

# Haiti

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In 1991 the impoverished Caribbean nation of Haiti held free elections for the first time in decades. Many Haitians had not voted more than once in their lifetimes. This time they swept a fiery orator, Jean Bertrand Aristide into office. Aristide, a Catholic priest was a champion of the poor and leader of the populist *Lavalas* movement.<sup>1</sup> In a country where the elites, who numbered less than one percent of the population, controlled more than forty-four percent of the national wealth, support of the powerful for Aristide's brand of government was less than enthusiastic.<sup>2</sup> Nor was it certain that the newly elected president would even complete his term of office. In its two hundred years of independence, Haiti has had 41 heads of state. Of these 29 were either assassinated or forcibly removed from office; nine declared themselves heads of state for life, and seven served for more than ten years.<sup>3</sup> In the nineteenth century, only one Haitian leader left the presidential office alive.<sup>4</sup> In the two centuries of its existence, Haiti has experienced twenty-one constitutions.

On 30 September 1991, a military junta, led by Lieutenant General Raoul Cedras, deposed the president in a quick, successful coup. Cedras, the coup's titular leader, was a military aristocrat, had initially risen to power during the Duvalier regime.<sup>5</sup>

The United States and the Organization of American States (OAS) refused to formally recognize the Cedras regime. That the OAS did so was not surprising. Democracy had swept South America during the latter half of the 1980s. By 1991, only Haiti and Cuba had non-democratic governments. Furthermore, on 5 June 1991 the OAS passed *Resolution 1080*, which called for an emergency meeting any time there was an overthrow of a democratic state in the region.<sup>6</sup> On 4 October, an OAS delegation met with Cedras in an effort to convince him to relinquish power. The attempt failed and by November the OAS had embargoed all shipments of weapons and oil to Haiti.

President Bush embarked on essentially a two track policy toward Haiti. One track was designed to make General Cedras and his cronies step down. The other track was to manage the tide of boat people that were coming to the United States. To accomplish the first track's objectives the United States initiated diplomatic overtures and supported similar moves by the Organization for American States (OAS). An embargo on certain essential materials bound for Haiti was initiated. It was hoped that such actions would be enough to convince the Cedras junta to leave.

In handling the other track, the administration was aided by the Alien Migration Interdiction Operation (AMIO). AMIO was a treaty, signed during the Reagan years, between Haiti and the United States. It gave the United States the right to return Haitian refugees to Haiti without recourse to a legal screening process. However, this generated considerable domestic unrest and several court challenges. On three separate occasions the Bush administration was forced by court injunctions to suspend direct repatriation of Haitian refugees until they could win the domestic legal challenges to the policy. As an interim measure, Haitian refugees began to be quartered at the U.S. Naval Base in Guantanamo, Cuba.

An additional problem for the Bush policy on Haiti was presidential candidate Bill Clinton. After emerging as the democratic candidate the former governor of Arkansas attacked the president on a wide variety of topics, including repatriation. Not only did candidate Clinton condemn the president's policy, but he also took pride in being "...the first person running for president... to speak out against the Bush administration's handling of the Haitian situation."<sup>7</sup>

Candidate Clinton's domestically oriented campaign produced highly successful results. In November 1992 he reiterated his opposition to the forcible repatriation policy and promised to overturn it when he was president.<sup>8</sup> This promise was not lost on the Haitian population.<sup>9</sup> Throughout October and November boat building boomed along the Haitian coast. Some of the wood used in the construction came from houses that people had torn down in their eagerness to escape. Nervous Coast Guard officials began predicting refugee flows as large as two-hundred thousand people.<sup>10</sup>

By mid-January 1993 President-elect Clinton, faced with overwhelming evidence of impending massive Haitian refugee flows was faced with a dilemma. If he kept his words, waves of boat people would put to sea. He then announced that he would temporarily continue the Bush policy of forcible repatriation. At the same time he reiterated his support of UN diplomatic efforts to find a way to restore democracy to Haiti.<sup>11</sup> The response did not go over well with the Haitian or the human rights communities.

Clinton's words also failed to resonate with the detainees at Guantanamo. Although the detainees had praised the U.S. military officers in charge of the camp, there was a riot on 14 March. The reason for the outburst was said to be irritation with the pace "with which U.S. officials are deciding their fate."<sup>12</sup> The riots also brought a visit from the Reverend Jesse Jackson, who compared the living conditions at the camp to those of a prison.<sup>13</sup>

On 15 March there was a rally in Manhattan protesting the Government's Haiti policy. Forty-one people were arrested. Among the marchers was actress Susan Sarandon. Among the arrested was the Reverend Jesse Jackson. Reverend Jackson's arrest was photographed and was printed in *The New York Times* for two consecutive days.<sup>14</sup> Sarandon later made a controversial plea for the Haitian detainees during the nationally televised Academy Awards.

