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Haiti: Violence, Economic Problems Escalate

by John Neagle

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Two months ago Ertha Pascal-Trouillot was named president of a provisional government after a popular uprising ousted Lt.Gen. Prosper Avril. Since then violence and economic problems have escalated. According to the New York Times (05/15/90), bandits kill and rob people at makeshift roadblocks. Major airlines have suspended service after a hijacking attempt last month by a member of the airport security brigade and a suspected case of arson aboard another plane. Strikes and protests continue. Workers have shut down numerous public services, including the electricity company and international telephone service. Strikers have staged work stoppages at flour mills and fisheries. In an interview with the Times at her home, the president said, "I was very surprised to find all of the coffers empty. Economically, the country is paralyzed. The state can't honor its debts or pay many of its employees." Pascal-Trouillot said she intends to give up the presidency by September. The president and others have noted that escalation in violence coincides with the naming of an electoral panel. Soldiers who have not been paid for lack of funds, are reportedly engaged in armed robbery.

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