

Report: DEA arrests Haitian ex-rebel

The Miami Herald
Jul. 16, 2007

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti --

U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration agents arrested a former rebel leader and presidential candidate with alleged ties to drug traffickers, Haitian radio reported.

U.S. and Haitian officials declined to comment on the Radio Metropole report, which cited eyewitnesses who said officers swooped down Monday in helicopters on the home of Guy Philippe, who helped topple former President Jean-Bertrand Aristide in 2004.

Earlier, both Metropole and Radio Vision2000 reported that foreign-looking agents searched Philippe's home in the southern coastal town of Les Cayes but found only his wife.

Metropole said later that the former rebel leader was captured in Les Cayes by DEA officers, but the station cited no source and gave no details on the status of the 39-year-old former police commander who ran for president in 2006.

Oscar Negron, a spokesman in the DEA's Miami office, declined to comment when reached by phone late Monday. The DEA has in the past assisted in arrests in the Caribbean nation in conjunction with local authorities.

Haitian Foreign Minister Renald Clerisme said he did not know anything about the incident. An employee who answered the phone at the U.S. Embassy also declined to comment, and calls to the embassy spokesman were not immediately returned.

Philippe was the police chief of Haiti's second largest city, Cap-Haitien, but fled the country in 2000 after being accused of plotting a coup. He returned in 2004 to help rebels topple Aristide in a three-week uprising.

Aristide called Philippe and other rebels "terrorists," and accused them of ties to drug traffickers who use Haiti and the neighboring Dominican Republic to reach the U.S.

Human Rights Watch says that while Philippe was police chief in the Port-au-Prince suburb of Delmas from 1997 to 1999, dozens of suspected gang members were executed by police under the command of his deputy.