



Press Statement
Richard Boucher, Spokesman
Washington, DC
February 29, 2004

Resignation of President Jean-Bertrand Aristide of Haiti

Jean-Bertrand Aristide has resigned as president of the Republic of Haiti, submitting a letter of resignation before departing Port-au-Prince safely early this morning. At President Aristide's request, the United States facilitated his safe departure from Haiti.

In conformity with Haiti's constitution, Supreme Court President Boniface Alexandre has been sworn in as head of state until presidential elections are held. We have been informed that Prime Minister Yvon Neptune will continue to serve as Haiti's head of government until a successor is appointed in the next days, within the framework of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) Plan of Action.

We call on all Haitians to respect this peaceful and constitutional succession and to refrain from any actions that will undermine national reconciliation. We urge all Haitians to cooperate with the international community as it supports measures to build a more just society and to help defeat the scourge of poverty and disease.

The decision by President Aristide to resign resolves the political impasse that is the root of the violent unrest in Haiti in recent weeks. Therefore, the United States will deploy a contingent of U.S. Marines as the initial contingent of a multinational interim force. We have been informed that several other countries are prepared to move quickly to join this mission.

During the course of the day we will continue consulting with our partners in CARICOM and the Organization of American States, as well as Canada and France, to seek a resolution of the United Nations Security Council authorizing international support for a peaceful and constitutional transition in Haiti. As envisaged under the CARICOM plan, the international community will facilitate the urgent formation of an independent government that will represent the interests of all of the Haitian people.

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