

Will U.S. occupy Haiti under U.N. auspices?

by Valerie Rush

By threatening to send troops to Haiti to impose a Pol Pot-style Marxist dictator in the presidency there, President Bill Clinton is stupidly embracing one of the Bush administration's worst foreign policy disasters. Tiny Haiti is already an inspiration to nationalist forces on the continent trying to defend their sovereignty from the supranational interventions of entities like the United Nations and its non-governmental organizations (NGOs). The deployment of American troops to the black island-nation, which has not forgotten its 19-year occupation by U.S. Marines earlier in this century, could touch off an explosion of unpredictable consequences.

Before Haiti's military overthrew President Jean-Bertrand Aristide, a terrorist priest, in September 1991, frenzied Jacobin mobs were being deployed with presidential blessing to "necklace" (burn alive) Aristide's political enemies, and bloody civil war was imminent. Aristide's ouster gave Haiti a chance to cool down and take a different direction. And yet, instead of giving that impoverished nation economic and political backing to stand on its own two feet, the Project Democracy forces inside the Bush administration offered full protection to the ousted Aristide and instigated a punishing economic embargo against the Haitian nation, enforced through the Organization of American States and the United Nations.

No 'quick and easy' victory

In the forefront of the Project Democracy networks in Washington which have been most outspoken in defending Aristide and promoting a hard line against Haiti is the Inter-American Dialogue (IAD), whose former chairman Richard Feinberg is now Bill Clinton's Latin American adviser on the National Security Council. While Clinton fumbles around looking for a "quick and easy" foreign policy success to hang from his belt, Feinberg and other IAD "loans" to the administration are dangling before his eyes the prospect of a "democratic" Haiti—enforced by U.S. troops.

The U.S. military mission would be small, to begin with. The idea is to send fewer than 100, the majority of them non-combat engineers, medical personnel, lawyers, and so forth. Combat troops would accompany them "merely to provide

security." Although Clinton administration officials imply that the mission would be a "humanitarian gesture" to assist in reconstructing the ravaged country, it is also openly acknowledged that having a U.S. security team in place is both Aristide's demand *and* a prerequisite for reinstating Aristide back into the presidency.

The *New York Times* admits that the presence of U.S. soldiers would "reinforce the demand of United Nations mediators here that there be no new delays in reaching a solution." The *Times* quotes one Haitian, "There is a long tradition here of taking the Pentagon very seriously. The mention of the American military, even if no one breathes the word 'intervene,' takes this thing to a whole other level."

Target the institutions

The real intent of any Project Democracy deployment into Haiti is to dismantle the military, one of the country's few surviving institutions which, with all its flaws, is intent on preserving national sovereignty. Under the rubric of "retraining" and "professionalization," U.S. and U.N. advisers would import the Salvadoran model, complete with an "independent" Truth Commission to investigate so-called atrocities, assign blame, and demand purges. The *New York Times* reports that the U.S.-U.N. plan is that "ordinary [Haitian] soldiers will either be eligible for retraining in the Army *under international supervision*, or induction into a civilian police force" (emphasis added).

In addition to a takedown of the Haitian military, U.S.-U.N. advisers would be involved in other "reshaping" activities in Haiti, such as "improving the courts and justice system, safeguarding press freedom and professionalizing the police." In El Salvador, every national institution is being given over to the supranational oversight of the United Nations, which has weighted all of its so-called "reforms" in favor of the FMLN insurgents. What Aristide's "necklacing" experts could do from behind a civilian police badge or judge's bench is too chilling to contemplate.

Washington and U.N. mediator Dante Caputo have presented Haiti with enough ultimatums to bludgeon a dozen countries into submission to their "democracy" agenda, and yet the Haitian military rulers will not be cowed. According to Caputo, Haitian Gen. Raoul Cedras kept him waiting for three days before rejecting the latest U.N. ultimatum. Said the miffed Caputo, "Some very bad things were said."

In the period just before the U.S. occupation of Haiti in 1915, President Woodrow Wilson's Secretary of State William Jennings Bryan received a briefing on the state of affairs in Haiti, which had become the world's first black republic following a heroic war with France over a century earlier. Bryan's insightful comment? "Dear me. Think of it. Niggers speaking French!" One wonders if Bill Clinton has learned anything from history, or will he be conned by such advisers as this into picking up the "Big Stick" against Haiti once again.