



Remarks with Prime Minister Gerard Latortue of Haiti After Their Meeting

Secretary Colin L. Powell

Port-au-Prince Airport
Port-au-Prince, Haiti
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PRIME MINISTER LATORTUE: (Via translator.) I am very happy that we are all here today to welcome Secretary of State Colin Powell this morning and I'm glad that you are all here so that we can wish him together a Happy Birthday because it is his anniversary today.



We've just had a head-to-head talk together, and we covered three main issues that basically comprised the interface between the United States and Haiti. The first question that we discussed was the security issue. The police issue revolves around new training for police officers that were there, as well as employing new personnel and basically find equipment for the police force.

We must emphasize that the real security issue for us is the violence. We are asking that people with armed guns refrain from using them, and because you cannot have access to political process nor power through use of guns and/or violence. And we are totally against violence. We talked among ourselves upon security issues regarding the airport and terrorism.

We knew that Haiti was not an area where there is much order, much law, and therefore, the terrorists could easily take over the space and the facilities or the country itself to establish their terrorist acts. We talked with the United States Government also about taking steps and measures against narcotic trafficking and money laundering. We asked also of the United States and its armed forces that they help us in other civic duties such as garbage cleaning up, road construction, and other civic form of activities.

I gave the Secretary of State an economic briefing on the state of affairs regarding economics in Haiti. The country is in a state of total bankruptcy and totally destroyed. The state is totally demolished. The gang that we had before left the country with absolutely nothing. The situation left by those that were there before is absolutely total, left nothing behind, including the contents of the vaults of the Central Bank. They cleaned up everything as though they were an army running away.

We also asked the Secretary of State, while discussing economic affairs, and waiting on the decisions of the international donors to assist us in some of the most urgent tasks at hand, particularly creating opportunity and economic jobs in the distressed areas such as Cite Soleil, Raboteau and (inaudible) La Fossette, and all of these areas, very impoverished areas of the main cities.

What we talked about in the defense of the private sector's interests is the Hero Act. The Hero Act is something that we are discussing that favors, in fact, some of the activities of the private sector. The last thing we talked about regarding the economic aspects of our cooperation is corruption. We intend to establish an anti-corruption unit within the administration.

The third thing we discussed is the democratic process and how it is going on in Haiti today. I was happy that last night, I was the first to sign, with the political parties, the civil society groups, a convention, an agreement, in how this process should go on, go forward.

Secretary Powell is the first person to whom I explained this, because we just signed this last night. And I spoke to him, too, right after Easter, we will be setting up the Provisional Electoral Council, right after Easter. One of the things we assured the Secretary of State is that whether you were a former official, a minister, a secretary, in the present government, you will not be allowed to participate in the political process coming up.

We have also agreed that no one in this government or in the former government will participate in the administration as long as they have relinquished violence, use of guns and corruption.

Another aspects of the document that we signed yesterday with the other parties and the civil society was the length of the transitional period of this government.

Everyone agreed that all the elections consisting of the electoral process will take place during the year 2005, that is, municipal elections, legislative elections and so on.

Some people agree that 15 days after the elections of the president, he should be instated into power. Others think, no, we ought to follow the constitutional prescriptions and have the president take office on the 7th of February, 2006.

One of the four most important points that we discussed, the Secretary and myself, was to put an end to corruption. That's number one. I have discussed with the Secretary of State the forthcoming meeting on the 22nd of April with the other donors that will be involved in the assistance with Haiti and set the date for the meeting of the donor countries by June of this year. One of the things we are going to put in place in this government is a Commission of Truth and Reconciliation and Justice as it had occurred in South Africa when Bishop Tutu and Nelson Mandela were part of that committee. And the last point is the Provisional Electoral Council that we will have set up by then so that it will begin work right after April, Easter.

Thank you.

SECRETARY POWELL: Thank you very much, Mr. Prime Minister, for hosting me today. On behalf of President Bush and the American people, I have come to Port-au-Prince to demonstrate America's support for Haiti. Our purpose is to help the people and the leadership of Haiti make a new beginning and to build a future of hope for the Haitian people.

I look forward to meeting with President Alexandre later today and to thank him for the important role that he played in preserving constitutional orders, following the resignation and departure of Mr. Aristide.

It was only six weeks ago that Haiti was on the verge of total security collapse. On that last weekend in February, I believe, we prevented a bloodbath from happening. President Alexandre played an historic role in assuming constitutional responsibilities as the interim President of Haiti. And I want to express my admiration and thanks to the Prime Minister for his willingness to step forward and serve his people at this time of crisis and time of challenge.