Haiti was far from being the only item on the president's agenda. It was even far from being the most important item on the agenda. Deprived of even the traditional "honeymoon

period,” the Clinton administration found itself embroiled with Congress from the outset. In part this was because the president had chosen much of his staff at the last minute and according to one noted Washington columnist had seemed to prefer inexperience.<sup>15</sup>

The president allowed foreign affairs and national security issues to be looked after by key cabinet members and advisors. When it came to Haiti, National Security Advisor (NSA) Tony Lake, Assistant National Security Advisor Sandy Berger and Lawrence Pezzullo, a foreign service officer who had been named special envoy to Haiti were among the most important of the inner circle.<sup>16</sup> These men formed the core of the “Haiti hawks.” Lake and Berger controlled and dominated the National Security Council staff and managed the NSC schedule and agenda. As a result, even if the president’s attention were elsewhere, there would always be a spot on the NSC calendar for Haiti.<sup>17</sup>

The most encouraging aspect of the spring of 1993 in regards to Haiti came from traditional diplomatic efforts. Things seemed to be on the verge of a breakthrough. A series of visits to Port-au-Prince had been made by UN envoy Dante Capote, and Lawrence Pezzullo, special envoy and special advisor to the president on Haiti. Pezzullo had carried the message that the United States was “determined to restore democracy quickly.”<sup>18</sup> This determination was echoed by U.S. Air Force General Raymond O’Mara, who was addressing a regional Caribbean security meeting in Port-of-Spain, Trinidad later that week. The general warned Caribbean military leaders to prepare themselves for action in Haiti if the situation worsened.<sup>19</sup>

Details of the plan began to emerge both in the hallways of power and in the press. Cedras would step down. Within six months Aristide would return. A new prime minister, acceptable to both sides would have to be found. A UN mission of as many as five hundred persons would oversee the reconstruction of the Haitian judiciary and the creation of an independent police force. The mission would work with the 140 UN human rights observers already in Haiti.<sup>20</sup>

There seemed to be three key components to the rapid progress of the talks. One was that the United States seemed to be taking a dedicated interest in the problem. Another was that President Aristide seemed to be softening his long held position that General Cedras had to be exiled or punished. This was important as the junta considered it non-negotiable. The third was that the United States and the UN were holding out the prospect of a massive infusion of aid to Haiti. President Clinton pledged a billion dollars as a start.<sup>21</sup>

Despite the optimism, there were also counter-indications, suggesting that agreement might not be as close as some would wish. Representatives of the Haitian business sector had told Pezzullo it would take U.S. military forces to reinstate Aristide. Cedras and his cronies had a monopoly on weapons and on violence. No one, including a restored Aristide could “make” them behave. As prospects for peace grew stronger, so did the unease of the Haitian elite. They saw the return of Aristide as a return to class struggle, the possibility of being held accountable for the violence of the Cedras regime and, worst of all, and erosion of their wealth position and power.<sup>22</sup>

Other warning signs that all was not well with the negotiations included Cedras' insistence that the coup participants be given amnesty or pardon. In addition these guarantees had to extend to businessmen and politicians who had supported Cedras. While the Cedras camp focused on these issues, Aristide's support base began showing signs of friction. Long-time allies and supporters began "bickering" over what the new government of Haiti should look like.<sup>23</sup>

Domestically, right wing Democrats were demanding action and resolution. Chief among these was Senator Bob Graham (D-FL). Concerned about an increase in the size of the Haitian refugee flow as would be boat people tried to beat the approaching hurricane season, Graham called for a 31 May deadline.<sup>24</sup>

As the negotiations continued, "After Action Reports," of U.S. interventions in Grenada, Panama and Somalia were being widely circulated in the Pentagon. Secretary Aspin worried that failure to get the Defense Department actively involved in the Haitian interagency planning process could have a significant negative impact on his department.<sup>25</sup> He accordingly directed the Department of Defense to commence interagency planning. The secretary had correctly diagnosed reluctance on the part of the Defense Department and the military to participate in any operations having to do with Haiti. The opposition consisted of two major elements. The first was a reluctance to get into another "nation-building exercise." The Army had gone through that in Panama and Grenada and was involved in just such an operation in Somalia. The second reason for the resistance was that based on an analysis of Haiti's conditions, senior defense leaders firmly believed that the U.S. military could not solve Haiti's problems.<sup>26</sup> Frequently reference was made to the thirty-five year long occupation of Haiti by U.S. military forces.

Nevertheless, in support of the United Nations sponsored negotiations with Haiti, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff was directed to plan a "nation assistance" operation to help restore democracy to Haiti.<sup>27</sup>

The negotiations that had led to such high hopes collapsed when General Cedras and the junta broke off talks.<sup>28</sup> This began a three-month period of varying diplomatic initiatives.

The Cedras regime's refusal to find a solution drew fire from both the UN and the United States. The secretary-general placed the blame squarely on the junta.<sup>29</sup> Inside the United States the Aristide caused was helped and promoted by a talented lobbying team. The team was led by Michael Barnes, a former congressman with a savvy understanding of Washington, DC. Barnes had also been a key Clinton fundraiser as well as a former partner in Sandy Berger's old law firm. The White House denied that Barnes had any special connectivity.<sup>30</sup> Mr. Randall Robinson of the lobby group "TransAfrica" helped Barnes in this effort. Robinson had been a member of the same public relations firm as Barnes and was also well acquainted with Tony Lake.<sup>31</sup>

After torturous negotiations it was agreed that talks between Aristide and Cedras would be conducted under UN auspices on Governors Island, just off Manhattan on 27 June.

