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91-147

Hundreds flee Zaire
as tense calm holds

By Craig Bird

KINSHASA, Zaire (BP)--The evacuation of Americans, including hundreds of missionaries, from Kinshasa, Zaire, climaxed a tense week of waiting amid increasing violence.

In the vast areas outside Kinshasa, the capital, Americans who wanted to evacuate have been grouped in central locations awaiting completion of U.S. Embassy plans to get them out of the country.

About 800 Americans left aboard three charter flights Sept. 26-28. The three groups, one each day, boarded ferries under the protective guns of French paratroopers for a 10-minute ride across the Zaire River to the airport at Brazzaville, Congo.

Life in Kinshasa, increasingly difficult over the past years as pressure for political change mounted while the economy crumbled, became intolerable for many people Sept. 23 and 24.

During those two days, a military protest against unpaid salaries exploded into a looting frenzy that swept the city's business and industrial area as well as hundred of private homes.

Even when an apparent calm returned to the streets, strongly encouraged by French and Belgium paratroopers and a seemingly mollified army, the U.S. Embassy saw no reason to withdraw its advice that Americans leave the country.

"Obviously we don't know what the political future of Zaire is, but you can draw your own conclusions about the economic situation," embassy spokeswoman Lynn Gutensohn told one groups of Americans Sept. 25.

"Have any of you who have been out seen a single food store -- or any other store -- with anything left on their shelves?" she said. "The people were hungry last week when there were things to buy but at high prices. What do you think will happen now that there is nothing to buy and they get increasingly hungry?"

As word of the military protest spread Sept. 23, Americans were urged to go home and stay off the streets. The hope was that, in a day or two, things would return to normal, as they have after other recent demonstrations.

But when patrols became gangs of armed robbers, others joined in. In many houses even the plumbing fixtures were ripped out and carried away. Gunfire echoed throughout the city as looting spread and the appearance of foreign troops on the Kinshasa streets flushed out memories of 1964 when hundreds of foreigners, including a number of missionaries, died in a brutal civil war.

The morning of Sept. 24, as Americans traded damage reports over the common citizen band radio channel, word came from the U.S. Embassy to private U.S. citizens. "The situation is now chaos. As soon as you safely can, you are advised to assemble at one of the four evacuation points. Bring one suitcase per person and food for two days."

The two largest concentrations of "non-official" Americans were at the American Baptist mission headquarters and at the Chevron Corporation compound.

Most people at those two compounds were missionaries. Three primary topics dominated all conversations: eyewitness reports of damages, concern for colleagues stranded "up-country," and tales from the 1964 trauma. Many missionaries had lived through that terror, including several who then were children and now are raising their own children in Zaire.

Early concern focused on Rob Neufeld, a Mennonite Brethren missionary from Ontario, Canada, and Dawn Sawatasky, another Canadian with the Christian Missionary Alliance. Neufeld was en route by bus from an up-country mission station Sept. 23 and did not arrive as scheduled. A group of soldiers had robbed Sawatasky of her truck and personal jewelry, and she was then trapped on the opposite side of town from her family.

The arrival of Neufeld and Sawatasky at the Chevron compound sparked major celebrations.

As the situation deteriorated in Zaire, men grouped in convoys returned to their home to get financial records and their most treasured keepsakes for the planned evacuation.

The actual leaving was dramatic, but not overly dangerous. The convoy passed by desolated business districts giving the women and children their first look at the devastation.

After the 10-minute ride across the Zaire River, the groups boarded planes at the Brazzaville airport. The first flight went to Frankfurt, Germany, while the other two went directly to Washington.

The evacuation of people who remain up-country will be assisted by such organizations as Mission Aviation Fellowship, which regularly operates flights throughout Zaire.

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NOTE TO EDITORS: Africa correspondent Craig Bird, who is based in Nairobi, Kenya, was among Southern Baptist missionaries who evacuated Zaire Sept. 26.

(BP) photos to be mailed to state Baptist newspapers by Richmond bureau of Baptist Press Oct. 1.

Haiti unrest: 'just another day' for Baptist volunteer

By Mary E. Speidel

Baptist Press
9/30/91

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti (BP)--For Bobby Edwards, Southern Baptist volunteer in Haiti, Sept. 30 was just another day.

Edwards awoke at 5 a.m. to a phone call from U.S. Embassy officials in Port-au-Prince, Haiti's capital city, notifying him of political unrest downtown. They advised him to stay indoors.

At 8 a.m. Edwards, from Greenville, S.C., began hearing gunfire at his home in Port-au-Prince, just a few miles from the presidential palace.

