Address to the Nation on Haiti
September 15, 1994

My fellow Americans, tonight I want to speak with you about why the United States is leading the international effort to restore democratic government in Haiti.

Haiti's dictators, led by General Raoul Cedras, control the most violent regime in our hemisphere. For 3 years, they have rejected every peaceful solution that the international community has proposed. They have broken an agreement that they made to give up power. They have brutalized their people and destroyed their economy. And for 3 years, we and other nations have worked exhaustively to find a diplomatic solution, only to have the dictators reject each one.

Now the United States must protect our interests, to stop the brutal atrocities that threaten tens of thousands of Haitians, to secure our borders, and to preserve stability and promote democracy in our hemisphere and to uphold the reliability of the commitments we make and the commitments others make to us.

Earlier today, I ordered Secretary of Defense Perry to call up the military reserve personnel necessary to support United States troops in any action we might undertake in Haiti. I have also ordered two aircraft carriers, the U.S.S. *Eisenhower* and the U.S.S. *America* into the region. I issued these orders after giving full consideration to what is at stake. The message of the United States to the Haitian dictators is clear: Your time is up. Leave now, or we will force you from power.

I want the American people to understand the background of the situation in Haiti, how what has happened there affects our national security interests and why I believe we must act now. Nearly 200 years ago, the Haitian people rose up out of slavery and declared their independence. Unfortunately, the promise of liberty was quickly snuffed out, and ever since, Haiti has known more suffering and repression than freedom. In our time, as democracy has spread throughout our hemisphere, Haiti has been left behind.

Then, just 4 years ago, the Haitian people held the first free and fair elections since their independence. They elected a parliament and a new President, Father Jean-Bertrand Aristide, a Catholic priest who received almost 70 percent of the vote. But 8 months later, Haitian dreams of democracy became a nightmare of bloodshed. General Raoul Cedras led a military coup that overthrew President Aristide, the man who had appointed Cedras to lead the army. Resistors were beaten and murdered. The dictators launched a horrible intimidation campaign of rape, torture, and mutilation. People starved; children died; thousands of Haitians fled their country, heading to the United States across dangerous seas. At that time, President Bush declared the situation posed, and I quote, "an unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security, foreign policy, and economy of the United States."

Cedras and his armed thugs have conducted a reign of terror, executing children, raping women, killing priests. As the dictators have grown more desperate, the atrocities have grown ever more brutal. Recent news reports have documented the slaying of Haitian orphans by the nation's deadly police thugs. The dictators are said to suspect the children of harboring sympathy toward President Aristide for no other reason than he ran an orphanage in his days as a parish priest. The children fled the orphanages for the streets. Now they can't even sleep there because they're so afraid. As one young boy told a visitor, "I do not care if the police kill me because it only brings an end to my suffering."

International observers uncovered a terrifying pattern of soldiers and policemen raping the wives and daughters of suspected political dissidents, young girls, 13, 16 years old; people slain and mutilated, with body parts left as warnings to terrify others; children forced to watch as their mothers' faces are slashed with machetes. A year ago, the dictators assassinated the Minister of Justice. Just last month, they gunned down Father Jean-Marie Vincent, a peasant leader and close friend of Father Aristide. Vincent was executed on the doorstep of his home, a monastery. He refused to give up his ministry, and for that, he was murdered.

Let me be clear: General Cedras and his accomplices alone are responsible for this suffering

AUTHENTICATED
U.S. GOVERNMENT
INFORMATION
GPO

and terrible human tragedy. It is their actions that have isolated Haiti.

Neither the international community nor the United States has sought a confrontation. For nearly 3 years, we've worked hard on diplomatic efforts. The United Nations, the Organization of American States, the Caribbean community, the six Central American Presidents all have sought a peaceful end to this crisis. We have tried everything: persuasion and negotiation, mediation and condemnation. Emissaries were dispatched to Port-au-Prince and were turned away. The United Nations labored for months to reach an agreement acceptable to all parties.

Then last year, General Cedras himself came here to the United States and signed an agreement on Governors Island in New York in which he pledged to give up power, along with the other dictators. But when the day came for the plan to take effect, the dictators refused to leave and instead increased the brutality they are using to cling to power.

Even then, the nations of the world continued to seek a peaceful solution while strengthening the embargo we had imposed. We sent massive amounts of humanitarian aid, food for a million Haitians and medicine to try to help the ordinary Haitian people, as the dictators continued to loot the economy. Then this summer, they threw out the international observers who had blown the whistle on the regime's human rights atrocities.