Although the talks lasted several days, Aristide and Cedras did not actually meet. Dante Caputo served as intermediary between the two groups. The two sides reached agreement on 3 July. The terms of the agreement were relatively simple. There would be a meeting of all Haitian political parties. A prime minister would be nominated by Aristide and confirmed. At this point the UN, OAS and United States would suspend, but not end the embargo and start a program to modernize the armed forces and create a new police force. Aristide would then issue an amnesty for all the officers who acted against him in the coup and Cedras would resign and take early retirement. Aristide would return.<sup>32</sup>

Unbeknownst to the participants, the U.S. operatives had most carefully monitored both delegations. And what the United States knew was that neither side had any intention of honoring the agreement.<sup>33</sup>

Still, just because the signatories were contemplating cheating did not mean that they could not be maneuvered into compliance. Or that as the months moved along that the contending parties might not come to see real value in following the course of action laid out in the agreement. At least these assumptions are what the administration began to base its policies on.

Although it was known that the Cedras regime was planning to break from the agreement, Pezzullo and others believed that once the trainers were in place, Haitian resistance would be futile. Construction personnel would also be sent in to assist the Haitians in starting civic action projects. Further, President Clinton, proposed a five-year, \$1-billion international development program for Haiti.<sup>34</sup>

On 18 August, after weeks of debate and strife among Aristide supporters and opponents, the Haitian senate, with Aristide's approval, officially named Robert Malval as prime minister. Malval declared that he would only serve as an interim leader and would be replaced no later than 15 December 1993. Interim prime minister or not, Malval's acceptance as prime minister indicated to most that the agreement was on track.

One of Malval's first official acts was to appeal for an early end to the international economic embargo of Haiti. The confirmation of Malval as prime minister and the appeal to lift the embargo were enough to convince the OAS and the UN to recommend lifting the sanctions. Madeline Albright, U.S. ambassador to the UN agreed with the idea. Haiti was starting to be touted as a rare example of sanctions being powerful enough by themselves to be successful. Some analysts attributed this to Haiti's unusual degree of vulnerability.<sup>35</sup>

Although Malval was now in place, political violence continued to escalate in Haiti. Beatings, kidnappings and shootings were common. Political opponents frequently assaulted pro-Aristide demonstrators as Haitian military personnel watched, making no move to intervene. Most of the assailants were known to be "attaches," civilian auxiliaries of the Haitian police force.<sup>36</sup>

On 16 September, Coretta Scott King wrote a hard-hitting editorial. The widow of the country's most famous civil rights leader claimed that the UN sanctions had been lifted

prematurely. She recommended delaying any further payments or shipments to the island until the return of Aristide as the Governors Island agreement required.<sup>37</sup>

On 27 September the UN Security Council voted to send more than 1200 police and military personnel to Haiti. 567 would be UN police monitors and the rest would be U.S. and UN military trainers. Most of the U.S. troops would be Navy construction battalion personnel, known as "Seabees." Most of the police monitors were expected to be in Haiti by 30 October.<sup>38</sup>

As September wore on the United Nations threatened to reinstall sanctions. On the last day of September 1993 the USS *Harlan County* (LST 1195) set sail from Charleston, South Carolina having embarked the initial group of U.S. monitors. The ship stopped in Puerto Rico en route to Haiti.

Secretary of Defense Aspin had argued against landing the monitors, fearing that once a presence in Haiti was established, it would be difficult to terminate. Should the animosity between the Cedras and Aristide camps turn violent, U.S. forces could be "caught in a civil war."<sup>39</sup>

Tony Lake, Sandy Berger and Warren Christopher felt that the United States needed to get the monitors into Haiti. They made the case that reversing U.S. policy was "not an option." The interventionists carried the argument, without it ever reaching the level of the president

There was also opposition from Capitol Hill. In a display of bipartisan concern Senator Bob Dole (R-KS) and Senator Sam Nunn (D-GA) warned against sending U.S. forces into the country.<sup>40</sup>

Then, half a world away, events unfolded that would directly impact the administration's handling of Haiti. On 3 October, in Mogadishu, Somalia, a force of U.S. Army Rangers and Delta Force soldiers attempting to capture warlord Mohammed Farah Aidid found themselves in an intense firefight. The eventual casualty report would list eighteen soldiers killed, seventy-four wounded and one captured. The Cable News Network (CNN) was on the scene and every television station in the United States showed the CNN video of a dead Ranger being dragged through the streets of Mogadishu. Public and congressional reaction was immediate and negative.

