

HAITI NEWS ROUNDUP: JUNE 3 – 19, 2006

Haitian ex-minister freed from jail

19 Jun 2006

Reuters

By Joseph Guylor Delva

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti, June 19 (Reuters) - Haitian authorities released a former government minister who was jailed for more than two years on murder accusations, and they could soon free other high-profile prisoners who served under former President Jean-Bertrand Aristide, a prosecutor said on Monday.

Jocelerme Privert, Aristide's interior minister, was released on Friday after a prosecutor said there was no evidence of wrongdoing.

Privert said he was a victim of a political conspiracy by the U.S.-backed interim government of former Prime Minister Gerard Latortue, who was installed after Aristide was ousted in an armed revolt in February 2004.

"Thanks to God I am free now after 26 months of political persecutions and injustice," Privert told Reuters and radio station Melodie FM.

Privert was arrested on April 6, 2004, and jailed on accusations that he was the mastermind behind what Aristide's opponents called a massacre on Feb. 11, 2004, in La Scierie, a small village near the northern town of St-Marc. Privert has denied the accusations.

"I spent all this time in jail just because there were authorities who wanted to have their political revenge," he said.

Former Prime Minister Yvon Neptune and a former legislator from Aristide's Lavalas Family party, Amanus Mayette, are among others held on similar accusations and expected to be released. A prosecutor working on the case has demanded that an appeals court dismiss the charges for lack of evidence. The court has yet to rule.

Several hundred of Aristide's supporters were arrested and jailed by the interim administration on vague charges of wrongdoing.

Many of the jailed Aristide allies were not brought before a judge for long periods of time, in violation of Haiti's laws and constitution, and U.N. officials have said most of the detentions are illegal.

The interim government has repeatedly denied it persecuted Aristide's allies.

A new government led by Prime Minister Jacques Edouard Alexis was inaugurated on June 9, after the first presidential and legislative election held in the troubled Caribbean country since Aristide fled.

Haiti, IMF launch aid talks

AFP

Caribbean Net News

Monday, June 19, 2006

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti (AFP): The IMF said Haiti has a "unique historical opportunity" to improve its political and economic situation, as talks opened here on a three-year aid program for the Caribbean nation.

Anoop Singh, the International Monetary Fund's regional director, said late Friday that discussions were under way on a new financial facility for Haiti that could help the impoverished country qualify for debt forgiveness.

"Haiti faces a unique historical opportunity to fully normalize its political and economic situation, and I conveyed the IMF's determination to assist in the process to the fullest extent feasible under our mandate," Singh said in a statement.

He added that President Rene Preval "has emphasized to me his government's commitment to economic reforms that would ensure rising prosperity for all Haitians, building on the political opening afforded by the recent election process."

Singh said Haiti and the IMF would begin detailed discussions over the coming week on a three-year facility under the IMF's Poverty Reduction and Growth Facility (PRGF) program. He declined to reveal the amount that could be provided to Haiti, one of the Western Hemisphere's poorest nations, saying it was up to the government and its international partners to determine the necessary levels.

"Structural reforms, including raising and better targeting social spending, strengthening economic governance and improving the investment environment, will aim at creating conditions for a higher rate of economic growth and reducing Haiti's high poverty. That will be a particular focus of the program," Singh said.

"A PRGF would also be a key step for Haiti in qualifying for debt forgiveness under the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Initiative and, more generally, catalyzing economic support from the wider international community."

Singh stressed the need to get people to pay their taxes to help finance necessary programs.

The discussions on the new IMF program came after the June 7 completion of the country's first elected government since president Jean Bertrand Aristide's February 2004 ouster.

Singh, who was to meet Saturday with private-sector and non-governmental organizations, said he hoped the PRGF talks could be completed by the end of 2006.

IMF urges Haiti to collect more taxes

Sun Jun 18, 2006

By Joseph Guylar Delva

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti, June 18 (Reuters) - The International Monetary Fund has urged Haiti to collect more taxes to help fund poverty reduction as part of a new economic-reform program.

Anoop Singh, the IMF's director for the Western Hemisphere, said Haiti's newly installed government needed to fight massive tax evasion to boost revenue intake in the poorest country in the Americas.

"Many people in Haiti who owe taxes don't pay them. So there is a need to raise the ratio by making those who owe taxes pay them," Singh told a weekend news conference in the Haitian capital.

"That's how you get resources to finance anti-poverty programs," he said.

Singh arrived in Port-au-Prince on Friday on a two-day visit.

He held talks with President Rene Preval, Prime Minister Jacques Edouard Alexis and various financial and monetary officials to discuss a three-year economic-reform program aimed at reducing poverty while paving the way toward long-term economic stability in the Caribbean nation.

IMF officials called on authorities to spend more on social programs to impact the lives of Haiti's impoverished masses.

"We are trying to help develop a framework that will allow this to be done while keeping inflation low," Singh said.

A team of IMF staffers led by Przemek Gajdeczka, an adviser who has overseen Haiti for more than three years, is expected in Port-au-Prince next week to start technical discussions with the government on a medium-term economic program that will potentially be supported under the IMF's Poverty Reduction and Growth Facility (PRGF).

The PRGF would be a key step for Haiti in qualifying for debt forgiveness under the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Initiative and, more generally, galvanizing economic support from the broader international community, IMF officials said.

The new structural reform program will also focus on raising and better targeting social spending, strengthening economic governance and ensuring economic transparency, while improving Haiti's overall investment climate, the IMF said.

The IMF said Haiti's performance under its so-called Emergency Post-Conflict Assistance program, approved in October 2005, has been broadly satisfactory.

"Macroeconomic indicators have strengthened and progress has been made in implementing key structural reforms. Net international reserves have increased substantially and the gourde (the Haitian currency) has been broadly stable," the Fund said.

IMF and Haiti Begin Talks on New Economic Program
Press Release - International Monetary Fund
June 16, 2006

Mr. Anoop Singh, Director of the Western Hemisphere Department of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), issued the following statement today in Port-au-Prince:

"I am delighted to have had the opportunity of visiting Haiti for the first time. I have had the privilege of meeting President René Garcia Préval, Prime Minister Jacques Edouard Alexis, Economy and Finance Minister Daniel Dorsainvil, Vice-Governor of the Central Bank of Haiti, Philippe Lahens, and other members of the economic team. Tomorrow, I will also meet with a wide spectrum of civil society representatives, the private sector, NGOs, clergy and the academic community.

"President Préval has emphasized to me his government's commitment to economic reforms that would ensure rising prosperity for all Haitians, building on the political opening afforded by the recent election process. I congratulated the President on the smooth transition to a newly elected government with broad participation from the political spectrum. Haiti faces a unique historical opportunity to fully normalize its political and economic situation and I conveyed the IMF's determination to assist in the process to the fullest extent feasible under our mandate. In this context, a staff team lead by Mr. Przemek Gajdeczka will start discussions next week with the government on a medium-term economic program that we hope to support under the IMF's Poverty Reduction and Growth Facility (PRGF).

"The economic team has already developed a vision for the medium-term economic program. They intend to firmly maintain, and entrench, the macroeconomic stability that has been painstakingly built over the recent period under the IMF's Emergency Post-Conflict Assistance. Structural reforms, including raising and better targeting social spending, strengthening economic governance, and improving the investment environment, will aim at creating conditions for a higher rate of economic growth and reducing Haiti's high poverty—that will be a particular focus of the program.

"A PRGF would also be a key step for Haiti in qualifying for debt forgiveness under the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) Initiative and, more generally, catalyzing economic support from the wider international community. We hope that the PRGF program could be finalized this year.

"Haiti's performance under the IMF's Emergency Post-Conflict Assistance, approved in October 2005 has been broadly satisfactory. Macroeconomic indicators have strengthened and progress has been made in implementing key structural reforms. Net international reserves have increased substantially and the gourde has been broadly stable."

Haiti, National Unity Vital
The Bahama Journal
June 19, 2006

In a previous commentary, we made reference to the fact that the Haitian people have been subjected to no end of indignities as to search for a haven in a seemingly heartless world. They have suffered mightily.

Having suffered for so long, they can be forgiven if they are today living in hope, but also fearing that they will –yet again- be disappointed.

And so we report that there is some good news coming in from Haiti.

Over the weekend, we learned that Haiti's new Cabinet was sworn in Friday, replacing a U.S.-backed interim government that was appointed to lead the impoverished and conflict-torn nation after a 2004 revolt.

Rene Garcia Preval is the President of the Republic of Haiti. Jacques-Edouard Alexis is his prime minister.

Of some note is the fact that Prime Minister Jacques-Edouard Alexis has said that his government would embark on a 25-year development plan, including boosting access to public services for Haiti's poor, reinforcing the country's brittle state institutions and attracting private investment.

In an address to Parliament, Alexis said Preval's administration would also work to restore security after the February 2004 revolt that toppled former President Jean-Bertrand Aristide and plunged the Caribbean nation of roughly 8 million people into chaos.

"We no longer have the right to fail," Alexis said. "The consequences would be too heavy a burden to carry. The country cannot be content with just hoping anymore. It must finally take the path that will lead to its development."

As reported, "President Rene Preval said the 18-member Cabinet of members from six political parties was the result of a new "spirit of dialogue," and urged Haitians to work together to overcome the "mistrust" among Haiti's deeply divided political factions.

We note also that the swearing-in was the final step in formally transferring power from a two-year-old interim government installed after former president Jean-Bertrand Aristide left the Caribbean nation for exile in Africa amid a February 2004 revolt.

The 18-member Cabinet includes five members of Preval's 1999-2001 government, including Justice Minister Rene Magloire and Agriculture Minister Francois Severin. Jean Raynald Clerisme, a former priest, was appointed foreign affairs minister.

The government is mostly made up of members of Preval's Lespwa party, but also includes members of the party Fusion, the Struggling People's Organization and one from Aristide's Fanmi Lavalas party, Planning Minister Jean Max Bellerive said.

"We are on the path to recovering our dignity and sovereignty," Preval said in a speech at the National Palace. "The dialogue has begun and the dialogue will continue, but I need everyone's help."

Preval, a 63-year-old champion of the poor who took power last month, has said national unity is vital to restoring security and allowing the withdrawal of a Brazil-led U.N. peacekeeping force sent to quell violence in the aftermath of the uprising.

We agree with him.

And now comes the really hard part.

Preval and his government will be judged good or bad depending on how they stack up to this challenge.

For our part, we believe that if the job can be done, Preval is the man for the job. Time will tell.

We note also that real progress does not come by chance or overnight. It only comes with clear ideas, appropriate design, organization and discipline. It is most often achieved step by step and inch by painful inch.

And so, it surely seems in the Republic of Haiti as President Rene Garcia Preval sets about the Herculean task of governing that country.

As we have previously noted, we wish him well. But –quite evidently- our wishes count for very little in an environment such as Haiti where the effects of fear, despair and mind-numbing poverty are so very pervasive.

The Haitian people need help.

Mercifully, they are currently getting a lot of support from a number of countries around the world. This is due –in part at least- to the valiant efforts of its determined president, Rene Preval.

In a sense, he is both blessing and God-send to his people.

What is also so very interesting and intriguing about this man is the fact that –unlike Jean-Bertrand Aristide- he gets support from across the political spectrum. Rich and poor –alike- trust him.

Aristide was anathema to both the Haitian elite and their foreign backers in the United States of America.

Today things are changing.

Preval seems to be succeeding where his mentor demonstrably failed. He seems to understand that politics is –after all is said and done- the art of the possible and the science of making deals.

In sum, then, there is hope today that what Preval is attempting will be to the net benefit of the Haitian people and that Haiti will –at long last- be put on a path to sustained development.

Reverse Solidarity: The Reactionary Role of US Labor in Haiti and Venezuela
Upside Down World
Written by Kim Scipes and Jeb Sprague on Flashpoints Radio
Monday, 19 June 2006

Dennis Bernstein/ Flashpoints: Many in the U.S. see the AFL-CIO as a huge effective union [federation] representing tens of thousands of workers in this country, which may be true and is but it is not widely understood that the union joined hands with the U.S. State Department and spy and propaganda agencies to undermine foreign governments in the guise of supporting democracy in the good old USA fashion.

In recent days this is no where more obvious than in Haiti and Venezuela – the United States has been heavily engaged in both countries and has availed themselves of various subsets of the AFL-CIO to subvert the will of the people and to undermine self determination in both these countries.

Joining us to talk about this is Jeb Sprague. He is the author of "Failed Solidarity," an article about the AFL-CIO and other organizations and their secret and not-so-secret work to undermine the will of the people in Haiti. It appears on the web and magazine Labor Notes. Also appearing with us is Kim Scipes, an assistant professor in Sociology at a branch of Purdue University. He is an expert in the foreign operations of the AFL-CIO. We appreciate both of you joining us on Flashpoints.

Let me start with you professor. Give us a blueprint because of those of us who are unionists get nervous when we think about the AFL-CIO abroad it could be the CIA.

Kim Scipes: Well that's true. But it's a little more complex. The AFL-CIO leadership, and this is the top leadership, I want to state from the beginning, it's [going on] behind the backs of [AFL-CIO] members. But the top leadership going back into the nineteen teens-has run its own independent foreign policy. They were involved in the Mexican revolution, they were involved setting foreign policy about the Soviet Union.

Coming forward, they were involved in helping to overthrow the democratically elected government of Guatemala in 1954, the democratically elected government in Brazil in 1964, the democratically elected government in Chile in 1973 and the attempted coup against the democratically elected government in Venezuela 2002. So they've got this long foreign policy that is done behind the back.

They refuse to come clean to individual members such as myself but the California AFL-CIO has also rejected [critique of] the foreign policy programs. So despite different efforts at all kinds of levels within the labor movement they have hid, they operate behind our backs although in our name.

Jeb and I are working within a new organization called the Worker-to-Worker Solidarity Committee that is trying to end this nonsense. [In 2005 AFL-CIO leadership refused floor debate on the proposed "Build Unity and Trust with Workers Worldwide" resolution at their National Convention. That resolution, approved in 2004 by the California State AFL-CIO Convention, would account for and end any AFL foreign activity tied to government agencies.]

Dennis Bernstein: Just as a case study, Jeb Sprague, lets go to your Labor Notes piece "Failed Solidarity". On this show, we have covered Haiti and the infiltration of various propaganda agencies and the National Endowment of Democracy (NED) into the internal workings of Haiti as part of a subset of the U.S. State Department policy of opposing Jean-Bertrand Aristide. Set up for us, what happened in Haiti?

Jeb Sprague: Ok, well first we can go back to 1984. This is when the Duvalier dictatorship was still in power. They were in power until 1986. Now at this point in time the [AFL] Solidarity Center was not around but its predecessor, AIFLD, was. Now they supported the FOS – the Federation of Syndicated Workers, which was the only sanctioned union under Duvalier.

[The FOS] was heavily infiltrated by his secret police and the Tonton Macoutes – who were well known for wearing their dark glasses and hanging up dead bodies and killing thousands of people. Then in 1991 you had [8 months] when Aristide was in power under his first Administration before the first coup. During these months the AFL-CIO was supporting Haiti's most historic union the CATH – Haitian Union of Autonomous Workers. Under AFL-CIO support, they had a schism within the CATH where the conservative section took over and started mounting protests against Aristide.

These were some of the very first protests against Aristide in 1991. And then following the 1991 coup you had additional money going to [pro-defacto] labor during the "de-facto period" around 1992 and 1993. After that, after a lot of criticism, the AFL-CIO pulled out of Haiti and from as far as I can find until the Solidarity Center began operations again in Haiti in 2005. [Besides a labor study conducted prior to the coup.]

Dennis Bernstein: Ok, So explain that.

Jeb Sprague: Well, first, in 1999 the CSH, which stands for the Haitian Trade Union Confederation, was supported by the ICFTU, ORIT, and ILO, which are these giant labor organizations in South America and around the world [connected closely with the AFL-CIO]. The CSH was the main labor organization within the Group of 184 and they basically co-opted labor leaders from unions across Haiti into this Group of 184 conspiracy against the Haitian government – agitating for its overthrow. And so then when the Solidarity Center comes back in following the coup, just weeks after the coup in 2004 they begin talks with the Batay Ouvriye.

Dennis Bernstein: Ok so you're referring to when the U.S. undermined, forced out the Aristide government. Kidnapped. We had a coup government. Explain now. Because there's a lot of numbers a lot of letters.

Jeb Sprague: Ok, well prior to the 2004 coup, you had three years where there was a U.S. government backed aid embargo upon the Aristide government. It was an aid dependent government that was starved. A large percentage of its money was dependent on aid that they were no longer getting. At the same time you had paramilitary rebels that were allowed safe houses in the Dominican Republic, coming in killing people and then reprisals happening after that, so you had them really creating this violent situation.

