Haiti Situation Puts Clinton in Precarious Position

Column by Sudhir Anandarao

As America prepares to launch an onslaught on Haiti to free it from the shackles of Lieut.-General Raoul Cédras and his junta, the Clinton administration is going through uneasy moments worrying about its policies on the Haitian issue.

President Bill Clinton, in a news broadcast on Sept. 15, announced that the only option left to restore democracy in Haiti was an invasion. Right from the beginning, Clinton has faced difficulties convincing Congress to face the ire of all quarters who denigrated the Clinton administration is going through uneasy moments worrying about its policies on the Haitian issue.

As an example of the destruction wrought by the Clinton administration and its lackadaisical way of handling the issue, President Bill Clinton, in a news broadcast on Sept. 15, announced that the only option left to restore democracy in Haiti was an invasion. Right from the beginning, Clinton has faced difficulties convincing Congress to face the ire of all quarters who denigrated the Clinton administration is going through uneasy moments worrying about its policies on the Haitian issue.

In Cuba's case, it seems to be partially resolved with a compromise being reached between Fidel Castro and U.S. diplomats. But Americans still have not forgotten the thousands of Cubans reaching Florida. They do not want to go through it all over again in the case of Haiti. This is one of the major problems the army is going to face after the invasion.

Going by Clinton's statement, the U.S. army is fully geared up for the invasion. Around 20,000 troops will be deployed, costing the treasury around $430 million. The army went through an intensive rehearsal for the invasion, code-named "Agile Provider." During this rehearsal, several troops were captured by the "defenders" hopefully, this should not happen again and become embarrassing during the real assault. Even though the Haitian army is going to be easy meat for the U.S. troops, Cédras has ominously spoken of inciting sporadic violence. This needs to be taken seriously.

An even bigger problem facing the army will be getting out after the attack. The U.S. people are well aware of the "nation building" operations carried out by the army in Somalia and do not want that to happen again. Another issue will be to transfer Cédras to an unknown place or to offer him as a guinea pig to the Haitians.

This invasion is going to take place, unless Cédras shows a white flag at the last minute and decides to give in. A nonviolent political solution would have been most acceptable involving all sectors of the Haitian society. Still an invasion will heal the wounds to some extent. The President maintains that the restoration of democracy, establishment of human rights, and maintenance of law and order are his only concerns at present. But it is a well-known fact that Western hegemony was established on the oil fields after Operation Desert Storm.

The "multinational" forces set up to attack Haiti consist of a few soldiers from Barbados, Trinidad and Tobago, Jamaica, and Belize. Clinton asked for unilateral support from other nations, but some of them wanted to burn their fingers again. The recent trade embargo imposed on Haiti gives Clinton some more time to think of alternative strategies, but it seems that he has finally run out of ideas.

Whatever happens in the coming days, one thing is certain: If U.S. troops come out unscathed, Clinton will secure a moral victory; but if it turns out otherwise, he is putting himself in a precarious position for the coming elections.

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