In response to that action, in July the United Nations Security Council approved a resolution that authorizes the use of all necessary means, including force, to remove the Haitian dictators from power and restore democratic government. Still, we continued to seek a peaceful solution, but the dictators would not even meet with the United Nations Special Envoy. In the face of this continued defiance and with atrocities rising, the United States has agreed to lead a multinational force to carry out the will of the United Nations.

More than 20 countries from around the globe, including almost all the Caribbean community and nations from as far away as Poland, which has so recently won its own freedom, Israel and Jordan, which have been struggling for decades to preserve their own security, and Bangladesh, a country working on its own economic problems, have joined nations like Belgium and Great Britain. They have all agreed to join us because they think this problem in our neighborhood is important to their future interests and their security.

I know that the United States cannot, indeed we should not, be the world's policemen. And I know that this is a time with the cold war over that so many Americans are reluctant to commit military resources and our personnel beyond our borders. But when brutality occurs close to our shores, it affects our national interests. And we have a responsibility to act.

Thousands of Haitians have already fled toward the United States, risking their lives to escape the reign of terror. As long as Cedras rules, Haitians will continue to seek sanctuary in our Nation. This year, in less than 2 months, more than 21,000 Haitians were rescued at sea by our Coast Guard and Navy. Today, more than 14,000 refugees are living at our naval base in Guantanamo. The American people have already expended almost $200 million to support them, to maintain the economic embargo. And the prospect of millions and millions more being spent every month for an indefinite period of time loom ahead unless we act.

Three hundred thousand more Haitians, 5 percent of their entire population, are in hiding in their own country. If we don't act, they could be the next wave of refugees at our door. We will continue to face the threat of a mass exodus of refugees and its constant threat to stability in our region and control of our borders.

No American should be surprised that the recent tide of migrants seeking refuge on our shores comes from Haiti and from Cuba. After all, they're the only nations left in the Western Hemisphere where democratic government is denied, the only countries where dictators have managed to hold back the wave of democracy and progress that has swept over our entire region and that our own Government has so actively promoted and supported for years.

Today, 33 of the 35 countries in the Americas have democratically elected leaders. And Haiti is the only nation in our hemisphere where the people actually elected their own government and chose democracy, only to have tyrants steal it away.

There's no question that the Haitian people want to embrace democracy; we know it because they went to the ballot box and told the world. History has taught us that preserving democracy in our own hemisphere strengthens America's security and prosperity. Democracies here are more likely to keep the peace and to stabilize

our region. They're more likely to create free markets and economic opportunity, and to become strong, reliable trading partners. And they're more likely to provide their own people with the opportunities that will encourage them to stay in their nation and to build their own futures. Restoring Haiti's democratic government will help lead to more stability and prosperity in our region, just as our actions in Panama and Grenada did.

Beyond the human rights violations, the immigration problems, the importance of democracy, the United States also has strong interests in not letting dictators, especially in our own region, break their word to the United States and the United Nations. In the post-cold-war world, we will assure the security and prosperity of the United States with our military strength, our economic power, our constant efforts to promote peace and growth. But when our national security interests are threatened, we will use diplomacy when possible and force when necessary.

In Haiti, we have a case in which the right is clear, in which the country in question is nearby, in which our own interests are plain, in which the mission is achievable and limited, and in which the nations of the world stand with us. We must act.

Our mission in Haiti, as it was in Panama and Grenada, will be limited and specific. Our plan to remove the dictators will follow two phases. First, it will remove dictators from power and restore Haiti's legitimate, democratically elected government. We will train a civilian-controlled Haitian security force that will protect the people rather than repress them. During this period, police monitors from all around the world will work with the authorities to maximize basic security and civil order and minimize retribution.

The Haitian people should know that we come in peace. And you, the American people, should know that our soldiers will not be involved in rebuilding Haiti or its economy. The international community, working together, must provide that economic, humanitarian, and technical assistance necessary to help the Haitians rebuild.

When this first phase is completed, the vast majority of our troops will come home, in months, not years. I want our troops and their families to know that we'll bring them home just as soon as we possibly can.

Then, in the second phase, a much smaller U.S. force will join forces from other members of the United Nations. And their mission will leave Haiti after elections are held next year and a new Haitian government takes office in early 1996.

