

Haiti News Roundup: February 10 -21, 2007

Haiti: 17 more suspected gang leaders arrested in new sweep by UN peacekeepers
UN News Centre
21 February 2007

Seventeen more presumed gang members have been arrested in one of Haiti's most dangerous areas, the Cité Soleil quarter of Port-au-Prince, the capital, in the latest sweep by hundreds of United Nations peacekeepers to rid the city of violent crime.

The operation yesterday by some 700 UN blue helmets, which also led to the seizure of a number of illegal weapons, was planned and executed in collaboration with the Haitian National Police, the UN Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) said in a statement.

“It marks an intensification of recent efforts to stabilize and secure the crime-ridden parts of the Haitian capital,” the mission added.

Over the weekend, UN peacekeepers picked up gang leader named Johnny Pierre Louis, also known as Ti Bazil, the presumed perpetrator of numerous murders and other bloody crimes, during a sweep through the Key Boyle residential section of Cité Soleil. He often acted under the orders of an ex-gang chief named Evens, whom MINUSTAH recently ousted from the Boston area of Cité Soleil.

MINUSTAH, set up in 2004 to help re-establish peace in the impoverished Caribbean country after an insurgency forced President Jean-Bertrand Aristide to go into exile, has launched several anti-gang operations in recent weeks. The mission recently has transformed Evens' former headquarters into a free medical clinic.

Haitian describes torture by police to jurors

The horrors of torture in Haiti under a former military regime were outlined in a civil trial against a former Haitian army colonel that began Tuesday in Miami.

BY ALFONSO CHARDY

achardy@MiamiHerald.com

February 21, 2007

Lexiuste Cajuste, once a top labor union leader in Haiti, described in detail to a Miami jury Tuesday how military-overseen police officers in Port-au-Prince tortured him in 1993.

Officers, he said, forced him under the open frame of an iron bed, his back and buttocks exposed. Then, he added, officers took turns stomping on his back with their boots and beating his buttocks with wooden clubs -- until he lost consciousness.

"I felt a lot of pain, and I felt I was going to die," Cajuste said in Creole, as an interpreter translated his words into English for the jury of four women and two men.

Cajuste's testimony came on the first day of a civil trial for unspecified compensatory and punitive damages against former Haitian army Col. Carl Dorelien, a former high-ranking officer who won \$3.2 million in the Florida Lottery in 1997 after he settled in Florida.

Attorneys for Cajuste, one of two plaintiffs in the case, claim Dorelien is responsible for the torture suffered at the hands of police and military officers -- not because Dorelien was personally involved, but because he was a member of the high command and his assignment was to ensure military discipline.

LINE OF SUITS

The case, filed in Miami federal court by the San Francisco-based human rights organization Center for Justice & Accountability, is the latest in a string of similar civil actions against foreign-born torture suspects who later moved to the United States.

Under the 218-year-old Alien Tort Statute, foreign nationals who suffer serious abuse anywhere in the world can sue in U.S. courts if suspected perpetrators are in the United States. The center sued Dorelien on Jan. 24, 2003 -- three days before he was deported to Haiti.

Matt Eisenbrandt, a Center for Justice & Accountability attorney, acknowledged in his opening statement that Dorelien was not personally involved in torturing Cajuste or in the other alleged abuses.

But Dorelien bore responsibility because he had been a member of the Haitian military high command and his specific assignment as chief of personnel was to ensure discipline of officers and to investigate human rights violations committed by men under his command, Eisenbrandt said.

"He was a member of the high command, and the high command ran Haiti," Eisenbrandt told the jurors.

Dorelien was not in the courtroom. Immigration authorities deported him because of his record as a human rights violator. He remains in Haiti.

Dorelien's Miami attorney, Kurt Klaus, did not make an opening statement. He told The Miami Herald later that he will make his comments to the jurors at the end of the trial, which is expected to continue through Friday and perhaps into next week.

CLAIMS INNOCENCE

Klaus has said Dorelien is not responsible for the abuses alleged in the lawsuit. He has accused attorneys for the Center for Justice & Accountability of going after his client because of his Lotto win.

There's only about \$808,000 left from the original jackpot, but the money is frozen pending a separate legal dispute over whether it should go to victims of human rights abuses in Haiti.

The second plaintiff in the case is Marie Jeanne Jean, widow of Michel Pierre -- one of 26 men, women and children killed in 1994 by soldiers and paramilitary supporters in Raboteau, a poor neighborhood in Gonaives, Haiti. She is expected to testify this week.

Ex-Haitian officer faces civil trial on rights allegations

A former Haitian army colonel will be judged in Miami in a civil trial to determine his liability in the death of one person and the torture of another.

BY ALFONSO CHARDY

Miami Herald

February 19, 2007

Carl Dorelien was among high-ranking military officers who overthrew Haitian president Jean-Bertrand Aristide in 1991 and then served as army colonel in the central command until U.S. troops landed in 1994 to restore Aristide to office.

Dorelien then fled to the United States and settled in Florida where he bought a Lotto ticket in 1997 and won \$3.2 million. Accused of human rights violations back home, Dorelien was deported in 2003 - and then lost control of his jackpot.

Now, Dorelien faces a civil trial in Miami federal court for allegedly tolerating human rights abuses while serving in Haiti. U.S. District Judge James Lawrence King is to begin selecting jurors Tuesday. The lawsuit seeks unspecified compensatory and punitive damages against Dorelien in connection with the alleged torture of Lexiuste Cajuste in Port-au-Prince in 1993 and the killing of Michel Pierre in the infamous 1994 massacre in Raboteau.

NOT IN COURT

Dorelien will not be at the trial but his Miami attorney, Kurt Klaus, will present a defense. He told The Miami Herald Friday that his client is not responsible for Cajuste's alleged torture or the Raboteau deaths.

"He had no direct command of troops," Klaus said. "He was an attache in the central command office, but he was just an administrator. The only reason they are bringing the lawsuit here is because Mr. Dorelien won the Florida Lottery and they see dollar signs."

The lawsuit is separate from an order last year by a judge in Tallahassee who ruled that about \$808,000 left from the jackpot should be paid to relatives of Raboteau victims including Pierre's widow -- one of the lawsuit plaintiffs. Dorelien has appealed the jackpot order and the case is pending.

Cajuste, who now lives in Jacksonville, told The Miami Herald last year that he was tortured in 1993 at a police station in Port-au-Prince. Cajuste said he was arrested after he went to a radio station to deliver a news release calling for a general strike.

Pierre died in Raboteau, a neighborhood of the Haitian city of Gonaives, when Haitian soldiers and civilian paramilitary supporters rampaged through the area in 1994.

DEADLY RAMPAGE

At least 26 unarmed men, women and children were killed during the two-day rampage, including Pierre.

The lawsuit was filed by the Center for Justice & Accountability, a San Francisco human rights organization.

"After waiting more than 12 years, our clients will finally have their day in court, and, for the first time, one of the many high-ranking members of the Haitian Armed Forces who found refuge in the U.S. after the restoration of democracy to Haiti, will have to answer to a U.S. jury for the allegations of widespread and severe human rights abuses," said Pamela Merchant, the group's executive director.

**In Haiti, Abductions Hold Nation Hostage
Despite U.N. Troop Presence, Much of Capital Controlled by Gangs
By Manuel Roig-Franzia
Washington Post
Wednesday, February 21, 2007**

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti -- Kidnappers came for Petit-Frère Desilus in the early afternoon, as he was driving away from his office.

The street was busy and he was just 10 feet outside the gated compound where he worked as a billing clerk. But they got him anyway, Desilus recalled recently in a hushed voice, trying to steady his trembling hands.

A music vender known as "Peaceful Michel" said he was kidnapped in December in front of a police station and is certain officers witnessed it. (By Michel Du Cille -- The Washington Post)

Despite the presence of thousands of U.N. troops and a new military offensive to root out gangs, armed thugs still rule much of Port-au-Prince, Haiti, where many of the 2 million residents live in tin or cinder-block shacks.

Two young men, their faces hard but calm, flashed pistols at him. When he turned, he saw four more gun barrels behind him. Pedestrians did nothing, merely swerving around the unfolding scene, he said.

"Lie down, shut up," Desilus remembers being told. "Today you're going to get yours."

Pressed flat against the back seat, Desilus was about to begin a downward spiral that severed his tenuous hold on a working-class lifestyle, leaving him poor and depressed more than four months after his captors released him. His troubles have become commonplace here. One year after a presidential election that generated optimism and marked only the second peaceful handover of power in Haitian history, Port-au-Prince is a city of fear.

Despite the presence of thousands of U.N. troops and a new military offensive to root out gangs, armed thugs still rule much of this hilly capital, where many of the 2 million residents live in tin or cinder-block shacks. A swarm of recent kidnappings is terrorizing residents and scaring away foreign investment.

Dozens of schools closed in December after students were kidnapped in a series of incidents and a school bus was hijacked. That month, at least 100 people were reported kidnapped, the most since August, when 115 were abducted. Victim advocates say the real numbers may be much higher; once freed, people often are afraid to go to the police.

Haiti's government has been powerless to stop the crisis. International advisers describe the police force and judicial system as critically dysfunctional and profoundly corrupt.

"We are a failed state -- our institutions are bad, they don't work," said Kesner F. Pharel, a Haitian economist who was trained in the United States and runs a business consulting firm in Port-au-Prince. "It is crucial for Haiti to solve the security problem if we have any hope of making progress."

The kidnapping plague, which began in 2004 after the ouster of President Jean-Bertrand Aristide and peaked during the past six months, is the latest horror in a long history of upheaval that has sealed Haiti's position as the Western Hemisphere's poorest nation. A hip destination for the adventurous rich in the 1970s -- a place where Mick Jagger of the Rolling Stones hung out and where tourists lounged at the Club Med -- Haiti is now a barely functioning country, dependent on the largess of international donors for two-thirds of its budget. The United States, which provides \$200 million a year, is Haiti's largest bilateral donor.

Decades of coups and political instability have ruined Haiti's economy and tourism industry, leaving factories closed and once-thriving beach resorts abandoned. According to the International Monetary Fund, 76 percent of Haitians live on less than \$2 per day and 55 percent of those live on less than 44 cents a day.

Many here had hoped for stabilization after the election last February of President René Prével, a soft-spoken agronomist who held the presidency from 1996 to 2001 and who promised reconciliation among 100 political parties. But crime has soared under Prével, exacting its heaviest toll on the poor and working class, who cannot afford ransoms or the bodyguards and bulletproof vehicles that shield every movement of Haiti's entrenched elite.

Desilus, 42, a slender man with big, sad eyes, was far from joining Haiti's elites. But he had scratched his way out of the slums and gotten a decent job. Before being kidnapped, he had managed to buy a tiny one-room apartment, where he lived with his wife and three of his six children.

The kidnapers, he said, took him to Cite Soleil, a 2 1/2 -square-mile seaside slum of more than 200,000 people that is ruled by gangs. The kidnapers beat him inside a second-story room that had been converted into a makeshift cell with heavy bars on the windows. They made him drink his own urine, he said.

Despite the presence of thousands of U.N. troops and a new military offensive to root out gangs, armed thugs still rule much of Port-au-Prince, Haiti, where many of the 2 million residents live in tin or cinder-block shacks.
in America.

Following a practice typical of kidnapers here, Desilus's abductors called all the numbers stored in the address book of his cellphone, each time threatening to kill him and demanding \$100,000, the equivalent of 20 years' salary for Desilus. A day later, they settled for \$4,800 and released him. But his troubles were just starting.

Traumatized by the experience, he asked his boss to let him switch to a job that would require moving around the city less. His boss responded by firing him.

Meanwhile, the friends and associates who had paid for Desilus's ransom were pushing to get their money back. Desilus said he sold his little apartment, as well as a small plot of land that he owned in the country, to pay off his debt. He drained his bank account.

Suddenly homeless, he was forced to move his family into a cousin's home. Jobless, he had to pull four of his children out of school, as even Haitian public schools charge tuition and require parents to buy materials.

"For me to build up what I had, it took me 10 years," he said. "I have to start all over. But being in this country, I don't see how I can."

Desilus desperately wanted someone to face justice. He tried repeatedly to get the Haitian police interested in his case. But each time the officers refused to write a report, he said.

It was a futile exercise that another kidnapping victim, a music vendor who goes by the nickname "Peaceful Michel," didn't even consider embarking upon. Michel, who was abducted in December, was seized in front of a police station and said he is certain the officers witnessed the kidnapping. Friends who have also been kidnapped told him they were "just laughed at" by police when they tried to file complaints, he said.

"Unless you're a millionaire, they're not listening to you," said Michel, who was deported from the United States after serving a four-year drug sentence and now is active in organizations that try to aid Haitian deportees.