Mogadishu would have a profound impact on the Clinton national security team and on every decision potentially involving military intervention made after 3 October 1993, and most strongly on what to do with the *Harlan County*. As George Stephanopoulos said, "So soon after Somalia, no one had the stomach for another fight."<sup>41</sup>

Tony Lake admitted that the fight in Somalia had an impact, but denied that it had made him, or other members of the administration "less interventionist. Rather it had the effect of imposing a more critical cost-benefit analysis into the decision making process."<sup>42</sup>

The Haitian government had agreed to allow *Harlan County* to berth at a pier in Port-au-Prince. As *Harlan County* approached it quickly became apparent that the pier was blocked by another vessel. Furthermore a large and angry crowd stood upon the pier, waving clubs and pistols. Mob spokesman claimed that they would turn Port-au Prince into another Mogadishu.<sup>43</sup> The *Harlan County* stopped in the Port-au-Prince Harbor, reported the situation and waited for guidance

In the White House a battle quickly developed between advisors in favor of forcing a landing and those that recommended the ship withdraw. On the one side were Ambassador Albright and NSA Lake. Albright claimed that U.S. prestige was at stake and would be harmed if *Harlan County* withdrew.<sup>44</sup> On the other side, Secretary Aspin argued that the troops embarked in *Harlan County* were not equipped for serious combat operations.<sup>45</sup>

Deliberations over what to do consumed the next day. The specter of the dead Rangers in Mogadishu hung over the deliberations.<sup>46</sup> Lake, Albright and Berger argued for intervention. Aspin was still opposed. Chief of Communications David Gergen recommended that it was time to “cut our losses.”<sup>47</sup> In the end, Secretary Aspin’s position prevailed. There would be no forcible landings. *Harlan County* withdrew. Larry Pezzullo was outraged. He had pushed hardest of all for a display of will, insisting that what the cameras were capturing was “theater, not threat.” In the end Secretary Aspin prevailed.

The *Harlan County* incident, as it came to be known in some circles, marked a major development in the U.S. involvement with Haiti. For several days there was an intense debate about what to do next. Lake, Berger and Albright favored a rapid return to Haiti, followed by a forced entry if necessary. The president began asking close advisors whether the United States should “go in and take them?”<sup>48</sup> The answer, in part, was that the military continued to oppose invasion and there was no public support for such an action.<sup>49</sup>

In the wake of the *Harlan County* debacle, several new and disturbing facts and allegations came to the attention of the White House, the Congress and the American people. For example it was discovered that the mob which had demonstrated on the pier in Port-au-Prince was not a spontaneous expression of public determination. It had been organized by the “Front Pour L’Avancement et le Progress Haitien,” (FRAPH). FRAPH was definitely a right-wing organization, with Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) ties, but leaders in Washington were unsure whether to view it as a political party or merely a creature of the Cedras regime.<sup>50</sup>

There were also allegations made concerning President Aristide. A CIA personality profile of Aristide that had been provided to the White House was leaked to the press. The report claimed that Aristide had been treated for a mental disorder and was suffering from manic depression. Equally disturbing was the translation of a speech in which Aristide seemed to be voicing support for the use of violence against political opponents.<sup>51</sup> In Congress Jesse Helms referred to Aristide as a “psychopath” and even though the president dismissed the report, he too referred to Aristide as “flaky.”<sup>52</sup>

It was later revealed that the information reported in the personality profiles was false.<sup>53</sup> The issue of supporting violence was more problematic. Aristide's supporters claimed he had been poorly translated.

On 14 October, the United States and the UN re-imposed sanctions on Haiti.

President Clinton ordered the United States Navy to take up blockading duties. Prior to this decision, the Coast Guard had performed this duty. Within days of the order six naval warships were on station off Haiti. Several Canadian and one British ship would also participate in the blockade.<sup>54</sup>

It was clear to all that the planned 30 October return of President Aristide to Haiti was not going to happen. Cedras and the junta remained firm in their defiance. For his part, Aristide returned to his old position of no amnesty for junta leaders. At this point, a discovery involving the junta leadership was made. It was reported and confirmed that both Cedras and Francois had at one point been paid by the CIA to be informers and agents.

The failure of the Cedras regime to conform to the Governors Island agreement convinced many people who had been unaware that there had never been any intention of conforming, that the junta was not to be trusted under any circumstances. Although some individuals and agencies, such as the Department of Defense, remained opposed to military intervention, others, such as members in the human rights directorate of the State Department, reevaluated their positions.

While the UN debated whether or not to impose an even tighter embargo on Haiti, reports began to emerge that the sanctions were taking their toll. Among the hardest hit were Haiti's poor. Many were out of work. Other than private volunteer organizations (PVO) and religious societies, there was nowhere to turn to for relief. Death rates among children rose. Broadening the sanctions would clearly deepen the impact, but this course of action was seen as the only alternative to combat.<sup>55</sup>

As this was occurring, Secretary Christopher was becoming increasingly marginalized where Haiti was concerned. As his power waned, the power of the Haiti hawks increased.

