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Haiti: Update On Recent Political Developments & Violence, August 3 - 14

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Aug. 3: Military sources reported that one army soldier was shot to death and two others wounded by unidentified assailants at a police post in the Carrefour neighborhood in southern Port-au-Prince. This was the second fatal attack on government security forces in less than one week. The military has attributed both attacks to "extremist" supporters of deposed president Jean Bertrand Aristide. According to police sources, Robinson Joseph, former director of Radio Lumiere, was shot and killed at a military checkpoint. Aug. 5: The Interior and Defense Ministries issued a joint communique stating the armed forces would conduct an intensive campaign against those responsible for recent attacks against members of the military and civilians. The statement referred to the similarity of attacks on two soldiers and five civilians in Port-au-Prince, referring to them as "the beginning of a movement which copies the methods of international terrorist networks operating in various countries, especially in Latin America." The statement said "the terrorists' objective is to create panic among the civilian population, destabilize society and cause the armed forces to enter into a logic of systematic repression and counter-terrorism...The Haitian armed forces are determined not to fall into this trap." Heavily armed security force patrols used armored vehicles and helicopters during raids conducted in several areas of the capital. According to witnesses, six people were detained, while an army statement reported that several automatic weapons were seized. Residents of the Cite Liberte slum reportedly threw stones at the soldiers as they attempted to carry out house-to-house searches. Aristide's special negotiating commission met with Venezuelan President Carlos Andres Perez in Caracas to request that he intercede on their behalf with the Organization of American States (OAS). The commission wants the OAS to take stronger action to restore democracy in Haiti. Aug. 6: Two bombs exploded near the residence of Prime Minister Marc Bazin in Petionville. No casualties or damages were reported. This was the third such incident in the area in two months. Aug. 12: Sen. Guy Bauduy told congress that political violence and repression in the country continue at a fierce pace. Sen. Herard Pauyo presented a detailed report on recent abuses perpetrated by rural section chiefs (police officials) against the rural population. In response, Prime Minister Marc Bazin condemned the repression perpetrated by both government security forces and by civilians. Next, Bazin announced that OAS secretary general Joao Baena Soares would accompany a diplomatic mission scheduled to arrive in Haiti Aug. 18. Bazin reiterated his willingness to meet with Aristide's negotiating team. In a press release, Catholic priest Gerard Jean Juste, a close friend of Aristide, threatened to "excommunicate" members of the army if they continue to commit human right abuses. Juste also denounced the Aug. 9 detention of Catholic priest Edner Devalcin. Devalcin was released the same day. Aug. 13: Haitian news agency AHP reported that five people were arrested during the previous three days in the cities of Grand Goave and Petit Goave. Police searched the houses of two of the detainees in connection with recent violence against government security forces. Aug. 14: Haitian police detained 154 refugees minutes after the US Coast Guard had dropped them off in Port-au-Prince. A police officer said the refugees were being taken to police headquarters for questioning regarding the hijacking of the 40-foot boat in which they had fled the island. The contingent brought to 3,617 the number of
Haitian refugees intercepted at sea and repatriated directly by the Coast Guard since President Bush's May 24 authorization of immediate forcible return. An army spokesperson reported that soldiers exchanged gunfire with about 15 unidentified armed gunmen near Les Cayes, a coastal city in southern Haiti. One soldier was wounded in the clash. The gunmen escaped and authorities subsequently arrested two persons as suspected accomplices, including a town council member. In Washington, representatives of various humanitarian and international organizations met under the auspices of the OAS and decided to create a joint "consultation and coordination mechanism" to increase shipments of humanitarian aid to Haiti. The representatives, however, agreed on the importance of maintaining the trade embargo. (Sources: Inter Press Service, 08/03/92, 08/05/92; Spanish news service EFE, 08/12/92; Agence France-Presse, 08/03-07/92, 08/12-14/92; Associated Press, 08/14/92, 08/15/92)

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