As you heard from the Prime Minister, we had a very full and comprehensive discussion and I am impressed by the commitment that he has brought to his tasks. We talked about the ending of corruption and putting in place someone and a committee that will go after those who are guilty of corruption to make sure it does not occur in the future government. As he noted, we talked about truth and reconciliation. We talked about what has to be done to get Haiti's economy started again and to create

jobs, and we also talked about the important job needed to put the country back on a constitutional footing completely with new elections in 2005.

And I also said to the Prime Minister in the course of our discussions that I will be working hard to reintegrate Haiti into the CARICOM community in the months ahead. And I assured the Prime Minister on all the issues that he has mentioned to you today, the United States will be providing him full support.

I want to take this occasion to thank our partners in the Multinational Force: France, Canada and Chile. Thank them for their swift and humane response to the needs of the Haitian people. We will be hard at work in the weeks ahead with the United Nations to put in place a peacekeeping force that will eventually replace the Multilateral Force.

To support the political process that the Prime Minister touched on a minute ago, I am pleased to announce today the release of \$9 million to the OAS Special Mission with the purpose of strengthening democracy in Haiti. And I also want to endorse again what the President said, that service in the Haitian government, including in its security forces and participation in the political process, should be open to all Haitians who reject violence and who are committed to democracy.

We also discussed the importance of getting guns off the street and out of the villages, getting guns out of the hands of thugs and criminals, because without disarmament, Haiti's democracy will remain at risk. And we call on all armed groups to lay down their weapons and allow the duly constituted authorities to impose the rule of law.

The United States will do everything we can in the months ahead to help the interim government. We plan to spend \$55 million in economic and humanitarian assistance in Haiti during this fiscal year. And we will be working with the World Bank and the Inter-American Development Bank to get Haiti the resources that it needs so badly. We know that the European Union and other friendly nations around the world are eager to contribute to Haiti's development.

Today, the Haitian people have a chance for a new beginning. On behalf of President Bush and the American people, I urge the proud people of Haiti to live together in peace. Seize this new chance to put your country firmly on the path of democracy and prosperity. Thank you, Mr. Prime Minister.

QUESTION: The American authorities have set forward the idea, the possibility of prosecuting or bringing to justice the former President Aristide. Should the investigation reveal that Mr. Aristide was tied to drugs, will you expedite extradition for him to stand charges?

SECRETARY POWELL: There are inquiries being made by our judicial authorities in the United States to see if there is any evidence of wrongdoing on his part. I will have to wait until our legal authorities and our investigators are finished before offering any comment on what he might be charged with, if anything, or what action might be taken by the Haitian Government. My principal focus and the principal focus of the United States Government really, though, is on the future, not on the past.

QUESTION: Did you seek assurances from the Prime Minister that criminal elements and human rights violators would be prosecuted (inaudible)?

SECRETARY POWELL: The Prime Minister offered those assurances at the very beginning of our conversation and I was pleased to receive them.

QUESTION: Was there any discussion of names of people who could be excluded?

SECRETARY POWELL: No. But I'm sure in the -- as we go forward -- any names that are known to us of individuals who have been involved in wrongdoing or acts of violence we will make known to the Haitian Government.

QUESTION: According to the Haitian constitution, the elections are to be performed in 90 days. And the Prime Minister said that all elections will be held in 2005. What is the position of the United States regarding the elections? And from the reports that you have gotten from the international force, which feedback, which information have you gotten from them during the time that they have been here, which is about a month?

PRIME MINISTER LARTORTUE: I think you all heard what I said. It was a political agreement that we had signed last night. I think all political parties agree that the elections cannot be held within the next 90 days. In effect, it is the essence of that agreement that we have had. They all understand that it is just impossible to have it in 90 days.

QUESTION: Mr. Secretary, what is your response to the -- CARICOM for a UN inquiry into the circumstances of President Aristide's departure? Short of that, what is the prospect of getting a wider international support from the UN?

SECRETARY POWELL: I don't think any purpose would be served by such an inquiry. I think the facts are very well known, that on that evening, the situation was deteriorating rapidly in the country and especially in Port-au-Prince. We were on the verge of a bloodbath and President Aristide found himself in great danger. He got in touch with our Ambassador and arrangements were made at his request for him to depart the country. He drafted, wrote, signed his letter of resignation all by himself and then voluntarily departed with his wife and his own personal security force. And we were able to provide transportation for him to depart and now I think it is important for all of us to focus on what the Haitian people need now, not what happened in the past.

Did I get it all, John, or...

QUESTION: The prospects for international contributions.

SECRETARY POWELL: I'm sorry. I think the prospects are good for international contributions to the peacekeeping force. We've had a number of countries that have expressed an interest in providing peacekeepers, and the UN peacekeeping team has been here to examine the situation and is writing the report back in New York now and I hope to speak to Kofi Annan in the near future.

Thank you.

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