Tonight I can announce that President Aristide has pledged to step down when his term ends, in accordance with the constitution he has sworn to uphold. He has committed himself to promote reconciliation among all Haitians and to set an historic example by peacefully transferring power to a duly elected successor. He knows, as we know, that when you start a democracy, the most important election is the second election. President Aristide has told me that he will consider his mission fulfilled not when he regains office but when he leaves office to the next democratically elected President of Haiti. He has pledged to honor the Haitian voters who put their faith in the ballot box.

In closing, let me say that I know the American people are rightfully concerned whenever our soldiers are put at risk. Our volunteer military is the world's finest, and its leaders have worked hard to minimize risks to all our forces. But the risks are there, and we must be prepared for that.

I assure you that no President makes decisions like this one without deep thought and prayer. But it's my job as President and Commander in Chief to take those actions that I believe will best protect our national security interests.

Let me say again, the nations of the world have tried every possible way to restore Haiti's democratic government peacefully. The dictators have rejected every possible solution. The terror, the desperation, and the instability will not end until they leave. Once again, I urge them to do so. They can still move now and reduce the chaos and disorder, increase the security, the stability, and the safety in which this transfer back to democracy can occur.

But if they do not leave now, the international community will act to honor our commitments; to give democracy a chance, not to guarantee it; to remove stubborn and cruel dictators, not to impose a future.

I know many people believe that we shouldn't help the Haitian people recover their democracy and find their hard-won freedoms, that the Haitians should accept the violence and repression as their fate. But remember, the same was said

of a people who more than 200 years ago took up arms against a tyrant whose forces occupied their land. But they were a stubborn bunch, a people who fought for their freedoms and appealed to all those who believed in democracy to help their cause. And their cries were answered, and a new nation was born, a nation that ever since has believed that the rights of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness should be denied to none.

May God bless the people of the United States and the cause of freedom. Good night.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9 p.m. from the Oval Office at the White House.

Remarks and an Exchange With Reporters on Haiti

September 16, 1994

The President. Thank you for coming in; I'm glad to see you. I wanted to make three quick points. One is, we had a detailed briefing this morning from General Shalikashvili, and I feel good about the extraordinary work and preparation that our military leaders have done. Second, we're up to 24 nations now participating in the coalition, and I feel very good about that. I think there will be more; I think we'll have more before very long. And the third thing that I want to say is, I've seen a copy of the remarks that President Aristide is going to deliver today, and I'm pleased with that. I think it is very important, in light of all the things that have occurred from the time he was elected forward, that this message of reconciliation be genuine, sincere, and straightforward. And I think it will be, and I feel good about that.

And I know some of you have been somewhat skeptical of that. And I would remind you that there's one event which has occurred in recent times which I think will reinforce it, and that is the meeting in Paris which got together the proposed aid package for Haiti to create the economic opportunity for the Haitians, which I think is clearly premised on the right sort of spirit of going forward down there and the whole promise of reconciliation being realized. So I feel good about it. And Admiral Miller's done a marvelous job. I thank you, sir, for what you've done.

Anyway, I didn't mean to interrupt the briefing—[*laughter*]—see so many——

Q. Are you nervous?

The President. Am I nervous? No, I feel good about it. I don't know if good is the right word. I think the policy is right, and I think that I have done the best I could to present it to the American people and we have done the best we could to prepare. And I have enormous confidence in the work that others have done. I think they have done the best they could.

We don't live in a risk-free world, and there are risks associated with anything we did or didn't do. But I think we're doing the right thing, and I think we have the right people doing the right thing. That's all I could ever ask for. And I've made the decision, so if it doesn't go right, I'm responsible.

Q. Secretary Christopher says that he expects more public support and more support on the Hill now, Mr. President. Do you expect to get fairly strong support in Congress now?

The President. I don't know; I can't answer that. I hope so. But he may know more about it than I do. All I can tell you is I've done the very best I could, and I hope they'll be supportive for it. I'm encouraged by the indications that the American people are more supportive. My sense is that the important things to a lot of Americans about last night were—first of all, I think more and more are learning about the human rights abuses and how that reinforces the arguments we made about immigration and democracy. But I think most of the people are focused on that.

But the two things I think that a lot of Americans got last night from an informational point of view were, one, the extraordinary efforts we have made in the diplomatic area and the patience we've shown and the rebuffs we've received over a long period of time. And two, I think a lot of Americans had forgotten about the Governors Island Agreement and that it was broken. And most Americans think when you make a deal with this country, you ought to