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FIJI COUP LEADER DECLARES REPUBLIC

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Lieut. Col. Sitiveni Rabuka, the leader of a military coup here last month, formally declared Fiji a republic Tuesday and proclaimed the right of the "indigenous Fijian race" to govern this South Pacific island nation.

Colonel Rabuka said Fiji would have a new constitution to guarantee the political dominance of ethnic Fijians over the larger Indian population.

Under the Constitution that took effect when Fiji gained independence from Britain in 1970, Fiji was a parliamentary democracy and Queen Elizabeth II was head of state.

"I hereby proclaim that as from this day forth Fiji is declared a republic," Colonel Rabuka announced at midnight Tuesday on the army-controlled Radio Fiji. "I reaffirm the indigenous Fijian race is empowered with the land and right to govern themselves for their advancement and welfare."

Talks Break Down

The declaration came 24 hours after Colonel Rabuka's talks with the Queen's representative, who led an interim Government between two coups, and with the leaders of Fiji's two rival political parties broke down.

On May 14, Colonel Rabuka toppled the ethnic Indian-dominated Government of Fiji. He staged another coup Sept. 25, saying he had failed to achieve the goal of his first coup.

Colonel Rabuka said he wanted to insure the rights of ethnic Fijians, who make up 47 percent of Fiji's 715,000 people. Indians, who are mostly descendants of 19th-century indentured laborers and who now own many of Fiji's businesses, make up 49 percent of the population.

Since the second coup, Colonel Rabuka has declared himself head of state, scrapped the Constitution and dismissed the Governor General, Ratu Sir Penaia Ganilau, who held executive powers as the Queen's representative. Britain rejected the actions and said it still regarded the Governor General as Fiji's sole authority.

U.S. BACKS GOVERNOR GENERAL

WASHINGTON, Oct. 6 (AP) - The State Department said today that it still viewed Fiji's Governor General as the nation's ruler. "We continue to view the Governor General as Fiji's legitimate constitutional authority, and we continue to support the Governor General's efforts to find a broadly based solution to Fiji's political crisis," said Charles E.

Redman, the State Department spokesman.

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