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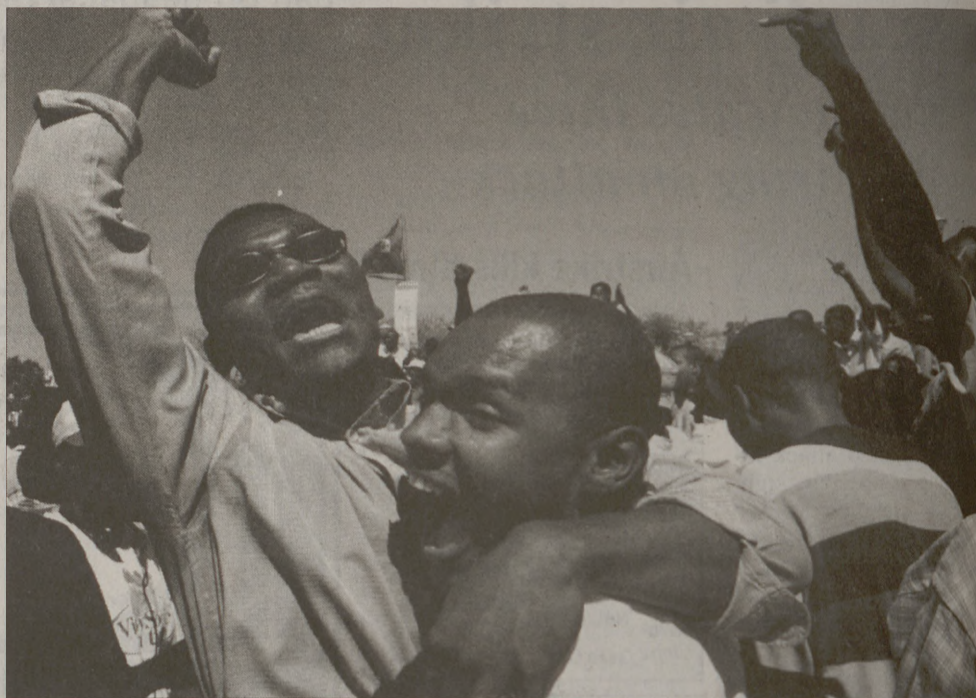
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Students embrace, rejoice and celebrate in front of the National Palace in Port-Au-Prince, Haiti on Wednesday. The arrival of Guy Philippe and his rebels brought supporters to the streets to celebrate the departure of President Jean Bertrand Aristide.

By Mark Stevenson
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti — Haiti's key rebel leader promised Wednesday his forces would lay down their arms after 1,000 U.S. Marines began patrolling the impoverished capital to restore order and prepare for the arrival of international peacekeepers.

If Guy Philippe, a rebel boss and former police chief, can make good on his vow, it would mark the end of the rebellion that broke out Feb. 5, drove President Jean-Bertrand Aristide into African exile Sunday and left at least 130 Haitians dead.

The 15-nation Caribbean Community, meanwhile, refused to join an international peacekeeping force in Haiti and called for an independent international inquiry into Aristide's allegations that he was forced out of office by the United States.

Jamaican Prime Minister P.J. Patterson said CARICOM was "extremely disappointed" at the involvement of "Western partners" in the hasty departure of Aristide.

Patterson, speaking for the trading bloc after an emergency meeting in the Jamaican capital, criticized the U.N. Security Council, saying it had ignored an urgent Caribbean appeal to it on Thursday to send peacekeepers to Haiti before Aristide was forced out.

Aristide remained in the Central African Republic, where he had been flown to exile in a U.S.-government-chartered jet, unable so far to find a country that will grant him permanent residence.

The Marines moved out of their bivouac at the presidential palace Wednesday in a first reconnaissance mission since they began arriving on Sunday. They walked and drove machine-gun mounted Humvees 30 blocks over trash-strewn streets.

Marine vehicles pushed burned cars from ways and riflemen watched the streets for signs of resistance. Encountering none, Marines returned to the palace that had been seat Aristide's power before his departure Sunday, marking the second time he had been deposed from power.

The death toll in the rebellion has continued to rise despite Aristide's ouster, reaching at least 130 Wednesday as workers at the Port-au-Prince hospital said an additional 30 bodies had been brought to the morgue since Sunday.

Holding out the hope that the spasms of violence would end, Philippe said rebels would obey orders.

"Some of us may not be happy about the decision to lay down arms, but we are army ... we'll always obey orders."

— Francois Ferdinand
Haitian army

"Now that there are five troops promising to protect Haitian people ... and they've given the guarantee to protect Haitian people ... we will down our arms," Philippe told a news conference.

Some of his fighters looked glumly as Philippe said: "This may be the last statement we're giving here in the name of the Liberation Front."

One of the rebels said, however, there was no question they would obey orders.

"Sure, some of us may not be happy about the decision to lay down arms, but we are army," said Francois Ferdinand, 44, a 12-year army veteran. "We have a hierarchy, command officers and we'll always obey orders."

The rebels have said they want to rebuild an army, which Aristide disbanded in 1995, after he was returned to power by 20,000 troops. He had been deposed in a military coup in 1991 after becoming Haiti's first democratically elected leader in 200 years of independence.

Philippe said he would go to other cities occupied by the rebels to tell fighters of his agreement to lay down arms. He made the declaration while visiting the residence of U.S. Ambassador Foley's earlier in the day.

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