You also had ten millions of dollars going to anti-government and critical voices against Aristide- so you had pro-government NGOs not getting any or very little funding. So with the labor, just weeks after the coup you have these meetings taking place in Haiti between the Solidarity Center and Batay Ouvriye. Batay Ouvriye was known for working in the Free Trade Zone in Haiti and they had agitated for the Aristide government to "leave the country."

And so what I found, after about 6 months trying to figure this out, that by mid-2005 we see nearly half a million dollars going to a program in support of the Batay Ouvriye [from Solidarity Center/State Dept funds]. And the most astonishing thing about all of this is that following the February 29, 2004 coup you had about 10,000 possibly 12,000 trade unionist supporters of the ousted government and public sector workers who were persecuted and repressed. These people were laid off.

Dennis Bernstein: When you say all that money, did that come from the AFL-CIO?

Jeb Sprague: Well it actually came through the NED, which gets its money from the State Department and then [the other grant] directly through the State Department. The AFL-CIO gets its money from the State Department and then they go in. Send in their people to work [trainers, etc]. Also with the CSH—the group 184-trade union they got their [program] money from the ICFTU, which is based out of Brussels. Money, support, all sorts of things.

So then you had these workers that were laid off and these groups the AFL-CIO, ICFTU, ORIT, ILO they refuse to do anything. So I asked them, why are you not condemning or investigating these massive layoffs, persecution, and 100 buses of a workers cooperative demolished? They don't have an answer.*

Dennis Bernstein: All right, so Kim Scipes why don't you help us understand the direct connection between the AFL-CIO and the attempt to destabilize and overthrow the Venezuelan government?

Kim Scipes: Basically what happened is, the AFL-CIO used to have regional organizations in Latin America. AIFLD is one of them the American Institute for Free Labor Development. That has been superseded by what is called the Solidarity Center. The Solidarity Center is one of four core institutes of the NED. And that [was] set up by the Reagan Administration and continues today under Bush. So they are not only getting money from the Administration, they are actively involved in what I believe is setting policy.

They were working in Venezuela between 1997 and 2001. They got over \$703,000 from the NED, specifically for their work in Venezuela. What did they do in Venezuela? They are working with a very conservative labor organization that is very much tied with security services in Latin America, as well as the CIA, and then they are supposedly democratizing these people. But at the time of the coup, we see a series of meetings set up between the business people and the right leadership of this labor movement—and they were key leaders in the coup attempt against Chavez.

This is a pattern very reminiscent of the coup Chile in 1973 when AIFLD helped lay the groundwork for the coup against Salvador Allende.

Dennis: Explain again, AIFLD is a sub group of the AFL-CIO its foreign action group?

Kim Scipes: Well they had four different regional organizations. One in Africa, Asia, Western Europe, and one in Latin America. AIFLD was [the AFL's] Latin American operation. When John Sweeney was elected in 1995 as a reform candidate one of the pressures was to get rid of all this foreign policy crap. He came in and centralized operations that he called the American Center for International Labor Solidarity (ACILS), which is the formal name of the Solidarity Center.

That was supposedly done to clean up and stop doing this stuff. It's a much more sophisticated operation than in the old days. They have actually done some good stuff such as supporting good trade union struggles in some maquiladoras. But in Venezuela what [ACILS] was still doing this clandestine stuff; pulling groups together against democratically elected governments.

They are operating around the world, in over 40 countries, over 90% of funding from the State Department; they are not supporting themselves off money from their members of the AFL-CIO unions. Most union members know nothing about this. And the point I also want to make [is that] we are not against the labor movement. I am in my fourth union, but I abhor, I detest what the labor leadership has done behind the backs of its workers. And they will not come clean and we are going to force them.

Dennis: Ok, Jeb Sprague hone in about what the Solidarity Center was doing in Haiti to take a side to undermine the Aristide government?

Jeb: Well they [the Batay Ouvriye] were basically part of a large group of organization NGO "leftist" organizations that were being funded by US, European, and Canadian organizations that were criticizing Aristide from the left and then you had the Group of 184 from the right [also being funded]. So it was a foreign funded operation from the start in Haiti. The AFL-CIO came in after the coup to maintain this program.

And then another interesting point, some of these laid-off workers went into armed groups, such as Dread Wilme, who worked at the port in Port-au-Prince and Dread Mackenzie. So you had a lot of this fueling anger after thousands of these workers were laid off.

We know from the NED grant listing for 2005 we know that 1.6 million dollars at least is coming from the NED to the Solidarity Center [for Latin American operations alone]. This includes Mexico \$183,000, Central America two grants each \$185,000, Andean region over \$600,000 that's Peru, Ecuador, Bolivia, Venezuela a lot of important places. So it's probably triple that, maybe quadruple that if you add in State Department and USAID funding.

Dennis: And finally Professor Skipes would it be fair to say that this group affiliated with the AFL-CIO has undermined/contravened democracy in other countries?

Kim Scipes: Yes, no question. And because they refuse to come clean, they refuse to come clean to their own workers; they undermine democracy in the United States.

They best place to get information is to visit workertoworker.net

Dennis: Ok, I want to thank both of you. This is a complicated subject. We are going to come back to it. We have been speaking with Kim Scipes he is a long time expert on the AFL-CIO, Assistant Professor of Sociology at Purdue University, one of the branches at that university. Also speaking with us is Jeb Sprague, Freelance journalist, graduate student, and from time to time special correspondent for this show we thank both of you for being on the show. You are listening to Pacifica Radio.

Visit the Flashpoints website at <http://www.flashpoints.net>

Visit Jeb Spragues blog at <http://www.freehaiti.net> and see his LABOR NOTES article at <http://labornotes.org/archives/2006/06/articles/f.shtml>

Kim Scipes website is at <http://faculty.pnc.edu/ks>

Haiti's slum of misery

It's the worst of the Third World in our backyard, but there are glimmers of hope amid wretched poverty

BY MARK CURNUTTE | ENQUIRER STAFF WRITER

The Cincinnati Enquirer

June 18, 2006

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti There's a bullet hole in the chalkboard.

St. Margaret, one of seven Catholic schools in the Cite Soleil slum, is an oasis of learning and relative safety for some of the world's most impoverished children.

Behind the steel gate and 12-foot cinderblock wall topped with razor wire, trees wave in the Caribbean breeze. Flowers and potted plants grow quickly. Dressed in green jumpers and pants, topped by a gingham shirt or blouse, students recite lessons in Creole. Elderly people arrive late in the morning to eat the same lunch of rice, beans and pasta that children receive. Safe drinking water and a vitamin pill come with the meal.

Life expectancy in Haiti is less than 50 years.

The neighborhood encroaches: disease, hunger, death, violence. School was in session when the bullets flew. Children ducked beneath the concrete benches.

Cite Soleil is called the Western Hemisphere's poorest, most wretched, most dangerous, most politicized place. Well into its third year of military occupation - first by U.S. Marines and now by a United Nations peacekeeping force - Cite Soleil is the epicenter of Haiti's pervasive governmental and social instability. Developers with no plans to house displaced residents want to gentrify the neighborhood with shops and hotels. Whole blocks have been burned out, yet no one has been held responsible.

I spent two days of a 17-day trip to Haiti last month in Cite Soleil. I toured the neighborhood with the Rev. Tom Hagan, an American priest and founder of the relief group Hands Together. Based in Springfield, Mass., Hands Together operates and supports the only schools in Cite Soleil and provides rare medical care.

The rest of the time I was 60 miles to the north, living with and interviewing three families in the Gonaives slum of Trou Sable.

Tin shacks and crumbling cinderblock huts line the mostly dirt streets of Cite Soleil, which translates to "City of the Sun." There are a few paved roads in the 3 square miles that comprise the neighborhood; between 300,000 and 400,000 people - almost one-fifth of the Port-au-Prince population - call Cite Soleil home. Open sewers, standing stagnant with human feces and garbage, snake through the neighborhood. They often flood the tiny houses.

MARINES HELPED; NOT U.N.

U.N. troops, unlike U.S. Marines, have no contact with the people. Marines helped clean sewers, clear standing water, treat the sick, and repair buildings and roads. They befriended the residents and restored order.

But from beneath their light blue helmets, U.N. troops peer from behind sandbags on the upper floor of a Cite Soleil market they commandeered. At key positions throughout the neighborhood, armed troops watch from behind big guns atop their white U.N. tanks. They are feared and loathed.

Plumbing, running water and electricity are virtually nonexistent throughout the neighborhood. The stench of waste melds with gray smoke from burning tires and charcoal fires.

Near St. Margaret is the former Fort Dimanche prison, called the "Dungeon of Death" during the 30-year Duvalier dictatorship that ended in 1986. Amnesty International rated the conditions in Fort Dimanche as some of the globe's most deplorable. Former Haitian President Jean-Bertrand Aristide, a one-time Catholic priest who worked in Cite Soleil, closed the prison. As many as 3,000 people moved in and took up residence in the concrete building and low guard towers.

Aristide flew into exile in South Africa after a 2004 coup drove him from power. The armed gangs of Cite Soleil are said to want Aristide back. Other observers say the gang members - fathers and husbands - just want jobs and a means to support their families.

After visiting St. Margaret we drove to the prison building. There, on the concrete ground, I saw a sheet covered with pancakes drying in the afternoon sun. The same brown discs can be found on some of the tin roofs. They are made of mud and flavored with bullion and are what some mothers are forced to feed their children.

CHILDREN'S PLIGHT

Half of all Haitian children die before age 5. Besides malnutrition, which stains their hair an orange hue, children most commonly die from untreated diarrhea caused by contaminated drinking water.

The seven Hands Together schools, one in each of Cite Soleil's zones, are the focal point of relief efforts. Besides providing standard education for children, the buildings are the site of adult classes in the afternoon; more than half of Haitian adults are illiterate.

Hands Together employs some 350 people in Cite Soleil, about half of its workers in Haiti. They are teachers, masons and other contractors, nurses and drivers. Jobs are so scarce in Haiti that one salary often is spread out to support as many as 20 extended family members. Hands Together is one of only three relief organizations still working in Cite Soleil, along with the International Red Cross and Doctors Without Borders.

A PRIEST, A GANG LEADER

One noon hour, the elderly and 700 students had gathered for the delivery of lunch from a central kitchen. The adults, sitting on the concrete floor and singing hymns, quickly squeezed onto the benches

and continued to sing. A line of students helped to serve food and water to the elderly before they were fed.

Word spread through the neighborhood that Father Tom was at the school. A group of six men arrived at the front gate and were allowed in. They were some of the gang leaders from the seven zones, as well as the overall gang leader, Amaral Duclona. He's baby-faced and still in his late 20s.

Father Tom has forged a fragile peace with the armed gangs that keep out the corrupt national police force. The gangs let the food into the neighborhood and like to be seen as an ally of Hands Together. Simply put, it's good PR.

I was introduced to Duclona, considered by the government the most wanted man in Haiti, and shook his hand. He sent out one of his lieutenants to buy something to drink for the two Americans and gang members. The man returned with six 16-ounce bottles of Coca-Cola that we shared.

Hagan engineered a meeting during the winter with Duclona and his top seven zone leaders. They signed a truce, vowing not to go on the offensive - even though U.N. troops fired heavy weapons indiscriminately into the neighborhood at 5 o'clock every afternoon for several months. The shells and bullets took out chunks of buildings, leveling some of them.

Duclona replaced Emanuel "Dread" Wilme, the former leader killed in an early-morning U.N. raid on his home July 6, 2005. Operation Iron First, executed by Brazilian, Jordanian and Peruvian troops - some of the 8,900 in Haiti - took the lives of Wilme and five of his gang associates. According to Haitian and international human rights activists, another 63 innocent bystanders were also killed. U.N. officials dispute the claim, despite eyewitness accounts and videotape of the corpses.

A SENATOR'S PLEA

Sen. Mike DeWine, R-Ohio, criticized the action of U.N. troops on the floor of the Senate last July 15. He has toured Haiti more than a dozen times with his wife, Fran. Since 1998, the DeWines have raised more than \$100,000 annually to support Hands Together. Last Christmas, the senator and his wife provided Christmas gifts for more than 3,000 children in Cite Soleil.

The network of schools in Cite Soleil is named for their daughter, Becky DeWine, who died in 1993 at the age of 22 in an automobile accident.

Sen. DeWine criticized the raid that he says left so many innocent people dead in Cite Soleil and explained why Haiti matters.

"We (should) care from a humanitarian point of view," DeWine is quoted as saying in the Congressional Record.

"If we do not care about that, we should care because Haiti is on our doorstep. Haiti is not going to go away. ... We should be concerned because Haiti is becoming a trans-shipment area for drugs into the United States. And we should be concerned because of the boat people who could begin to float back up to Miami, where our Coast Guard will again have to turn them around.

"So Haiti is of significance to the United States. It always will be because of its geographical location. We have had U.S. troops down there twice in the last decade. In the last century, we have been involved numerous times. Unless the situation changes quickly in the next several weeks, we are going to have to be involved again."

British and Irish NGOs call on CARICOM to help Haiti

Friday 16 June 2006

By Haiti Support Group

Submitted to AlterPresse on June 16, 2006

A grouping of British and Irish development non-governmental organizations working in Haiti and in solidarity with the Haitian people has issued a call to CARICOM, regional heads of states, and Caribbean civil society to support progressive and constructive change in Haiti.

The Haiti Advocacy Platform Ireland/UK (HAPI-UK) welcomes the fact that the election of a President and Parliament opens the way for Haiti's re-engagement with other Caribbean states, and suggests that the CARICOM Secretariat and CARICOM member states should to commit to a specific package of support for the country.

The HAPI-UK statement notes that the new Haitian government and the UN stabilization mission, the MINUSTAH, "need every possible assistance in their efforts to combine reduced gang violence with the rapid implementation of high-profile interventions to benefit the inhabitants of the capital's worst urban districts".

It also states that, at the same time, "action is needed to disarm and dismantle urban and rural armed gangs through a re-focused Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) program, and to make more rapid progress with the professionalisation and strengthening of the Haitian National Police (HNP)". In this context, the Platform calls on CARICOM member states to contribute police officers to the MINUSTAH contingent, adding that French and/or Creole-speaking police officers would be particularly useful.

With regard to strengthening democracy and institution-building, the HAPI-UK calls on CARICOM to increase their participation in monitoring forthcoming local government elections, and explore ways to support the new Haitian parliament, including arranging bilateral exchange visits by parliamentarians.

As CARICOM is an entity with an economic focus, the statement makes a number of recommendations on ways that Haiti could economically benefit from its membership of CARICOM. These include the offer of duty and quota-free access for key Haitian goods which have significant potential to reduce poverty in Haiti, ensuring that flexibility on tariffs is maintained for Haiti within CARICOM, and the development of a Caribbean-wide investment framework, with the inclusion of Haiti, to ensure that the benefits of foreign investment in the region are harnessed for development purposes.

The statement concludes with calls for CARICOM and members states to provide assistance to initiatives to halt deforestation, to support Haiti in developing alternative energy sources and include Haiti in the work by the Caribbean Renewable Energy Development Program, and to consider the development of linkages between the University of the West Indies and the State University of Haiti.

The HAPI-UK members signing the statement are Cafod, Christian Aid, Concern Worldwide, the Haiti Support Group, Oxfam GB, SCIAF, Tearfund, and Trocaire.

The Haiti Support Group's Charles Arthur said that the idea for the recommendations to CARICOM was first mooted during a meeting in London with Reginald Dumas, the Trinidadian diplomat who was UN secretary-general Kofi Annan's Special Adviser on Haiti between February - August 2004.

Arthur said that the recommendations to CARICOM must be seen in the context of President Préval's remarks during his visit to Cuba in April this year when he called for regional integration. Préval stated, "If we do not integrate ourselves within the region we will have major problems with developing...So we will do all we can...politically, economically and culturally."

Following the collapse of the Lavalas Family government and the installation of the interim government headed by Gérard Latortue in March 2004, Haiti has not been invited to participate in CARICOM meetings. However CARICOM foreign ministers, meeting in Grenada in late April 2006, agreed that the successful conclusion of presidential and legislative elections deemed to be free, fair and credible would lead to a return to constitutional rule and would enable Haiti to be fully reintegrated into the activities of CARICOM. The final reintegration will now take place at the CARICOM heads of state meeting in St Kitts and Nevis in early July.

In late May, Reginald Dumas criticized what he saw as CARCIOM's failure to meet and talk with new president René Préval since his election in February. In an interview with BBC Caribbean, Dumas said, "This is amazing. They should have re-engaged already. The longer they wait, the more marginalized they become. I've been disappointed, frankly".

Dumas said the regional body should have re-engaged with Haiti before René Préval's inauguration as President in mid-May. He said, "What's important in Haiti above all is the welfare of the Haitian people. CARICOM spent too much time talking about the need for free and fair elections and how Aristide left, and not enough time talking about what they could do to assist the people".

The Haiti Support Group's Arthur said he shared Dumas' frustration. "If CARICOM really wants to help Haiti, it needs to act quicker. Haiti is enjoying a rare period of relative stability and everyone needs to take advantage of this and the generalized sense of optimism."

