

Catholic radio station in Haiti vandalized

By Kenneth D. MacHarg

Quito, Ecuador--Protestors have vandalized a Roman Catholic radio station in Cap Haitien, Haiti, while other journalists in the area have been attacked.

Approximately 50 protestors vandalized the antenna of Catholic radio station Radio Voix de l'Ave Marie (Voice of Ave Maria) on November 14. The station serves the northern region of the country from offices of the Cap Haitien archdiocese.

The protestors said they were looking for firearms. Some of the station's equipment was destroyed before the protestors were stopped by police.

Meanwhile, Evelyne Toussaint, head of VKB, Radio Cap Haitien disappeared on November 14 after being attacked by demonstrators. The crowd forced her and her two children out of their car before setting fire to it. U. N. peacekeepers were reportedly searching for her, but didn't know whether she had been kidnapped or had gone into hiding.

Radio station officials said Toussaint had received threats after her station aired the names of three supporters of President Jean-Bertrand Aristide who were implicated in the attack on the Catholic Radio station.

The day before, protestors had shut down the station. Earlier the station had dropped newscasts because of threats against its journalists. Various reporters from the station are reported to be in hiding.

Jean Robert Lalanne, chief editor with Radio Cap Haitien had been threatened with necklacing (being burned by placing a tire around him and setting it on fire) for allegeding being a supporter of the defunct Duvalier dictatorship.

The Association of Haitian Journalists condemned the attack as a "serious threat to press freedom" and issued an urgent appeal to Haitian authorities to guarantee security for the two stations and their staff.

Meanwhile, Reuters news service reported that a number of foreigners had taken refuge in a hospital in nearby Limbe after being threatened by mobs.

They included 16 Americans, three Canadians, one Indian and one Austrian. It was unclear whether the foreigners were missionaries or aid workers.

Tensions are reported high and violence increasing in Haiti in the run up to December's presidential elections.

Other religious radio stations in Haiti have experienced problems in recent months. Radio Bois Caiman, a Catholic community radio station in Mare Rouge was forced off the air in May when the military damaged their antenna.

Evangelical radio station 4VEH experienced a shortage of oil, and invasion of their transmitter site by people wanting to claim it for housing. U.S. military personnel removed the people by force.

Recent reports indicate that 4VEH continues to experience problems with squatters on their property.

Catholic radio station in Haiti vandalized, *Compass Direct*, Nov 17, 1995

#