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Trinidad & Tobago: Government Repudiates Agreement With Rebels Signed By Prime Minister

by Barbara Khol

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Aug. 2: According to government spokesperson Gregory Shaw, the attempted coup by a group of Moslem radicals and widespread looting resulted in the deaths of at least 30 people, and 150 wounded. The coup attempt commenced on July 27. (See Chronicle 07/31/90, 08/02/90.) Local press sources reported that under the nation's constitution, the rebels could face the death penalty. Deputy Prime Minister Winston Dookeran dismissed the agreement established between the rebels and Prime Minister Arthur Robinson. The government, he said, is not bound by an agreement signed by a person held hostage by terrorists. In the same vein, Shaw told reporters: "All the agreements were signed under duress, all under gunpoint, all of which are completely invalid." According to Shaw, coup leader Abu Bakr and his 111 followers had dropped their demands before surrendering on Aug. 1, and releasing their remaining 46 hostages. Caribbean Economic Community (CARICOM) countries were sending in food and medicine following a request from Port of Spain, according to officials in Kingston, Jamaica. Aug. 6: AFP cited unidentified government sources who said the director of public prosecutions had retained attorneys to help formulate charges against the 112 rebels, who are in military custody. They face charges ranging from treason and murder to possession of arms and ammunition. In a radio interview, Prime Minister Robinson confirmed that he had signed the agreement, which the government repudiated. It had provided for an amnesty for the rebels, his resignation, formation of a caretaker government under Deputy Prime Minister Winston Dookeran and the holding of elections in 90 days. (Basic data from Notimex, AP, 08/02/90; AFP, 08/02/90, 08/06/90)

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