

Rebels seek Aristide's ouster

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going change in the way Haiti is governed, I think that could indeed involve changes in Aristide's position," a U.S. official said.

Late on Tuesday, the State Department issued a new travel warning on Haiti, urging U.S. citizens to leave the country if they can do so safely. It said it had authorized the voluntary departure of nonessential embassy staff and family members.

A former Roman Catholic priest once hailed as a champion of Haiti's fragile democracy, Aristide's popularity has waned since parliamentary elections in 2000 were declared flawed, and as deep-seated poverty kept the bulk of Haitians in its grip.

The current armed revolt began last Thursday when a former pro-Aristide gang drove police from the country's fourth city, Gonaives,

capping months of anti-government demonstrations from opponents who accuse Aristide of corruption and violence.

Prime Minister Yvon Neptune, speaking before the U.S. comments, dismissed any suggestion that Aristide should fall on his sword and said he had been democratically elected.

Police don't fight wars

The prime minister said the 5,000-member police force could not restore order alone, but he was confident the police would get support from the populace.

Haiti does not have an army to rely on for public order as it was disbanded



Aristide

after Aristide was restored to power in 1994 by a U.S.-led invasion after having been ousted in a military coup.

"The mission of the police force is not to declare war, or to go to war," Neptune said. "But what we know is that with the help of the population who is opposed to terrorism, the national police force and the government, we will find ways to get rid of the terrorists," he told Reuters in an interview.

In addition to the large port town of Saint Marc, 65 miles north of the capital Port-au-Prince, retaken by the government and armed supporters on Monday, police reasserted state control in Grand Goave, to the southwest.

Two Saint Marc neighborhoods remained under rebel control on Tuesday, but the rest appeared to be returning to normal.

Meanwhile, government supporters hit back elsewhere.

Radio Metropole said two opposition leaders were shot and 12 houses torched in the northern town of Dondon, briefly held on Monday by anti-government gunmen.

In Cap-Haitien, a restaurant and two banks went up in flames after a pro-government militia attacked an opposition neighborhood. Several people were detained, injured or had disappeared, radio stations said.

Gunshots rang out across the city of half a million overnight, they added, and gasoline supplies ran dry after deliveries from Gonaives were stopped by the rebels.

In Port-au-Prince, the National Coalition for the Rights of Haitians said at least five opposition members were lynched or executed in the slum of Cite Soleil.

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Africa's future stability tied to women's ability to find work

By Nicole Itano
WOMEN'S E-NEWS

PONDOLAND, South Africa — Half the buttons on Nophiwa Sinqina's skirt have fallen off, and despite the long distances she walks, her shoes are only floppy sneakers. But Sinqina, 24, has something many young people here, especially young women, envy: a job.

A few times a month, the quiet, young woman leads visitors along South Africa's eastern shore as part of a community-run tourism project. Visitors around the world come to see the area's rugged beauty, but for the people of Pondoland—named for the rural Xhosa-speaking Pondo people who live here—life here is hard.

Ten years after the end of apartheid, many villages still have no running water or electricity. Jobs are scarce, families are large and AIDS is running rampant. With few prospects at home, many young people still leave for the big cities in search of work, leaving behind households of old people and children.

At play in Pondoland are a number of demographic trends — a youth bulge, urban migration and scarcity of land and water — that researchers at the Washington-based Population Action International say may contribute to future civil conflict.

A report released by the group last month, "The Security Demographic: Population and Civil Conflict after the Cold War," argues that much of sub-Saharan Africa, as well as parts of the Middle East and Asia, are at high-risk for future civil conflict. The report, which found a high correlation between demographics and conflict in the 1990s, also identifies the increasing toll of HIV/AIDS as a factor that will likely make some states more vulnerable to civil conflict in the future.

Researchers at Population Action International argue that the best way to mitigate these factors is to improve women's access to education, family planning and economic opportunities. Programs such as the European Union-supported Wild Coast Trails Community Tourism Initiative that provide jobs for young women such as Sinqina can help reduce birth rates, slow urban migration and ultimately reduce the risk of civil conflict in high-risk countries such as South Africa.

Whether single by choice or circumstance, Sinqina's unmarried state would make her a prime candidate to be sent to the cities to find employment, most likely as

a domestic worker, where she would be more vulnerable to sexual exploitation and AIDS.

Sinqina said her job as a tourist guide — which gives her just a few dollars a few times a month — provides enough income for basic needs such as clothes and soap and to contribute to her family. And, although it is not discussed in conservative areas such as the Eastern Cape, the income also makes her less vulnerable to AIDS by reducing the chance that she will trade sex for food or clothes, a major cause of the virus' spread.

The second of 10 children, Sinqina is the only one of her grown sisters who is not married and the only one without children. Like her sisters, Sinqina did not finish

high school — scarce money to pay school fees often get used up on boys — but spent enough time in school to become literate and speak some English. Both are remarkable skills in a region that has among the country's highest poverty rates and lowest adult literacy.

Like most families here, the Sinqinas live between the modern and traditional economies. They keep cattle and grow corn, providing for themselves much of what they need. But pensions and remittances from family members working in the city and mines provide cash income to pay for school fees, housing improvements and smaller items such as cooking oil and soap they cannot make themselves.

PUBLIC MEETING

The Charlotte Area Transit System (CATS) will hold a public meeting to receive comments on the ADA Certification Process and service expansion for CATS Special Transportation Service. A meeting is planned for:

March 11, 2004

Charlotte-Mecklenburg Government Center, Room 267

4:00 PM – 6:00 PM

600 E. Fourth Street, Charlotte, NC

Current STS customers requesting transportation to this meeting may contact STS at 704-336-2637. For more information about this meeting, contact CATS at 704-336-RIDE or visit us online at www.ridetransit.org.



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