He added, "We must be aware that the new government in Haiti is enjoying a honeymoon period that will inevitably come to an end soon. If big changes don't take place rapidly, Haiti runs the risk of falling back into hopelessness and despair."

Haiti Seeks U.S. Tariff Relief for Garment Industry
The HOPE Act would create tens of thousands of jobs, proponents say.
By Carol J. Williams, Times Staff Writer
Los Angeles Times
June 17, 2006

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti — Vladimir Fabre had what passes here for a decent-paying job: work as a fabric roller at a factory making T-shirts for U.S. discount stores.

But three years ago, Fabre, his mother and four of his siblings lost their employment, thanks to rising political violence here and fierce competition from Asia. The Fabres now eke out an existence by boiling a pot of rice and beans each day and ferrying it to the garment-factory zone to sell to Haitians still lucky enough to be working.

Jobs in the garment industry, once Haiti's most vital sector, have dropped from 100,000 in the late 1980s to less than 20,000 today. In a country long plagued by chronic unemployment of 50% to 70%, the apparel assembly sector remains the nation's most important.

But manufacturers that have managed to survive, albeit by borrowing or scaling back production, believe that recovery could be on the horizon. A bill pending in the U.S. Congress would grant Haitian garment makers duty-free entry to the U.S. market for apparel crafted from fabric made in the U.S.

The bill, known as the Haitian Hemispheric Opportunity Through Partnership Encouragement, or HOPE, Act, could create as many as 20,000 jobs within four months of its passage, industry leaders say.

"When you lose your job in Haiti, the whole family suffers, because everyone else is counting on you to help them," said Fabre, 30, as he set up his lunch stand in the leafy industrial park, where the whine of sewing machines now emanates from less than a third of the buildings.

The HOPE Act is a watered-down version of a humanitarian gesture drafted in 2004. That bill, which was known as the Haiti Economic Recovery Opportunity, or HERO, Act, would have allowed all Haitian-made apparel duty-free entrance to the U.S. market, whatever the origin of the cloth. HERO was passed by the Senate but bogged down in the House, prompting supporters of tariff relief for Haiti to bow to pressure from the U.S. textile lobby and scale back their ambitions.

Haitian garment makers have been led to believe that action on the bill was imminent, but unrelated Middle East trade issues have upended legislative scheduling, said a congressional source who did not want to be identified because negotiations on the matter are confidential.

A spokeswoman for the House Ways and Means Committee, Ianthe Jackson, said the timing of any debate on HOPE was unclear.

As recently as January, the few apparel manufacturers still in business in Port-au-Prince were having to close sporadically because of gang violence and riots in the slums that consume all but a few tiny enclaves in this capital city.

"Every day you lose in a factory is a complete loss," said AG Textiles owner Georges Sassine, noting that he has to pay employees even when flaming barricades block their way to work. "It's not like commerce, where if you have to close you'll sell tomorrow the sugar you didn't sell today."

Economists and foreign analysts have identified the garment industry as the most promising for kick-starting an economy on its knees.

The Sonapi industrial park here once produced Major League baseballs, brassieres and electronics. Now it is home almost exclusively to manufacturers of knit garments. Contracts for the other products began migrating to China in the 1980s and disappeared altogether during the turmoil of the last two decades that saw a military coup, political strife, assassinations and an armed rebellion that sent former President Jean-Bertrand Aristide into a second exile in February 2004.

"We as an industry are the only ones who can create jobs quickly," said Sassine, whose plant employs 600 people who make sweatshirts for Canadian company Gildan Activewear Inc. "We just need to receive orders and execute them. We have capacity that is not used or is underused."

He says he could hire 300 more workers if HOPE passes, based on an expected boom in orders for the U.S. market.

Sassine's plant, like others doing business with Western countries, is certified by the nonprofit group Worldwide Responsible Apparel Production for maintaining accepted standards for garment workers, including regulated hours, adequate ventilation and healthcare.

"Our customers want to know their goods are not being made in sweatshops or with child labor," Sassine said. "This is our guarantee that the goods are made by socially responsible factories."

He points to the lunchtime scene around the industrial park as evidence that a boost for the garment industry would have a ripple effect in the capital's economy. Outside the walled compound of giant assembly plants, vendors display secondhand clothes, fresh fruits and vegetables, housewares and handicrafts, catering to those earning paychecks. At noon, dozens of vendors like Fabre haul in crude wheeled carts carrying food and soft drinks.

Richard Coles, whose family owns the Multitex factory that produces 150,000 dozen T-shirts a week for customers such as Hanes, J.C. Penney Co., Sears, Roebuck & Co. and Wal-Mart Stores Inc., says the preferential trade terms accorded by the HOPE Act would be a far more effective way for the U.S. government to help the Haitian economy than foreign aid.

"It forces everyone to work and modernize to capitalize on it," he said of the duty-free access.

Part of the legislation offers tariff relief on some clothing made of woven fabrics, which Coles said would offer Haitian manufacturers an opportunity to diversify the industry here, which is 90% knits.

Working woven fabric is more labor-intensive, he said, offering the prospect of more jobs and higher revenues.

To sew a dozen T-shirts from knitted fabric, U.S. and Canadian apparel companies pay Haitian factories \$1.60 to \$1.80 for the labor. To sew jeans or trousers from woven cloth, manufacturers get \$20 to \$35 per dozen.

Coles said he trusted newly elected President Rene Preval's commitment to help revive the garment industry, breaking with other business leaders who have taken a wait-and-see attitude toward the new government.

But even some business leaders who opposed Preval have become bullish on the garment industry's outlook. Minimum wage in Haiti is less than \$2 a day, compared with more than \$5 in the neighboring Dominican Republic and most of Central America.

Jean-Edouard Baker, the older brother of an unsuccessful challenger to Preval and a fellow garment maker until Aristide's loyalists burned down his factories in February 2004, has drawn up plans for a free-trade zone in the town of Croix-des-Bouquets, just east of the capital airport. The current president of the Haitian Industrialists Assn., Baker accompanied Preval on a March visit to Washington, where they lobbied congressional leaders to pass the HOPE Act "to send a clear signal that Haiti is back open for business."

Newly appointed Prime Minister Jacques-Edouard Alexis has promised to streamline business-licensing procedures to make Haiti an attractive venue for foreign manufacturers, Baker said. The new government is also working to ensure a reliable supply of electricity and water to the existing industrial park and to the site of the proposed free zone, he added.

In an analysis of the HERO and HOPE proposals, the Washington think tank Inter-American Dialogue concluded that because the garment industry "presents itself as one of few opportunities for growth and new employment in an otherwise anemic economy," passage of one of the tariff relief measures would be an effective way to aid Haiti.

The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops has also weighed in on the subject, saying that "it is time to end Haiti's unmerited suffering" and urging Congress to act before the summer recess.

"If the U.S. Congress would pass this HOPE bill, it would be a good thing for the Haitian economy and would help Haiti recover some of what it has lost" over the last 15 years to unrest and China, said Andre Apaid, who owns five factories that produce 200,000 dozen T-shirts a week for export.

Revival of apparel manufacturing here would have a stabilizing effect and would discourage Haitians from taking to the seas in flimsy boats in hopes of reaching Florida or the Bahamas to find black-market employment, said Jean Pierre Mangones, an official with the International Organization for Migration. The IOM has been lobbying Washington to pass the HOPE Act to convince Haitians that their best prospects might be at home.

Haiti targets democratic governance
The Dominican Today
June 16, 2006

Speaking with President René García Preval during my recent visit to Haiti, I had the opportunity to converse with a political leader whose leadership demonstrates great wisdom. This wisdom is made evident in many ways, such as the profoundness with which he refers to the Haitian reality; the great prudence exercised in the presentation of his proposals; and consideration toward his political adversaries, whom he does not perceive as enemies, but instead as compatriots with different points of view.

Proof of this lies in the composition of his Government, which comprises professionals from various parties that participated in recent elections. For Preval, this configuration is the basis upon which the democratic objective of re-establishing an ongoing dialogue that would facilitate policies of integration and reconciliation is constructed.

In this respect, the number one priority is that of regaining a climate of peace and stability, which would allow the merging of the internal forces that are necessary to achieve harmony among the nation's different social and political players, and in that way, involve all those who could make a contribution in the application of a development plan. As a result, in his declaration, Prime Minister Jacques Edouard Alexis speaks of "permanent and structured concerted action."

In order to fight against the sources of insecurity in which Haitians have been living for more than a decade, and in working to re-establish peace, the Government has proposed an open fight against any type of criminality. In order to accomplish this objective, the Government Program is proposing, in response to the call of the population and the nation's needs, that the Haitian state be responsible for heading the police forces and apply a plan for general disarmament of the civil population that abuses the use of weapons to the detriment of its fellow citizens.

This proposal is closely linked to the interest in the Haitian State fully assuming sovereignty over its national territory, since for the time being, there are areas in the country where the State's presence is extremely precarious and others where it is non-existent. That is why the Government Plan includes the provision of work spaces and equipment for all territorial groups that are, according to the Constitution, the foundation of that country's social and political power. This is one way to recognize each of these bodies' realms of power and to also give them the necessary formality to carry out the role that they are constitutionally called to play.

There is also talk of the need to rebuild the State and strengthen democratic institutions. To do so, the first step is to re-establish the authorities through which they, the institutions and the State, make themselves felt in the society, placing emphasis on strengthening justice, as a point of departure to guarantee the social arbitration necessary. A novel element of this restructuring proposal is the creation of a ministry that would be responsible for relations between the Parliament and the Executive Power. Given the fact that Haiti has undergone several crises between those two bodies of political power, this initiative becomes important and is destined to play a relevant role.

Based on the foregoing, it can be said that the new Haitian Government is striving to respond to the aspirations of a population, which, two hundred years after its emancipation, has been unable to secure an enduring democratic system. Instead, it has lived under the fears of authoritarianism, against which the Haitians have protested time and time again. Therefore, what they are living now is not an illusion, but rather a concrete utopia, based on the experiences of both a distant and recent past that have led them to value the meaning of democratic governance.

7 Haitians detained after swim to shore
South Florida Sun-Sentinel
June 17 2006

Seven Haitians were rounded up Friday morning shortly after they swam ashore from a smuggler's boat, the Palm Beach County Sheriff's Office said.

As the Coast Guard and other authorities searched for the boat, the Sheriff's Office and Jupiter Island Police continued to search for three more people who eluded them.

The Haitians, four men and three women, said they paid \$5,000 to \$7,000 each for the trip. They said they left their homeland from Port-de-Paix four days ago aboard a 25-foot boat powered by twin outboard engines and steered alternately by a captain and two crew.

About 7:30 a.m., someone noticed the ragged group making its way along the 19700 block of State Road A1A just north of the Jupiter Lighthouse and called police.

Haitian refugees hope fix for flawed law will pass Congress

BY JENNIFER KAY

ASSOCIATED PRESS WRITER

Sarasota Herald Tribune

June 17, 2006

MIAMI -- The forged passport that helped Marie Michel board a plane to flee violence in Haiti 12 years ago - saving her life and her son's, she says - has betrayed her under U.S. law. Immigration officials said she committed fraud to enter the country and ordered her deported.

Michel thought she was saved under a 1998 act that enabled many Haitians who fled the deadly aftermath of a 1991 coup to become legal U.S. residents. But she soon discovered a flaw in the act that migrant advocates say has inadvertently left hundreds of families in immigration limbo: The law made no mention of those who used false documents to arrive on planes instead of making the more perilous sea crossing.

Until last month, efforts to amend the Haitian Refugee Immigration Fairness Act repeatedly were blocked. Fix-it legislation proposed by U.S. Rep. Kendrick Meek, a Miami Democrat, passed on May 25 as an amendment to the Senate immigration bill but now faces a compromise with the House.

Michel and her U.S.-born son Michelot anxiously hope the amendment survives so they can legally remain together in Florida. If deported, she will have to choose whether to leave him behind or take him to Haiti.

"If you want to save your life, and your son's, whatever do you do? Forged documents or not, you try to save your life," the 46-year-old woman said.

Michel was four months pregnant in 1994 when she boarded a plane ultimately bound for Miami. She joined other migrants who were not expected to survive the arduous crossing by sea, even if their boats slipped past the U.S. Coast Guard, Meek said.

"Families that made the decision to put their grandmothers and women and children on the plane - the men would try to come by boat - out of fear for their lives are being penalized because they had improper documents," Meek said.

Michel left Port-au-Prince with a forged passport and scars from a recent stabbing - two signs of the chaos plaguing the Haitian capital after President Jean-Bertrand Aristide was deposed in September 1991.

Murderous gangs encouraged by the leaders of the military coup terrorized the city. Migrants caught at sea by the U.S. Coast Guard were returned to the same attackers they fled, said Marleine Bastien, executive director of Haitian Women of Miami, an immigration advocacy and social services agency.

"Going to the embassy or the government to get a passport would have been like signing your own death warrant. It would have been like bringing yourself to the butcher," Bastien said.

Michel loosens her shirt to show a pale scar just above her left shoulder blade. One of her brothers later told her that the men who attacked her threatened to kill her if she ever came back.

Now, she lives in fear of being sent back to Haiti.

"If you're not immigration, you can come in," is how Michel warily greets visitors to her home on the northern outskirts of Miami. She was denied asylum and ordered deported, but she initially believed the 1998 act would resolve her residency status and allow her to remain in Florida.

The legislation, however, had been copied from a similar law that lacked any provisions about false documentation for Nicaraguan refugees fleeing political violence in their country. "When the law was passed, they told me I was qualified. But after that, 'Oh, you came with false documents? You're not qualified,'" Michel said.

Meek's HRIFA Improvement Act, included in a manager's amendment to the Senate immigration bill, would expand the 1998 law to cover most Haitians who used false documents to make the journey by air. It also would prevent children who applied for protection under the original law from "aging out" - turning 21 and becoming adults before immigration authorities process their applications.

Meek estimates up to 8,000 Haitian migrants would benefit from his fix-it legislation, though advocates say 1,500 to 3,000 is a more likely number because the majority of the 40,000 HRIFA applicants came to the United States by boat. About 16,000 HRIFA applications have been approved so far, according to the U.S. Government Accountability Office.

Migrants like Michel were never meant to be excluded from the original law, but their forged documents have been the obstacle to fixing the legislation. Meek said opponents harbor a misguided fear of Haitian terrorists coming into the United States.

"I think we all know there is not a cell of Haitian terrorists that has been documented or rumored to be," Meek said.

Supporters say the legal oversight has driven parents like Michel underground, ineligible for work permits and frequently moving to avoid deportation.

"These are people whose lives are being basically stopped because the legislation went wrong," said Jean-Robert Lafortune, chairman of the Haitian-American Grassroots Coalition in Miami.

"They are in the immigrant category of permanent outcasts. They are in abject poverty and are in the margin of society and have no control over their lives unless Congress takes action," said Lafortune, whose organization plans to lobby for the bill in Washington.

Fixing HRIFA "will allow people who deserved residency to come out of the shadow at last and be allowed to live a normal life like every human being," Bastien said.

Michel proudly shows off the academic awards won by her son, who speaks without his mother's Haitian accent. His father still lives in Haiti, but Michelot only knows the impoverished Caribbean country as a dangerous place lacking good schools and reliable electricity.

In his own words, he echoes his mother's plea: "I would just send a shout out to say, 'Help us.'"

IMF to tackle reform, debt relief

An International Monetary Fund delegation will begin negotiating today an economic program with Haiti.

By PABLO BACHELET

Miami Herald

June 16, 2000

WASHINGTON - A high-level mission from the International Monetary Fund arrives in Haiti today to negotiate an economic-reform program that could lead to massive debt relief for the beleaguered nation.

Anoop Singh, the head of the IMF's Western Hemisphere department, will initially lead the mission and meet with Haitian President René Préval and other officials. Much of the negotiating will be done by a team of about 10 IMF staffers led by Przemek Gajdeczka, an advisor who has overseen Haiti for more than three years.

Haiti owes about \$1 billion to the World Bank and the Inter-American Development Bank, of which a large portion could be written off either immediately or over a number of years, depending on how aggressively Haiti carries out key reforms.

According to IMF officers and other observers, Haiti needs to set up an independent Central Bank more committed to battling inflation, improve the way it manages its fiscal accounts, boost its tax intake and end rampant smuggling in ports.

Under an IMF program, Haiti would remain under tight IMF surveillance during the program's three-year duration, with periodic missions to ensure targets are being met.

The negotiations are also a test of the willingness of Préval to commit his administration to potentially sweeping changes, officials say.

"The international community has got to keep Préval and his cabinet on a very strict regimen of reforms," said Roger Noriega of the pro-business American Enterprise Institute. He said ending contraband and corruption at Haiti's notoriously porous ports is especially important. "It is the heart of all evils."

