

U.S. SOUTHCOM
United States Southern Command
NEWS RELEASE



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IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE STATEMENT ON HAITI

At the request of the new President of Haiti, President Bush has ordered the deployment to Haiti of a contingent of U.S. Marines, as the leading element of a multinational interim force.

The mission of the U.S. forces being deployed is to secure key sites in the Haitian capital of Port au Prince, for the purposes of:

- Contributing to a more secure and stable environment in the Haitian capital to help promote the constitutional political process;
- Assisting as may be needed to facilitate the delivery of humanitarian assistance;
- Protecting U.S. citizens as may be required.
- Facilitating the repatriation of any Haitian migrants interdicted at sea;
- Helping create the conditions for the anticipated arrival of a U.N. multinational force.

The initial contingent of U.S. Marines is expected to arrive in the Haitian capital the evening of February 29, 2004.

Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld has ordered additional U.S. forces to deploy as necessary over the next several days to fill out the U.S. contribution to the multinational interim force.

The final size of the U.S. contribution to the multinational interim force is to be determined. The United States, working with the United Nations, the Organization of American States, and the Caribbean Community, is in contact with a number of countries that have expressed a willingness to contribute forces. The initial leadership of the multinational interim force will be the United States. The leadership of the final multinational force will be determined in the days ahead.

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This information is located at www.defenselink.mil