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Haitian rebels occupy police headquarters

By Paisley Dodds and Ian James
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti — Rebels occupied the national police headquarters but kept away from the U.S.-guarded presidential palace after their convoy entered the capital Monday to the cheers of thousands celebrating the ouster of President Jean-Bertrand Aristide.

Dozens of insurgents packing an eclectic array of weapons dating to World War II swaggered around a posh hotel where rebel leader Guy Philippe met with members of the political coalition that opposed Aristide. He was joined by rebel commander Louis-Jodel Chamblain, who is a former army death squad leader and a convicted assassin.

With U.S. military forces on the ground and more on the way, Aristide claimed they forced him to leave Haiti and told him they would "start shooting and killing" if he refused, according to a telephone interview with the exiled president after he was flown aboard a contracted U.S.-government plane to the impoverished Central African Republic.

Aristide was put in contact with The Associated Press by the Rev. Jesse Jackson on Monday following a news conference in Atlanta, where the civil rights leader called on Congress to investigate Aristide's ouster.

U.S. officials called the allegation — repeated earlier by other U.S. critics who said they were called by Aristide — "nonsense" and "absurd."

Philippe said he planned to make preparations for the new president, former Supreme Court Chief Justice Boniface Alexandre, to assume office, as called for in the constitution.

"We're just going to make

Celebration and conflict mark capital

Victorious rebels rolled into Haiti's capital Monday, a day after ousted President Jean-Bertrand Aristide resigned and went into exile in Africa. U.S. Marines and French troops, the first of a multinational force approved by the U.N. Security Council, secured key sites.



Port-au-Prince Rebels rolled through Petionville en route to the capital. Former Supreme Court Chief Justice Boniface Alexandre declared he was taking charge of the country. Caribbean Sea

sure the palace is clean for the president to come ... that there is no threat there," he said as his convoy of 70 rebels approached the capital.

But a half dozen U.S. Marines guarded the National Palace at the Champs de Mars plaza, and the rebels did not approach. Philippe has said that he has no political aspirations but wants reinstated the Haitian army that ousted Aristide in 1991 and that Aristide disbanded in 1995.

In the capital, there were reports of reprisal killings of militant Aristide supporters accused of terrorizing people. An AP reporter saw four bodies at Carrefour, on the outskirts of the capital, three of them with hands tied behind their backs and shot in the head execution-style.

The fourth body was that of a man allegedly shot by police, said witness Charlie LaPlanche. "He ran out of the (police) pickup truck and then it became a manhunt. He went into a house.

They found him. And then he took him out and executed him," he said.

Secretary of State Colin Powell said U.S. forces "will have a lead role" initially in restoring order to Haiti following the three-week rebellion that swept Aristide from power. The U.N. Security Council last Sunday approved the deployment of a multinational force to Haiti.

Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld estimated that between 1,500 and 2,000 U.S. troops would go to Haiti for a "relatively short period." They would participate in an interim force, which could include as many as 5,000 troops from several countries, that would stay until replaced by a U.N. peace-keeping force.

There were no clashes between the rebel force and the U.S. and French troops, who were establishing security at diplomatic missions and other sites. Philippe earlier said he welcomed the peacekeepers.

Sheriff's opponents fight ideas of inside job after jail break

By Lynn Brezovsky
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

HARLINGEN, Texas — Federal authorities decided Monday to transfer inmates out of the Brownsville jail where three inmates escaped late Friday, a move expected to result in up to 42 job losses for jail guards.

It's the second time in two months that U.S. marshals pulled inmates from a Cameron County jail. Officials did not immediately say where the inmates were transferred.

Meanwhile, opponents in the Cameron County sheriff's race Monday scoffed at Sheriff Conrado Cantu's notions that the latest jail break was an inside job aimed at making him look bad.

"He ought to be focusing on what's going on inside the jail instead of what's going on outside," said Abel Perez Jr., a constable who is one of Cantu's four challengers in the March 9 primary.

Cantu said the department was investigating all angles, including that three federal inmates had help making a noisy roof escape from a downtown Brownsville jail Friday evening.

"This is real suspicious," Cantu said Monday. "The guards are sitting there 15 feet from where

the hole is and they couldn't hear them banging on the roof? ... Somebody had to plant this."

Maximo Manuel Ravell, 39; Mario Alberto Hernandez Villarreal, 22; and Francisco Ramirez Guerrero, 21, were still missing Monday afternoon following their escape from the Ruben M. Torres Sr. Jail, a decades-old structure less than two miles from the Mexican border.

Ravell and Hernandez-Villarreal were serving time for illegal re-entry into the United States and Guerrero was jailed for possession of marijuana. None were considered violent, sheriff's Capt. Rinaldo Rodriguez said.

Investigators say the three broke through a bathroom ceiling and roof, including 1-inch thick cement and wire mesh, with an industrial metal handle before fleeing the jail.

Perez, whose precinct includes the jail area, said his deputies found discarded jail uniforms near the building.

The break was the latest in a list of problems for Cantu that include a string of jail escapes, missing inmate funds and allegations of inmate sexual abuse by prison guards. On Feb. 12, Cantu was indicted on a misdemeanor charge alleging he held a mandatory meeting at the jail to talk about his re-election campaign.



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