In the early hours of Sept. 30, mutinous soldiers reportedly fired on President Jean-Bertrand Aristide's home. Aristide was inside the house at the time of the attack, but his fate and whereabouts were not known, according to initial press reports. The streets of Port-au-Prince were almost deserted.

The day marked Edwards' two-year anniversary as a volunteer mechanic working with a well-drilling project in Haiti. Political unrest is nothing new on the island. "This has happened 10, 12, maybe 15 times over the past two years. Usually you just stay home and off the streets. Most of the time you don't have any problems," he said.

Since Aristide took office in February, "the country has been the quietest that I've seen it and the safest," said Edwards.

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Edwards has been in radio contact with Southern Baptist missionaries Mark and Peggy Rutledge, who were safe at their home several hours from the capital. The Rutledges are from Murfreesboro, Tenn., and Glendale, Calif. Missionaries Virgil and Patsy Suttles are on furlough in Elberton, Ga. Aristide, a leftist Roman Catholic priest, was inaugurated president of Haiti Feb. 7, the fifth anniversary of the fall of dictator Jean-Claude "Baby Doc" Duvalier. Aristide is Haiti's first democratically elected president.

In light of the latest unrest, Edwards urged Southern Baptists to pray for "Haiti's leadership, that this situation will be resolved, and that the country will begin to move on."

Haitians had high expectations when Aristide was inaugurated in February. "But a lot of what they have expected has not come about," Edwards said. "Of course, this happens all over the world when a country goes democratic. People want instant change. Pray that Haitians will understand change isn't going to happen overnight and that they'll have to give it some time."

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NOTE TO EDITORS: For papers that have not gone to press before 9/30, the following two paragraphs update information in the (BP) release of 9/27/91 titled "Unrest in Zaire forces missionaries to evacuate," which subbed out a story of the day before with the same head.

Missionaries Al and Karen Hodges, their two other children and journeyman Jane Gouge arrived safely in Washington, on a U.S.-sponsored evacuation flight Sept. 29. Hodges is from Harrison, Ark.; his wife is from Paragould, Ark. Gouge is from Orlando, Fla. At the time of the unrest, U.S. Embassy officials in Zaire told the Hodges family and Gouge to stay at their home in Kitwit and not make the nine-hour drive to Kinshasa to join the other evacuating Southern Baptist missionaries, who left Zaire Sept 26.

The Falks are now in Lome, Togo, the Seaberrys are in the United States and Bird has returned to his home in Nairobi, Kenya.

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Tie vote on Thomas
viewed different ways

By Tom Strode

Baptist Press
9/30/91

WASHINGTON (BP)--Opponents of Clarence Thomas' nomination to the United States Supreme Court made much of the tie vote in the Senate Judiciary Committee Sept. 27, but supporters of the black federal judge downplayed its significance.

The committee deadlocked at 7-7 on the vote to report Thomas' nomination favorably to the full Senate. The six Republican members of the committee and one Democrat, Sen. Dennis DeConcini of Arizona, voted for him. The remaining seven Democrats voted against Thomas.

The ensuing vote to report the nomination to the Senate floor without a recommendation passed, 13-1, with only Sen. Paul Simon, D.-Ill., opposing.

Thomas' nomination will be considered by the Senate no earlier than Oct. 3. It is uncertain when a vote will be held. It is possible no vote will be taken before Oct. 15, when the Senate returns from a week-long recess. Opponents voiced hope the vote would be delayed, apparently believing their side could build momentum.

The Supreme Court will begin its new term Oct. 7.

Thomas' supporters and detractors, both on and off the committee, seemed to agree his confirmation by the Senate remained likely.

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The committee's Sept. 27 action came a week after the conclusion of eight days of hearings, including nearly five full days of testimony by Thomas. During the hearings, it was predicted by some the judge, who serves on the Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia, could receive as many as 10 favorable votes.

The committee's vote encouraged opponents of the nomination.

"... I think this is an entirely new day after this vote ...," said Kate Michelman, executive director of the National Abortion Rights Action League. "The nomination was considered to be a foregone conclusion. Today's vote demonstrates how very controversial this nomination is ..."

"The Senate Judiciary Committee sent a very important message that they are not going to sit by and let fundamental rights, like a woman's right to choose, go down without a serious fight," Michelman told reporters.

"It's a good victory for those who were concerned about Judge Thomas' qualifications and about the direction in which he would help to take the country," said John Buchanan Jr., policy chairman of People for the American Way.

