island of Hispaniola.

The former regime elements among the rebels may have expected to parlay their ouster of Aristide into some role in the next leadership — an arrangement foreign diplomats have said they would reject because that would sanction the use of violence.

Under an international transition plan, a seven-member Council of Sages will be assembled from a cross-section of Haitian civil society and political groups to guide the president and name a transitional government to replace Neptune's in the next few weeks.

Foley conceded that the U.S. role in previous efforts to help Haiti build democratic institutions had failed for lack of funds and persistence. He promised unflinching support this time and said his government was committed to helping Haiti reform and recover because "we wanted to be sure the country would be in a better place."

U.S. efforts during the last few days convinced Aristide to leave, senior officials said.

On Friday, Bush authorized a military deployment, if necessary, to go to Haiti. The next day, when Aristide's followers "began trashing the city, it was becoming clearer and clearer the Haitian leader had to go," said a senior administration official.

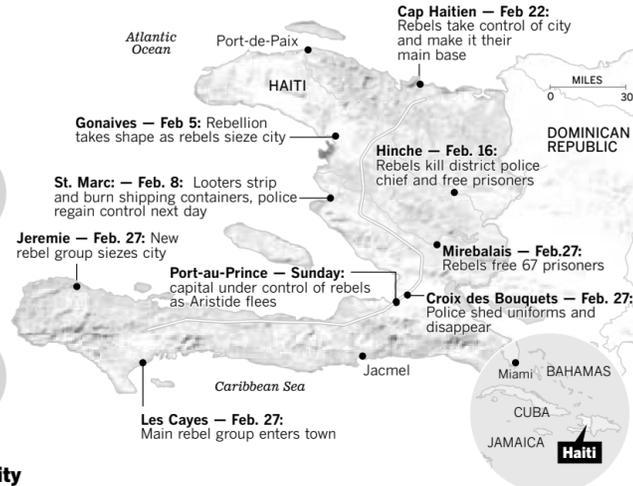
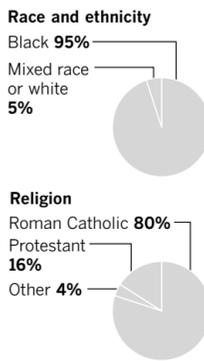
With Bush at Camp David, top U.S. officials, including Secretary of State Colin L. Powell, national security advisor Condoleezza Rice, Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Gen. Richard B. Myers, met via teleconference. They decided to issue a blunt statement through the White House on Saturday evening that blamed Aristide for events in Haiti, and raised questions about his fitness for office.

Though Aristide continued to say in interviews that he would

## Haiti at a glance

Haiti, a country of 8 million that shares the island of Hispaniola with the Dominican Republic, is the poorest nation in the Western Hemisphere. A former French colony that gained independence in 1804, it has a history of political instability.

### Country snapshot



### A history of instability

**April 1971:** Francois "Papa Doc" Duvalier dies and is replaced by his son Jean-Claude "Baby Doc" who declares himself president for life.

**February 1986:** Duvalier forced into exile by an uprising, ending 29-year family dictatorship. Army chief Lt. Gen. Henri Namphy is named to oversee two-year transition to democracy.

**January 1988:** Political scientist Leslie F. Manigat elected president in army-run elections. Manigat overthrown three days later.

**September 1988:** Namphy overthrown by Presidential Guard, replaced by Lt. Gen. Prosper Avril, a former Duvalier aide.

**March 1990:** Avril deposed. Supreme Court Justice Ertha Pascal Trouillot installed.

**December 1990:** Jean-Bertrand Aristide is landslide winner in presidential elections, Haiti's first free and peaceful polls.

**September 1991:** Aristide overthrown in a coup led by Lt. Gen. Raoul Cedras.

**1991:** Organization of American States demands Aristide be reinstated, imposes trade sanctions.

**July 1993:** Aristide and Cedras, sign U.N.-brokered agreement in New York. Pact calls for Aristide to return, Cedras to resign.

**September 1994:** U.S. calls up 1,600 reservists to prepare for possible invasion. Accord reached in talks led by former President Jimmy Carter averts U.S. invasion, provides for military leaders to step down.

**October 1994:** Aristide makes triumphant return to Haiti as president.

**December 1995:** Former Prime Minister Rene Preval, from Aristide's Lavalas party, is overwhelmingly elected to replace Aristide.

**May 2000:** Aristide's party sweeps legislative elections. Observers say voting flawed.

**November 2000:** Aristide wins presidency. Major opposition parties boycott voting.

**December 2001:** Gunmen storm National Palace in coup attempt.

**Jan. 11, 2004:** Thousands march against Aristide.

**Feb. 5:** Anti-Aristide uprising begins in city of Gonaives.

**Feb. 8:** Armed revolt spreads to more cities.

**Feb. 13:** Secretary of State Colin Powell warns Haiti's opposition against ousting Aristide.

**Feb. 22:** Rebels seize Cap-Haitien, Haiti's second-largest city.

**Feb. 23:** The U.S. sends about 50 Marines to Haiti to protect U.S. facilities and presses opposition politicians to accept a power-sharing plan.

**Feb. 24:** Power-sharing deal rejected.

**Feb. 28:** The White House blames Aristide for some of the violent clashes.

**Feb. 29:** Aristide leaves Haiti.

**OUSTED:** Haitian President Jean-Bertrand Aristide

CAROLYN COLE Los Angeles Times

VICTOR KOTOWITZ, REBECCA PERRY, PAUL DUGINSKI Los Angeles Times

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Times staff writers Maggie Farley at the United Nations and Paul Richter and John Hendren in Washington contributed to this report.

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That news began frantic activity. From 9 p.m. Saturday until dawn, Powell made more than three dozen calls to find a country that was willing to take Aristide, and to line up countries to contribute to the peacekeeping efforts. By some accounts, South Africa agreed to grant him asylum. At 1:30 a.m. Sunday, Rice called Bush with news that Aristide wanted to leave. Bush called Rumsfeld, and ordered troops deployed.

Aristide left the National Palace in a hurry Sunday morning. When he climbed aboard a U.S. aircraft, his ultimate destination was still unclear.

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