More importantly, Singh told The Miami Herald in a phone interview, the IMF program would signal to investors and donors that Haiti is serious about tackling its chronic political instability and economic mismanagement.

Haiti has been on an economic decline for decades but its political situation worsened after a bloody armed revolt ended the presidency of Jean-Bertrand Aristide in 2004.

After Aristide's fall, the IMF gave the country about \$30 million in assistance for the transition government that, Gajdeczka said, undertook some reforms like curtailing government spending and drafting a new banking law.

Haiti Back In CARICOM

By Darrin Culmer

The Bahama Journal

June 12, 2006

Following suspension from the Councils of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) for a two-year period, Haiti has been re-admitted to the highest decision-making level of the regional body, the CARICOM Secretariat has announced.

The Secretariat reported in a statement that the recently elected President of Haiti, Rene Preval, has been invited not only to take Haiti's rightful place in the Conference of Heads of Government in the upcoming CARICOM summit, but also to address the opening ceremony.

The twenty-seventh meeting of the heads of government is scheduled to be held in St. Kitts and Nevis from July to 6.

The invitation to President Preval to address the opening ceremony is in keeping with the Community's usual practice of inviting a head of government who was elected subsequent to the last meeting of the Conference to make such a presentation, the statement indicated.

The last meeting of the Conference of the Heads of Government was held in February 2006.

"Heads of Government of the Caribbean Community have welcomed the return to constitutional rule in Haiti through the election of a president and of parliamentary representatives in the course of an electoral process deemed by the people of Haiti and the international community as free and fair," the Secretariat's statement said.

"Heads of Government wish to congratulate the people of Haiti who through their patience, resolve and courage demonstrated their attachment to the democratic process by exercising their franchise to determine their representatives at the presidential and legislative levels."

CARICOM officials said they now look forward to the election of local and municipal representatives, with a view to fulfilling the constitutional and political systems of representation.

Haiti's membership of the Councils of CARICOM was suspended shortly after the toppling of Jean-Bertrand Aristide as president on February 29, 2004.

Haiti swears in new PM and coalition Cabinet

Monday, June 12, 2006

by Joseph Guyler Delva

Reuters

Caribbean Net News

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti (Reuters): Haitian Prime Minister Jacques Edouard Alexis and a coalition Cabinet meant to help unite the fractious Caribbean nation were sworn into office on Friday.

Outgoing Prime Minister Gerard Latortue, who was appointed to the post by a council of elders after former President Jean-Bertrand Aristide was pushed from office by a bloody rebellion in 2004, left Haiti about two weeks ago and did not attend the inauguration.

The new government, including 18 ministers appointed by Alexis and approved by Parliament this week, was installed in a ceremony at the National Palace, completing the troubled Caribbean nation's first democratic government in more than two years.

Alexis called on the Cabinet, which includes ministers from five leading opposition parties, to fight corruption. Haiti is a key Caribbean conduit for cocaine traffickers and is perceived as one of the most corrupt nations in the world.

"I count on you to ensure sound and honest management of public funds," Alexis told the ministers.

President Rene Preval is a one-time Aristide protege who rode support from Aristide's supporters in the slums to victory in the February 7 presidential election. His election and the installation of Alexis's government marked Haiti's latest steps to recover from decades of brutal dictatorship and military rule, and the political turmoil that beset the impoverished nation after Aristide was ousted in February 2004.

Among Alexis' appointments were Preval adviser Daniel Dorsainvil, a former US Agency for International Development official, as finance minister, and Renald Clerisme, a former member of Haiti's delegation to the World Trade Organization, as foreign affairs minister.

Poisoning Case Exhumed Ten Years Later
Pharval Laboratories Press Release
June 13, 2006

Press Release.
Pharval S.A.

Following the statements made on behalf of the APEVIDGH association, Pharval Laboratories reminds the public that the lawsuit started against it on September 11, 1996, mentioned 70 children whose names were stated clearly.

After ten years of a complicated procedure in four different countries, including the United States, Germany, the Netherlands, and Haiti, we can certify that the families of the 70 victims of that tragedy which left Haitian families and the whole country in mourning, have received from Pharval Laboratories compensatory damages amounting to ten thousand U.S. dollars or the equivalent in Haitian gourdes in each case, for a total of 700,000.00 U.S. dollars.

In addition, as specified in the affidavits about the 70 waivers of claim, Pharval Laboratories made available to American, Dutch, and German attorneys more than 300,000.00 U.S. dollars to seek justice and compensation for the families from the Dutch company VOS.

Finally, in March 2004, the Dutch authorities made available to a Haitian human rights group an amount equal to that already paid by Pharval, to distribute to the victims' families.

Some of the families receive a monthly allocation from the Haitian Government.

Since no pharmaceutical chemical products, particularly diethyl glycol, are made in Haiti, it is obvious that any raw material used to manufacture dosage forms is imported from other countries under the control of the Ministry of Public Health, and through the Customs Office in Port-au-Prince.

Pharval Laboratories informs the public that Mr. Rudolph Boulos is not the owner of Pharval Laboratories, a corporation having its own legal identity.

Pharval Laboratories and Mr. Boulos have always responded to all requests from the Haitian judicial authorities.

Furthermore, Pharval Laboratories informs the public that Mr. Phillibert Berthony, spokesperson for APEVIDGH, filed a duly sworn waiver of claim accepting that Pharval, Inc. take necessary action against the parties in the Netherlands.

We remain convinced that, out of respect for this Nation's sorrow, those who are motivated by partisan politics will cease to manipulate and exploit the suffering that German and Dutch nationals caused to Haitian families.

Pharval Laboratories,

Pharval@aol.com

Port-au-Prince, June 2, 200

Second Haiti Development Summit to focus on travel marketing
Travel Daily News International, Greece
Wednesday, June 14, 2006

A panel of leaders in travel marketing from Florida and the Caribbean will be one of the highlights of the "Second Annual Haiti Tourism & Economic Development Summit" from June 23 to June 25 focusing on rebuilding and developing the country's tourism industry. Haitian President Rene Preval will speak on the last day of the conference, taking place at the Deauville Beach Resort Hotel in Miami Beach (6701 Collins Ave).

The Summit will bring together key players in the local and international tourism industry, including the Haitian and foreign private sector, the public sector, and representatives of international financial (donor/investment) organizations. Marketing panelists include Karen Weiner Escalera, KWE group, Miami, known for the firm's work for Mexico City and Cartagena, Colombia; Dwight Johnson, Sandals Resorts; Maryse Chancy, Association Touristique d'Haiti; Hugh Riley, Caribbean Tourism Organization; Lionel Pressoir, Tour Haiti and Guide Panorama; and Frank Nocera, Visit Florida. The Summit is being organized by MWM & Associates, a Miami-based marketing firm. Registration fees range from \$100 to \$200 per person.

Special emphasis will be placed on innovative marketing tools and strategies that will contribute to the increased awareness of Haiti as a tourism destination and build the economy. Other topics to be addressed include: infrastructure needs for the development of tourism activities nationally; the role of the Haitian Diaspora in the marketing and consumption of Haitian tourism products; financing and investment issues; community development opportunities; and security issues affecting tourism.

Last year's event hosted over 500 professionals. Summit results have included monthly ToHaiti.com Getaway groups to Haiti; U.S. and Canada city-by-city tourism forums; feasibility studies conducted by potential hotel chains; and technical assistance planned by FAVACA (The Association of Volunteer Action in the Caribbean and Americas). This year over 800 participants are expected to attend.

Chile, Dominican Republic work together to help Haiti
The Dominican Today
June 12, 2006

The Chilean and Dominican presidents feel that Haiti cannot solve its problems without the international aid

SANTO DOMINGO.- The presidents of Chile and of the Dominican Republic affirmed that they were committed to work together for the purpose of helping Haiti to solve its problems and definitively embark itself on the path to democracy. Michelle Bachelet was received by Leonel Fernandez in the National Palace at 7:00 PM on Saturday night

In addition, Bachelet justified the presence of her country's troops in Haiti, stating that they are in a humanitarian effort.

The chief executives met for about one hour, and discussed bilateral issues aimed at benefiting both nations.

In a press conference, Chile's president said that she favors that her nation's forces remain in Haiti until helping that neighboring country to form its own army and announced that in a short term Bolivia and Paraguay will join those efforts.

The Chilean chief executive said that her presence in the Dominican Republic –a visit lasting just 7 hours and left to return on midnight Sunday- aims to bolster the bonds between both nations.

**Source: The Haiti Support Group
ReliefWeb
Date: 13 Jun 2006**

**Haiti's membership of CARICOM Call to: Heads of CARICOM states, CARICOM secretariat, Caribbean civil society
Re: Haiti's membership of CARICOM
From: Haiti Advocacy Platform Ireland / UK (Haiti Support Group, Christian Aid, Oxfam GB, Cafod, Tearfund, Concern Worldwide, Sciaf, Trocaire)**

We welcome the granting of full and final accession of Haiti to membership of CARICOM, and the fact that election of a President and parliament opens the way for the re-engagement of Haiti with the other Caribbean states. Haiti has suffered from a long and dire political and economic crisis, and there is now a rare opportunity for Caribbean neighbours to support progressive and constructive change in Haiti.

We believe that this opportunity should not be squandered and call on the CARICOM Secretariat and CARICOM member states to commit to a specific package of support for the country. With this in mind, we present the following recommendations on areas where we believe CARICOM could provide support to Haiti:

1. Improving security and stability

After several years of increasingly violent, politically-motivated conflicts, and a surge of violent crime in the capital, Port-au-Prince, it is essential to try and preserve a much improved security situation in the provinces, and since the end of January 2006 in the capital, Port-au-Prince. The new Haitian government and the UN stabilisation mission, the MINUSTAH, need every possible assistance in their efforts to combine reduced gang violence with the rapid implementation of high-profile interventions to benefit the inhabitants of the capital's worst urban districts. At the same time, action is needed to disarm and dismantle urban and rural armed gangs through a re-focused Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration (DDR) programme, and to make more rapid progress with the professionalisation and strengthening of the Haitian National Police (HNP).

An important part of the international effort to help stabilise the situation in Haiti is the provision of UN police officers to the MINUSTAH with the specific tasks of training, coaching and accompanying officers of the HNP. The current strength of the MINUSTAH (as of 31 March 2006) was 8,903 uniformed personnel, composed of 7,151 troops and 1,752 police. There is a clear need to re-orientate the composition of the MINUSTAH, reducing the number of troops and increasing the number of police personnel (UNPOL). CARICOM member states could make a very useful contribution to the success of the MINUSTAH by contributing police officers to the UNPOL. French and/or Creole-speaking police officers would be particularly useful.

The riot at the National Penitentiary on the day of President Preval's inauguration underscores the need to resolve the problems of 'political' prisoners, and prisoners detained without charge or trial. At

present, these problems continue to generate political tensions and undermine respect for the rule of law. Should the new government decide to address these problems by creating a commission to review the most pressing cases, CARICOM member states could provide the commission with advisors, legal assistance, and – if requested - some specialists to sit on the commission.

2. Strengthening democracy and institution-building

Election observers from a number of CARICOM member states participated in the Mission for Monitoring Haitian Elections (IMMHE) in February and April when elections produced a President and a National Assembly (Parliament). However elections for municipal councils and for the territorial collectivities have not yet been held. These elections are important parts of the democratic structure in Haiti, particularly to make the decentralisation of political power a reality. In the context of an inevitable decrease in international interest in observing the electoral process in Haiti, CARICOM member states could consider increasing their participation for these forthcoming elections.

The National Assembly in Haiti has rarely played a full role in line with the powers accorded to it in the Haitian Constitution. Now, after more than two years without any parliament at all, an entirely new set of members for both the upper and lower houses have been elected. Few of these members have any experience of parliamentary norms and structures. CARICOM member states could explore ways to pass on their own institutional experience and knowledge, and the personal experience and knowledge of their own members of parliament to members of the new Haitian parliament. One way would be to arrange bilateral exchange visits by delegations of members of parliament.

3. Offering special market access arrangements

On 1 January this year, the CARICOM Single Market and Economy (CSME) came into being with six countries (Barbados, Belize, Guyana, Jamaica, Suriname and Trinidad and Tobago). Haiti, like some other CARICOM states, is not yet ready to participate in the single market. However, there are a variety of ways in which Haiti could economically benefit from its membership of CARICOM.

As part of a package of support for Haiti, it would be beneficial if CARICOM markets which are more developed than Haiti consider offering duty and quota free access for key Haitian goods. This is particularly important to support Haiti's agricultural sector that has declined dramatically since Haiti lowered agricultural tariffs in 1995. Since then imports have replaced national food production and traditional agricultural exports have been in steady decline.

Haitian farmers, producing both traditional and non-traditional export crops would benefit from duty and quota free access and such arrangements could have significant potential to reduce poverty in rural areas. It would also allow Haiti to develop strong regional links whilst phasing in entry to CSME arrangements.

By increasing trade within the region, there is also the potential for CARICOM states to jointly develop standards, improve regional infrastructure and develop joint production projects. It is important that CARICOM consider the development needs of Haiti in this regard and make special efforts to include the country in developing and implementing new initiatives of this kind.

4. Reopening negotiations with Haiti regarding the common external tariff

Haiti is one of the most liberalised economies in the world and generally applies tariffs below CARICOM's common external tariff arrangements. However, this situation is not necessarily in Haiti's interest. Agricultural tariff liberalization has meant that imports have replaced national food production to a dramatic degree and Haiti is using 81 per cent of the value of its exports for purchasing imported food. Given Haiti's increasing trade deficit this is an extremely poor use of resources and an unsustainable strategy over the long term. The Haitian government needs support to pursue an explicit strategy to reduce food imports and replace them with national production.

Given this situation tariff flexibility is very important to Haiti especially in its agricultural sector where a range of products would benefit from a higher tariff, particularly rice. Tariff flexibility, therefore, needs to be maintained with CARICOM support. Any negotiations on the common external tariff and market opening to third countries should bear this in mind and CARICOM should use its negotiating power to ensure that Haiti maintains the flexibilities it needs for sensitive products and is not forced to reduce tariffs further.

5. Promoting investment in Haiti

There is of course a need to attract foreign investment into Haiti. However, it needs to be the type of investment that will bring real benefits to Haitians in the form of employment and linkages with the local economy. This issue is of course of great concern to all Caribbean states, particularly during this process of regional economic integration.

Currently there is an opportunity to develop a Caribbean-wide investment framework that could ensure that the benefits of foreign direct investment are effectively harnessed by host countries. The regional framework could prevent the race to the bottom in incentives and labour standards and could also offer preferential treatment to regional investors. Haiti would benefit from its inclusion in such a framework. It should also retain the right to manage investment in the country by applying its own local content and staffing requirements. CARICOM should develop a region wide investment framework that would provide these benefits to all Caribbean member states, including Haiti.

6. Addressing environmental degradation

One of the most serious challenges that Haitians face is environmental degradation, particularly deforestation and soil erosion. The most immediate danger resulting from this situation is the threat of floods and mudslides as occurred in south-east of the country and in the city of Gonaives in 2004. In the medium term, Haiti's prospects of moving out of crisis, and into a process of sustainable development, are threatened by disappearing water sources, declining agricultural yields, and creeping desertification. CARICOM can provide assistance to initiatives aiming to halt deforestation and soil erosion by drawing on the specific experience and know-how of individual member states.

7. Energy

Haiti's electric power supply is heavily dependent on imported petroleum fuel. Existing hydro-electric facilities are becoming less efficient and less reliable as a result of infrequent rain-fall and the soil

erosion that ends up as silt in the turbines. Haiti's chances of economic development are greatly restricted by the ever-increasing difficulties – both financial and practical – of providing a reliable power supply. Yet there are several alternative sources of energy that CARICOM could help Haiti develop. The most obvious is solar power, but CARICOM could also explore ways to help Haiti research and develop ethanol production (in an environmentally sound manner) and wind power. The Caribbean Renewable Energy Development Programme (CREDP) could play a vital role in this field.

8. Educational links and exchanges

The Haitian people's capacity to address the many serious problems that the country faces is seriously hampered by the twin blights of 'brain-drain' and insufficient State funding for public education. The University of the West Indies could make a contribution by establishing links with the State University of Haiti. A first step might be for the University of the West Indies to organise a seminar on Haiti in the Caribbean – perhaps a joint initiative between the two universities as a means to both promote awareness on Haitian issues generally in the wider Caribbean and to build some political momentum.