"He is certainly likely to be (confirmed)," said Buchanan, an ordained Southern Baptist minister. "It is an uphill battle ... but I think it is possible for us to win on the floor as we won in committee."

The tie was the "last gasp" of the nomination's opponents, said Tom Jipping, legal affairs analyst of Coalitions for America and a Thomas supporter.

"The magic number is 51, not 8," Jipping said, referring to the majority in the Senate as opposed to that of the committee.

"... it's not over till it's over, but we believe that as of now he's got a good 60, 65 votes (in the Senate)," said Gary Bauer, president of Family Research Council and the Citizens Committee to Confirm Clarence Thomas. "Unless some sort of unexpected event takes place, I think it's still a solid nomination."

"... I'm somewhat shocked that the liberals on the committee were willing to go with the feminists on the abortion issue over a black nominee that has strong grass-roots black support," said Bauer, a Southern Baptist. "I think increasingly the Democratic liberals are becoming solely the party of abortion."

Thomas' past statements related to abortion and his unwillingness to answer questions related to it were cited by opponents.

If senators believe the nominee will consider *Roe v. Wade* with "an open mind, there's a bridge in Brooklyn they might also like to buy," said Sen. Edward Kennedy, D.-Mass.

"If evasiveness before the committee is rewarded, we have warped the process," Simon said.

"... so long as Clarence Thomas is on the Supreme Court it is not probable that another black will be named," Simon said. "That means that for three or four decades the lone person of African heritage will, if judged by his record, be taking stands that the large majority of blacks do not hold."

"I'm concerned that there is a liberal set of litmus tests that are operating to the denigration of minorities in this country," said an admittedly "irritated" Sen. Orrin Hatch, R.-Utah, "and that unless you belong, unless you work and are a part of that liberal plantation, your ideas and your thoughts and your ability and your experience and your pain and your history of growth means nothing."

"I believe that he is an independent thinker, beholdng to no one and to no particular cause," DeConcini said.

Sen. Joseph Biden, D.-Del., chairman, chose to vote against Thomas though "my heart tells me he'll be a solid justice.

"I might be prepared to vote my instinct and my heart were the state of the Court and the state of the nation different than it is now," Biden said.

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Religious groups' growth
suggests outreach tools

By Sarah Zimmerman

Baptist Press
9/30/91

ATLANTA (BP)--In a year when Southern Baptists gained less than 1 percent in total church membership, Mormons and Jehovah's Witnesses grew by 6 and 4 percent respectively.

Such growth patterns suggest that Southern Baptists could benefit from studying outreach tools of the two religious movements, said Gary Leazer, director of the Home Mission Board interfaith witness department.

From the 1989 to 1990 church year, total membership in Southern Baptist churches increased 0.88 percent. From 1989 to 1990, worldwide membership in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints or Mormons increased 6.3 percent, and the active members of Jehovah's Witnesses in the United States increased 3.97 percent.

One key to the movements' growth is zealous neighborhood campaigns. But their outreach involves much more than door-to-door visitation, Leazer said.

"Friendshiping" is the Mormon program to attract new members. It involves training a Mormon family to cultivate relationships with non-Mormon neighbors, friends and co-workers.

The friendshiping plan includes inviting prospects to social activities and family activities before inviting the family to a church meeting.

Jehovah's Witnesses use a similar seven-step program that begins with literature distribution and encourages follow-up contacts. Interested people are not invited to the Kingdom Hall, the Jehovah's Witnesses worship center, until the fifth step in the program.

Delaying the invitation to attend church contrasts Southern Baptists' typical approach of inviting a prospect to a worship service first, Leazer noted.

"I'm convinced that we need to get outside our church building (to develop prospects). We think we've done our duty by giving away a tract or inviting someone to church," Leazer said.

The friendshiping and seven-step programs require members to be well-versed in their faith. Mormons and Jehovah's Witnesses do not depend on a church staff member to witness for them, Leazer noted.

Another advantage of delaying the church invitation is that prospects who have become friends with members feel like they belong in the organization before they attend a service.

Mormons and Jehovah's Witnesses are both encouraged to invite prospects to home studies of their faith. Leazer said Southern Baptists could do likewise by inviting people to home Bible studies. He recommended using Outreach Bible Study material from the Baptist Sunday School Board during such Bible studies with prospects.

Another distinctive of both Mormons and Jehovah's Witnesses is an emphasis on commitment before church membership.

Before a person is baptized as a Jehovah's Witness, he must "preach the truth" door to door, Leazer said. Jehovah's Witnesses also only count people who are active in the Kingdom Hall activities as "publishers" or members.

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