The United Nations, which is engaged in background checks of police that officials believe could lead to the dismissal of 1,000 corrupt officers, is now overseeing the largest military operation to defeat gangs since being deployed here in 2004. U.N. officials hope to stem the flow of kidnap ransoms to gangs, some of which need as much as \$70,000 a month to pay for their operations.

Préval initially opposed military intervention, opting to negotiate with the gangs, and invited several top gang leaders to the National Palace. Edmond Mulet, the U.N. special envoy to Haiti, described the talks as a "very strange" strategy.

"By mid-September Préval said, 'This is going to work. This will be over by October,' " Mulet recalled during an interview at his headquarters in the Hotel Christopher in Port-au-Prince. "I said, 'Okay, if you say so.' But I knew in my heart it would not work."

In the past year, kidnappers appear to have been targeting victims throughout the city rather than staying in the slums that are patrolled by the U.N. troops. Residents of neighborhoods once considered safe now feel anxious.

Despite the presence of thousands of U.N. troops and a new military offensive to root out gangs, armed thugs still rule much of Port-au-Prince, Haiti, where many of the 2 million residents live in tin or cinder-block shacks.

Christian Duvivier was nabbed after leaving Magdoo's, a hip hangout for Port-au-Prince's young, moneyed set in the prestigious hilltop neighborhood, Petionville.

Kidnappers rammed their car into Duvivier's vehicle, he recalled in an e-mail from the Dominican Republic, where he fled after a ransom was paid and he was released. They pulled out guns and told him they were "the devil's sons" and that "they kill for fun," Duvivier said.

Young people and professionals are pouring out of Haiti. By some estimates as many as 50,000 have left in the past several years, creating a massive "brain drain," according to Pharel, the economist.

But for some kidnapping victims, fleeing is not an option. Emmanuelle Poncet, a Port-au-Prince math teacher, has spent the five months since his kidnapping and release trying to get a visa to enter the United States so he can leave Haiti and "never come back." He finds his solace in chain-smoking and bottles of rum, a form of self-medication that he knows is ruining his health.

Poncet's brother, a Catholic priest, and a group of friends paid nearly \$14,000 to free him. Like Desilus, Poncet has sold what little he had to pay off his debts. His car and a small farm were gone within days of his release, sold cheap because the buyers knew he was desperate.

One week after his release, Poncet got a phone call from another group of kidnappers. They were holding his brother-in-law, they told him. And they wanted money.

An 'uphill battle' to polish Haiti's image

By Marc Lacey

International Herald Tribune

February 15, 2007

LABADIE, Haiti: There is Haiti, the poorest nation in the hemisphere. And then there this slice of Caribbean bliss surrounded by security fencing with all-you-can-eat buffets.

This other Haiti has a stunning stretch of white sand between turquoise water and lush rolling hills. There are jet skis and beach chairs, and work is under way on a zip line that will send giddy adventurers across the bay on harnesses at heart-pounding speeds.

On a recent morning, Labadie was filled with several thousand people just off a Royal Caribbean cruise ship frolicking in the Haitian waves, bartering in the Haitian craft market and taking in the Haitian voodoo show.

None of them would experience the rail-thin children, barefoot and sick; the mounds of garbage and open sewage dumps; the heavily armed peacekeeping troops struggling to keep a lid on the sprawling urban slums.

"It's beautiful," said Marlene Peacock, a tourist from Tobermory, Ontario, gazing up at the forested hills. "I didn't know it was hilly."

Flow of illegal immigrants to U.S. starts to slow Libby defense not believable, prosecutor says U.S. court upholds limit on habeas petitions by Guantánamo detainees

There is much that is unknown about Haiti, says Patrick Delatour, the country's optimistic tourism minister, who wants to build on Labadie and turn the world's oldest black republic into an important tourist destination.

He realizes, though, that Haiti has a long way to go before it competes with its Caribbean neighbors, who have much more tourist infrastructure and much less insecurity than Haiti. While Cuba, the Dominican Republic and Jamaica have tens of thousands of hotel rooms each, Haiti has just 850 rooms, down from about 4,000 a quarter century ago.

"I'm fighting an uphill battle," Delatour said. "Haiti is a place that is in the news and it's always bad news. We don't help with the development of our own reputation."

Some years back, Royal Caribbean downplayed to passengers that they were visiting Haiti. The stop was referred to as being on Hispaniola, the island that includes both Haiti and the Dominican Republic.

But the Haitian authorities complained, and the company has been more precise to cruise ship passengers.

Any reservations that visitors have about Haiti seem to disappear once they set foot on this idealized patch of the country, which the company calls Labadee.

"You think of Haiti you think of poverty," said Dave Scott, who runs the resort at Labadie for Royal Caribbean. "You think of violence. You think of politics. You think of a suppressed people. But when they actually sail into the bay and they see the pristine sand and the blue seas and the smiling people, their whole attitude changes."

Royal Caribbean temporarily pulled out of Haiti in 2004 after a security guard was shot at the front gate to the Labadie property. The incident was linked to the armed uprising against former President Jean-Bertrand Aristide, who is now in exile in South Africa. But within three months, when the country settled down, the cruise ships were back.

Delatour is trying to build on the 20-year relationship with Royal Caribbean, one of the few bright spots when it comes to Haitian tourism. The government receives \$6 for each of the nearly 40,000 people a month who come ashore at Labadie. And the ships that arrive keep getting larger, with the biggest cruise ship in the world, Freedom of the Sea, making regular stops.

But Delatour wants the visitors to go beyond the fencing. One draw is the Citadelle, a well-preserved mountain fortress dating back to 1817 that still has cannons in place and piles of cannonballs stacked up, as if awaiting the return of Napoleon's forces.

Much of the government's inch-thick master plan for turning the country into a big-league destination can appear fantastical given the reality of the country, which is being propped up by international assistance and still suffers serious bouts of violence, especially in Port-au-Prince, the capital.

Delatour has dreams for an international airport in the north of the country, resort hotels dotting the coastline and tourist revenues, now paltry, shooting through the roof.

Delatour, an architect who specialized in restoring historical sites, scoffs at the pessimists. Jamaica had severe urban violence even as its beach resorts bloomed, he said. The key for Haiti, those promoting tourism here say, is for visitors to avoid the capital for now and head to some of the more tranquil corners of the country.

"Yes, there is violence in Port-au-Prince," he said. "But you could sleep on the beach in Jacmel and you'd be safe."

Haiti was once a place of thriving resorts. Then the AIDs scare in the 1980s and the political instability that came with the ouster of the dictator Jean-Claude Duvalier, known as Baby Doc, in the mid 1980s scared most people away.

The country had a Club Med — "Magic Haiti" it was called — about an hour outside of Port-au-Prince from 1975 until 1986. But political chaos kept it shuttered for nearly a decade. It reopened in 1995, only to close again a few years later.

Local owners are now attempting to revive the resort but it is peacekeeping troops, not tourists, who fill the beach today.

That is also the case at some of the beach clubs on the north coast. Armored personnel carriers fill the parking lots on weekends and soldiers wear bullet proof vests over their bare chests when they head back to base after a day in the surf.

For now, hotel owners are pursuing niche markets, such as surfers looking for undiscovered waves.

The lack of development along much of Haiti's shoreline is seen as a plus for some.

"Here you have a virgin coastline, a beautiful coastline you can do anything with," said Scott of Royal Caribbean.

But running a first-class resort in such an undeveloped part of the earth has its challenges. With no reliable electricity, Labadie has to rely on massive generators. All food served to the passengers who disembark is taken from the ship.

On a recent morning, one passenger was cursing at an employee because he had told her she could not leave the Labadie compound without signing a waiver and presenting her passport, which she had left aboard the cruise ship.

Most passengers, however, seem perfectly content to remain on their isolated cove and get just a passing glimpse of the struggling country.

"I don't want to see poverty," said Helen Murphy, 66, of St. Paul, Minnesota, who was shopping with her husband in the tourist market one morning. "I'm on vacation. I don't want to think that these people don't have enough to eat."

At UN Peacekeeping, Urge To Split and To Downplay in Haiti the Collateral Damage

Byline: Matthew Russell Lee of Inner City Press at the UN

Inner City Press

February 15, 2007

UNITED NATIONS, February 15 -- The UN's Department of Peacekeeping Operations gave two press briefings at Headquarters on Thursday, one on background, the other mostly on the record. Explaining Ban Ki-moon's plan to split the agency in two, a senior UN official who had a part in writing the plan described a future in which a new Department of Field Support would do all procurement for peacekeeping, and even for other UN agencies. Inner City Press asked how this business plan differs from that of the UN Office of Project Services, which markets its procurement and other capabilities to UN agencies like UNDP and also to USAID. The official shot back that UNOPS doesn't do procurement for peacekeeping. But what about the other UN agencies for which the two would then be vying?

The proposal, to be distributed at six p.m. Thursday, Ban Ki-moon states "I intend to examine the possibility of establishing regional procurement offices to significantly enhance the procurement opportunities for development countries and economies in transition... I welcome the opportunity to discuss this and other aspects of this initiative in the current session of the General Assembly." Ban Ki-moon will be speaking before the GA on Friday about this proposed split, which one correspondent diagnosed as being primarily intended to create another Under Secretary General post to give out, to keep at least one more Member State satisfied.

Inner City Press asked if the locations or more detail about these regional opportunities might be dangled in the GA before decision on the split-up of DPKO is voted on. The official demurred. Asked if the proposal is responsive on the issues for which the U.S. General Accounting Office criticized the UN's peacekeeping procurement in April 2006, [click here for that report](#), the official said that the change would address the issues.

The official was asked to describe how the changes, if enacted, would assist particular peacekeeping missions in the field. Two hours later, DPKO offered a media briefing in its 32nd floor Situation Room, with answers by its spokesperson in Haiti, David Wimhurst. Inner City Press followed up on SRSR Mulet's recent statement that when MINUSTAH become aware that it may have killed or injured a non-gang civilian, it makes disclosure to this effect. Inner City Press asked, Where are such disclosure made?

Haiti per MINUSTAH

The spokesman replied that it is difficult to investigate, that bodies are taken away, that supporters of former president Aristide are stoking up media disinformation in the United States. Inner City Press asked how large, in MINUSTAH's estimate, the February 7 pro-Aristide demonstrations were. "Fewer than a thousand people, in Port au Prince," the spokesman said.

In a burst of welcome candor, Mr. Wimhurst agreed to give on-the-record answers to several questions about the political dynamics of the UN Security Council in extending the MINISTAH mission, which was approved Thursday but, in response to concerns raised by China, for only eight

months rather than the requested and recommended year. The spokesman noted that in September 2006, Haiti has sponsored a resolution in the General Assembly about security in Asia, specifically about the Taiwan Straits. While the resolution was not enacted, the spokesman said that China, based on its position on Taiwan, began to speak of vetoing the extension of MINISTA. He said that MINISTAH was involved in finessing and resolution the issue. Mr. David Wimhurst then went off-the-record, as to why Haiti might have sponsored the resolution. We'll have more on this.

Feedback: editorial [at] innercitypress.com

UN Office: S-453A, UN, NY 10017 USA Tel: 212-963-1439

Reporter's mobile: 718-716-3540

Search WWW Search innercitypress.com

At the UN, Happy Talk of Haiti and Hide-the-Ball on Casualties and the Taiwan Factor on MINUSTAH

Byline: Matthew Russell Lee of Inner City Press at the UN: News Analysis

UNITED NATIONS, January 29 -- The dynamic in Haiti, according to Ban Ki-moon's envoy Edmond Mulet, is of heroic and restrained peacekeeping troops, 80% of them from Latin America, confronting gangsters and bandits and practitioners of voodoo. At a UN press conference on Monday, Mr. Mulet said that everyone in Haiti supports the UN mission, which as he describes it is laying medieval siege to Cite Soleil and "squeezing, squeezing," until the gangsters are pushed out. Video here.

Inner City Press asked Mr. Mulet where, if anywhere, the UN mission acknowledges when civilians are killed during flurries of action in this siege. In response, Mr. Mulet gave assurance that such public acknowledgements are made. Afterwards Inner City Press asked his spokeswoman to provide direction to any such disclosures. "Check the mission's site," the spokeswoman said, adding that although she had no business card with her, this too could be found on the web site. The site is slow, only in French, and the press contact page is "en construction," click here to view. So much for acknowledgments.