Summary of call to CARICOM

CARICOM should:

- contribute police officers to UNPOL
- provide any commission which is set up to resolve the issue of political detentions with expertise and legal assistance
- increase their participation in monitoring the forthcoming local government elections
- explore ways to support the new Haitian parliament, including arranging bilateral exchange visits by parliamentarians
- offer duty and quota free access for key Haitian goods which have significant potential to reduce poverty in Haiti
- support Haiti in developing trading standards and infrastructure for regional trade
- ensure that flexibility on tariffs is maintained for Haiti within CARICOM
- develop a Caribbean-wide investment framework, with the inclusion of Haiti, to ensure that the benefits of foreign investment in the region are harnessed for development purposes
- provide assistance to initiatives to halt deforestation
- support Haiti in developing alternative energy sources and include Haiti in the work by the Caribbean Renewable Energy Development Programme

- support the University of the West Indies and the State University of Haiti to develop linkages, including, as a first step, the development of a joint seminar on Haiti in the Caribbean

Haiti Returns to Caricom, But With Old Problems

Peter Richards

Inter Press Service News Agency

June 14, 2006

PORT OF SPAIN, - As he prepares to take a seat alongside his fellow Caribbean leaders in St. Kitts on Jul. 4, Haiti's President Rene Preval knows all too well there are still lingering issues he has to deal with.

Last week, Guy Delva, the head of the Haitian journalists' support group, SOS Journalists, told an international media conference in Edinburgh, Scotland, "There is a sense of hope with the change in government, but things can change anytime, as armed groups have caused problems in the country in the past and they have not given up their weapons."

Preval, 62, is aware that Haiti's return to the 15-member Caribbean Community (Caricom) fold after a two-year absence will allow his regional colleagues to push for even more democratic rule in a country where Preval himself holds the record as the sole elected president to have served a full five-year term since Haiti became an independent nation in 1804.

Outgoing Caricom chairman Patrick Manning of Trinidad and Tobago left no doubt that the regional grouping would want its French-speaking member state to adhere to the principles that have guided the Caribbean's own political stability over the years.

In a congratulatory message sent soon after Preval was elected in February, Manning said that his victory was "testimony to the achievements of your first term in office which brought a fresh breath of hope to the majority of the Haitian people".

He reminded Preval that his re-election campaign was characterised by his determination to "reach out across the social and political divide and to focus on the factors that are critical for the social, political and economic development of your country".

"Key among these are reconciliation and stability," Manning said.

Two years earlier, Caricom had stopped inviting Port au Prince to its deliberations following the controversial removal of President Jean-Bertrand Aristide from office and the appointment of a U.S.-backed interim administration.

"It is particularly pleasing to me that we held to a principled position grounded in the OAS (Organisation of American States) Charter in relation to Haiti. We are now able once again to restore Haiti to its rightful place around our Community table, democratic processes having been restored," said P.J. Patterson, the former Jamaican Prime Minister and a respected Caribbean statesman at a lecture in Trinidad last month.

But Delva believes that Aristide, who now resides in exile in South Africa, could also undermine the new hope for the hemisphere's poorest nation.

"Aristide still enjoys great popularity even after more than two years since he was kicked out. Many believe his immediate return could bother the new president and there are people around the new president who don't like Aristide, which causes a dilemma because some of the people who voted for Preval did so because they thought Preval could bring Aristide back," Delva said.

"And there is a chance that if that does not happen, different groups could take up weapons again," he warned.

OAS Assistant Secretary General Albert Ramdin said recently he hoped the international community would continue to support Haiti and have a security presence in the country as long as the Haitian authorities wish.

"It's a new page in the history of Haiti and I hope that everybody will use that opportunity to not make it a black page in the history of Haiti," Ramdin told journalists in Barbados.

Earlier this year, St. Lucia's Prime Minister Kenny Anthony called for "a clear and unambiguous message" from Caricom indicating that it would not "tolerate or accept the unlawful and unconstitutional interruption of the democratic process".

Anthony then went further by calling for an "immediate amendment to the Charter of Civil Society and other appropriate instruments to authorise the expulsion of a member state which repudiates the democratic process by violence and intimidation".

Caribbean leaders adopted the Charter of Civil Society in 1992 after it was recommended by the West Indian Commission examining ways of deepening the regional integration process.

It has 11 major points, including the need to "to uphold the right of people to make political choices" as well as "to create a truly participatory political environment within the Caribbean Community which will be propitious to genuine consultation in the process of governance".

Caribbean leaders had opted for Haiti's return to the grouping only on the grounds that the presidential and parliamentary elections held earlier this year were free and fair and truly reflected the wishes of the people of the impoverished Caribbean nation.

"Heads of Government wish to congratulate the people of Haiti who through their patience, resolve and courage demonstrated their attachment to the democratic process by exercising their franchise to determine their representatives at the presidential and legislative levels. The Community looks forward to the election of local and municipal representatives so that the constitutional architecture of representation can be completed," the Guyana-based Caricom Secretariat said in a statement earlier this week. The statement all but gave Preval a red carpet return to Caricom's Jul. 3-6 meeting in St. Kitts and Nevis, where he has been asked to address the opening ceremony.

The speech will be widely anticipated, for Haiti returns to a grouping that has forged closer ties through the establishment of a Caricom Single Market (CSM), the first component of a wider Caricom Single Market and Economy (CSME) allowing for the free movement of skills, services, labour and goods within the community.

Because it was unable to participate in any of the deliberations regarding the CSME over the last two years, Haiti may well seek protection from the Revised Treaty of Chaguaramas that governs the CSME and also provides for a certain level of protection for disadvantaged countries within the grouping.

Like the smaller islands of the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States that have been clamouring for the establishment of the multi-million-dollar regional development fund to help cushion the effects of the CSME on their open economies, Haiti may well seek solace in that initiative.

Last month, Trinidad and Tobago said it had entered into a joint constituency arrangement with Haiti allowing it to become a full-fledged member of the Barbados-based Caribbean Development Bank (CDB) that provides significant finances to regional states for socio-economic development projects.

CDB President Compton Bourne said that the bank's engagement with Haiti would be two-pronged, "based on an immediate short-term response during the current financial year geared towards familiarising bank staff with the situation on the ground to be followed by a medium term strategy where a permanent presence is contemplated".

"Now that elections have been held and the security situation has improved, we expect that a way has been paved to commence some operational work in Haiti," Bourne said. (END/2006)

**Immediate progress for Haiti `critical'
Americas group warns of backslide Window to help
`could slam shut'**

Jun. 15, 2006

GRAHAM FRASER

The Toronto Star

OTTAWA—Donor countries must move quickly so progress is made quickly in Haiti, or else the poverty-ridden country will slip even further backwards, MPs were told yesterday,

"We have a legitimately elected government with widespread popular support inside the country and among donors," John Graham, chair of the board of the Canadian Foundation for the Americas, told Canada's foreign affairs and international trade committee.

"The conditions are finally right to make substantial progress on rebuilding the country. Yet, this is a fragile window of opportunity that could easily slam shut, putting us, and Haiti, further back than where we started."

Graham told MPs on the committee that with the election of President René Préval, Haiti is at a critical point, and for the first time in a decade, there is a glimmer of hope.

"Yet all of this could and will easily fall apart, if immediate action is not taken to link the electoral success to tangible, highly visible improvements in the material conditions of life in Haiti," he said.

"The next four months, the first hundred days of the Préval administration are critical. During this period, it is essential that the people of Haiti observe some visible improvement."

If this does not happen, he said, it will be impossible for Préval to cope with public disillusionment, and the Caribbean state will fall back into what he called the "partisanship, conflict, intransigence and instability" that have characterized Haiti for so many years.

"The hundreds of millions of dollars that we and the international community have invested in Haiti will have been wasted," he said.

"We then have a choice: do what is necessary to secure the current advances in Haiti, or allow the country to slip backward."

He called for large-scale public works projects in areas agreed upon by Haitians that would provide jobs, show visible progress and give people a stake in the success of the new government: projects like road construction, port clean-up, garbage clearance or housing construction.

"We need shovels in the ground now. No excuses," Graham said. "We must do what it takes to make this happen."

Asked what the priorities should be, he replied, security and job creation.

"Rebuilding a fragile or failing state is not easy or cheap," he said, pointing out that expatriate Haitians have spent four to six times as much, in money sent back to help their families, as international donors.

Last month, Foreign Affairs Minister Peter MacKay and International Development Minister Josée Verner announced Canada would boost reconstruction in Haiti by \$48 million.

From April 2004 to March of this year, Canada spent more than \$190 million on reconstruction and development projects in Haiti.

'Shadow' seeks salvage for tune in Haiti's waters

By Reed Lindsay

THE WASHINGTON TIMES

June 13, 2006

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti

As junta leader during Haiti's 1991-1994 military regime, Gen. Raoul Cedras spent weekends scuba diving off the coast of Haiti in the hopes of finding sunken treasure in centuries-old shipwrecks, often accompanied by a mysterious Canadian confidant known as "the Shadow."

The general has never returned from exile in Panama, but "the Shadow" is back, working on a contract from the recently replaced interim government to search for a 17th-century ship once captained by Welsh pirate Henry Morgan.

Lynn Garrison, a former Canadian fighter pilot and adviser to Gen. Cedras until the junta was removed in an invasion by 20,000 U.S. Marines, has been seeking the remains of Morgan's flagship, the HMS Oxford, which was accidentally blown to bits off the southwestern coast of Haiti in 1669.

Mr. Garrison is not alone. The search for the Oxford and other ships thought to be encrusted in coral at the bottom of the Caribbean has lured other treasure hunters to Haiti, where they have quarreled among themselves and with the government over the right to excavate the wrecks.

Some of these treasure hunters claim there are billions of dollars in gold and emeralds buried in Spanish galleons that could make them rich and inject money into desperately poor Haiti. Others say there are only iron cannons, anchors and other artifacts of archeological and historical value.

In the early 1990s, Mr. Garrison tried to keep his identity secret while he worked behind the scenes as a public relations officer for a military regime that human rights groups accused of killing thousands of pro-democracy activists.

Since returning to Haiti after a rebellion by former soldiers helped topple President Jean-Bertrand Aristide in February 2004, Mr. Garrison has continued his furtive ways.

His company, Caribbean Marine Institute, signed a contract with the interim government of Prime Minister Gerard Latortue in August 2004 to excavate shipwrecks off the Haitian coast, with any profits to be split 50-50.

But his return to Haiti has not been publicized, and his involvement in the Caribbean Marine Institute has been kept secret, while the U.S.-based company and its partners have been roiled by rumors that valuable artifacts from shipwrecks have been stolen.

Mr. Garrison has gone by the alias "Robert Morgan," or simply "Morgan," apparently a reference to the pirate. He did not reply to numerous messages left at e-mail addresses and phone numbers in Port-au-Prince and Fort Lauderdale, Fla., provided by his business associates.

His company is as obscure as Mr. Garrison himself. Caribbean Marine Institute is registered in Nevada under the name of Mr. Garrison's Los Angeles-based attorney, Maurice L. Muehle, and its only listed address is a post office box in Minden, a town of fewer than 3,000 people near the border with California.

The company was formed in June 2004, and two months later won a coveted contract from the Haitian government to search for shipwrecks in Haitian waters, despite having no apparent experience and no assets beyond \$75,000 in capital declared to Nevada state authorities.

According to Doug Chozianin, one of Mr. Garrison's partners in the institute, the company was "confident, based on our research, that we would discover a number of ancient wrecks and that would yield a bounty of treasure."

But it never even sent a boat to Haiti. Instead, it contracted Twin Star Marine Industries, a Florida-based salvage and commercial diving company, to do the work for it.

Robert Weihe, owner of Twin Star, said that shortly after beginning exploration he discovered that Caribbean Marine Institute's contract did not include the waters around the island of Ile a Vache, where the Oxford is thought to be located. Mr. Weihe eventually severed relations with Mr. Garrison, and continued the search for the Oxford with the help of Barry Clifford, a renowned underwater explorer from Cape Cod, Mass.

The Oxford, the holy grail for some pirate ship aficionados, is not thought to contain treasure, but even artifacts of little intrinsic value could reap large monetary rewards if they could be shown to have belonged to the notorious pirate.

Mr. Clifford says he believes his team has found the Oxford. But it has since been involved in a dispute with another U.S.-based company, Sub Sea Research, which claims to have an exclusive Haitian government contract to explore for shipwrecks around Ile a Vache.

Haiti's Preval Installs New Cabinet
The Associated Press
The Washington Post
Friday, June 9, 2006

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti -- Haiti's new Cabinet was sworn in Friday, replacing a U.S.-backed interim government that was appointed to lead the impoverished and conflict-torn nation after a 2004 revolt.

President Rene Preval said the 18-member Cabinet of members from six political parties was the result of a new "spirit of dialogue," and urged Haitians to work together to overcome the "mistrust" among Haiti's deeply divided political factions.

The swearing-in was the final step in formally transferring power from a two-year-old interim government installed after former president Jean-Bertrand Aristide left the Caribbean nation for exile in Africa amid a February 2004 revolt.

"We are on the path to recovering our dignity and sovereignty," Preval said in a speech at the National Palace. "The dialogue has begun and the dialogue will continue, but I need everyone's help."

Preval, a 63-year-old champion of the poor who took power last month, has said national unity is vital to restoring security and allowing the withdrawal of a Brazil-led U.N. peacekeeping force sent to quell violence in the aftermath of the uprising.

Haiti PM names cabinet
Wed Jun 7, 2006
By Joseph Guylor Delva
Reuters

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti (Reuters) - Haitian Prime Minister Jacques Edouard Alexis unveiled his cabinet on Tuesday and vowed to deal with the burning issue of political prisoners.

Alexis, named prime minister by President Rene Preval last month, went before the Senate to outline his plan for governing as part of the formal process of installing a new government, more than two years after former president Jean-Bertrand Aristide was ousted by a bloody rebellion.

He named a cabinet that included members of at least five rival political parties and seven people who served as ministers during Preval's first presidency, from 1996 to 2001.

The Senate debated Alexis' program into the night but was expected to approve both the plan and the ministers. Rejection would be the equivalent of a no-confidence vote and Preval would have to choose a new prime minister.

Preval's election in February was an important step in Haiti's return to democracy as the Caribbean nation of 8.5 million people -- the poorest in the Americas -- struggles to shake off decades of dictatorship, military rule and political upheaval.

Human rights groups in Haiti and abroad have accused the U.S.-backed interim government appointed after Aristide's ouster in February 2004 of jailing hundreds of the former president's supporters without cause.

Alexis told senators the rights of many prisoners have been denied, addressing the issue uppermost in the minds of Aristide supporters who were instrumental in electing Preval.

"There are too many people in jail now for peccadilloes. We are going to act," Alexis said.

"We are going to work immediately with the judicial system on the cases of people who have been arrested and who were jailed for political reasons," he said, while promising to respect the independence of the judiciary.

Outside Parliament, hundreds of demonstrators demanded Aristide be returned to Haiti from his South African exile and called for the release of political prisoners.

"We want to know if Preval and Alexis' government want to condone the abuses committed by the interim government," demonstrator Johnny Marsan said. "We want to know why the political prisoners are still in jail."

As a result of a deal reached between Preval and Alexis and their political rivals in parliament, five leading opposition parties are represented among the 18 ministers named by Alexis. They include the

parties of prominent politicians Paul Denis, Evans Paul, Serge Gilles and Chavannes Jeune, who all ran against Preval in the presidential campaign.

Alexis named Daniel Dorsainvil, a close adviser to Preval and former official with USAID in Haiti, as finance minister.

Rene Magloire, who served as justice minister during Preval's first term, was returned to that post and Renald Clerisme, a former member of Haiti's delegation to the World Trade Organisation, was named minister of foreign affairs.

Paul Antoine Bien-Aime, who was education minister in Preval's first term, was named interior minister.

Jordanian troops acted fast to save Canadian in Haiti: UN
Wed, 07 Jun 2006
CBC News

The United Nations has denied reports that the death of a retired Canadian police officer was due to inaction by Jordanian peacekeepers.

The UN Stabilization Mission in Haiti released a statement on Wednesday after a magazine report said it took an hour to get Marc Bourque to a hospital.

Bourque was shot in the leg while on patrol in the Port-Au-Prince slum of Cite Soleil in December 2005.

Toro magazine said Jordanian peacekeepers immediately secured the scene, but ignored pleas to get Bourque to hospital and even took pictures of him.

But the UN statement says two Jordanian doctors and one Jordanian nurse treated Bourque at the scene as soldiers rushed to provide cover from gunmen.

Bourque was in hospital within 40 minutes, which should be considered a fast response given the slum's heavy traffic, said the statement.

Ottawa has deferred all questions about Bourque to the United Nations mission in Haiti.

Bourque was one of a couple dozen retired Canadian police officers sent to Haiti in October 2005 to provide security for elections. He had been working as a police technical advisor and a liason between the Haitian national police and the UN force.

Human Rights Focus of OAS Talks
By Brian Wagner
Santo Domingo
07 June 2006

Official photo of foreign ministers from 34 countries that are participating in the XXXVI General Assembly the Organization of American States in Santo Sunday
Human rights concerns were the focus of talks on the final day of a meeting of the Organization of American States. Some human rights groups say the OAS should do more to address terrorist threats, racism and violence against women. There is also concern that a funding shortfall at the OAS may threaten its human rights activities.

