



## Sen. Nelson on Haiti Coup: "Hard to Say We Support Democracy and Elections and then We Go and Push [Aristide] Out"

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<http://www.democracynow.org/article.pl?sid=05/01/19/1510217>

At her confirmation hearing for Secretary of State, Condoleezza Rice was questioned about the situation in Haiti and the 2004 coup d'etat that ousted the democratically-elected President Jean Bertrand-Aristide. We play an excerpt of the hearing and speak with Larry Birns of the Council on Hemispheric Affairs. [includes rush transcript]

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At the hearing, Rice was also questioned about another country in the Western hemisphere: Haiti. Last year the democratically-elected president of Haiti, Jean Bertrand Aristide, was overthrown in what he calls a modern-day kidnapping in the service of a coup d'etat backed by the United States.

Since then, the situation in the country has deteriorated rapidly under the new, unelected government, which the Caribbean Community bloc CARICOM refuses to recognize.

A new report released by the Center for the Study of Human Rights at the University of Miami School of Law describes the situation like this "Haiti's people churn inside a hurricane of violence. Gunfire crackles, once bustling streets are abandoned to cadavers, and whole neighborhoods are cut off from the outside world. Nightmarish fear now accompanies Haiti's poorest in their struggle to survive in destitution. Gangs, police, irregular soldiers, and even UN peacekeepers bring fear."

At Rice's Senate confirmation hearing yesterday, Democratic Senator Bill Nelson of Florida was one of those who questioned her about Haiti.

- Sen. Bill Nelson (D-FL) questioning Secretary of State nominee Condoleezza Rice about the situation in Haiti, January 18, 2005.
- **Larry Birns**, Director of the Council on Hemispheric Affairs in Washington DC.

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### RUSH TRANSCRIPT

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favor to win, if it doesn't win, we cut off all aid. In regard to Haiti, there is a totally failed, superimposed interim government, the Latortue government. There is a minister of justice, who is really the minister of injustice. You talk about a failed state under Aristide. In fact, the United States froze all aid to Haiti, and wouldn't even send riot control gear to Aristide. He did not have the weapons to defend himself against a resuscitated military force of the old Haitian military under the military junta that ruled from 1991 to 1994. This junta was approaching -- these forces were approaching Port-au-Prince, and Colin Powell said we will not permit a gang of thugs, the military, to overthrow a constitutional president, which is precisely what he allowed to happen.

**AMY GOODMAN:** And Condoleezza Rice's direct involvement in dealing with, even pressuring the prime minister of Jamaica not to keep -- allow Aristide to stay there.

**LARRY BIRNS:** Yes, yes. That was when Aristide was allowed to visit Haiti -- Jamaica for 30 days. She described that as an unconstructive act. Unmitigated -- that is, unremitting pressure was brought upon the prime minister to get rid of Aristide.

**AMY GOODMAN:** Larry Birns of the Council on Hemispheric Affairs. We thank you for being with us. We will continue to cover the Rice hearings tomorrow on Democracy Now!, as well as the confirmation hearings of others in President Bush's cabinet.

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