What's lacking, too, is honesty and humility. Perhaps because Haiti faces such difficulties -- 65% of its governmental budgets comes from international sources -- Mr. Mulet appears to believe that he must peddle in wishful thinking and absolutes. No one in Haiti is a drug addict, he said. And, everyone supports us being there. But there have been demonstrations to try to hold MINUSTAH and its soldiers accountable. Demonstrations of gangsters, Mr. Mulet would say. Some wonder, is this type of demonization consistent with the UN Charter? And why is it that some UN envoys, like Mr. Mulet and envoy to Central African Republic Lamine Cisse, think their job is to come to UN headquarters and paint rosy or cartoon-like Polyanna pictures, whatever the situation on the ground? The incumbent Special Representatives of the Secretary General need to be evaluated and at least graded, if not changed. We'll have more on this in coming weeks.

UN blue helmets in Haiti

A more balanced source, present at Monday's press conference but later requesting anonymity due to UN position, acknowledged that not all those who question MINUSTAH are gangsters, but added that since the kidnapping of a busload of children, more Haitians have accepted continued MINUSTAH presence as necessary, and better than the alternative, for now, if the UN were to leave. Many of the kidnapers, it is said, are Haitians returned from New York and Detroit, who do not speak Creole but rather English (this apparently is the testimony of some of those kidnapped and released). These are the nuances that provide a better justification for MINUSTAH than Mr. Mulet did, at least publicly.

Mr. Mulet also provided a private briefing for the Security Council. Afterwards, he declined to characterize the briefing. Inner City Press asked if the issue of Haiti's support for Taiwan had come up, as explaining China's reported move to problematize the extension of MINUSTAH's mission. "You should ask the Security Council," Mr. Mulet said. And Inner City Press did, asked Russian Ambassador Vitaly Churkin, Council president for two more days, if the issue of Taiwan came up in the Council. He said no, [click here for video](#).

Afterwards another Council diplomat on condition of anonymity acknowledged that Taiwan is the elephant in the Security Council consultations room on Haiti, as it was recently on extended the Liberian diamond sanctions. The diamond issue concerned a move, or comment, by a Kimberly Process staffer in Brussels about perhaps allowing Taiwan into the Process. China opposes countries recognizing Taiwan, and Taiwan's inclusion in any international bodies, including, we're told, the UN press corps. For three months, NTD-TV was allowed in the UN, and then it was stopped. And this is no longer challenged or even discussed.

Perhaps with so much stilted silence, Mr. Mulet's rosy picture should not be a surprise. The question is whether Haiti and Haitians are best served by such partial pictures. Time alone will tell.

As Two UN Peacekeepers Are Killed, UN Says Haiti's Improving, Ban Ki-moon on Zimbabwe?

Byline: Matthew Russell Lee of Inner City Press at the UN

UNITED NATIONS, November 14 -- The UN says things are getting better in Haiti. Days after two UN peacekeepers from Jordan were shot and killed in Port-au-Prince, Inner City Press asked Under-Secretary General for Peacekeeping Jean-Marie Guehenno to describe the level on conflict in Haiti. Mr. Guehenno advised to "look at the statistics, which I don't have at my fingertips today, but show that the number of violent acts per month has decreased." Inner City Press has been given, by the UN in Port-au-Prince, the following numbers for kidnappings in Haiti: June: 30; July: 55; August:78; September: 45; October: 27.

Mr. Guehenno called the two peacekeepers' deaths tragic and said they had been "returning from patrol" when they were "apparently shot at point blank range by..." His voice trailed off. Video [here](#), from Minute 7:05.

When the UN's envoy to Haiti Edmond Mulet came to UN Headquarters in August, he did not speak with reporters. Since then, questions from Inner City Press about shooting by UN peacekeepers have been met with silence or inapposite information. In recent weeks, Inner City Press has asked the UN mission in Haiti to explain the shooting incidents, including the reported killing of three civilians. At first the UN responded with a description of an unrelated, non-lethal UN Day incident:

From: Gaitanis [at] un.org

To: innercitypress.com

Sent: Mon, 30 Oct 2006 7:50 PM

Subject: info on protests in Haiti

Here's what we have on the developments in Haiti: On UN Day and later in the week there were a number of anti-MINUSTAH demonstrations. It began with about 30 students, displaying anti-UN signs and chanting slogans protesting the presence of UN peacekeepers. Some of the demonstrators started to throw stones, breaking the windshield of two UN vehicles parked nearby. By that time, most guests had already left the ceremony. No one was injured.

Later in the afternoon, another group of more agitated demonstrators gathered in the vicinity of the Presidential Palace. Two UN Police vehicles and one UN minibus driving in the area were damaged after receiving stones. Four students were arrested by the Haitian National Police in connection with the incidents... On 27 October, UN peacekeepers reported that 400 people held a peaceful demonstration in the vicinity of Strong Point 16 and Avenue Soleil 9 in Cite Soleil to demand the departure of UN peacekeepers. At one point, some demonstrators tried to force their way into the Strong Point 16 but were prevented from doing so by MINUSTAH troops. The crowd dispersed at about 1:00 pm without incident. According to reports, a second demonstration of some 100 people was held simultaneously in the Drouillard area of Cite Soleil near Checkpoint 20. No incident was reported. As far as we know there were no casualties during any of these incidents, apart from damage inflicted on some of our vehicles.

This was in response to Inner City Press' inquiry about reports of three dead. Subsequently, an Inner City Press reader sent in this picture of demonstrations:

After Inner City Press asked a follow-up question about the shootings, from Port-au-Prince the following arrived:

From: simon5 [at] un.org

To: innercitypress.com

Sent: Mon, 6 Nov 2006 6:20 PM

Subject: Information requested

Part of Minustah's mandate is to bring peace and stability across the country and in Port-au-Prince. As you know we are active in Cite Soleil as well as in many other such places in the capital. Just to give you an example, last Friday, we intervened with the national police (HNP) in order to neutralize armed men who had put together a road block and were firing at different targets inside Martissant, one of the capital's neighborhoods. Minustah's UNPOL (UN policemen) returned fire when they were attacked. The armed men stopped their action when additional Minustah soldiers arrived on location. One civilian was killed. One of our Senegalese policemen was injured during the incident. He was taken to the hospital where he was operated. Also, the following statistics might be of an interest to you. They represent the number of kidnapping incidents in the country :

June: 30; July: 55; August:78; September: 45; October: 27

One reading of these statistics is that the situation in October 2006 was as it had been in June. One hopes that going forward the UN puts updated numbers on its Haiti Mission web site and includes also the number of Haiti civilians killed...

UNspoken truth about gangs in Haiti

Editorial by Kevin Pina

Haiti Action Committee

February 15, 2007

Recent military operations by the United Nations in Cite Soleil expose an underlying strategy based on a set of false assumptions set in motion by Bush administration policy makers through the U.S. Embassy in Haiti. The argument for this strategy goes like this:

Aristide cultivated and armed networks of gangs to harass his opposition and maintain his power. These are the remnants of the same gangs controlling Haiti's largest slum and they continue to receive support from Aristide.

These gangs are behind the large demonstrations that continue to show support for Aristide and his Lavalas movement.

If you remove the gangs, the demonstrations will cease.

The Brazilian generals, who are leading the U.N. military campaign in Haiti, have combined this strategy with tactics they developed to cope with their own "gang" problems in the favelas of Rio and Sao Paulo. This is what created an environment where sweatshop owner Andy Apaid, of the anti-Lavalas "civil society" coalition named the Group 184, could support paramilitary gangs as a countervailing force in the slums of Haiti's capital where support for Aristide remained strong.

It was this grafting of Brazilian tactics and U.S. strategy that led to the arming of the Labanye gang in Cite Soleil in 2004 and the subsequent formation of the infamous Little Machete Army in 2005 by the Haitian police. The U.N. also accommodated known gang members who helped to overthrow Aristide and currently run Haiti's fourth largest city Gonaives. They also failed to disarm Haiti's former brutal military and actually rewarded them with a payoff of \$29.5 million dollars. The U.N.'s political strategy has been to allow these elements to launder their well-deserved reputations as human rights abusers through elections. Although these groups are deemed dormant and/or sufficiently co-opted for the moment, the U.N.'s long sought after brass ring of political stability has consigned future generations of Haitians to the merry-go-round of political instability.

While the U.N. has faithfully executed the Bush administration's strategy of dismembering Aristide's Lavalas movement at any cost to Haitian society, they are also infiltrated by Haiti's wealthy elite who were the real force behind the corporate media's much trumpeted "popular uprising" that ousted Aristide in Feb. 2004. Arguably, it was the small wealthy elite's way of doing business that created the huge chasm between themselves and the majority of Haiti's desperately poor majority and historically gave rise to Aristide and the Lavalas movement.

The mass of the disenfranchised poor saw Aristide and the Lavalas movement as the only political force to ever represent their interests in Haiti's entire history. It is for this reason alone they endured state-sponsored violence and political persecution under the U.S.-installed regime of Gerard Latortue that was provided legitimacy under the aegis of a United Nations Security Council resolution. They continue to this day to risk their lives in demonstrations of support for Aristide and Lavalas in spite of the great toll that has been exacted from them for their belief in Lavalas, whose main tenet was that the poor masses are entitled to play a role in determining the future of Haiti, and by extension, the future of their children.

Massive demonstrations demanding the return of ousted president Jean-Bertrand Aristide throughout Haiti on Feb. 7 went largely unreported by the international corporate media. This stood in contrast to the avalanche of news stories filed two days later when United Nations forces, known by their acronym MINUSTAH, launched yet another in an endless series of military operations in the seaside shantytown of Cite Soleil. Although the raid was ostensibly to rid the neighborhood of gangs, it followed a pattern that pointed back to the overarching strategy already established by the Bush administration.

Prior to this latest UN military offensive in the most desperate slum of Haiti's capital, a pattern had already been established between expressions of support for the ousted president and UN military operations. Last Dec. 16 saw another large demonstration for Aristide that began in Cite Soleil and only six days later the UN would execute a deadly raid that residents and human rights groups say resulted in the wholesale slaughter of innocent victims. Not gang members as the UN would later claim, but unarmed residents trying to flee from gunfire they say came largely from the UN peacekeepers (see victim's list).

Dec. 22, 2006 would be called a second massacre committed by UN forces in Cite Soleil not unlike earlier accusations resulting from a July 6, 2005 military operation. In the carnage that followed July 6, 2005, the UN would claim that only "six bandits" had been killed while local human rights organizations and community activists claimed as many as 70 unarmed residents may have been felled by UN bullets. The UN took it one step further and claimed that although they were unable to ascertain exactly how many people died that day, if residents were killed it was at the hands of gangs seeking retribution against those who they hypothesized had applauded their military operation. For supporters of the ousted president, the July 6, 2005 raid was largely viewed as a preemptive strike by the UN and Haiti's wealthy elite to dampen the impact of protests on Aristide's birthday planned to take place only nine days later on July 15. The parallels between the two events are undeniable and the greatest shame is that not a single international human rights organization, including Amnesty International, ever undertook a serious investigation of these UN military actions despite pleas from the survivors and the families of the victims.

Demonstrations demanding the return of Aristide and justice for the Lavalas political movement will not cease despite UN military operations that target gangs they mistakenly believe are behind them. Despite the propaganda of well-placed journalists who fed into the perception that Lavalas was solely comprised of thugs, the vast majority of the movement were the very same representatives of Haiti's poor majority who are being murdered by UN bullets today.

While many in the corporate media portray the reality of Cite Soleil's population as falling into only two categories, helpless residents caught in the crossfire or gangsters, there is a third force that just will not go away. They are conscious and intelligent and oppose the UN occupation of their country. They do not possess any weapon other than the conviction that Aristide and Lavalas represented them and the best future for their children. The supporters of Aristide and Lavalas believe they have the right to publicly demonstrate their convictions. Unfortunately, the UN has already shown where its position lies in relation to the right of free speech claimed by those who support Aristide and his Lavalas movement.

Not being your garden variety journalist or intellectual here's a few pointers on researching the point of view presented in this editorial:

1. do a google search by entering the words "Labanye, Apaid, Haiti"
2. see <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/americas/6352759.stm> for information on Brazil's strategy in the favelas. Also do a search "Brazil, human rights record"
3. research the archives at www.haitiaction.net
4. be independent and relentless in using the internet as a research tool while it's still available to us — all the information is at your fingertips (for the moment)
5. care enough to make a difference
6. to learn more about the author read "Haiti's Untold Betrayal"

©2007 Haiti Information Project

Jamaica, Haiti guns-for-drugs trade concerns US

Friday | February 16, 2007

Jamaica Gleaner News

Brenda LaGrange Johnson

United States Ambassador to Jamaica, Brenda LaGrange Johnson, says she is concerned about the implications for the island's border security with the flourishing guns-for-drugs trade between Jamaica and Haiti.

Speaking with The Gleaner following the handover of a refurbished 40-foot patrol vessel to the Jamaica Defence Force (JDF) Coastguard Wednesday, Mrs. LaGrange Johnson said, "It is a concern to all of us and I think that many people are concerned about it and are very concerned about a stable government in Haiti."