On 27 January 1994 the United States further tightened the economic screws on Haiti. In a series of moves designed to impact the Haitian elites, the United States revoked visas and froze additional Haitian financial assets.<sup>56</sup> At a meeting of the "friends" it was also decided to press the UN for a total trade embargo.<sup>57</sup>

Proponents for greater economic pressure being applied to Haiti received a boost when the Commerce Department reported that both imports to and exports from Haiti rose in 1993. It was also reported that the Haiti-Dominican Republic border was a sieve. Although the total amount of trade was small, only \$370 million, it was seen as sufficient to help the junta maintain their grip on the country.<sup>58</sup> Further indication of the failure of the embargo came when observers in Port-au-Prince reported the price of black market gas had dropped from nine dollars a gallon to six dollars a gallon.<sup>59</sup>

While the international diplomatic battles raged, domestic events were unfolding that would intrude into the Haiti calculus. Lawton Chiles, governor of Florida had been impacted by the refugee flows as no other state leader had. Legal immigrants, bona fide refugees and illegal immigrants tended to stay in Florida, and placed heavy burdens on the state's social systems and budgets. Efforts to get the federal government to pick up the additional costs had not been successful. The governor turned to other methods and sued the federal government.<sup>60</sup> If the suit was successful, Chiles anticipated recouping significant amounts of money. The governors of Texas, New Mexico, Arizona, New York and California were closely watching this pending legal action. Chiles was also a power in the Democratic party and his state was going to be crucial in the upcoming congressional November elections.<sup>61</sup>

However, President Aristide managed to keep in the public eye. On 19 March he launched his most telling and harshest criticism of the Clinton administration to date. During an opening meeting of the Congressional Black Caucus, Aristide compared the treatment of Haitian refugees with Cuban refugees. Aristide maintained that the U.S. policy toward Haiti was racist. Several members of the Caucus immediately agreed.<sup>62</sup> Few statements could have aggrieved or angered the Clinton administration as much.

In a nearly full page advertisement in *The New York Times*, more than eighty-five religious leaders, actors, politicians and other well known personages signed an open letter to the president, claiming that the repatriation policy was driven by "considerations of race."<sup>63</sup> The ad included a form which one could use to make a donation to TransAfrica.

Aristide's supporters now focused on Special Envoy Pezzullo as being part of the problem.<sup>64</sup> Special interest groups began to demand his removal. Following a series of increasingly confrontational meetings, the Congressional Black Caucus called for his removal.<sup>65</sup> Although arguably filling no more than forty congressional seats, the impact of the Caucus was significant. They represented large numbers of Democrats. The Caucus members were highly articulate and dedicated. Their support was seen as essential to many of the president's social programs. Furthermore, this was a unified position among Caucus members. "We are hoping that the White House understands on this issue that the Congressional Black Caucus speaks with one voice," said Caucus Chairman Kweisi Mfume (D-MD).<sup>66</sup> The White House was listening and the White House did understand.

Proof of this came on 26 March 1994 when the administration announced that it was implementing a new plan that would be much more in tune with that favored by Aristide.<sup>67</sup> The new plan also included the potential for increased sanctions.

On 7 April, President Aristide formally served notice on President Clinton that, as the recognized leader of Haiti, he was canceling the current AMIO Accord. In keeping with the terms of the Accord, the cancellation would become effective in six months. Although the State Department would not comment on the cancellation, the repatriation policy remained in effect.<sup>68</sup>

Randall Robinson, the director of TransAfrica, was so adamantly opposed to the policy that he embarked on a highly publicized hunger strike on 12 April 1994. He made it clear that the strike would last until he died or Haitian refugees were given a hearing. In a powerful op-ed article he accused the Clinton administration of lacking deep convictions, Pezzullo of accommodating the Haitian military while holding Aristide in contempt, and failing to include FRAPH among the State Department's annual listing of human rights abusers.<sup>69</sup> The initial response of the White House was to announce a policy review.

As Robinson began his hunger strike, additional congressional members began to call for a military solution to the Haitian dilemma. David Obey (D-WI), chairman of the powerful House Appropriations Committee, publicly endorsed such an option. Although Obey stated that he would prefer an international military force be used, he would support a unilateral U.S. invasion. Not surprisingly, many Representatives, especially Republican Representatives, found the idea unacceptable. Others, notably Charles Rangel (D-NY) supported a "show of force," but not the "use of force."<sup>70</sup>

As Randall Robinson continued to fast, supporters of Aristide continued to attack Special Envoy Pezzullo. On 27 April, he tendered his resignation. The special envoy had become increasingly ignored by the administration.<sup>71</sup>

Robinson's fast entered its 17<sup>th</sup> day and President Clinton admitted that his Haiti policy to that point had failed. He was personally troubled by the continuing violence. The president gave additional moral validity to the Robinson hunger strike when he stated that Mr. Robinson should "stay out there."<sup>72</sup>

The number of voices clamoring for military invasion increased. Columnists Mary McGrory of the *Washington Post*, Richard Cohen, also of the *Post* and Cathy Booth of *Time* all came out in favor of military action.<sup>73</sup>

On April 21<sup>st</sup> six Representatives were arrested after chaining themselves to the White House fence in protest of the president's Haiti policy. All were Democrats. The protest was well covered by the press and photographs of Joseph Kennedy (D-MA), Ron Dellums (D-CA) and the other four were on the front page the next day.<sup>74</sup>

By the end of April, the refugee issue was still receiving heavy play in the papers, Randall Robinson was gradually starving to death and California and Arizona had followed Florida's lead and filed lawsuits against the Federal government. The governor of New York announced that New York was going to pursue similar action while the attorneys-general in Texas and New Jersey were deliberating whether or not to join the Florida litigation.<sup>75</sup> More than \$3 billion were at stake.