OAS delegates gathered on the third and final day of the General Assembly for an assessment of human rights conditions in the Americas. The president of the group's Inter-American Commission on

Human Rights, Evelio Fernandez, noted several improvements in the region, including measures to prevent violence against women in Jamaica and Chile. And he praised Honduras and Colombia for ratifying a treaty to combat political killings.

But Fernandez told delegates there is still much room for improvement.

He says there are still serious obstacles to human rights in the hemisphere, especially because of weak legal systems in several countries. He adds that poor living conditions prevent residents of many nations from enjoying their social and economic rights. Fernandez also noted ongoing violence by leftist rebels in Colombia, lack of security in Haiti and the jailing of political dissidents in Cuba.

The United States Ambassador to OAS, John Maisto, took note of conditions in Cuba, such as as continued restrictions on freedom of expression and failures in the justice system.

"For 47 years, the people of Cuba have lived under a dictatorship that has shown time and again that beneath its rhetoric there is no respect for the fundamental rights of the individual," said John Maisto.

Maisto also drew comparisons between Cuba and the current government in Venezuela, which frequently has been at odds with Washington. He criticized Caracas for failing to respond to a request from the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights to visit the country.

Commission president Fernandez also called on Venezuela to respond to its request. And he expressed concern that the goal of human rights protection is being threatened by a lack of funding from the OAS.

Fernandez says with a staff of only 17 lawyers, the commission cannot fulfill its mandate to investigate cases, complete reports and visit countries throughout the region.

OAS Secretary-General Jose Miguel Insulza told delegates that funding problems remain a concern, and officials are studying a possible increase in dues from member states to avoid cuts in OAS activities.

Human rights groups at the OAS meeting have already accused the organization of failing to address their concerns. And Sergio Widder, Latin America representative for the Simon Wiesenthal Center, told VOA that possible financial cuts are a serious worry.

He said funding for the commission should not be cut, because its human rights activities are the final guarantee for protections of civil rights and human rights.

Widder said his group was calling on the Organization of American States to create a list of terrorist groups for the Americas, and said the Palestinian group Hamas should be included. He said Venezuela's government has invited Hamas members to visit the South American nation.

He said allowing terrorist group members into Latin America is a threat, and should be opposed before it's too late, especially following terrorist attacks in Argentina, such as the bombing of a Jewish community center in 1994.

The final task for delegates from the 34 nations of the OAS was the signing of a declaration in support of expanding technology and communication systems across the region. The next General Assembly is set to take place in Panama next year.

Préval appoints coalition government

A new government composed of 18 members from six political parties would implement a 25-year plan to help lift Haiti's poor and restore security, the nation's prime minister said.

BY STEVENSON JACOBS

Associated Press

Miami Herald

June 7, 2006

PORT-AU-PRINCE - Haiti's president appointed a coalition government Tuesday in an effort to unite the nation two years after a bloody revolt toppled the previous elected administration.

The new government includes members of six political parties, underscoring President René Préval's need to bring together Haiti's bitterly divided political factions. Haiti's Parliament must approve the Cabinet in a vote due to be completed today.

Haiti's powerful business community and large network of popular organizations offered no immediate reaction to the new government, which was announced after days of intense negotiations with Parliament, where no party holds a majority.

Prime Minister Jacques Edouard Alexis said the government would embark on a 25-year development plan, including boosting access to basic services for Haiti's poor, reinforcing the country's brittle state institutions and attracting private investment.

In an address to Parliament, Alexis said Préval's administration would also work to restore security after the February 2004 revolt that toppled former President Jean-Bertrand Aristide and plunged the Caribbean nation of roughly eight million into chaos.

"We no longer have the right to fail," Alexis said. "The consequences would be too heavy a burden to carry. The country cannot be content with just hoping anymore. It must finally take the path that will lead to its development."

The 18-member Cabinet includes five members of Préval's 1999-2001 government, including Justice Minister René Magloire and Agriculture Minister François Séverin. Former priest Jean Raynald Clérisme was named foreign affairs minister.

The government is mostly members of Préval's Lespwa Party but includes members of FUSION, the Struggling People's Organization and one from Aristide's Fanmi Lavalas Party, Planning Minister Jean Max Bellerive said.

Lavalas officials, who are calling for Aristide's return from exile in South Africa, had complained that they were being sidelined by Préval, a former Aristide ally who has since severed ties with his political mentor.

In his address, Alexis vowed that the government would embrace voices from all political stripes, calling a plural government "a requirement for the blooming of a healthy democratic life."

He said the government would seek to develop Haiti's crippled economy by promoting tourism, manufacturing and agriculture, and would "reconsider" some legal statutes enacted by the U.S.-backed interim authority that was appointed to replace Aristide.

Préval was Aristide's premier in September 1991, when the army staged a bloody coup.

Three years later, 20,000 U.S. troops intervened to restore the democratically elected government. Aristide backed Préval in 1995 elections because the constitution bars presidents from running for consecutive terms.

**Haiti, Failed Solidarity: International Trade Union Organizations "Pay Lip Service" to 2004
Overthrow of President Aristide
Center for Research on Globalization, Canada
by Jeb Sprague
June 6, 2006
Labor Notes**

Failed Solidarity: The ICFTU, AFL-CIO, ILO, and ORIT in Haiti
by June 2006

On February 16, 2004, a group of foreign trade union officials arrived in Port-au-Prince, Haiti, amongst them ORIT General Secretary Victor Baez, ICFTU Assistant General Secretary Mamounata Cissé and union leaders from France, Canada, Guyana and the Global Union Federation. The purpose of the delegation was to assist eleven trade unionists of the Coordination Syndicale Haïtienne (CSH), accused by Haitian authorities as working to bring down the government. The labor delegation drew international coverage as Katia Gil, General Coordinator of Programs with ORIT explains, “We went to visit them in jail. We went with many newspapers and press, local and international agencies.”¹ Just thirteen days after their arrival on February 29, 2004, Haiti’s popularly elected Lavalas government was overthrown and its President Jean-Bertrand Aristide after being sent on a plane to Africa, declared he had been kidnapped by U.S. Marines. An interim government made up of elites drawn from the political opposition to the Aristide government was quickly put into place, supported by the United States, France, and Canada.

“Following the coup, more than 12,000 public sector employees, who had been hired under the Aristide government, were immediately fired without compensation”, writes Isabel Macdonald, a Canadian journalist conducting interviews with laid off workers in Haiti.² The Associated Press on May 12, 2004 reported that Telecommunications D’Haiti (TELECO), the 90% government owned public telephone company, had announced plans to lay off 2,000 workers, half of its workforce.

In May of 2004 an investigative report from a labor-religious delegation sent to Haiti, initiated by the San Francisco Labor Council, spoke of a witch-hunt against supporters of the former government and of receiving reports from the “FTPH (Federation of Public Transport Workers of Haiti), of criminal attacks on over 100 of the buses that they had purchased for use in the bus cooperative operated by the union.”³ Sasha Kramer, a PhD student from California traveling in Haiti took photos of the demolished public buses. With death threats and arbitrary placements on police “wanted” lists, public sector employees and trade unionists, such as teachers, port workers, and bus drivers across Haiti were targeted. With an untold number of dead victims and political prisoners from the coup and the consequent twenty-six months of an unelected interim government, numerous human rights organizations decried state sponsored violence and persecution (March 2004- May 2006).

During the weeks prior to the 2004 coup a “general strike” was called by businesses and organizations associated with the opposition to the government, in which banks, gas stations, supermarkets, and specialty shops kept their doors closed, while the marketplaces of the poor remained open.⁴ In a recent interview Duclos Benissoit, a founder of the Haiti Transportation Federation currently living in exile in New York, discussed his experience during the 2004 coup. “The people who stick their necks out, vocal resisters were targeted first. I was one of those people. I was opposed to any kind of “strike”

called by the bosses. Unless called by labor, I told consumers to ignore the other ‘strikes.’ (Big business and national forces) didn't like this.”⁵

The ICFTU delegation in February 2004, just prior to Aristide's ouster, as Katia Gil explains, “visited many people but only those involved with the opposition to the government of course.” The International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU), claiming a membership of 157 million workers in 148 countries and territories, plays a leading role in investigating and drawing attention to labor abuse around the globe; but for the two years following the coup d'etat, the ICFTU did not make a single public statement or condemnation in regards to the massive labor persecution. The Organización Regional Interamericana de Trabajadores (ORIT) as the Latin American regional affiliate of the ICFTU, currently headquartered in Brazil, also remained silent.

CSH, the “ICFTU/ORIT's fraternal organization in Haiti” according to Victor Baez⁶, was a member of the Group of 184, supporting the installation of the interim government. CSH Secretary-general Fritz Charles, whose organization was made up primarily of anti-Lavalas unions and labor organizations, such as the Duvalier sanctioned and formerly U.S. government funded Fédération des Ouvriers Syndiqués (FOS), explained, “We adhere to the Group of 184 because it is a broad organization of the civil society which preaches a social pact where we want to play our part, where we want to also support the claims present in our trade-union agenda, ratified by our general assembly.”⁷ The Group of 184 a Haitian organization of NGOs, business elites, and foreign financed human rights groups was the principal civil society organization that agitated for the downfall of the elected government and was headed up by one of Haiti's most notorious sweatshop owners, Andre Apaid, Jr.⁸

“Democracy Promotion” program monies through United States, Canadian, and European Union aid agencies were channeled nearly exclusively to groups and organizations that were critical of the elected government of Haiti. In some cases, this took the form of actively building the political opposition, such as many of those within the Group of 184 – in others, it was simply supporting and funding sectors and leaders who were sharp critics of the Haitian government. Fabiola Cordove, a program officer at the National Endowment for Democracy (NED) in Washington D.C., which funds numerous opposition affiliated groups, pointed out, “Aristide really had 70% of the popular support and then the 120 other parties had the thirty per cent split in one hundred and twenty different ways, which is basically impossible to compete [with].”⁹

While foreign governments and financial institutions heavily favored the elite opposition, the local and foreign media did as well. Similar to the media manipulation during the 2002 attempted coup in Venezuela, the Haitian media, owned overwhelmingly by opposition-affiliated elites, refused to air pro-government demonstrations. Instead they devoted large blocks of air time to coverage of the much smaller opposition marches, which one observer noted were led down the streets by “fancy BMW motorcycles and huge, square Mercedes Benz SUV's.”¹⁰

Haiti's government by early 2004 had been weakened and it's impoverished masses of supporters, as well as its opposition, felt increasingly under attack. In the months and weeks before the large ICFTU led labor delegation arrived, chaos reigned as rebels, from the disbanded military, based in the Dominican Republic had begun an invasion of Haiti, equipped with new SUVs and, reportedly, airplanes. For years the same rebels had been running violent raids, into Haiti killing police, government officials, and civilians alike – sparking violence and reprisals. Even months before the

inauguration of Aristide in February 2001, Port-au-Prince had been shaken by mysterious bombings. OAS officials admit they never worked to investigate the rebels or pressure the Dominican Republic to root them out. With the economic strangulation of a Bush Administration backed government aid embargo taking effect in 2000 and a small poorly armed police force, the difficulties of the Haitian government intensified. The CSH, like many other opposition groups affiliated with the Group of 184, had something the Haitian government did not have – foreign aid.

Fritz Charles explains that the CSH received assistance, support, and computers from ORIT and the International Labor Organization (ILO), which, though viewed as a labor organization, is in fact a tripartite body of the UN which groups together trade union bodies, employer organizations, and governments.¹¹ Katia Gil of ORIT clarifies that “Since 2000, we have had support from International Solidarity funds from the ICFTU to help in a trade union education program, organizing workers in Haiti...we helped to build the CSH, and we provided part of the support for the CSH infrastructure, in order to create a place where the Haitian workers [the CSH] could plan and manage their own process.”¹² The ICFTU continues to provide an undisclosed amount of funding for CSH programs.

Charles also refers to the ILO’s financing of six seminars for the CSH conducted by André Lafontant Joseph (Secretary-general of the private school teachers Union, the CNEH).¹³ André Lafontant Joseph, was the author of a major research report funded by the ILO on the Haitian labor movement¹⁴ and his union the Confédération Nationale des Educateurs d’Haiti (CNEH) took a leading role, following the coup, in working to undermine the public school teacher’s in the north of Haiti.¹⁵ According to André Lafontant Joseph’s ILO funded study, “ORIT” amongst others “encourage[d] more than about fifteen organizations to constitute the Trade-union Coordination Syndicale Haïtienne (CSH).”¹⁶

According to Ana Jiménez, of the ILO’s San Jose office, the ILO has provided “technical cooperation...a program that has the objective of fortifying the Haitian union movement, in particular the Coordination Syndicale Haïtienne (CSH). This program is assumed within the ordinary budget of the Office...which does not surpass US \$70,000.”¹⁷ The ILO currently has two other projects in Haiti, a project in Gonaïves worth US \$413,00 (partially financed by the United Nations Development Program) and a Canadian government financed project working in the field of child labor with US\$ 382,374.¹⁸ The AFL-CIO works closely with the ILO, as Harry G Kamberis, Senior advisor of the AFL-CIO’s Solidarity Center explains, “Through our representatives at the ILO we supported what the ILO tried to do as well.”¹⁹

Kevin Skerrett, a researcher at the Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE) who previously visited Haiti as a Canadian labor delegate argues, “There is not much evidence to suggest that the CSH actually operates as a trade union at all. I have not seen any reports that they have engaged in any collective bargaining, or even have democratic meetings of affiliated unions during which policy positions are democratically decided. A number of the trade unionists that I spoke with in Haiti and in the post-coup exile-diaspora have suggested that the CSH was only formed in the late 90s, and with significant involvement of US and foreign agencies. While it continued to operate as a sort of “advocacy” group for Haitian workers, it is not clear that they became anything more than a small number of people that were part of the political opposition to the Preval and then Aristide governments.”²⁰ Suffice to say; led by Fritz Charles, the CSH became the main platform for organizing labor leaders towards the platform of the Group of 184.

Meanwhile, in Canada, while the Canadian Labor Congress (CLC) denounced Canada's role in legitimizing the 2004 coup d'état of the democratically elected government,²¹ it failed to investigate the massive layoffs and persecution of public sector workers in Haiti. An April 2004 statement from the CLC committed itself to "monitoring" the human rights and workers rights situation in the coming months in Haiti, something which never occurred.²²

From Brussels the ICFTU played a leading role in the year's leading up to the coup, circulating reports, heavily influenced by Haitian opposition elites, within the European labor movement – and to some extent the North American labor movement, that while informing the public of some real ongoing labor disputes, also forwarded unfounded allegations. For example, attributing to the Aristide government the killings of two labor advocates that took place in the rural area of Guacimal in 2002, near the northeastern town of St. Raphael, which were in fact (according to a newspaper whose reporter lost an eye in the assault) murders carried out by employees of a local landowner, not "government partisans" as one Aristide critic recently claimed.²³ Showing the echo effect of such allegations, an employee of the AFL-CIO's Solidarity Center recently made the unsubstantiated claim that "Aristide flew over Guacimal in a helicopter, shooting at workers."²⁴

While labor conditions remained extremely poor and corruption persisted, as foreign backed destabilization plunged Haiti's economy, the Aristide government took steps towards aiding labor. The minimum wage was increased from 36 Gourdes to 70 Gourdes a day in early 2003, the right to organize in the free trade zone was successfully negotiated, a provision of the labor code that sanctioned child domestic service was repealed, and legislation prohibiting human trafficking was passed. A 20-person police unit was set up to monitor cases of suspected human trafficking along the border, while steps were taken to promote access to education, offering a 70% subsidy to cover education supplies and calling on families who employ children to release them during school hours. The second Aristide administration (2000-2004) also refused to privatize public sector industries, requested by the IMF. Following the coup d'état many of the labor reforms were suspended, with numerous employers reverting to the old minimum wage.

The ILO, ICFTU and ORIT were not the only labor organizations to support the opposition to the Aristide government and ignore the persecution of public sector workers following its overthrow. On March 1, 2004 the AFL-CIO released its sole statement in regards to the overthrow of democracy in Haiti, stating that the "current crisis in Haiti represents a failure of U.S. foreign policy."²⁵ Only weeks later, the AFL-CIO and its offshoot the Solidarity Center (American Center for International Labor Solidarity) began talks with the Batay Ouvriye (BO), an anti-Lavalas worker's organization that had agitated for the Aristide government to "leave the country."²⁶

By mid-2005 the Solidarity Center had won two grants for its program with the BO.