In recent months local police have expressed concern that the growing guns-for-drugs trade between the two countries was contributing to a large circulation of illegal guns here. Recently, the police recovered a gun which was identified to be the type carried by the Haitian police. Four persons - including two Haitian nationals - suspected to be a part of the illicit trade were arrested earlier this week .

However, Ambassador LaGrange Johnson said her government was committed to providing the JDF Coastguard with more resources to help in border security and combat drug trafficking. "I have to talk to the Admiral (Rear Admiral Hardley Lewin) see what he needs ... we have given these two ships, but I am sure there are more things coming to ensure safety especially with Cricket World Cup arriving," she said. The U.S. Ambassador said her government has committed an additional US\$384,600 (J\$25.8 million) to assist in equipping the JDF this year.

Ambassador LaGrange Johnson handed over the keys to a refurbished Sea Ark Dauntless class vessel to the Rear Admiral Lewin at the HMJS Cagway, the coastguard headquarters, in Port Royal, Wednesday. This is the second patrol vessel donated by the U.S. to the JDF in a year. Both vessels are valued at US\$670,000 (J\$44.8 million).

"We anticipate that the Government of Jamaica will enable maximum use of these vessels by providing the coastguard with sufficient operational resources to meet future challenges," she noted.

Rear Admiral Lewin said the vessel will greatly assist the JDF in patrolling the island's shores.

In the meantime, the military continues to benefit from the cooperation between both countries through training programmes. There are currently 31 members of the JDF engaged in training in the U.S.

Union lobbies for Haiti's education sector
Jamaica Gleaner
Monday | February 19, 2007

KINGSTON (CMC):

The Caribbean Union of Teachers has called on the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) to do more to assist in improving public education in Haiti.

In a letter to CARICOM Chairman Dr. Ralph Gonsalves, following a recently concluded meeting here, the union pointed to the poor condition of public education for the majority of children in the French-speaking Caribbean nation.

This was one of several matters discussed by the association at the Regional Conference on Education in the north-coast resort town of Ocho Rios last month.

"The delegates unanimously agreed that every child in this region and indeed the world deserves opportunities in life and that this opportunity means education," the letter said. "Education is the key that opens the door of opportunity and for thousands of children in Haiti this door is closed.

"We are calling upon all the other members of CARICOM to put pressure on the Government of Haiti to provide quality public education for children of the country," the group said.

The letter also called on all governments in the region to give priority to public education through the provision of adequate funding to the sector.

S. Florida minister and rabbi join to help Haiti's AIDS orphans

By Tim Collie

South Florida Sun-Sentinel

February 19 2007

HOLLYWOOD -- Inspired by a Hollywood man single-handedly supporting Haitian orphans, a minister and a rabbi are leading a Christian-Jewish delegation to Haiti next month to see how they can rescue children left homeless by HIV/AIDS.

The Rev. Kennedy McGowan, of First Presbyterian Church, and Rabbi Allan C. Tuffs, of Temple Beth El, hope their four-day mission will result in the sponsorship of one or more orphanages in Haiti, which has one of the highest rates of HIV infection in the world.

Both became aware of the situation in Haiti after reading the South Florida Sun-Sentinel's four-part series, "AIDS Orphans," which was published in November and December.

Among other efforts, the project profiled the work of Aaron Jackson, 24, an activist with the Homeless Voice organization in Hollywood who has established two small orphanages in Haiti.

Two members of McGowan's congregation have already visited Haiti for a firsthand look at Jackson's work. Jackson also has spoken with members of Temple Beth El.

"These children could have been any one of us. They were just unlucky enough to be born in these circumstances," said Sharon Tanenhaus, who will be making the trip as head of the temple's social action committee. "They were born into the world innocent, and I think that's affected everyone who became aware of Aaron's work.

"Although Aaron Jackson is not Jewish and doesn't know the meaning of tikkun olum [a Hebrew term that means to "repair the world"], he is living it every day," Tanenhaus wrote on the synagogue's Web site after meeting Jackson.

About eight people from the synagogue and church are scheduled to depart on March 5 and return on March 8. They plan to visit orphanages, charities and hospitals in the Haitian capital, Port-au-Prince, and its surrounding slums, where people live on as little as \$1 a day with no access to medical care.

"We know we can't save everyone, but if you can look back a year from now and say that because of your efforts 10 children are alive who wouldn't be, well, that's an incredible result for a church," said McGowan, who has been minister at the church for just 11 months.

The interfaith partnership is the result of conversations between the rabbi and minister, who want to steer their respective congregations toward greater social action. McGowan had been discussing a mission to Africa with his church elders when he read the Sun-Sentinel's series.

Gerald Little, a Miami-Dade County firefighter, and his wife, Kelly, hopped on a plane several weeks after hearing about Jackson's work during a Sun-Sentinel presentation at the church. They flew to the

nation in January to visit the orphanages and the slums, where he found many children living on the streets or in shanties with sick mothers.

"I wanted to get a look for myself at what Aaron was doing, whether he was the real thing or not," said Little, 35, who had done charity work with Haitian students in Miami but had never visited the country. "I can tell you the orphanages he has are just amazing. I was just really surprised at how well-behaved the children were, how they helped each other going to school."

Little and his wife were shocked by the poverty.

"The air down there, I can tell you, is really toxic with fires and trash and dust and everything else down there just blowing around," Little said. "The poverty is immense, and I can tell you these kids on the street aren't going to live very long breathing all of that pollution in these slums."

But the sight of the children at Jackson's orphanage showed them what could be accomplished with few resources.

"You see these kids, how happy they are in the orphanage, and then you realize everything they've been through," Little said. "It just tugs at your heart. Right then and there, my wife and I realized we just had to do something, that now was the time."

McGowan hopes that type of spirit spreads through his congregation. After attending a meeting last year in which rock star Bono issued a call to churches to engage more fully in the world AIDS crisis, McGowan started a series of sermons and discussions with congregants on how to make First Presbyterian a church that would have a major impact in Hollywood.

"We know there's a huge, very serious problem in Haiti, and what we want to find out on this trip is what's the best way we can help," said Tuffs, the rabbi. "I can tell you from conversations I've had here with children and the adults, people are chomping at the bit to help."

Staff Writer Tim Collie can be reached at tcollie@sun-sentinel.com or 954-356-457.

Under the Dome: Price to visit Southwest, then Haiti
News and Observer, NC
Barbara Barrett and Rob Christensen, Staff Writers
Feb 19, 2007

U.S. Rep. David Price, a Chapel Hill Democrat, is leading two delegations on two different congressional trips during Congress' district work period this week.

Price left Friday for a tour through the Southwest as part of his work as chairman of the Appropriations subcommittee that funds homeland security. He planned to visit a U.S.-Mexico border site in Arizona to observe a pilot border security project.

He then was to head to San Diego to see the border and meet with U.S. Customs and Border Patrol agents. He also is scheduled to meet with Coast Guard officials and tour the ports at San Diego and Los Angeles, said his spokesman, Paul Cox.

Price will be joined by Democratic Reps. Bob Filner, Sam Farr and Lucille Roybal-Allard of California; Ciro Rodriguez of Texas and Carolyn Kilpatrick of Michigan.

On Wednesday, Price heads to Haiti for his work as chairman of the House Democracy Assistance Commission. The bipartisan group selected Haiti last year as a partner country in its program of aiding emerging democracies.

In several days of meetings, Price will talk to parliament members about the legislative process and committee structure.

Price will be joined on that trip by Rep. Wayne Gilchrist, a Maryland Republican, and Rep. Bobby Rush, an Illinois Democrat.

Price returns to the United States on Sunday.

'One Step at a Time': An interview with Jean-Bertrand Aristide - Part I

February 21, 2007

By Peter Hallward,

HaitiAnalysis.com

Caribbean Net News

PRETORIA, South Africa: In the mid 1980s, Jean-Bertrand Aristide was a young parish priest working in an impoverished and embattled district of Haiti's capital city Port-au-Prince. A champion of the rights and dignity of the poor, he soon became the spokesman of a growing popular movement against the series of military regimes that ruled Haiti after the collapse in 1986 of the Duvalier dictatorship.

In 1990 he won the country's first democratic presidential elections, with 67% of the vote. Perceived as a threat by Haiti's tiny ruling elite, he was overthrown by a military coup in September 1991. Conflict with that same elite and its army, backed by their powerful allies in the US and France, has shaped the whole of Aristide's political trajectory.

After winning another landslide election victory in 2000, his enemies launched a propaganda campaign to portray him as violent and corrupt. Foreign and elite resistance eventually culminated in a second coup against him, the night of 28 February 2004.

A personal and political ally of the ANC's Thabo Mbeki, Aristide then went into exile in South Africa, where he remains to this day.

Although the situation in Haiti remains tense and UN troops still occupy the country, the worst of the recent violence came to an end in February 2006 when Aristide's old prime minister and ally Rene Preval (who succeeded him as president in 1996) was himself re-elected in a landslide victory. Calls for Aristide's immediate and unconditional return continue to polarise Haitian politics. Many commentators, as well as some prominent members of the current government, acknowledge that if the constitution allowed Aristide to stand for re-election again then he would easily win.

* * * * *

Peter Hallward: Haiti is a profoundly divided country, and you have always been a profoundly divisive figure. For most of the 1990s many sympathetic observers found it easy to make sense of this division more or less along class lines: you were demonised by the rich, and idolised by the poor. But then things started to seem more complicated. Rightly or wrongly, by the end of the decade, many of your original supporters had become more sceptical, and from start to finish your second administration (2001-2004) was dogged by accusations of violence and corruption. Although by every available measure you remained by far the most trusted and popular politician among the Haitian electorate, you appeared to have lost much of the support you once enjoyed among parts of the political class, among aid-workers, activists, intellectuals and so on, both at home and abroad. Most of my questions have to do with these accusations, in particular the claim that as time went on you compromised or abandoned many of your original ideals.

To begin with though, I'd like quickly to go back over some familiar territory, and ask about the process that first brought you to power back in 1990. The late 1980s were a very reactionary period in

world politics, especially in Latin America. How do you account for the remarkable strength and resilience of the popular movement against dictatorship in Haiti, the movement that came to be known as lavalas (a Kreyol word that means 'flood' or 'avalanche', and also a 'mass of people', or 'everyone together')? How do you account for the fact that, against the odds and certainly against the wishes of the U.S., the military and the whole ruling establishment in Haiti, you were able to win the election of 1990?

Jean-Bertrand Aristide: Much of the work had already been done by people who came before me. I'm thinking of people like Father Antoine Adrien and his co-workers, and Father Jean-Marie Vincent, who was assassinated in 1994. They had developed a progressive theological vision that resonated with the hopes and expectations of the Haitian people. Already in 1979 I was working in the context of liberation theology, and there is one phrase in particular that remains etched in my mind, and that may help summarise my understanding of how things stood. You might remember that the Conferencia de Puebla took place in Mexico, in 1979, and at the time several liberation theologians were working under severe constraints. They were threatened and barred from attending the conference. And the slogan I'm thinking of ran something like this: si el pueblo no va a Puebla, Puebla se quedará sin pueblo. If the people cannot go to Puebla, Puebla will remain cut off from the people.

In other words, for me the people remain at the very core of our struggle. It isn't a matter of struggling for the people, on behalf of the people, at a distance from the people; it is the people themselves who are struggling, and it's a matter of struggling with and in the midst of the people.

This ties in with a second theological principle, one that Sobrino, Boff and others understood very well. Liberation theology can itself only be a phase in a broader process. The phase in which we may first have to speak on behalf of the impoverished and the oppressed comes to an end as they start to speak in their own voice and with their own words. The people start to assume their own place on the public stage. Liberation theology then gives way to the liberation of theology. The whole process carries us a long way from paternalism, a long way from any notion of a 'saviour' who might come to guide the people and solve their problems. The priests who were inspired by liberation theology at that time understood that our role was to accompany the people, not to replace them.

The emergence of the people as an organised public force, as a collective consciousness, was already taking place in Haiti in the 1980s, and by 1986 this force was strong enough to push the Duvalier dictatorship from power. It was a grassroots popular movement, and not at all a top-down project driven by a single leader or a single organisation. It wasn't an exclusively political movement, either. It took shape above all through the constitution, all over the country, of many small church communities or ti legliz. It was these small communities that played the decisive historical role. When I was elected president it wasn't a strictly political affair, it wasn't the election of a politician, of a conventional political party. No, it was an expression of a broad popular movement, of the mobilisation of the people as a whole. For the first time, the national palace became a place not just for professional politicians but for the people themselves. The simple fact of allowing ordinary people to enter the palace, the simple fact of welcoming people from the poorest sections of Haitian society within the very centre of traditional power — this was already a profoundly transformative gesture.

