

**Haiti police hunt rebel ex-soldiers, say no talks.**

By Joseph Guyler Delva

476 words

11 February 2005

05:19 pm

Reuters News

English

(c) 2005 Reuters Limited

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti, Feb 11 (Reuters) - Haitian police launched a hunt on Friday for rebel former soldiers accused of killing four police officers, and Haiti's interim authorities said they would crack down on the men they called bandits.

Police Chief Leon Charles said the police are looking for Remissainthe Ravix, the leader of the former soldiers. He ruled out negotiating with the group.

The announcement came one day after Haitian police, backed by about 150 U.N. troops, stormed the former soldiers' headquarters building in Petionville on the outskirts of the capital. The targets of the raid, whom Charles accused of stealing vehicles and police weapons, had left the compound.

The police arrested three people, confiscated several army uniforms and uncovered papers that appeared to be plans to attack the National Palace, a police spokeswoman said. Authorities were still analyzing the papers.

Police operations would extend to "other areas where those bandits have been calling the shots," Charles said.

"The police have decided to combat this situation, to attack and really hunt those who tarnish the noble military institution's image. They are nothing but bandits," said Charles, a former army lieutenant.

Former troops led the rebel force that pushed out President Jean-Bertrand Aristide a year ago and still control parts of Haiti, which has been plagued by political and gang violence that has killed more than 240 people since September.

Police last week arrested a former soldier who possessed a government-owned vehicle and a gun confiscated from a policeman, Charles said. He identified the man as a driver for Ravix.

In retaliation, the ex-soldiers kidnapped four policemen in Terre-Rouge, in the Haitian-Dominican border area where Ravix and a group of his men took refuge after clashing with Haitian authorities few months ago. U.N. troops negotiated the policemen's safe release last week.

But on Sunday, four police officers were killed in the residential Clercine neighborhood, not far from a base for U.N. peacekeepers who have been trying to stabilize Haiti since shortly after Aristide was driven out.

Police authorities have accused Ravix's men of killing the officers, which Ravix denied.

The time for a political settlement had passed, Charles said. "But we cannot wait anymore, we cannot sit idly by and let those guys kill policemen," he said. "We don't have to negotiate with those people."

Haiti's interim Prime Minister Gerard Latortue said his government would disarm all those who carry illegal weapons.

Ex-soldiers have demanded that the government reinstate the army, which Aristide disbanded in 1995, but interim authorities said that decision would be left to the next elected government. A presidential ballot is scheduled for November, with a new president due to take office in February 2006.

Document LBA0000020050211e12b00njb

© 2005 Dow Jones Reuters Business Interactive LLC (trading as Factiva). All rights reserved.