The first grant for US \$350,000 was awarded to the Solidarity Center in May of 2005 through the U.S. State Department's "Democracy Rights and Labor Department", while the second grant for US \$99,965 came in September of 2005 from the NED, also receiving its funding from the U.S. State Department.²⁷ Teresa Casertano, regional director of the Americas for the Solidarity Center, managed the grants. She explains, "We provide a service that is an educational service, to train them, to share

with them our knowledge and skills on trade union organizing...Organizing members, doing new member orientation, collective bargaining, contract enforcement, shop stewards.”²⁸

As part of the grant requirements, the Solidarity Center must submit quarterly evaluation reports to its funding sources, the NED and U.S. State Department. Casertano explains, “We wrote a proposal that was submitted. A very standard format with objectives, activities and evaluation procedures...So there was a grant agreement based on that, the State Department dispersed funds for those activities described...The specific grant has a quarterly reporting requirement...We then write that up and we submit it as a quarterly report.” In this particular program with the Batay Ouvriye (BO), the U.S. State Department asked to extend the program, as Casertano explains, “They did ask us to extend it from a year long to 18 months with the same amount of funding and we agreed.”

Kamberis explains further the cooperation between the U.S. State Department and the AFL-CIO’s Solidarity Center. “The State Department has annually a labor officer conference that we are invited to come and speak at and also when they have labor officer training programs they send the officers over to speak with us. We design our own programs and run them. But we do talk with the State Department. We exchange information and we help them with information on their annual labor and human rights reports.”

Kamberis argues that there is a difference today between the activities of the Solidarity Center and its Cold War predecessors. “Since the end of the cold war the global trade union movement has become less ideological. What you see in Haiti [the support for opposition labor organizations] is just a coincidence...We are supporting the efforts of workers to organize. For example with the World-Bank, we worked to build labor rights conditionalities and that’s what we have achieved in Haiti to help workers...I would say that working with the Batay Ouvriye does advance U.S. Strategic interests, because it helps to advance freedom of association in Haiti and that is a U.S. government objective, to allow workers to freely associate.” In regards to the Solidarity Center’s predecessor, AIFLD (American Institute for Free Labor Development), and it’s support for unions run through Duvalier’s secret police in the 1980’s Kamberis states, “We had programs under the Duvalier government that addressed the same thing: worker exploitation whether they were or were not Anti or Pro-Duvalier. That was not for us the issue.”²⁹

As the United States, Canada, and France played integral roles in overthrowing the Aristide government; those with close ties to Haiti - CARICOM and the African Union - refused to recognize the interim government put in its place. Unions such as the Oilfield Workers’ Trade Union (OWTU) of Trinidad and Tobago and the Caribbean spoke out against the coup. On March 1, 2004, the day following the coup, Errol McLeod, President of OWTU condemned the foreign role in occupying Haiti, stating “It was totally wrong for the US, France and Canada to determine that President Aristide was ‘unfit to govern’.”³⁰

There are numerous trade unions and labor organizations that did not join the political opposition movement, while none have received support from any of these four bodies. These organizations continue to support political interventions through groups that espouse the undemocratic removal of governments in selected countries (i.e. Haiti, Venezuela), at the expense of workers and in collaboration with the foreign policy of the Bush Administration.

The blind eye turned towards the major transgressions of the interim government can be partially explained by the vested interests that international labor organizations had in the participants of the coup and pre-coup destabilization campaign. Political parties of Western Europe that have strong ties to their countries large and influential trade unions such as Germany's SPD (Social Democratic Party of Germany) have consistently supported Haitian political parties opposed to Lavalas such as the OPL (L'Organisation de Peuple en Lutte), a backer of austerity measures forwarded by the IMF.³¹ While the majority of Haitians speak kreyòl and live at abysmal subsistence levels; the French-speaking opposition aligned elite, many with European educations, were apt to form long term relations with foreign institutions already predisposed against popular democracy – so called “radical populism”. The ICFTU released a statement on November 23, 2000, over two months prior to Aristide's inauguration, titled “Return To Dictatorship?” heavily reliant on OPL sources, labeling Haiti's largest political party Lavalas as “much feared.”³² Another deeply partisan ICFTU Bulletin in May of 2001 cited OPL leaders Sauveur Pierre Etienne, Gérard Pierre, and Paul Dennis, as well as a Convergence leader Evans Paul, with no mention of their heavy reliance on foreign government aid agencies.³³ In comparison to its overtly critical stance during the second Aristide Administration (2001-2004), not a single ICFTU bulletin decried coup and post-coup labor rights violations against public sector workers and trade unionist supporters of the ousted government. Dominique Esser, a New York based human rights advocate, argues that labor “persecution is a non-topic if it happens to elements of society that are not supported by those wealthy parties that are strongly intertwined with international union heavyweights.”³⁴

The most prominent international labor organizations active in Haiti, the ICFTU, AFL-CIO, ILO, and ORIT, working to support and strengthen labor unions that agitated for the ousting of Haiti's democratically elected government, have simultaneously refused to condemn the massive layoffs and persecution of public sector workers and trade unionists committed by its illegally-imposed successor. In response to questions over the Solidarity Center's aloofness in regards to labor persecution resulting from the coup, Casertano states, “We make public statements. We make plenty of statements.” In reference to post-coup labor persecution Katia Gil of ORIT explains, “We have not looked into that.”

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IADB agrees to new infrastructure works in Haiti

06 Jun 2006

Reuters

WASHINGTON, June 6 - The Inter-American Development Bank has agreed to build roads, expand drinking water services and improve electricity services in Haiti, a bank statement on Tuesday said.

IADB President Luis Alberto Moreno met with Haitian President Rene Preval and members of his cabinet in Port-au-Prince on Monday where the request for new infrastructure projects was made.

Preval, who was sworn in as president of the Western Hemisphere's poorest country last month, wants to speed up development projects in infrastructure, education and agriculture to create jobs and improve living conditions.

Other requests included basic sanitation in rural areas and a nutrition, health and early education program for infants and young children, the IADB said.

No cost estimates were provided.

The IADB to date has invested \$525 million in Haiti for needs ranging from water and sanitation, health, education and job training to flood prevention.

Meanwhile, the International Monetary Fund said it plans to send a mission to Port-au-Prince from June 19 to June 30 to discuss a three-year Poverty Reduction and Growth Facility with Haitian officials.

IMF projections show Haiti's economy growing 2.5 percent this year and 4.0 percent in 2007 while inflation should slow from 13.1 percent in 2006 to 8.9 percent next year.

Slain Haitian icon to be honored

South Florida's Haitians will remember a former first lady weeks after she was gunned down in a robbery attempt in a Port-au-Prince jewelry store.

BY JACQUELINE CHARLES

The Miami Herald

June 6, 2006

For decades, Lucienne Heurtelou Estimé lived in relative obscurity, enjoying her golden years in a Port-au-Prince retirement home, far removed from Haiti's paralyzing politics.

Few even realized the widow of one of Haiti's most revered presidents, Dumarsais Estimé, was still alive until a robber's bullet ended her life last month while she was visiting a Port-au-Prince jewelry store. Estimé was 85.

REVERED FEMINIST

This evening in a Miami church, Haitians and members of Estimé's family will honor the woman who became Haiti's Eleanor Roosevelt, a feminist who opened the door of the National Palace to Haiti's peasants and who, like her husband, strongly advocated the social emancipation of dark-skinned Haitians in a society deeply divided by class and color.

"She's an icon in Haitian history," Francois Guillaume Jr. said about his step-grandmother. "She was a very strong-minded, independent person."

A light-skinned Haitian, Estimé was born in Port-au-Prince in 1920 and married Haiti's future president -- then the minister of education -- at the age of 19. At the time, she was a physical education teacher "and he fell in love with her legs," said Valérie Estimé, the couple's oldest grandchild, who now lives in South Dade.

"She was an extraordinary woman and a great humanitarian."

In addition to Valérie, Estimé has four other grandchildren. She and Dumarsais Estimé had four children, including Valérie's father, Jean Robert Estimé, Haiti's former minister of foreign affairs.

Six years ago, Lucienne Estimé published her memoirs about life as Haiti's first lady during the country's golden age.

In 1946, Dumarsais Estimé, who was dark-skinned, was elected Haiti's first black president. As a couple, the Estimés worked to open the doors of education and opportunity for Haiti's poor black masses and helped create the black middle class. But midway into his six-year term in 1950, Estimé was ousted by Haitian army general Paul Magloire.

The couple fled into exile, and Dumarsais Estimé died in New York in 1953.

RETURN TO HAITI

Lucienne Estimé brought her husband's body back to Haiti for burial. Greeting her at the Port-au-Prince airport were the very same military leaders who had ousted her husband. Although upset, she managed a sense of humor. "Are there no taxis in this country?" she asked.

She would later be instrumental in helping Francois "Papa Doc" Duvalier win the presidential election by giving credence to Duvalier's claim of Estimé's black nationalist mantra. Later, she would make her own political history by serving as Haiti's first female ambassador. She was its representative to Belgium, where she lived for almost 30 years before moving back to Haiti in 1984, said her granddaughter.

'CLASS AND DISTINCTION'

"She served with class and distinction," said Gerard Philippeaux, a Miami-Dade County Commission aide and former Haitian diplomat.

Pastor Fritz Bazin said he planned today's service after realizing few Haitians alive today knew of Estimé and her contributions to Haitian society. Equally troubling was the way in which she died, in a country besieged by violence, he said.

"Haiti was part of the world map, thanks to President Estimé and his wife," Bazin said. "They made it possible for lots of Haitians, dark-skinned, to travel abroad for scholarships to study and to have important functions. A tremendous change took place with Dumarsais Estimé as president of Haiti, and his wife at his side contributing."

UN troops left Canadian to die in Haiti, magazine says
Blank stares greeted pleas for help, but soldier found time to pose for photo
JANE ARMSTRONG
The Globe and Mail
June 6, 2006

As Mark Bourque lay dying from a bullet wound under the blazing Haitian sun, a group of soldiers from the same United Nations mission he was assigned to snapped photos of their gravely wounded Canadian colleague. However, none of them lifted a finger to save him, according to a magazine article published today.

The article in Toro magazine, by writer Christopher Shulgan, paints a harrowing account of Mr. Bourque's last moments as a frantic colleague begged for help that might have saved his life from UN soldiers in a nearby armoured personnel carrier.

The deadly attack occurred last December in Port-au-Prince, in a dangerous gang-controlled section of the capital city, the slum known as Cité Soleil.

Mr. Bourque and his colleague, Pierre Perrault, were just five minutes away from reaching their destination when their rented jeep was surrounded by young men.

One had a gun.

Mr. Bourque, the driver, gunned the accelerator and shots were fired.

"Pierre, I'm hit," he cried out.

Mr. Bourque, 57, was a retired Mountie who had been hired to train security guards to protect polling stations in the February election.

He and Mr. Perrault worked for the policing arm of the United Nations stabilization mission in the Caribbean country. It included troops from Brazil, Argentina and Jordan.

According to the article written by Mr. Shulgan, an Argentine-run hospital was just five minutes from the ambush scene, but Mr. Bourque lay unconscious and bleeding for half an hour before an ambulance came.

He arrived at the hospital at 10:55 a.m., nearly an hour after the 10 a.m. shooting.

Mr. Bourque, who was married and had two grown sons, died at 11:08 a.m.

In the article, Mr. Perrault describes his increasing frustration with the inaction of the UN soldiers at the scene of the fatal ambush. At first, he believed that a language barrier was responsible for the confusion.

After the shooting, Mr. Perrault grabbed the steering wheel and pulled their SUV off the road. The troop carrier parked in front of the vehicle, providing the two men with some cover from the band of attackers.

Mr. Bourque was unconscious, slumped at the wheel. Blood was pouring from his leg wound, pooling on the floor underneath the driver's seat.

Mr. Perrault lifted Mr. Bourque from the vehicle and tied his belt around the injured man's thigh to serve as a tourniquet. Mr. Bourque's pulse was weak and his colleague could see the colour fading from his face.

Mr. Perrault yelled at the soldiers in French, asking them to get his friend into the troop carrier. They stared back at him blankly.

He tried again, this time in English, but still there was no response.

Mr. Perrault noticed the soldiers wore Jordanian shoulder patches. He tried miming, and then he tried begging.

"Please! Please!" Mr. Perrault pleaded.

"Please help me.

"He's going to die. If we don't get him in your tank.

"To get to the hospital. Please."

A spokesman for the UN mission in Haiti defended the soldiers. "They're not supposed to leave their station," David Wimhurst told *Toro* magazine -- even in a matter of life and death.

"Not if there's another form of transportation available. I don't think, for example, [Mr. Bourque's] car was out of service."

Yesterday, in a brief telephone interview from Haiti, Mr. Wimhurst refused to discuss the circumstances of Mr. Bourque's death, saying it was presently the subject of a UN inquiry.

Mr. Wimhurst would not explain the policy for UN soldiers who come across a wounded colleague.

"I don't want to comment, in general, because you're calling about a specific case," Mr. Wimhurst said.

According to the article, the Jordanian troops were milling beside Mr. Bourque, when one soldier crouched beside the pool of blood at the dying man's feet. Another soldier snapped his photo.

Mr. Shulgan, who travelled to Haiti last spring to research the article, was given copies of the photographs by a documentary filmmaker, who obtained them from a contact in the UN's Jordanian detachment.

The writer said one of the photos, of an armed soldier crouched beside Mr. Bourque's feet, resembles a so-called trophy photograph pose, the kind that people e-mail to friends.

"The soldier's facial expression, and its absence of urgency, is the most concrete evidence I saw of how tragic -- and avoidable -- Bourque's death was," Mr. Shulgan wrote.

The officers were hired by a non-governmental organization called Canadem, which the Canadian government contracted to assemble a team to send to Haiti.

The group of 25 officers was made up of retired and inactive police officers.

Once there, the Canadians noted there was a shortage of cars, so they rented unmarked SUVs from a Hertz rental agency in Port-au-Prince.

At the time of his death, Mr. Bourque was wearing a white shirt and brown pants, and not a UN uniform.

Quoting a Haitian source, the article said gang members involved in the incident believed that the Canadians were American civilians.

The gang, one of many such local gangs known as chimère, has been responsible for a wave of kidnappings aimed at Haiti's elite.

In the months following Mr. Bourque's death, the UN has urged its staff to put UN markers on the hoods and doors of vehicle, the article reported.

IADB head meets Haiti cabinet amid aid preparation

05 Jun 2006

Reuters

By Gilbert Le Gras

WASHINGTON, June 5 (Reuters) - Inter-American Development Bank President Luis Alberto Moreno is meeting with Haitian President Rene Preval and senior officials of his cabinet on Monday to discuss financial support for a social peace plan, the IADB said.

"As the leading source of long-term lending to economic and social development programs in Haiti, the (bank) is already working in various sectors...including basic infrastructure, public utilities and agriculture," a bank statement said.

Preval, who was sworn in as president of the Western Hemisphere's poorest country last month, is pressing for more funds for primary education for all students, restoring electricity services and expanding health care.

One World Bank source said a meeting of 26 donor countries and agencies under the umbrella group known as the International Cooperation Framework is set for July 25 in Port-au-Prince.

So far the ICF aid program has paid out 90 percent of the \$1.08 billion pledged in July 2004, according to Brazil's foreign ministry.

A Brazilian-led U.N. peacekeeping mission of about 7,000 troops and 1,700 international police has been in Haiti since June 2004, supporting the interim government installed to run the country until elections were held earlier this year.

The IADB has invested \$525 million in Haiti for needs ranging from water and sanitation, health, education and job training to flood prevention.

Another \$15 million has been earmarked for improvements to public sector financial management and should be paid out in two installments -- \$10 million then the remaining \$5 million -- over the next few months as the Caribbean nation meets its targets, an IADB official said.

The International Monetary Fund, meanwhile, plans to hold discussions with Haitian officials this month and again in August on a three-year Poverty Reduction and Growth Facility.

IMF projections show Haiti's economy growing 2.5 percent this year and 4.0 percent in 2007 while inflation should slow from 13.1 percent in 2006 to 8.9 percent next year.

Visa denial for Haitian PM 'regrettable,' says MacKay
04 Jun 2006
CBC News

Foreign Affairs Minister Peter MacKay, visiting Haiti on the weekend, apologized on Canada's behalf for a border incident in May that involved the Caribbean country's prime minister.

Jacques Edouard Alexis was denied a Canadian entry visa because his name was on a list of people accused of crimes against humanity.

He was eventually given a visa, but not an explanation.

"This is an unfortunate and regrettable occurrence," MacKay told reporters after meeting with Alexis and President René Prével in Port-au-Prince on Saturday.

"But Mr. Alexis has been very gracious and very patient and understanding, and my presence here today is a demonstration that we're going to work through this."

Earlier in the week, Alexis complained that his "honour has been soiled" by the incident.

While MacKay tried to make amends, he wouldn't say whether Canadian officials made a mistake.

"We are committed to working through this," he said. "I've given my personal word that we are going to give this the priority that it deserves and we're going to find a way to fix it."

The incident was embarrassing for Ottawa, which has sent millions of dollars in funding and dozens of police officers to join a UN peacekeeping force to help restore calm in Haiti after Jean-Bertrand Aristide was ousted as president in a violent rebellion in February 2004.