PH: You hesitated for some time, before agreeing to stand as a candidate in those 1990 elections. You were perfectly aware of how, given the existing balance of forces, participation in the elections might

dilute or divide the movement. Looking back at it now, do you still think it was the right thing to do? Was there a viable alternative to taking the parliamentary path?

JBA: I tend to think of history as the ongoing crystallisation of different sorts of variables. Some of the variables are known, some are unknown. The variables that we knew and understood at the time were clear enough. We had some sense of what we were capable of, and we also knew that those who sought to preserve the status quo had a whole range of means at their disposal. They had all sorts of strategies and mechanisms -- military, economic, political... -- for disrupting any movement that might challenge their grip on power. But we couldn't know how exactly they would use them. They couldn't know this themselves. They were paying close attention to how the people were struggling to invent ways of organising themselves, ways of mounting an effective challenge. This is what I mean by unknown variables: the popular movement was in the process of being invented and developed, under pressure, there and then, and there was no way of knowing in advance the sort of counter-measures it might provoke.

Now given the balance of these two sorts of variables, I have no regrets. I regret nothing. In 1990, I was asked by others in the movement to accept the cross that had fallen to me. That's how Father Adrien described it, and how I understood it: I had to take up the burden of this cross. 'You are on the road to Calvary', he said, and I knew he was right. When I refused it at first, it was Monsignor Willy Romelus, whom I trusted and still trust, as an elder and as a counsellor, who insisted that I had no choice. 'Your life doesn't belong to you anymore', he said. 'You have given it as a sacrifice for the people. And now that a concrete obligation has fallen on you, now that you are faced with this particular call to follow Jesus and take up your cross, think carefully before you turn your back on it.'

This then is what I knew, and knew full well at the time. It was a sort of path to Calvary. And once I had decided, I accepted this path for what it was, without illusions, without deluding myself. We knew perfectly well that we wouldn't be able to change everything, that we wouldn't be able to right every injustice, that we would have to work under severe constraints, and so on.

Suppose I had said no, I won't stand. How would the people have reacted? I can still hear the echo of certain voices that were asking, 'let's see now if you have the courage to take this decision, let's see if you are too much of a coward to accept this task. You who have preached such fine sermons, what are you going to do now? Are you going to abandon us, or are you going to assume this responsibility so that together we can move forward?' And I thought about this. What was the best way to put the message of the Gospels into practice? What was I supposed to do? I remember how I answered that question, when a few days before the election of December 1990, I went to commemorate the victims of the ruelle de Vaillant massacre, where some twenty people were killed by the Macoutes on the day of the aborted elections of November 1987. A student asked me: 'Father, do you think that by yourself you'll be able to change this situation, which is so corrupt and unjust?' And in reply I said: 'In order for it to rain, do you need one or many raindrops? In order to have a flood, do you need a trickle of water or a river in spate?' And I thanked him for giving me the chance to present our collective mission in the form of this metaphor: it is not alone, as isolated drops of water, that you or I are going to change the situation but together, as a flood or torrent, lavalissement, that we are going to change it, to clean things up, without any illusions that it will be easy or quick.

So were there other alternatives? I don't know. What I'm sure of is that there was then an historic opportunity, and that we gave an historic answer. We gave an answer that transformed the situation. We took a step in the right direction. Of course, in doing so we provoked a response. Our opponents responded with a coup d'etat. First the attempted coup of Roger Lafontant, in January 1991, and when that failed, the coup of September 30th 1991. Our opponents were always going to have disproportionately powerful means of hindering the popular movement, and no single decision or action could have changed this. What mattered was that we took a step forward, a step in the right direction, followed by other steps. The process that began then is still going strong. In spite of everything it is still going strong, and I'm convinced that it will only get stronger. And that in the end it will prevail.

PH: The coup of September 1991 took place even though the actual policies you pursued once in office were quite moderate, quite cautious. So was a coup inevitable? Regardless of what you did or didn't do, was the simple presence of someone like you in the presidential palace intolerable for the Haitian elite? And in that case, could more have been done to anticipate and try to withstand the backlash?

JBA: Well it's a good question. Here's how I understand the situation. What happened in September 1991 happened again in February 2004, and could easily happen again soon, in the future, so long as the oligarchy who control the means of repression use them to preserve a hollow version of democracy. This is their obsession: to maintain a situation that might be called 'democratic', but which consists in fact of a superficial, imported democracy that is imposed and controlled from above. They've been able to keep things this way for a long time. Haiti has been independent for 200 years, and we now live in a country in which just 1% of its people control more than half of its wealth. For the elite, it's a matter of us against them, of finding a way of preserving the massive inequalities that affect every facet of Haitian society. We are subject to a sort of apartheid. Ever since 1804, the elite has done everything in its power to keep the masses at bay, on the other side of the walls that protect their privilege. This is what we are up against. This is what any genuinely democratic project is up against. The elite will do everything in its power to ensure that it controls a puppet president and a puppet parliament. It will do everything necessary to protect the system of exploitation upon which its power depends. Your question has to be addressed in terms of this historical context, in terms of this deep and far-reaching continuity.

PH: Exactly so -- but in that case, what needs to be done to confront the power of this elite? If in the end it is prepared to use violence to counter any genuine threat to their hegemony, what is the best way to overcome this violence? For all its strength, the popular movement that carried you to the presidency wasn't strong enough to keep you there, in the face of the violence it provoked.

People sometimes compare you to Toussaint L'Ouverture, who led his people to freedom and won extraordinary victories under extraordinary constraints -- but Toussaint is also often criticised for failing to go far enough, for failing to break with France, for failing to do enough to keep the people's support. It was Dessalines who led the final fight for independence and who assumed the full cost of that fight. How do you answer those (like Patrick Elie, for instance, or Ben Dupuy) who say you were too moderate, that you acted like Toussaint in a situation that really called for Dessalines? What do you say to those who claim you put too much faith in the U.S. and its domestic allies?

JBA: Well [laughs]. 'Too much faith in the U.S.', that makes me smile... In my humble opinion Toussaint L'Ouverture, as a man, had his limitations. But he did his best, and in reality he did not fail. The dignity he defended, the principles he defended, continue to inspire us today. He was captured, his body was imprisoned and killed, yes; but Toussaint is still alive, his example and his spirit still guide us now. Today the struggle of the Haitian people is an extension of his campaign for dignity and freedom. These last two years, from 2004-2006, they continued to stand up for their dignity and refused to fall to their knees, they refused to capitulate. On 6 July 2005 Cite Soleil was attacked and bombarded, but this attack, and the many similar attacks, did not discourage people from insisting that their voices be heard. They spoke out against injustice. They voted for their president this past February, and this too was an assertion of their dignity; they will not accept the imposition of another president from abroad or above. This simple insistence on dignity is itself an engine of historical change. The people insist that they will be the subject of their history, not its object. As Toussaint was the subject of his history, so too the Haitian people have taken up and extended his struggle, as the subjects of their history.

Again, this doesn't mean that success is inevitable or easy. It doesn't mean we can resolve every problem, or even that once we have dealt with a problem, that powerful vested interests won't try to do all they can to turn the clock back. Nevertheless, something irreversible has been achieved, something that works its way through the collective consciousness. This is precisely the real meaning of Toussaint's famous claim, once he had been captured by the French, that they had cut down the trunk of the tree of liberty but that its roots remained deep. Our struggle for freedom will encounter many obstacles but it will not be uprooted. It is firmly rooted in the minds of the people. The people are poor, certainly, but our minds are free. We continue to exist, as a people, on the basis of this initial prise de conscience, of this fundamental awareness that we are.

It's not an accident that when it came to choosing a leader, this people, these people who remain so poor and so marginalised by the powers that be, should have sought out not a politician but a priest. The politicians had let them down. They were looking for someone with principles, someone who would speak the truth, and in a sense this was more important than material success, or an early victory over our opponents. This is Toussaint's legacy.

As for Dessalines, the struggle that he led was armed, it was a military struggle, and necessarily so, since he had to break the bonds of slavery once and for all. He succeeded. But do we still need to carry on with this same struggle, in the same way? I don't think so. Was Dessalines wrong to fight the way he did? No. But our struggle is different. It is Toussaint, rather than Dessalines, who can still accompany the popular movement today. It's this inspiration that was at work in the election victory of February 2006, that allowed the people to out-fox and out-manoeuvre their opponents, to choose their own leader in the face of the full might of the powers that be.

For me this opens out onto a more general point. Did we place too much trust in the Americans? Were we too dependent on external forces? No. We simply tried to remain lucid, and to avoid facile demagoguery. It would be mere demagoguery for a Haitian president to pretend to be stronger than the Americans, or to engage them in a constant war of words, or to oppose them for opposing's sake. The only rational course is to weigh up the relative balance of interests, to figure out what the Americans want, to remember what we want, and to make the most of the available points of convergence. Take a concrete example, the events of 1994. Clinton needed a foreign policy victory, and a return to

democracy in Haiti offered him that opportunity; we needed an instrument to overcome the resistance of the murderous Haitian army, and Clinton offered us that instrument. This is what I mean by acting in the spirit of Toussaint L'Ouverture. We never had any illusions that the Americans shared our deeper objectives, we knew they didn't want to travel in the same direction. But without the Americans we couldn't have restored democracy.

PH: There was no other option, no alternative to reliance on American troops?

JBA: No. The Haitian people are not armed. Of course there are some criminals and vagabonds, some drug dealers, some gangs who have weapons, but the people have no weapons. You're kidding yourself if you think that the people can wage an armed struggle. We need to look the situation in the eye: the people have no weapons, and they will never have as many weapons as their enemies. It's pointless to wage a struggle on your enemies' terrain, or to play by their rules. You will lose.

PH: Did you pay too high a price for American support? They forced you to make all kinds of compromises, to accept many of the things you'd always opposed -- a severe structural adjustment plan, neo-liberal economic policies, privatisation of the state enterprises, etc. The Haitian people suffered a great deal under these constraints. It must have been very difficult to swallow these things, during the negotiations of 1993.

JBA: Yes of course, but here you have to distinguish between the struggle in principle, the struggle to persist in a preferential option for the poor, which for me is inspired by theology and is a matter of justice and truth, on the one hand, and on the other hand, their political struggle, which plays by different rules. In their version of politics you can lie and cheat if it allows you to pursue your strategic aims. The claim that there were weapons of mass destruction in Iraq, for instance, was a flagrant lie. But since it was a useful way of reaching their objective, Colin Powell and company went down that path.

As for Haiti, back in 1993, the Americans were perfectly happy to agree to a negotiated economic plan. When they insisted, via the IMF and other international financial institutions, on the privatisation of state enterprises, I was prepared to agree in principle, if necessary -- but I refused simply to sell them off, unconditionally, to private investors. I said no to untrammelled privatisation. Now that there was corruption in the state sector was undeniable, but there were several different ways of engaging with this corruption. Rather than untrammelled privatisation, I was prepared to agree to a democratisation of these enterprises. What does this mean? It means an insistence on transparency. It means that some of the profits of a factory or a firm should go to the people who work for it. It means that some of those profits should be invested in things like local schools, or health clinics, so that the children of the workers can derive some benefit from their work. It means creating conditions on the micro level that are consistent with the principles that we want to guide development on the macro level. The Americans said fine, no problem.

We all signed those agreements, and I am at peace with my decision to this day. I spoke the truth. Whereas they signed them in a different spirit. They signed them because by doing so they could facilitate my return to Haiti and thus engineer their foreign policy victory, but once I was back in office, they were already planning to renegotiate the terms of the privatisation. And that's exactly what happened. They started to insist on untrammelled privatisation, and again I said no. They went back on

our agreement, and then relied on a disinformation campaign to make it look like it was me who had broken my word. It's not true. The accords we signed are there, people can judge for themselves. Unfortunately we didn't have the means to win the public relations fight. They won the communications battle, by spreading lies and distorting the truth, but I still feel that we won the real battle, by sticking to the truth.

PH: What about your battle with the Haitian army itself, the army that overthrew you in 1991? The Americans re-made this army in line with their own priorities back in 1915, and it had acted as a force for the protection of those priorities ever since. You were able to disband it just months after your return in 1994, but the way it was handled remains controversial, and you were never able fully to demobilise and disarm the soldiers themselves. Some of them came back to haunt you with a vengeance, during your second administration.

JBA: Again I have no regrets on this score. It was absolutely necessary to disband the army. We had an army of some 7000 soldiers, and it absorbed 40% of the national budget. Since 1915, it had served as an army of internal occupation. It never fought an external enemy. It murdered thousands of our people. Why did we need such an army, rather than a suitably trained police force? So we did what needed to be done.

