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Police in Haiti Kill 4 Men, Witnesses Say

By MICHAEL KAMBER

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti, Oct. 28 - Four young men were shot dead Thursday in Port-au-Prince by men witnesses described as police officers. The killings took place in a busy intersection of Bel Air, an area that has been a flash point of violence in recent weeks.

"Six police cars came up here with about 15 officers," said Jean Yves, one of the witnesses. "They took the men out of the cars, put them on the ground and shot them in the head."

Other residents confirmed Mr. Yves's account as bursts of gunfire sounded nearby, evidence of continued fighting between the police and loyalists of the deposed president, Jean-Bertrand Aristide, who was forced to step down in February and is now in exile in South Africa.

Police officials said Thursday afternoon that they had not heard about the killings.

The shootings in Bel Air followed an incident on Tuesday in which residents of the Fort National neighborhood in Port-au-Prince said police officers had killed as many as nine young men and three women. Police officials denied involvement.

"I can categorically say that it was not a police operation," said a police spokeswoman, Dr. Marie Gessy Coicou, raising the possibility of renegade police units or of death squads posing as police officers. She advised citizens to check police badges.

But on Thursday, the United Nations special envoy to Haiti, Juan Gabriel Valdés, called on the country's interim government to investigate the killings, Reuters reported.

In Fort National, dozens of residents said five police vehicles arrived at 4:30 p.m. on Tuesday, blocking Fort National's main thoroughfare. Masked men in black police uniforms and helmets ordered residents to lie on the ground, then moved down an alleyway to a house where young men from the neighborhood gather to play dominoes and smoke marijuana, residents said.

"I was on the rooftop washing clothes," said Renise Joseph, describing the killing of an acquaintance, Reginald François, 25. "Reginald was running and the police shot him in the head. He was not dead yet, so they took him from the yard and shot him again in the street."

Asked if she could identify the killers, she said: "I did not see their faces. They were just wearing black uniforms with black helmets and big guns."