On 4 May, the 23<sup>rd</sup> day of his hunger strike, Randall Robinson was hospitalized. Robinson's strike and physical condition had been closely monitored by the White House, and perhaps most closely of all by Tony Lake. When asked if the hunger strike had an impact, Lake answered, "Of course. I was worried Randall might die."<sup>76</sup>

Behind the scenes, military contingency planning for the use of force in Haiti was activated. Admiral Paul David Miller, commander in chief, U.S. Atlantic Command (USACOM) directed General Hugh Shelton to develop a plan to forcibly remove Cedras from power. The forcible entry option would be known as Operations Plan 2370 (OPLAN 2370). The U.S. XVIII Airborne Corps would provide the combat power the plan required. Simultaneously the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) began developing its own plan for assisting and democratic forces and training a Haitian police force.<sup>77</sup>

On 6 May the UN Security Council voted for more sanctions. Private flights in and out of the country were banned. Police and military officers, prominent civilian supporters of the Cedras regime and their families were prohibited from leaving Haiti. A worldwide freeze on these individuals' assets was also recommended.<sup>78</sup>

On 7 May, President Clinton once again changed U.S. policy toward Haitian refugees. Forcible repatriation would no longer be practiced. Haitians would now be given interviews either at sea, or in third party countries. Those determined to be ineligible for asylum would be returned to Haiti.<sup>79</sup> This change of policy was enough to cause Randall Robinson to end his hunger strike. The decision came after a presidential discussion with General Shalikashvili, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. During this discussion the president said he had come to believe that the only way to resolve the situation was through intervention. The general countered by laying out the opposing viewpoints and invasion plans were put on hold.<sup>80</sup>

The Clinton administration also announced the appointment of Larry Pezzullo's replacement. William Gray, former congressman (D-PA) and president of the United Negro College Fund was named U.S. special envoy to Haiti. Gray immediately announced that his goal was to "end the suffering of the Haitian peoples at the hands of their military leaders."<sup>81</sup>

During the second week in May large-scale military maneuvers were conducted in the Caribbean. Many observers believed these were precursor operations to a Haitian invasion. The Clinton administration dismissed such speculation as incorrect. The sense that the nation was edging closer to conflict also energized Congress. Led by Bob Dole (R-KS) a proposal to require congressional authorization for any use of military force involving Haiti was introduced.<sup>82</sup>

As Congress debated and the junta continued to defy the UN, one of the fears of the Clinton administration began to be realized. As news of the revised refugee policy reached Haiti the numbers of Haitians putting to sea steadily increased. In an effort to cope with the rising demand the U.S. government chartered the Ukrainian flagged liner *Gruziya* to serve as floating staging area and site of immigration hearings.<sup>83</sup>

As rumors of a possible invasion continued to abound, congressional members slowly coalesced into groups supporting and opposing the use of military force. On 22 May Senator Bob Graham (D-FL) returned from a two-day trip to Haiti and announced that he now supported invasion.<sup>84</sup> Bob Dole continued to lead the opposition.

The shifts and reversals that had marked the Clinton policy on Haiti were also having an impact on public opinion. In May, a *Washington Post - ABC News Survey* showed that only 40 % of the U.S. public approved of the president's handling of foreign policy as opposed to 53% of those polled who did not.<sup>85</sup>

Yet another voice was added to those calling for invasion, when, on 1 June 1994, President Aristide claimed that economic sanctions would not restore him to office and called for "action." In his speech, he made it clear that he was talking about military action. "The action could be a surgical move to remove the thugs within hours," Aristide said of the kind of intervention he would support.<sup>86</sup>

On 10 June President Clinton further increased sanctions on Haiti. U.S. commercial flights to Haiti were banned and most financial actions between the two countries were canceled. Concurrently the State Department announced that it was pulling all embassy dependents out of Haiti and recommended that U.S. citizens in Haiti leave at the earliest opportunity. Other nations were expected to cancel their commercial flights as well.<sup>87</sup> In Haiti the Cedras government declared a "state of emergency." Junta-appointed President Emil Jonassaint stated there was a threat of "invasion and occupation. In response to this announcement, Clinton administration officials noted that thirty Caribbean and Latin American nations had expressed support for a U.S. intervention if all else failed.<sup>88</sup>