In fact we did organise a social programme for the reintegration of former soldiers, since they too are members of the national community. They too have the right to work, and the state has the responsibility to respect that right -- all the more so when you know that if they don't find work, they will be more easily tempted to have recourse to violence, or theft, as did the Tontons Macoutes before them. We did the best we could. The problem didn't lie with our integration and demobilisation programme, it lay with the resentment of those who were determined to preserve the old status quo. They had plenty of money and weapons, and they work hand in hand with the most powerful military machine on the planet. It was easy for them to win over some former-soldiers, to train and equip them in the Dominican Republic and then use them to destabilise the country. That's exactly what they did. But again, it wasn't a mistake to disband the army. It's not as if we might have avoided the second coup, the coup of 2004, if we had hung on to the army. On the contrary, if the army had remained in place then Rene Preval would never have finished his first term in office (1996-2001), and I certainly wouldn't have been able to hold out for three years, from 2001 to 2004.

By acting the way we did we clarified the real conflict at issue here. As you know, Haiti's history is punctuated by a long series of coups. But unlike the previous coups, the coup of 2004 wasn't undertaken by the 'Haitian' army, acting on the orders of our little oligarchy, in line with the interests of foreign powers, as happened so many times before, and as happened again in 1991. No, this time these all-powerful interests had to carry out the job themselves, with their own troops and in their own name.

PH: Once Chamblain and his little band of rebels got bogged down on the outskirts of Port-au-Prince and couldn't advance any further, US Marines had to go in and scoop you out of the country.

JBA: Exactly. The real truth of the situation, the real contradiction organising the situation, finally came out in the open, in full public view.

PH: Going back to the mid 1990s for a moment, did the creation of the Fanmi Lavalas party in 1996 serve a similar function, by helping to clarify the actual lines of internal conflict that had already fractured the loose coalition of forces that first brought you to power in 1990? Why were there such deep divisions between you and some of your erstwhile allies, people like Chavannes Jean-Baptiste and Gerard Pierre-Charles? Almost the whole of Preval's first administration, from 1996 to 2000, was hampered by infighting and opposition from Pierre-Charles and the OPL. Did you set out, then, to create a unified, disciplined party, one that could offer and then deliver a coherent political programme?

JBA: No, that's not the way it happened. In the first place, by training and by inclination I was a teacher, not a politician. I had no experience of party politics, and was happy to leave to others the task of developing a party organisation, of training party members, and so on. Already back in 1991, I was happy to leave this to career politicians, to people like Gerard Pierre-Charles, and along with other people he began working along these lines as soon as democracy was restored. He helped found the Organisation Politique Lavalas (OPL) and I encouraged people to join it. This party won the 1995 elections, and by the time I finished my term in office, in February 1996, it had a majority in parliament. But then, rather than seek to articulate an ongoing relation between the party and the people, rather than continue to listen to the people, after the elections the OPL started to pay less attention to them. It started to fall into the traditional patterns and practices of Haitian politics. It started to become more closed in on itself, more distant from the people, more willing to make empty promises, and so on. As for me I was out of office, and I stayed on the sidelines. But a group of priests who were active in the Lavalas movement became frustrated, and wanted to restore a more meaningful link with the people. They wanted to remain in communion with the people. At this point (in 1996) the group of people who felt this way, who were unhappy with the OPL, were known as la nebuleuse -- they were in an uncertain and confusing position. Over time there were more and more such people, who became more and more dissatisfied with the situation.

We engaged in long discussions about what to do, and Fanmi Lavalas grew out of these discussions. It emerged from the people themselves. And even when it came to be constituted as a political organisation, it never conceived of itself as a conventional political party. If you look through the organisation's constitution, you'll see that the word 'party' never comes up. It describes itself as an organisation, not a party. Why? Because in Haiti we have no positive experience of political parties; parties have always been instruments of manipulation and betrayal. On the other hand, we have a long and positive experience of organisation, of popular organisations -- the ti legliz, for instance.

So no, it wasn't me who 'founded' Fanmi Lavalas as a political party. I just brought my contribution to the formation of this organisation, which offered a platform for those who were frustrated with the party that was the OPL (which was soon to re-brand itself as the neo-liberal Organisation du Peuple en Lutte), those who were still active in the movement but who felt excluded within it. Now in order to be effective Fanmi Lavalas needed to draw on the experience of people who knew something of politics, people who could act as political leaders without abandoning a commitment to truth. This is the hard problem, of course. Fanmi Lavalas doesn't have the strict discipline and coordination of a political party. Some of its members haven't yet acquired the training and the experience necessary to preserve both a commitment to truth and an effective participation in politics. For us, politics is deeply connected to ethics, this is the crux of the matter. Fanmi Lavalas is not an exclusively political organisation. That's why no politician has been able simply to appropriate and use Fanmi Lavalas as a

springboard to power. That will never be easy: the members of Fanmi Lavalas insist on the fidelity of their leaders.

PH: That's a lesson that Marc Bazin, Louis-Gerald Gilles and a few others had to learn during the 2006 election campaign, to their cost.

JBA: Exactly.

PH: To what extent, however, did Fanmi Lavalas then become a victim of its own success? Rather like the ANC here in South Africa, it was obvious from the beginning that Fanmi Lavalas would be more or less unbeatable at the polls. But this can be a mixed blessing. How did you propose to deal with the many opportunists who immediately sought to worm their way into your organisation, people like Dany Toussaint and his associates?

JBA: I left office early in 1996. By 1997, Fanmi Lavalas had emerged as a functional organisation, with a clear constitution. This was already a big step forward from 1990. In 1990, the political movement was largely spontaneous; in 1997 things were more coordinated. Along with the constitution, at the first Fanmi Lavalas congress we voted and approved the programme laid out in our *Livre Blanc: Investir dans l'humain*, which I know you're familiar with. This programme didn't emerge out of nothing. For around two years we held meetings with engineers, with agronomists, with doctors, teachers, and so on. We listened and discussed the merits of different proposals. It was a collective process. The *Livre Blanc* is not a programme based on my personal priorities or ideology. It's the result of a long process of consultation with professionals in all these domains, and it was compiled as a truly collaborative document. And as even the World Bank came to recognise, it was a genuine programme, a coherent plan for the transformation of the country. It wasn't a bundle of empty promises.

Now in the midst of these discussions, in the midst of the emergent organisation, it's true that you will find opportunists, you will find future criminals and future drug-dealers. But it wasn't easy to identify them. It wasn't easy to find them in time, and to expel them in time, before it was too late. Most of these people, before gaining a seat in parliament, behaved perfectly well. But you know, for some people power can be like alcohol: after a glass, two glasses, a whole bottle... you're not dealing with the same person. It makes some people dizzy. These things are difficult to anticipate. Nevertheless, I think that if it hadn't been for the intervention of foreign powers, we would have been able to make real progress. We had established viable methods for collaborative discussion, and for preserving direct links with the people. I think we would have made real progress, taking small but steady steps.

Even in spite of the aid embargo we managed to accomplish certain things. We were able to invest in education, for instance. As you know, in 1990 there were only 34 secondary schools in Haiti; by 2001 there were 138. The little that we had to invest, we invested it in line with the programme laid out in *Investir dans l'humain*. We built a new university at Tabarre, a new medical school. Although it had to run on a shoestring, the literacy programme we launched in 2001 was also working well; Cuban experts who helped us manage the programme were confident that by December 2004 we'd have reduced the rate of adult illiteracy to just 15%, a small fraction of what it was a decade earlier. Previous governments never seriously tried to invest in education, and it's clear that our programme was always going to be a threat to the status quo. The elite want nothing to do with popular education, for obvious reasons. Again it comes down to this: we can either set out from a position of genuine

freedom and independence, and work to create a country that respects the dignity of all its people, or else we will have to accept a position of servile dependence, a country in which the dignity of ordinary people counts for nothing. This is what's at stake here.

PH: Armed then with its programme, Fanmi Lavalas duly won an overwhelming victory in the legislative elections of May 2000, winning around 75% of the vote. No one disputed the clarity and legitimacy of the victory. But your enemies in the U.S. and at home soon drew attention to the fact that the method used to calculate the number of votes needed to win some senate seats in a single round of voting (i.e. without the need for a run-off election between the two most popular candidates) was at least controversial, if not illegitimate. They jumped on this technicality in order to cast doubt on the validity of the election victory itself, and used it to justify an immediate suspension of international loans and aid. Soon after your own second term in office began (in February 2001), the winners of these seats were persuaded to stand down, pending a further round of elections. But this was a year after the event; wouldn't it have been better to resolve the matter more quickly, to avoid giving the Americans a pretext to undermine your administration before it even began?

JBA: I hope you won't mind if I take you up on your choice of verbs: you say that we gave the Americans a pretext. In reality the Americans created their pretext, and if it hadn't been this it would have been something else. Their goal all along was to ensure that come January 2004, there would be no meaningful celebration of the bicentenary of independence. It took the U.S. 58 years to recognise Haiti's independence, since of course the U.S. was a slave-owning country at the time, and in fact U.S. policy has never really changed. Their priorities haven't changed, and today's American policy is more or less consistent with the way it's always been. The coup of September 1991 was undertaken by people in Haiti with the support of the U.S. administration, and in February 2004 it happened again, thanks to many of these same people.

No, the U.S. created their little pretext. They were having trouble persuading the other leaders in CARICOM to turn against us (many of whom in fact they were never able to persuade), and they needed a pretext that was clear and easy to understand. 'Tainted elections', it was the perfect card to play. But I remember very well what happened when they came to observe the elections. They came, and they said 'very good, no problem'. Everything seemed to go smoothly, the process was deemed peaceful and fair. And then as the results came in, in order to undermine our victory, they asked questions about the way the votes were counted. But I had nothing to do with this. I wasn't a member of the government, and I had no influence over the CEP (Provisional Electoral Council), which alone has the authority to decide on these matters. The CEP is a sovereign, independent body. The CEP declared the results of the elections; I had nothing to do with it. Then once I had been re-elected, and the Americans demanded that I dismiss these senators, what was I supposed to do? The constitution doesn't give the president the power to dismiss senators who were elected in keeping with the protocol decided by the CEP. Can you imagine a situation like this back in the U.S. itself? What would happen if a foreign government insisted that the president dismiss an elected senator? It's absurd. The whole situation is simply racist, in fact; they impose conditions on us that they would never contemplate imposing on a 'properly' independent country, on a white country. We have to call things by their name: is the issue really a matter of democratic governance, of the validity of a particular electoral result? Or is actually about something else?

In the end, what the Americans wanted to do was to use the legislature, the senate, against the executive. They hoped that I would be stupid enough to insist on the dismissal of these elected senators. I refused to do it. In 2001, as a gesture of goodwill, these senators eventually chose to resign on the assumption that they would contest new elections as soon as the opposition was prepared to participate in them. But the Americans failed to turn the senate and the parliament against the presidency, and it soon became clear that the opposition never had the slightest interest in new elections. Once this tactic failed, however, they recruited or bought off a few hotheads, including Dany Toussaint and company, and used them, a little later, against the presidency.

Once again, the overall objective was to undermine the celebration of our bicentenary, the celebration of our independence and of all its implications. When the time came they sent emissaries to Africa, especially to francophone Africa, telling their leaders not to attend the celebrations. Chirac applied enormous pressure on his African colleagues; the Americans did the same. Thabo Mbeki was almost alone in his willingness to resist this pressure, and through him the African Union was represented. I'm very glad of it. The same pressure was applied in the Caribbean: the prime minister of the Bahamas, Perry Christie, decided to come, but that's it, he was the only one. It was very disappointing.

To be continued tomorrow...

Editor's note: This interview was conducted in French, in Pretoria, on 20 July 2006; it was translated and edited by Peter Hallward, professor of philosophy at Middlesex University. An abbreviated version of the interview appeared in the *London Review of Books* 29:4 (22 February 2007), http://www.lrb.co.uk/v29/n04/hall02_.html. The text of the complete interview will appear as an appendix to Hallward's forthcoming book *Damming the Flood: Haiti, Aristide and the Politics of Containment*, due out from Verso in the summer of 2007.

In Haiti Kill the Poor, Leave Right-Wing Death Squads Untouched

by Ben Terrell

Global Research.ca

February 18, 2007

The United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) has been blatant in its support of rightwing forces, including the Haitian police, and has been systematic in carrying out human rights abuses against the poor people of Haiti, supporters of Aristide and his Lavalas party, writes Ben Terrell.

As Kofi Annan moves on to life after the UN, it's important to look at the less-discussed 'regime change' which the Bush administration engineered with Annan's help. The outgoing secretary-general's supporters argue he did what he could to register disapproval of the Iraq invasion, but in the case of Haiti, he actually helped facilitate a bloodthirsty imperial agenda.

