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SCHAKOWSKY CONDEMNS BUSH ROLE IN TOPPLING DEMOCRATIC GOVERNMENT IN HAITI

CHICAGO, IL - This is a sad day for those who believe in Democracy. The Bush Administration had the choice of defending the democratically elected government in Haiti or supporting its overthrow. It chose the latter. Jean Bertrand-Aristide was the first democratically elected President of Haiti, his successor due to be chosen in the next Presidential election in 2005.

Over the last several weeks, an armed insurrection was organized by former death squad leaders, convicted murderers and drug dealers. They used terrorist tactics to take over police stations and then cities which were protected by only a very small government police force. Today's *New York Times* describes these so-called "rebels":

"The public face of the rebel army is the smile of Mr. Guy Phillippe. He is suspected by both Haitian and United States officials of cocaine trafficking...Mr. Phillippe has few democratic credentials. In 2001 he stood accused of planning a coup. Government said he masterminded a raid on the Presidential palace that left seven dead. He is joined in this rebellion by Louis Jodel Chamblain, the convicted assassin from FRAPH." The *New York Times*

describes FRAPH as "an instrument of terror wielded by the military junta that overthrew Haiti's embattled President Jean Bertrand Aristide in 1991. It killed thousands over the next three years."

Rather than coming to the defense of the democratically elected government of Haiti, the Bush Administration yesterday joined with the anti-democratic forces in the country to call for the President's ouster. This morning he is gone.

Last Thursday, I joined eighteen members of the Congressional Black Caucus in a meeting with President Bush, Secretary of State Colin Powell, and Condoleezza Rice, pressing our position that the United States stand by our principles of democracy.

Last year, I visited Haiti with two of my colleagues and Ethel Kennedy on a trip sponsored by the Robert F. Kennedy Memorial Foundation. We met with President

Aristide, opposition leaders, and visited a remarkable clinic on the central plateau run by the world renowned physician, Dr. Paul Farmer of Harvard University. At that time, I felt it was shameful that the Bush Administration refused to provide any humanitarian assistance to the Haitian Government and, in fact, intervened to hold up international aid to Haiti. The poorest nation in the hemisphere, 60% of Haitians lack access to potable water.

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Last weekend, the United States and the international community met with President Aristide, at which time he agreed to a power-sharing proposal made by Caricom and supported by the U.S. and France. The opposition refused. Colin Powell extended the deadline, but the opposition stood by its insistence that Aristide step down, essentially dead or alive.

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The Administration has consistently supported a small elite group in Haiti whose principle economic interest is working with multi-national corporations to exploit Haiti's vast pool of cheap labor. It is important now to have a full investigation of USAID, the CIA and other agencies that used taxpayer dollars to determine whether they were involved in any way in the destabilization of Haiti. It is critical that the United Nations dispatch an international force, including US soldiers, to bring security to the country and protect people's safety and restore democracy.

This week I joined several of my colleagues in calling on President Bush to grant Haitian's in the United States Temporary Protected Status (TPS). Sadly, this week, instead of a signal of hope for the people of Haiti, President Bush chose to send a warning, telling Haiti's public that those seeking to escape the violence in that country would not be welcome as refugees in the United States. Now that President Bush has added to Haiti's troubles and contributed to the further destabilization of that nation, he should at least allow Haitian's currently in the United States to stay here with Temporary Protected Status so that they do not have to face the prospect of returning to a country under the control of violent criminals.