While the international community may have been coming to grips with the possibility of an invasion, the U.S. public was not. On 23 June, an *Associated Press Poll* found only twenty-eight percent of the populace approved on an invasion.<sup>89</sup> This was not lost on the administration. Years later Tony Lake admitted that public opinion was never on the side of the administration.<sup>90</sup>

By 28 June, the ocean-going exodus the administration had been waiting for materialized. In an explosive surge of interdiction, Coast Guard vessels gathered in more than thirteen hundred Haitians in one day. It quickly became apparent that, despite the precaution of moving additional vessels into the area, the flow would overwhelm the preparations to meet it.<sup>91</sup> Within a day, President Clinton decided to reopen the refugee center at Guantanamo Bay. The combination of increased regime repression in Haiti, the disproportionate impact of sanctions on the poor and the reversal of the U.S. forcible repatriation policy were believed to explain the dimensions of the flow.

The refugee flow continued to build. The CIA estimated that as of early July, 1,000 Haitians were leaving by boat every day and that the number would soon rise to 4,000 each day. Boat building in Haiti was at such a fever pitch that houses again were being torn down to provide raw construction materials. In Haiti, it was believed that as many as one third of the refugees intercepted at sea were being allowed into the United States.<sup>92</sup>

In the midst of changing policies and mounting congressional debate, the United States sent four amphibious ships carrying the 24<sup>th</sup> Marine Expeditionary Unit (MEU) to the waters off Haiti to conduct exercises and to be available if a noncombatant evacuation operation of embassy personnel had to be carried out. Although Special Envoy Gray assured the

press that no invasion was “imminent,” speculation ran rampant.<sup>93</sup> The MEU had only just returned to its home base of Camp Lejeune, North Carolina from duty in the vicinity of Somalia.

The next increase in the pressure being applied to the junta came when Special Envoy Grey announced that General Cedras and the members of the coup had six months to leave, or face possible military action. The threat may have gained credibility when Panama declared that it would no longer serve as a third party host to Haitian refugees. Efforts by the United States to reach a compromise solution failed.<sup>94</sup> UN Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali announced that only 2,000 to 3,000 of the 9,000 to 12,000 strong peacekeeping force had been identified. Potential contributors were said to be reluctant to commit until they knew if the United States intended to oust Cedras by force.<sup>95</sup>

At this point in the confrontation, the Cedras regime took action that could not have been more beneficial to the Clinton administration than if it had been planned for that purpose. On 10 July 1994 all OAS and UN human rights observers were ordered to depart Haiti within forty-eight hours. The observer force, numbering one hundred individuals was declared to be “undesirable aliens.” To external observers it seemed that the junta was removing potential witnesses to what many feared would be a wave of orchestrated violence and terror.<sup>96</sup>

In Guantanamo, more than sixteen thousand Haitians awaited screening and transportation to a safe haven not in the United States. Some, tiring of the conditions or disappointed at being denied entry into the United States opted to return to Haiti.<sup>97</sup> The ever-increasing number of Haitians at Guantanamo was exerting an inexorable pressure on the administration to find some solution to the confrontation.

President Aristide amplified his earlier remarks on 15 July. Explaining that Haiti’s constitution did not “allow” him to call for an invasion, he still called for “swift and definitive action against the leaders of the coup.

The U.S. Army 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain Division was ordered on 28 July 1994 to begin planning for a permissive entry into Haiti.<sup>98</sup> This plan would be known as OPLAN 2380 and was an entirely separate operation from OPLAN 2370. There was almost no overlap in the forces assigned to each plan.

On 31 July the UN Security Council authorized the United States to “use all means necessary” to restore President Aristide to power in Haiti. The vote was 12 to 0 in favor of the resolution, with China and Brazil abstaining. A UN observer force would accompany any invasion force.<sup>99</sup> The stage was now set for an invasion. All the component pieces were in place.

On 2 August the Dominican Republic agreed to allow an international force to patrol the Dominican-Haitian border. The force’s purpose was to report cross-border smuggling to the Dominican authorities, which would then intervene.<sup>100</sup> The force, initially numbering

only eighty individuals from the United States, Argentina, and Canada could be said to be more symbolic than utile, yet still presented an image of an internationally isolated Haiti.

Several Latin American countries, led by Venezuela expressed concerns with the prospect of yet another U.S. military intervention into the Caribbean and Latin America. In the U.S. on 3 August the Senate unanimously declared the UN authorization to use force, did not justify the use of U.S. troops. However, the measure was nonbinding and when Senator Arlen Specter (R-PA) offered an amendment blocking the use of force in Haiti unless U.S. lives were endangered, the amendment was defeated 63 to 31. Even some opponents of the use of force in Haiti felt the amendment, if passed, would set a dangerous precedent.<sup>101</sup> The president reiterated that he already had constitutional authority to use military force as needed.<sup>102</sup>