MINUSTAH, the UN mission to Haiti, was put in place to support the illegal post-coup regime which ousted the democratically elected government of President Jean-Bertrand Aristide in February 2004. Countries participating in the UN's Haiti mission, whose mandate is currently up for renewal, curried favour with Washington, thereby repairing Iraq war-related rifts with the Bush administration. Brazil's participation was seen by many observers as part of its bid to gain a seat on the UN Security Council.

Brian Concannon, director of the Institute for Justice and Democracy in Haiti and a former UN human rights observer in Haiti, points out that 'until 2004, the UN, for good reasons, only deployed peacekeepers where there was a peace agreement to enforce. Only in Haiti has the Security Council deployed blue helmets to enforce a coup d'etat against an elected government. With the MIF [Multinational Interim Force] and then MINUSTAH, the UN abandoned a half-century of principles and common sense, with predictable results.' Since replacing the US marines in July 2004, the UN troops have supported the Haitian police in crackdowns on the urban-poor supporters of Aristide and his Lavalas party.

Brian Concannon notes, 'In contrast to its decisive action in Cite Soleil, MINUSTAH has been tolerant of right-wing paramilitary groups. For months after its deployment, MINUSTAH declined to dislodge the paramilitary groups that helped to overthrow the government from police stations. In August 2005 a paramilitary group called the Little Machete Army killed dozens of spectators at a soccer game in broad daylight near a MINUSTAH observation post. MINUSTAH never tried to stop the massacre or pursue paramilitary members, even though the group has terrorised the Grande Ravine area for two years.'

Since February 2004, thousands of non-violent activists and other civilians have been killed, arrested, tortured and exiled by the post-coup regime, which the UN mission in effect was set up to support. This essential fact rarely appears in media analysis of Haiti, so few in the US understand why some have taken up arms to defend their neighbourhoods. In defence of ongoing military operations in the poorest neighbourhoods of Port-au-Prince, UN commanders in Haiti claim they only launch assaults after they have been fired at. But during a week-long August 2006 visit to Haiti's capital, I was told otherwise.

I witnessed a 24 August UN operation in Simon Pele (a community bordering the sprawling seaside shantytown Cite Soleil) which was stunning in its disregard of the dangers of using heavy calibre weapons in a densely populated area. Such operations had been carried out in Simon Pele throughout August in a UN campaign to 'secure' the area. Video footage taken by a photographer also on the scene shows a Brazilian soldier firing from the top of an armoured personnel carrier. I witnessed Brazilian troops running from two armoured personnel carriers into Simon Pele. The soldiers within the neighbourhood were also firing their weapons.

One of those shots killed a young man whose mother I spoke to four days later. Adacia Samedy told me how her son Wildert was fixing a radio on the roof of their family home when UN snipers shot him in the operation. Ms. Samedy told me, 'My message to the UN is: Thank you for killing my son. I don't see the sense in their work, they come in, shoot, and people passing can get shot.' I asked her if any UN personnel had returned to see if civilians were killed, or to offer any assistance. Nobody with the UN had offered so much as a basic acknowledgement of her loss. Queries I have directed to UN spokespeople about the killing of Wildert Samedy remain unanswered.

Another family, that of wheelchair-bound civilian William Mercy, told me they were similarly ignored by the UN after a raid on their section of the Bel Air neighbourhood in Port-au-Prince. Brazilian UN troops swept through the alley outside their home in June 2005 and shot the top of Mercy's head off, later killing several other unarmed civilians the same day.

I interviewed an older gentleman who was moving his family out of the area, which he told me holds nothing but misery for local youth. I asked him about armed groups the UN claimed it was fighting. He said, 'I can't say anything about that,' but that many people had been shot and killed by the UN in the neighbourhood. None were linked to any armed groups, all were 'workers'.

Near the bullet-riddled dwelling from which he was pulling out furniture was a church pockmarked by gunfire from UN forces. A Haitian journalist told me the UN claimed there were armed gang members in the church, but that, given the seriousness with which residents feel about Catholicism, no armed combatants would use such a sanctuary for a hideout. A school on the same side of the street was also destroyed by high calibre guns.

In 2005, Harvard Law Student Advocates for Human Rights and Brazil's Global Justice Centre concluded, 'MINUSTAH has provided cover for abuses committed by the HNP [Haitian national police] during operations in poor, historically tense Port-au-Prince neighbourhoods. Rather than advising and instructing the police in best practices, and monitoring their missteps, MINUSTAH has been the midwife of their abuses.'

Several months earlier, a University of Miami Law School report concluded, 'Both forces admitted that it is a confusing "free for all" when the HNP conduct an operation in a poor neighbourhood because there are no radios shared by HNP and the MINUSTAH forces and, even if there were radios, nobody speaks the same language. On a neighbourhood operation, they admitted, there is no clear strategy or objective, but operations devolve into "just shoot before you get shot".'

In 2004 and 2005 UN troops repeatedly stood by as Haitian police opened fire on non-violent protesters demanding the return of Aristide. In April 2005, Amnesty International noted that 'Haitian

national police officers (HNP) reportedly used live ammunition against Lavalas supporters as they peacefully demonstrated against the United Nations mission headquarters in Boudon, Port-au-Prince.’

But just allowing Haitian police to kill civilians was not enough for prominent rightwing figures in Port-au-Prince. In meetings with UN officials, the elite-owned media and veteran anti-Aristide figures pushed a steady drumbeat of demonisation of poor neighbourhoods that one Haitian activist told me reminded him of propaganda disseminated before the 1994 Rwanda genocide. In January 2006 Reginald Boulos, president of the Haitian Chamber of Commerce and a key supporter of the 2004 coup, told Radio Metropole, ‘You cannot make an omelette without breaking eggs. We think that MINUSTAH’s generals need to make plans to limit collateral damage. But we in the private sector are ready to create a social assistance fund to help all those who would be innocent victims of a necessary and courageous action that should be carried out in Cite Soleil. ... When terrorists occupy some lawless zones, there are always innocent victims.’ Elsewhere in the interview Boulos called on UN troops to help police ‘neutralise all the armed criminals and terrorists who are terrorising the metropolitan area.’

Most poor adults in Haiti have strong memories of death squad terror during the first anti-Aristide coup in 1991–1994, which killed around 5,000 people. That history was frequently referred to as a ‘Solidarity Encounter With the Haitian People’ which Lavalas activists staged in Port-au-Prince in August 2006. The conference brought international visitors to share political insights and experiences with Haitians struggling on the ground. Jacques Depelchin, author of ‘Silences in African History: Between the Syndrome of Discovery and Abolition,’ and executive director of the Ota Benga Alliance for Peace, Healing and Dignity in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, spoke several times at the conference. He told me, ‘It is important for people to understand that Aristide and Lavalas members are connected through generations to the successful slave revolution of 200 years ago.’ Later, as we shared a car together in Port-au-Prince, he told me, ‘the problem of Haiti is really a structural one: they are not supposed to have succeeded or, worse, to have survived and still be resisting’.

As to the ‘great powers’, Depelchin said, ‘one should not harbour illusions: [the UN] is a club of states, structures which cannot even respect their own conventions (for example, the Convention Against Genocide, passed in 1948). In case the UN falters, there is now the G8 to make sure that ultimate power rests with the most powerful. Radicals around the world need to think in terms of the kind of emancipatory politics which drove the slaves to overthrow the system as it was then known. Democracy à la US/France/Canada is consensus politics around an agenda set up by financial and economic interests. That agenda is to ensure that what happened between 1791 and 1804 is forgotten forever or, if remembered at all, is a history written and propagated by the current powers that be.’

Haitian revolutionary leader Touissant L’Overture once wrote that any effort by plantation owners to reimpose slavery ‘would be to attempt the impossible: we have known how to face dangers to obtain our liberty, we shall know how to brave death to maintain it’.

Rene Civil, a Lavalas leader who spent much of the coup period in exile, struck a similar chord at the solidarity encounter, when he said: ‘The people of Haiti, who believe in freedom, who have tasted freedom, will never accept this criminal, slaving system.’ Civil also denounced the global system ‘which causes economic, political, military and social war on the people of the world’, and prevents poor nations like Haiti from exercising their independence.

Rene Civil was arrested shortly after I saw him speak at the conference, on charges Brian Concannon describes as 'dubious'. Initially claiming that Civil was just being brought in for routine questioning, the authorities have moved the activist to Port-au-Prince's downtown penitentiary. Dissidents in Haiti both fear for Civil's safety there and worry that his arrest may signal a new round of judicial harassment of activists.

Dave Welsh, a US trade unionist who attended the solidarity conference, told me, 'Haiti is still under military occupation. The occupiers hope the UN label will give a fig leaf of legitimacy to French, US and Canadian plans to benefit from the nation's labour and resources, control the Haitian state, and prevent any restoration of Haitian sovereignty and democracy. Countries like Brazil, who provide the UN troops that are brazenly and repeatedly killing civilians in their homes, undoubtedly have their own reasons for two years of willing support for this brutal occupation.' Welsh was also in Haiti in July 2005 as part of a labour and human rights delegation which documented the aftermath of a massacre in which Brazilian troops killed up to 60 Cite Soleil residents in the midst of targeting a Lavalas militant and community leader. (I also spoke to survivors of that massacre, including a pregnant woman who was fired upon by UN troops in a helicopter. She lost her baby but was saved by Doctors Without Borders.)

Brian Concannon told me that in recent conversations, he has heard 'over and over from poor Haitians that they wanted disarmament in their neighbourhoods, but in tandem with disarmament in the wealthy neighbourhoods that are the main source of guns that get to the slums, and the disarmament of death squads and former soldiers who kill Lavalas supporters with impunity.'

Concannon adds, 'If the MINUSTAH operations really aimed to establish law and order, they would start by obeying the law: making legal arrests of those suspected of possessing guns, with a valid judicial warrant, rather than undertaking deadly indiscriminate attacks on poor neighbourhoods.'

But the UN shows no interest in following that direction. On 19 August, Amaral Duclona, a spokesman for armed groupings in Cite Soleil opposed to coup forces, told Reuters, 'UN troops don't want peace and disarmament because they want a justification for their presence here.' Duclona asked, 'How can we hand over our weapons while UN troops continue to conduct heavy attacks against us?'

On 19 October 2006 Brazilian troops levelled dwellings in Cite Soleil to widen a road, and as angry residents demonstrated to stop the project, soldiers opened fire and killed at least three people. Two months later, the San Francisco Bay Area-based Haiti Action Committee, which keeps close daily contact with activists and human rights observers in Port-au-Prince, stated, 'In the early morning of Friday 22 December, starting at approximately 3 a.m., 400 Brazilian-led UN occupation troops in armoured vehicles carried out a massive assault on the people of Cite Soleil, laying siege yet again to the impoverished community.'

Eyewitness reports said a wave of indiscriminate gunfire from heavy weapons began about 5 a.m. and continued for much of the day. Referring to UN soldiers and Haitian police, Cite Soleil resident Rose Martel told Reuters, 'They came here to terrorise the population. I don't think they really killed any bandits, unless they consider all of us as bandits.' The Institute for Justice and Democracy in Haiti estimates more than 20 civilians were killed, including elderly and children. A US doctor who

interviewed survivors after the assault was told by survivors that ‘a UN helicopter circled [Cite] Soleil and fired bullets down on the homes of thousands of people’.

The 22 December operation was partly in response to a sustained campaign of rightwing pressure which blamed alleged gang leaders in Cite Soleil for kidnappings in Haiti. But Lovinsky Pierre-Antoine, coordinator of the September 30 Foundation, an organisation which supports victims of the first and second coups against Aristide, told me that the most widely covered kidnapping in the two weeks before the 22 December attack, that of anti-Lavalas Senator Andre Riche, was ‘political theatre’. Lovinsky told me that rightwing media outlets broadcast inflammatory editorials about the kidnapping without asking many essential questions, including why the heavily armed bodyguards of the prominent anti-Lavalas politicians kidnapped did not have their weapons taken away, and how the politicians managed to escape unscathed from captivity. Lovinsky points out that the media outlets calling for crackdowns on Cite Soleil ‘are in full support of Michael Lucius’, the former central director of the judicial police implicated in kidnapping operations.

The Haiti Action Committee noted, ‘The kidnapers are mostly well connected to the business elite and coup regime. Even Police Chief Andresol admits the national police are involved in much of the crime wave, including kidnappings.’ Canadian journalist Anthony Fenton spoke with ‘numerous sources’ (who could not go on the record due to security concerns) that connected Senator Youri Latortue, nephew of post-coup regime Prime Minister Gerard Latortue, to kidnapping rings. In August 2005 prominent businessman Stanley Handal was arrested for involvement in kidnapping; the Haiti Information Project reported, ‘Handal is a member of one of Haiti’s wealthiest families that supported the ousting of Aristide in 1991 and 2004. He was initially arrested along with eight members of Haiti’s police force for running a kidnapping ring after he attempted to use a stolen credit card taken from one of his victims. The judge who released them, Jean Péres Paul, is responsible for keeping Father Gerard Jean-Juste behind bars and for the arrest of journalists Kevin Pina and Jean Ristil on 9 September. The police officer responsible for the initial investigation into Handal’s case has reportedly been forced into hiding.’

