

What Bush did to Haiti

The February 29, 2004 Coup D'Etat instigated by the Bush Administration

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If a group of dedicated scholars, attorneys, journalists, and activists had tried to generate a comprehensive list of impeachable offenses committed by George W. Bush as president, and only 35 of them had been introduced into Congress, one of the many discarded ones, in rough and overly detailed form, might have read something like this:

In his conduct while President of the United States, George W. Bush, in violation of his constitutional oath to faithfully execute the office of President of the United States and, to the best of his ability, preserve, protect, and defend the Constitution of the United States, and in violation of his constitutional duty under Article II, Section 3 of the Constitution "to take care that the laws be faithfully executed", has both personally and acting through his agents and subordinates, caused the United States of America to kidnap, imprison, intimidate, coerce, threaten, confine, abduct, and carry away the elected, constitutional President of Haiti, and his wife, a U.S citizen, in violation of United States statutes, to wit:

a. The President, both personally and acting through his agents and subordinates, prevented the security contractors working for Haiti's elected, constitutional government led by President Jean-Bertrand Aristide from receiving reinforcements at a time when Haiti's constitutional government was under attack. The removal of the security contractors facilitated the kidnapping of President Aristide:

b. On February 17, 2004, U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell defended President Aristide as the "free and fairly elected President of Haiti." Referring to insurgents who brutally attacked police stations and other government building over the previous weeks, Secretary Powell further stated that the United States "cannot buy into a proposition that says the elected President must be forced out of office by thugs and those who do not respect law and are bringing terrible violence to the Haitian people."

c. On the afternoon of Saturday, February 28, 2004, the Steele Foundation, a U.S. company that had been providing private security services to the Haitian government, informed President Aristide that the U.S. government had asked it to withdraw all of its personnel from Haiti. The Steele Foundation also told President Aristide that the U.S. government was blocking the Steele Foundation's efforts to bring to Haiti additional personnel needed to protect the President. Later that day, the Steele Foundation informed President Aristide that without the additional personnel, the Foundation would not be able to protect the President or his wife.

d. The President, both personally and acting through his agents and subordinates, misrepresented the immediacy of the threat against President Aristide, and informed him that U.S. forces in the country would not help either the President or his constitutional

government:

e. On February 28, members of the U.S. Foreign Service informed President Aristide that rebel forces under the command of Guy Philippe, a U.S.-trained former army and police officer, were less than 50 miles outside Haiti's capital, Port-au-Prince. The diplomats informed President Aristide that Mr. Philippe's forces would attack the next day. At the time, Mr. Philippe and his soldiers were in Cap-Haitien, at the far northern end of Haiti, and could not have reached Port-au-Prince for several days.

f. Members of the U.S. Foreign service told President Aristide that if he remained in Port-au-Prince, the United States would not provide any assistance when the expected attack by the insurgents occurred, and that they expected that the insurgents would kill him, his wife and many of his supporters.

g. That night, the U.S. Deputy Charge de Mission (DCM) in Haiti, Luis Moreno, accompanied by a contingent of U.S. troops, met with President Aristide. Moreno reiterated the expectation that an attack by the insurgents was imminent and the promise that the U.S. would not intervene to protect President Aristide or his supporters. He then informed President Aristide that if he left at that moment, the United States would provide aircraft for him to leave, but only if he provided the United States with a letter of resignation.

h. On February 28, Secretary Powell called former Representative Ron Dellums, who had been engaged as a lobbyist in Washington by the Haitian government. Secretary Powell informed Mr. Dellums that the insurgents were going to attack Port-au-Prince the next day (February 29), and that the United States would do nothing to interfere with their plans.

i. The President, acting through his agents and subordinates, forced President Aristide onto an unmarked U.S. plane that filed a false flight plan, and flew him against his will to the Central African Republic.

j. On February 25, Secretary Powell issued a threat to President Aristide, telling the press: "whether or not Aristide is able to effectively continue as President is something he will have to examine carefully in the interests of the Haitian people." On February 28, a senior State Department official told CNN that the "international community" is "putting pressure on Aristide to live up to his responsibilities and to think hard about his future," which implied more pressure for President Aristide to step down. The CNN article also reported that "privately the United States continues to distance itself from Aristide and suggests it might be time for him to step down." Timothy Carney, who was appointed by President Bush to run Iraq's Ministry of Minerals and Mines in 2003 and coordinator of Iraq reconstruction in January 2007, announced to the press that "Aristide is toast. He's gone. The only question is whether he goes out in a pine box or on an airplane." These statements contradicted the earlier statements of the Secretary of State, which recognized Aristide as the democratically elected President of Haiti and blamed the rebel groups for the violence gripping the country.

k. On February 28, White House spokesman Scott McClellan stated, "Aristide's own actions have called into question his fitness to govern Haiti. We urge him to examine his position carefully...."

l. President Aristide, at all times, publicly and privately, insisted that he would remain in office to serve out his constitutional term.