Inside White House decision-making circles, Secretary of Defense William Perry argued against Deputy Secretary of State Talbott's desire to impose a deadline by which the junta leaders had to leave or face invasion. Perry, echoing the sense of his department wished to explore alternatives that could buy off the Haitian leadership. Talbott found this idea "repugnant" and favored an early invasion. Perry's counter was that it was preferable to spend money than lives.<sup>103</sup> Through the duration of the Haiti confrontation the Defense Department had been adverse to any application of military force and Strobe Talbott had consistently been in favor of intervention.<sup>104</sup>

As Guantanamo filled with Haitians and Lawton Chiles continued to sure the federal government and fall elections drew closer, Fidel Castro allowed an outpouring of Cuban refugees to brave the Windward Passage and head by sea to Florida. As the old operating rules remained in effect, the Cubans were initially granted political asylum. The expatriate Cuban community welcomed them to Florida. Not surprisingly the flow evoked memories of the Mariel Boat Lift.<sup>105</sup> As the Cuban refugee flow swelled in size to more than two thousand individuals a week, the comparisons between the treatment they received vice that meted out to the Haitians came under harsher criticism.

For the president recollections of the Mariel Boat Lift were not pleasant ones. While Clinton was governor, Cubans being held in Fort Chaffee, Arkansas rioted. There were several deaths and the riots were a major issue in the next gubernatorial campaign, which Clinton lost. He now made it clear that such events were not going to happen again.<sup>106</sup>

The refugees continued to flow and Guantanamo continued to fill. By 24 August, the Navy was planning to remove civilian dependents of base personnel back to the United States. It was announced that the base would be used to accommodate up to forty thousand refugees.<sup>107</sup>

While the United States grappled with Cuban and Haitian refugees, the Cedras regime once again were thrust into an unflattering limelight. On 28 August 1994, Father Jean-Marie Vincent, Catholic priest and long time friend of President Aristide was killed. More precisely, Father Vincent was gunned down just a few feet from the door of his order, the Congregation of Montfortin Fathers. It was "the first political killing of a priest in

memory..." in Haiti. Vincent was credited with having saved Aristide's life in the past.<sup>108</sup> When President Clinton learned of the killing he was "outraged."<sup>109</sup>

As August gave way to September, four Caribbean states pledged to provide forces the any upcoming invasion of Haiti.<sup>110</sup> UN Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali also announced that he was "giving up" any attempt to try and persuade the leaders of the junta to step down. The UN had sent a high level mission to Haiti during the last week in August, but the Haitian military leaders had snubbed the diplomats and refused to talk with them.<sup>111</sup>

Newspapers ran story after story speculating as to when U.S. forces would be used. The Pentagon announced that an invasion would cost \$427 million dollars in addition to the \$200 million already spent on interdiction operations as well as building and running the refugee facilities on Guantanamo.<sup>112</sup>

Unlike most preparations for operations involving the potential for combat, much of the invasion preparations took place in an overt fashion. The press coverage was extensive. This was clearly done in an effort to impress the junta to abdicate. U.S. military overflights of Haiti were increased and the international contingent of the invasion force trained openly in Puerto Rico.<sup>113</sup> Some administration officials explained that due to conflicting signals in the past and a possible perception of President Clinton being indecisive, General Cedras and the other coup leaders might not understand how resolute the U.S. position was.<sup>114</sup>

But opposition leaders were also making statements. Bob Dole continued to argue against any invasion arguing no U.S. interests were at stake. On 6 September, political cartoonist Gary Trudeau announced that the Clinton presidential icon was going to be a "waffle."

What did not get reported was an NSC meeting on the Haiti situation in the White House on 7 September 1994. Tony Lake chaired the meeting. General Shalikashvili briefed the state of the Haitian Army, and the U.S. plans to deal with them. As soon as the briefing was over the president thanked him for the briefing and said, "It's a good plan; let's go."<sup>115</sup>

Although it would take an additional eighteen days during which U.S. forces moved to position, the press indulged in a frenzy of speculation and U.S. public opinion never moved to a point favorable to the president, the decision had been made.

Just prior to the invasion the president gave former president Carter, retired Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Collin Powell, and former Senator Sam Nunn (D-GA) permission to fly to Haiti in order to make one last effort to convince Cedras to step down. Former President Carter argued that, as he had known Cedras personally he would be successful. He had convinced Powell and Nunn to add their arguments to his. Although there was concern that the three men could be taken hostage, they were allowed to go. The mission's initial efforts were not successful, and negotiations were in progress when planes loaded with U.S. paratroopers lifted off and headed for Haiti.<sup>116</sup>

That fact, relayed to Cedras by a Haitian intelligence asset in the United States, was enough to convince him that the time had come to quit. The Carter mission gave him a face-saving way out and he took it. As the paratroopers' aircraft moved steadily to the jump points, Carter reported Cedras' "surrender" to the president. In a remarkable display of military discipline and precision the invasion was halted. Aircraft were turned around in mid-air and headed home. OPLAN 2380 was activated. In less than twelve hours, U.S. troops walked ashore. Five years later, Cedras was living comfortably in exile, the Haitian population was preparing for its second consecutive free presidential election and U.S. soldiers still walked the streets of Port-au-Prince.

### Notes

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