Alexis, 58, is an agronomist who previously served as prime minister and education minister during Prével's first presidency from 1996 to 2001.

During that time, Haitian police allegedly killed civilians, including political opponents of Aristide.

Visa dispute between Canada and Haiti on the way to being solved

Tuesday, June 6, 2006

by Vario Sérant

Caribbean Net News

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti: The visa dispute between Ottawa and Haitian Prime Ministerial nominee, Jacques Edouard Alexis, is reportedly on the way to being solved, according to Canada's Foreign Affairs Minister.

Alexis referred to the disagreement during a ceremony held last Saturday evening in the Canadian ambassador's residence in Port-au-Prince, to welcome Canada's Minister of Foreign Affairs, Peter Mackay.

"I hope that Canada very quickly will find a solution which will satisfy not only the Prime Minister, but also the citizen Jacques Edouard Alexis in his private life. I hope very soon to be received in Canada in my dual role of Prime Minister and private person," Alexis stated.

Questioned by journalists after the ceremony, Mackay confirmed that a solution was going to be found very soon relative to the decision prohibiting Alexis to enter Canada due to alleged complicity in a "crime against humanity".

Mackay, however, did not come to a conclusion about other former associates of President Rene Préal (1996-2001) who were also banned by Ottawa for the same reasons.

According to a letter from the Canada embassy recently quoted by "Radio Canada", Ottawa reproached to Alexis for not having done anything about the "Carrefour Feuilles massacre", when he was a minister (1999-2001). Eleven young people were killed by the Haitian police force in Carrefour-Feuilles, in the south-eastern suburbs of Port-au-Prince) on May 28, 1999.

Alexis had immediately refuted this charge, making the point that his government had acted by supporting a lawsuit against the culprits. "In fact, it is for the first time, as far as I remember, that the police officers who were identified in those crimes were arrested, imprisoned and brought before the courts. They were condemned," emphasised Alexis.

In spite of this disagreement, relations between Haiti and Canada are pretty good, said Alexis.

Alexis also indicated that under the Préal/Alexis administration, co-operation will take a new orientation. "Co-operation must be made from now on to the benefit of the country," said Alexis.

"Henceforth, international assistance must be 'country oriented' and not 'donor oriented'," Alexis stated.

Alexis also took occasion to underline the basic objectives of the future government. This will aim in particular to create conditions of stability, to allow everybody to be freely occupied with their activities, without risking their lives."

"Canada plans to support the government programme so that it can respond to the needs of the Haitian people," affirmed Alexis.

"As of the installation of the next government, probably next week, a program of social reconciliation will be implemented," promised Alexis. This program will especially take into account education, health, drinking water, transportation youth and roads.

In his speech, the Canadian minister let it be known that his first bilateral visit to Haiti testifies to the will of his country to work with the next Haitian administration in order to improve the living conditions of the population.

"Let us work for a more beautiful Haiti," Mackay declared in Creole, to the applause of those present.

Mackay also announced the release of additional funds, around fifteen million dollars, for the reinforcement of democratic institutions in Haiti.

These funds will be added to the total amount of more than one hundred ninety million dollars which has been devoted over two years to projects of rebuilding and development in Haiti, according to priorities defined by Interim Program Co-operation (CCI).

Minister Mackay announces funding for Haiti
Government of Canada, Ministry of Foreign Affairs
June 3, 2006

“Canada is committed to supporting the Haitian people,” said Minister MacKay. “Canada’s support will help to solidify the transition toward stability, security and good governance in Haiti, and to assure respect for human rights and the rule of law.”

The new funding will come from the Global Peace and Security Fund, which is administered by Foreign Affairs Canada. The funds are in addition to the more than \$190 million spent in the last two years on reconstruction and development projects in Haiti, in keeping with the priorities of the Interim Cooperation Framework.

On February 7, 2006, the Haitian people demonstrated their commitment to democratic renewal with the election of a new president. While these elections are an important step, much work remains on the road toward justice and prosperity in Haiti. In addition to the need for assistance in education and health, the challenge of ensuring the right to security and the right to live in a fair and just society persists. Canada calls on the Government of Haiti to continue its efforts to end violence, reform its institutions and bring about social reconciliation, including sustained and visible efforts in terms of respect for human rights and dialogue among all Haitians.

For further information, media representatives may contact:

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MacKay regrets handling of visa denial for Haitian PM
By STEVENSON JACOBS
CNews, Canada

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti (CP) - Foreign Affairs Minister Peter MacKay expressed regret Saturday after Haiti's prime minister was denied a Canadian entry visa because of past accusations of links to government atrocities.

MacKay, on an official visit to the Caribbean country, said Canadian immigration and border authorities were looking into why Prime Minister Jacques Edouard Alexis was barred from entering Canada during a trip last month.

He said Canada's previous government included Alexis' name on a list of people accused of crimes against humanity, but wouldn't say, when asked, if officials made a mistake. Alexis has strongly denied the accusation.

The spat has been embarrassing for Canada, which has committed more than \$190 million Cdn and dozens of police officers to help Haiti recover from a violent rebellion that helped oust former president Jean-Bertrand Aristide in February 2004.

"This is an unfortunate and regrettable occurrence, but Mr. Alexis has been very gracious and very patient and understanding, and my presence here today is a demonstration that we're going to work through this," MacKay told reporters after meeting with Alexis and President Rene Preval.

Alexis, who had accompanied Preval on the Canada trip, stood alongside MacKay but did not discuss the visa dispute.

Earlier this week, Alexis angrily denounced the allegation against him, saying on local radio that "my honour has been soiled" and demanding that Canada publicly exonerate him.

The dispute stems from Alexis' 1999-2001 term as prime minister under Preval's previous administration, when Haitian police allegedly carried out killings of civilians, including political opponents of Aristide.

MacKay said Canadian law allows Alexis to receive a temporary visa until the matter is resolved.

"We're very committed to working to find a way in which we can have Mr. Alexis visit Canada very soon, because as the duly appointed prime minister, it's very important as the head of state that we can work face to face," he said.

The rift comes as Preval reaches out to wealthy countries for development aid for Haiti, the Western Hemisphere's poorest country.

MacKay also said Canada would commit another \$15 million Cdn in aid to Haiti.

"Canada's support will help to solidify the transition toward stability, security and good governance in Haiti, and to assure respect for human rights and the rule of law," MacKay said in a statement issued Saturday.

The new funding will come from the Global Peace and Security Fund, which is administered by Foreign Affairs.

MacKay arrived Friday for the one-day trip and was scheduled to travel to neighbouring Dominican Republic on Sunday to attend the annual summit of the Organization of American States.

Another group of Brazilian troops departs for Haiti

Márcia Wonghon

Agência Brasil

May 6, 2006

Recife - The last group of Brazilian soldiers slated to join the 5th contingent of the United Nations (UN) Peace Force in Haiti left the Recife Air Base yesterday (4) on their way to that Caribbean island country.

The 144 soldiers, from various Army units in the Northeastern states of Pernambuco, Alagoas, Bahia, Paraíba, and Rio Grande do Norte, spent four months undergoing rigorous training, including simulated confrontations.

The 5th contingent is made up of 850 troops. Their job is to continue the effort to pacify conflicts and maintain public order, to control the urban violence the country has faced since the beginning of the political crisis that erupted during the administration of former president Jean Bertrand Aristide, who was ousted in 2004 after a popular uprising.

The UN, which is in charge of the country's security, calculates that with this year's election of president René Préval, who received over 60% of the votes, the situation in Haiti will become stable once again.

The Brazilian troops are scheduled to return to Brazil in December.

Translation: David Silberstein

AIDS no longer taboo in Latin America

June 3, 2006

By STEVENSON JACOBS,

Associated Press

The Hinesberg Journal

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti - Standing beneath a towering crucifix, the Rev. Andre Pierre thundered at the faithful crowded elbow-to-elbow in the Sacred Heart Church to show mercy for the poor and the elderly.

Then he did something that until recently would have been close to heresy: He urged his flock to pray for people with AIDS .

Such sentiment was virtually unheard of a few years ago in socially conservative Latin American and Caribbean countries, where open debate about sex is rare and many still consider AIDS a punishment for deviant behavior.

But 25 years after the pandemic began, a new spirit of openness is emerging, spurred by education and by a growing awareness that AIDS touches every sector of society. While discrimination persists, the stigma of HIV is diminishing as more people contract the disease.

Throughout Latin America and the Caribbean, the number of new HIV infections increased from 200,000 in 2003 to 230,000 in 2005, U.N. officials say. Most of the new patients were between 15 and 24, and health officials worry that awareness campaigns may not be reaching youths who are becoming sexually active earlier.

He said young people were most at risk.

Even so, many officials say frank talk from Barbados to Brazil is a plus.

In Brazil, where more than a third of Latin America's 1.8 million HIV-positive people live, officials credit an aggressive prevention campaign with limiting the cases to fewer than half the number the World Bank estimated Brazil would have by 2000.

"One of the things that's really helped is that the Catholic Church hasn't come out aggressively against condom use," said Paulo Teixeira, a former director of Brazil's anti-AIDS program. "In some cases, they've even supported it quietly," despite the church's birth control prohibition.

POZ officials said informal surveys indicate that the overwhelming majority of Haitians would care for a friend or relative with AIDS, while just a few years ago few said they would.

Meanwhile, in Haiti's state-run hospitals, many patients lie on the floor for lack of beds. Doctors still regularly turn away people with AIDS, said Jean Sorel Beajour, head of Haiti's National Association for Solidarity with People with AIDS.

"For someone living with AIDS in Haiti, it's still a very degrading existence," said Beajour, a gay man who has HIV and was denied treatment for a cut three years ago.

He said the stigma will continue as long as the virus is associated with immorality.

"It's not just one group that is affected by AIDS," he said. "It's all of us."

Associated Press correspondents Michael Astor in Sao Paulo, Brazil, and Jeanneth Valdivieso in Quito, Ecuador, contributed to this report.

International Tribunal on Haiti: Three More U.N. Officers Convicted for Crimes Against Humanity

By Haiti Progres

Political Affairs Magazine

June 3, 2006

One Brazilian and two Canadian police officers working for the United Nations Mission to Stabilize Haiti (MINUSTAH) were convicted of crimes against humanity by a 12-member jury during the fourth session of the International Tribunal on Haiti, which took place in Montreal on May 27.

Canadian Police Chiefs David Charles Beer and R. Graham Muir are respectively the former and current commissioners of the MINUSTAH's Police Division in Haiti, known as UNPOL. Brazilian Capt. Leonidas Carneiro Junior commanded a UNPOL base in the Belair neighborhood of Port-au-Prince. All three were charged by the Tribunal's prosecution team with command responsibility for massacres and killings carried out by UNPOL troops in Belair between June 2004 and February 2006. Leonidas was further charged with personally carrying out the execution of an unarmed man on Rue Tiremasse in Belair on the night of Sept. 28, 2005.

The verdicts bring to ten the number of officers and officials of the U.N., Haitian National Police (PNH) and paramilitary groups that Tribunal juries have convicted, from 26 indicted, over the past eight months.

Over 300 people crowded into an amphitheatre at the University of Montréal for the four-hour session, at which live and videotaped testimony was presented. The presiding judge was former Haitian ambassador Benjamin Dupuy, assisted by judge William Sloan, head of the Canadian chapter of the American Association of Jurists, and by Lucie Tondreau, a Haitian activist lawyer based in Miami, FL. Human rights lawyer Brian Concannon, Jr. was the investigating judge.

MINUSTAH's two top civilian and military leaders – Chilean diplomat Juan Gabriel Valdès and Brazilian Lt. Gen. Augusto Heleno Ribiero Pereira – were previously convicted by a jury during the Tribunal's first session in Washington, DC on September 23, 2005, along with former Haitian Police Chief Léon Charles.

“Never doubt the importance of what is being done here,” said former U.S. Attorney General Ramsey Clark, who heads the Tribunal's Commission of Inquiry, formed to investigate human rights crimes. “This Commission, and this Court, intends to seek the truth about the summary executions, about the unlawful use of deadly force, about the excessive use of force, and about the deliberate effort to destroy popular movements, and to hold those responsible accountable.”

Clark said that over the past two years, the Haitian people have been “facing the whole world that is dominated by wealth.” Since the Feb. 29, 2004 coup d'état against former President Jean-Bertrand Aristide, “they've been up against the United Nations itself, which is acting subservient to the will, primarily, of the United States,” he said.

Clark asserted that the U.N. had been given the mission “to destroy the popular movement and the popular opposition, and to systematically kill its young leadership. The Stephen Bikos of Haiti had to

die because they were committed, they were courageous, they were intelligent, and they wouldn't be stopped. We think they have failed. But we have to remember. We thought they had failed in 1990. We thought they'd failed in the second election of President Aristide... But unless this Tribunal can bring to justice some of the people that seem so high and mighty, so immune to accountability, then how long will this last election [of President René Préval] have any meaning, whether it is taken over from within, as has too often happened, or from without?"

Independent Vancouver-based journalist Anthony Fenton took the witness stand and was questioned at length by lead prosecutor Desiree Wayne about Canada's role in the 2004 coup, which he has researched extensively.

"It's quite striking because Canadian development assistance to Haiti was gradually reduced over the years preceding the coup d'état," Fenton explained. "Back in 1997-98, you had \$44 million in disbursements by the Canadian International Development Agency [CIDA], which is the Canadian counterpart to the U.S. Agency for International Development. These went down to the lowest point in 2001-2002 to under \$19 million. In fact, these disbursements to Haiti were cut in half in a two-year period from 1999-2000 to 2001-2002," when Aristide had just come to power for the second time.

Fenton outlined how the Canadian government funneled money through and to Canadian "non-governmental organizations" to subvert democracy in Haiti and helped plan Aristide's overthrow with a high-level secret meeting in Ottawa in 2003. He also gave information about police commissioners Beer and Muir, about Canadian investments in Haiti, and about the collusion of various Canadian agencies with those of Washington before and after the coup.

The prosecution also presented a half-hour of videotaped testimony from six victims and witnesses from Belair, who detailed how UNPOL forces had carried out arson, beatings and killings in the hilltop slum. Presented by assistant prosecutor Kim Ives, the video testimony was collected by the Commission of Inquiry in October 2005.

The UNPOL cops came into the house where Peterson "Dan Serré" Venord was sleeping with his girlfriend, one witness explained in the footage. "Peterson spoke to [Captain] Leonidas and said 'Don't kill me, I'm a former policeman.' Léonidas said. 'No, you are Dan Serré' and shot him dead... They had that exchange, and Léonidas shot him in front of everyone." Léonidas later boasted about the killing, the witness said.

The identity of the witnesses was not revealed by the prosecution to protect their security.

During its second session in Boston on Nov. 19, 2005, a Tribunal jury convicted U.S. Brig. Gen. Ronald Coleman and Haitian Police Chief Jean-Michel Yves Gaspard for massacres committed under their command in Belair and Carrefour. Two "rebel" leaders, former Haitian police chief Guy Philippe and former FRAPH death-squad No. 2 Louis Jodel Chamblain, were convicted during the Tribunal's third session in Miami on March 11, 2006.

In one major development, Investigating Judge Concannon indicted former Haitian de facto Prime Minister Gérard Latortue and his Justice Minister Bernard Gousse for their role in encouraging, commanding and overseeing some of the worst violence committed during the coup by the PNH.

The Tribunal casts a spotlight on the question of justice in Haiti, where hundreds of political prisoners still languish in jail and human rights criminals still walk the streets.

The International Tribunal on Haiti was formed by a series of Latin American and Haitian solidarity organizations last year. Haitian Resistance in Quebec, the Canada Haiti Action Network and the Quebecois Committee to Recognize the Rights of Haitian Workers in the Dominican Republic (CQRDTHRD) helped organize the Montreal session. A delegation from the New England Human Rights Organization for Haiti drove up from Boston to participate.

The jury deliberated for over 40 minutes before rendering its verdict. When jury forewoman, Darlène Fabienne Lozis, read guilty verdicts, the hall erupted in applause. The jury also made two recommendations: that the prosecution in the future provide proof that it has notified those indicted of the charges against them and that the investigation into the Feb. 29th coup continue.

The multinational jury, equally divided between men and women, included a nurse, a unionist, a teacher, an economist, a community organizer, and a researcher. Their decision was unanimous.

The proceedings were conducted primarily in English, with simultaneous translation via headsets into French. However, the presiding judges opened the session in French, explaining the purposes and conduct of the court.

The International Tribunal on Haiti is now planning to hold its fifth session in Port-au-Prince, Haiti in September. The Tribunal will present the evidence it has collected to the courts in Haiti and petition for justice. If the Haitian courts prove unwilling or unable to take up the case, the Tribunal will submit its findings and the names of those convicted to the International Criminal Court in The Hague for prosecution.