m. On February 28, President Aristide conferred with U.S. Ambassador to Haiti James Foley and DCM Luis Moreno about ways of avoiding further violence in Port-au-Prince. Early in the morning of February 29, at Mr. Moreno's request, President Aristide agreed to go with a U.S. escort to a location where he could appear on television to appeal for calm. The escort that arrived at President Aristide's house consisted of heavily armed, uniformed members of the U.S. Armed Forces traveling in a convoy. The escorts took President Aristide and his wife from his house, and instead of taking him to a television studio, took him to the Port-au-Prince airport.

n. The Steele Foundation security contractors protecting President Aristide were told to plan for a move to the U.S. Embassy where President Aristide would make a TV broadcast. Then minutes before they left President Aristide's residence, they were told they were going to the airport and that they would be leaving with him on the plane.

o. An unmarked white aircraft, with a U.S. flag, had been flown in by the U.S. government, and sat on the airport runway. According to a customs declaration at a refueling stop, the aircraft was owned or operated by Technilink, and was registered in the U.S.A, registration number N145CA. Haiti's national airport was secured by U.S. soldiers. President Aristide reported that DCM Moreno forced him to sign a letter and board the plane.

p. President Aristide claims that the statement that he signed was not a resignation letter, that he did not intend to resign – that it included a conditional statement, “[i]f I am obliged to leave in order to avoid bloodshed” The United States Government reported this letter as a resignation, to the United States public, to the United Nations and to the Organization of American States even though the Creole expert the government asked to translate it, Professor Bryant Freeman of the University of Kansas, concluded that the statement was not a resignation letter.

q. Uniformed and heavily-armed members of the U.S. armed forces boarded the plane along with President Aristide. They changed into civilian clothes after boarding. Nineteen members of the Steele Foundation security detail also boarded the plane, although they were taking direction not from President Aristide, but from officials of the United States. Also on board were President Aristide's wife, Mildred Trouillot Aristide, a U.S. citizen, and two Haitian security officials.

r. The plane left Port-au-Prince at about 6 AM on February 29. Once placed on the aircraft, President Aristide and his wife were kept incommunicado by United States military personnel, even though the plane was equipped with faxes, satellite telephones, and other means of communication. The passengers were forced to keep the shutters on the aircraft closed at all times. They were denied the right to leave the aircraft when it landed in Antigua and thereafter when it refueled.

s. The operators of the aircraft provided the Antiguan government a fraudulent customs declaration that stated there were no passengers on board, that the flight had originated in “Guantanamo Bay,” and that there had been no intermediate stops. No destination was listed.

t. Neither the President nor his wife, who is a United States citizen, was told by the United States military personnel where the aircraft was going or when they would land. They were kept as prisoners on the aircraft and were only told a short time before the aircraft landed that the Central African Republic was their country of destination.

u. When the unmarked plane landed at the airport in Bangui, Central Africa Republic, it was met by French soldiers, who were based in the Republic. Officials of the Central African Republic informed President Aristide's lawyer that they were in consultation with both French and United States officials about keeping President Aristide in the country, and that they were doing it as a "favor" for those countries.

v. President Aristide was kept against his will in the Central African Republic. He was not allowed to leave his lodging on the grounds of the Presidential Palace without government permission and an escort, and he was not allowed to speak on the telephone after he made a few calls explaining what had happened to him, which Central African Republic officials called "regrettable statements. President Aristide was kept there for two weeks, until a mission led by U.S. Representative Maxine Waters flew to the country and negotiated his release with the President of the Central African Republic, Francis Bozize.

w. President Bush's kidnapping of President Aristide and his wife violated U.S. law:

x. Under 18 U.S.C. section 112, it is a criminal offense to imprison, intimidate, coerce, or threaten an "Internationally Protected Person." The statute's definition of "Internationally Protected Person" includes both President Aristide and his wife, Mildred Trouillot Aristide. The actions by President Bush and his agents and subordinates, including Secretary Powell, Ambassador Foley and DCM Moreno, included imprisonment, intimidation, coercion and threats within the statute. The statute penalizes such illegal conduct with prison sentences up to ten years. The statute confers jurisdiction for these crimes to U.S. courts, because the offenders were nationals of the United States, and were afterward found within the United States.

y. Under 18 U.S.C. section 1201, it is a criminal offense to unlawfully confine, kidnap, abduct, or carry away an "Internationally Protected Person." The statute's definition of "Internationally Protected Person" includes both President Aristide and his wife, Mildred Trouillot Aristide. The actions by President Bush and his agents and subordinates, including Secretary Powell, Ambassador Foley and DCM Moreno, included seizing, confining, kidnapping, abducting, and carrying away of both President Aristide and his wife. The statute penalizes such illegal conduct with prison sentences of up to life in prison. The statute confers jurisdiction for these crimes to U.S. courts, because the offenders were nationals of the United States, and were afterward found within the United States.

In all of these actions and decisions, President George W. Bush has acted in a manner contrary to his trust as President and Commander in Chief, and subversive of constitutional government, to the prejudice of the cause of law and justice and to the manifest injury of the people of the United States. Wherefore, President George W. Bush, by such conduct, is guilty of an impeachable offense warranting removal from office.

David Swanson is the author of the new book "Daybreak: Undoing the Imperial Presidency and Forming a More Perfect Union" by Seven Stories Press. You can order it and find out when tour will be in your town: <http://davidswanson.org/book>.

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