Hopes for progressive change in Haiti were buoyed with the election of Rene Preval on 7 February 2006. Preval’s success was a victory against long odds by the popular movement which first swept Jean-Bertrand Aristide into office in 1990. Preval, who served as Haiti’s second democratically elected president from 1996 to 2001, ran with Espwa (Creole for ‘hope’), a party hastily assembled for the elections with little organising capacity. Because of the post-coup government’s refusal to release political prisoners and its continued repression of Lavalas, Aristide’s party (by far the largest political formation in Haiti, did not officially field candidates in the presidential election.)

But a year later, the police, the judiciary, and other ministries in Preval’s government remain controlled by coup figures, and major media are run by rightwing elites. Though Preval helped achieve the release of prominent political prisoners such as Annetee Auguste (‘So Anne’), Yvon Neptune, and others, hundreds of political prisoners illegally jailed by the coup regime remain behind bars. Preval also has little control over the UN mission.

In a 19 December 2006 report on the UN mission in Haiti, Annan recommended an extension of MINUSTAH’s mandate beyond 15 February 2007. Annan’s report gave no acknowledgement of charges of sexual abuse of Haitian women and girls by UN troops, or of documented killings of

civilians in military assaults. Annan states, 'The Mission's continued deployment will be essential, since destabilizing forces continue to use violence to attain their objectives.'

But UN representatives seem disinterested in anti-Lavalas violence. A study published on 30 August 2006 in the prestigious medical journal 'The Lancet' concluded that in the 22 months after Aristide's removal there were 8,000 murders and 35,000 sexual assaults in the greater Port-au-Prince area alone. More than 50 per cent of these murders were attributed to anti-Aristide and anti-Lavalas factions including armed anti-Lavalas groups, demobilised army members and government security forces. The report also stated that UN soldiers 'were identified by respondents as having issued death threats, threats of physical injury, and threats of sexual violence'.

The report's co-author, Athena Kolbe, told me, 'We notified more than a dozen UN staffers in Haiti of the report during last summer and told them that we would be in the country and available to share an advance copy of the report with them and discuss it if they had any questions. We had no response before or during the trip from anyone associated with MINUSTAH ... [W]e got an email message from a UN staff person declining to meet with us, stating that she was busy and saying, "I don't know that you have anything of relevant [sic] to share with us".'

In early January, Brazilian Major General Carlos Alberto Dos Santos became the fourth commander of the UN force in Haiti (consisting of 8,360 total uniformed personnel, as of 30 November 2006). Dos Santos said, 'We are going to work in the same way as we have worked before. Nothing has changed about our mission or our obligations.' Since Dos Santos made that commitment, UN military operations have continued. Among the civilians killed by UN gunfire in these attacks, as reported by the Haiti Information Project, are seven-year-old Stephanie Lubin, four-year-old Alexandra Lubin, and nine-year-old Boadley Bewence Germain.

Lovinsky Pierre-Antoine and other activists point to the unabated UN killings of civilians in their campaign against a renewal of the MINUSTAH mandate.

Ben Terrell is a San Francisco-based writer who has visited Haiti four times since the 2004 coup which drove the democratically-elected Aristide government from office.

Yacht Captain arrested for transporting Haitians
Yachtbuddy weblog
February 21, 2007

The French Captain of a vessel which ran aground last week on Cades Reef, Antigua, has been found and arrested. Chief Immigration Officer Lt. Col. Clyde Walker confirmed the arrest of Frederick Pascouaud of the yacht 'Camerone'. The Captain abandoned the yacht and 5 Haitians after striking the reef. He left in the yacht's tender. The Coast Guard boarded the yacht and turned over the Haitians to Immigration Officials. The Haitians had been picked up in Dominica and were to be taken to French St. Martin. Smuggling Haitians has become a big criminal activity in the Caribbean. The Haitians had managed to get out of Haiti and live in Dominica for several years thanks to limited visa restrictions.

As Haiti stabilizes, progress still slow

A year after presidential elections, Haiti is enjoying political stability but struggling with democracy.

BY JACQUELINE CHARLES

Miami Herald

February 16, 2007

PORT-AU-PRINCE - For the first time in years, Haiti is enjoying relative political stability.

There is not-so-good news as well. Progress has been slow, frustrations are growing, international donors are complaining and lawmakers are bickering. Crime remains high, and the slow pace of government may be steering the nation back toward paralysis.

"We are building a country, and it's not easy," said Prime Minister Jacques-

Edouard Alexis, defending the government. "I don't think there is a form of government as difficult as a democracy."

But confounding problems face President René Préal. Following his election a year ago this month, Préal formed a coalition government in hopes of avoiding a repeat of what happened during his first presidential term from 1996 to 2001, when a nonfunctioning parliament paralyzed his government.

"The problems in Haiti are so enormous that you could justify prioritizing almost every one at the top of the list," said former Florida Sen. Bob Graham.

"But you cannot put 50 items at the top of the list," Graham said, echoing criticisms that the government's priorities change from meeting to meeting and lack strategies for implementation.

"Initially Préal said education; six months later, roads, roads, roads. There needs to be a commitment to a clearly articulated short list of priorities and then demonstrate the ability to organize and get something done," Graham said.

Graham, who visited here in October, said he has been waiting months for a list of what kind of experts the government needs as part of a planned \$10 million effort to recruit Haitians in the United States and Canada to work in Haiti. The program is being funded by the Inter-American Development Bank.

"We are ready to go to be of assistance, but we still haven't gotten that list of requirements," Graham told The Miami Herald.

Alexis said the criticisms are unwarranted. Haiti, he said, is still waiting on donors to turn over "the kind of dollars they need to give for the country to develop."

"President Préal and I have defined where we want to go," he told The Miami Herald. "I don't believe they have a problem with our priorities. I believe it's their bureaucracy."

Donors publicly downplay concerns, preferring to tout their aid programs, including almost \$10 million to train parliament members. Privately, however, they say they are telling Préval and Alexis to get moving or risk losing badly needed dollars.

Victor Benoit, head of one of the six major political parties in Préval's fragile coalition government, agrees. "The population doesn't have the sense that the government is moving forward," he said.

Alexis acknowledged that little progress has trickled down to the people, but he listed several government advances:

- For the past two weeks, Préval has been meeting at 5 p.m. every day with Alexis and cabinet ministers, asking for updates on projects and pledged dollars.

"Before the elections you had political fragmentation. Today, we have a government capable of governing," said Albert Ramdin, assistant secretary general of the Organization of American States. "There is an active engagement of people in the process."

- Graduated 500 new Haitian National Police officers to help fight the wave of kidnappings and other crimes gripping the capital, and began tough vetting of police officers for signs of corruption. Both the government and the U.N. peacekeeping mission here have beefed up efforts to reclaim chunks of the city once controlled by armed gangs.

"Haiti today is horrible, the level of violence, kidnappings, corruption," said Edmond Mulet, head of the U.N. mission here. "But if you compare the picture of Haiti today with a year ago, it's a very positive evolution. It's very complicated, difficult. It will be better."

- Formed a task force to help Haiti take advantage of HOPE, a U.S. bill for duty-free textile exports approved by Congress last December and expected to create thousands of jobs in the poverty-stricken nation of eight million.

Préval has remained relatively silent amid the burgeoning complaints, choosing instead to run public service TV and radio announcements telling Haitians to respect one another.

Determined not to return the government to paralysis, he has instructed Alexis to prevent a clash with parliament. But with most of the lawmakers being first-time politicians and new to their duties and powers, some Haitians say clashes are inevitable.

Préval will have to do more than just take out ads, some analysts say. He'll have to shake things up, replacing ineffective ministers.

"We have political peace," said Jean-Marie Pierre, 20, who lives in the Bel Air neighborhood, near the presidential palace. "But the people are dying from hunger; dying from misery. This country is finished, completely broken."

Said Léon Saint-Louis, a professor of public law at the State University of Haiti: "The population is losing confidence. They don't see them working, they only see them fighting," he said.

Opposition Sen. Rudy Boulos said he doesn't share the anxiety about the 129-member parliament. It's growing pains, he said.

"They have slipped up a little bit, gotten into fights that took their time and were not vital neither for democracy nor governance," he said. "This is in the normal result of getting to know one another and acting within a group and facing other centers of powers."

For a while, parliament appeared to be playing its role. Members passed the budget in record time and threatened Alexis with a vote of no confidence over the deteriorating security environment.

Then came the traffic ticket.

A member of the lower chamber alleged that he was beaten by a police inspector after being pulled over for driving the wrong way. The issue erupted into a fight between parliament and the National Police, with the chamber of deputies passing a nonbinding resolution demanding the inspector be fired.

Soon after, the Senate was rocked by allegations that several senators had accepted \$200,000 in bribes to pass a resolution nullifying a decision by the executive on a bank merger. Parliament announced last week that a five-member commission would investigate the allegations.

"They don't see this as a unique window of opportunity Haiti has," Mulet said, referring to the parliament and its lack of focus on big issues. "They are acting as if this is a traditional country. Haiti has special problems and should have special and exceptional actions and measures to solve them."

U.N. Operation Said To Be Key To Haiti Revival

By BENNY AVNI

The New York Sun

February 15, 2007

UNITED NATIONS — An ambitious U.N. operation against local gangsters in Haiti has become an integral part of the country's political and economic recovery efforts, opponents and supporters say.

Opponents are condemning what they say is the loss of Haitian sovereignty that the operation, which a U.N. force launched last Friday in a gang-ridden part of Port au Prince, entails. But supporters say the use of international troops is necessary to stabilize countries where lawlessness threatens national institutions.

"It's like Iraq," the Haitian ambassador to Washington, Raymond Joseph, told The New York Sun yesterday, comparing the complete dismantling of the Iraqi army in 2003 to that of the Haitian armed forces during the 1994 coup.

"You create a vacuum, and what happens?" he said. "You have to fill it. In the case of Haiti, just as in the case of Iraq, it was filled by gangsters, by insurgents and whatnot."

Today, the Security Council is expected to extend the mandate of the U.N. Stabilization Mission in Haiti, known as Minustah, until October. Last Friday, Minustah launched one of the most ambitious police operations ever undertaken by a U.N. peacekeeping force.

Seven hundred Minustah troops, along with a small local police force, entered an area in the neighborhood of Cité Soleil, seizing rifles and ammunition. The raid, which came in response to a record number of kidnappings for ransom, was the toughest yet since December, when the U.N. force, under a new Brazilian commander, launched an attempt to gain control of the crime-ridden neighborhood.

"Under no circumstances can Minustah troops accept that the local population should be victims of armed violence," the commander, Major General Carlos Alberto Dos Santos Cruz, told reporters yesterday.

Supporters of the exiled former president, Jean-Bertrand Aristide, say the U.N. operation represents a loss of Haitian sovereignty. But Mr. Joseph, a former columnist for the Sun, dismissed such statements, saying, "Those same people invited troops back in 1994" in an effort to boost Mr. Aristide's regime.

Other critics of the United Nations's muscular approach say no military action can succeed without reform of the police and judicial system, in which gang leaders and drug dealers control many judges.

"What is needed is a bold democratic national strategy to reform the police and judicial system involving a broad spectrum of Haitian society," a Haitian representative of the nongovernmental organization Action Aid, Raphael Yves Pierre, said.

"What are we to do, wait until we create a justice system before we deal with the gangsters?" Mr. Joseph said. "We might not have time to build a justice system. I think the two go together."

In addition to cooperating with Minustah, the Haitian government is planning to start a "decentralization" campaign, advertising areas outside the politically tense capital in the hope of attracting tourism, Mr. Joseph added.

UN in Haiti takes on gangs, public opinion
Wednesday, February 14, 2007
by Clarens Renois
Caribbean Net News

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti (AFP): Three months ago, a UN military mission with government backing took aim at Haiti's armed gangs, thanks to residents who blamed the blue helmets for taking a passive stance toward crime.

The UN Stabilization Mission in Haiti, known by its French acronym MINUSTAH, has stepped up operations against gunmen and kidnapers after residents castigated the peacekeeping troops' apparent indifference to the rampaging armed groups.

The UN Security Council is expected on Thursday to extend by another year the mission's mandate, which began in 2004.

Haiti's population of eight million is one of the poorest in the Americas and has suffered from violence for the past two decades.

The United Nations sent in the troops under Brazilian command after former president Jean Bertrand Aristide was pushed out of power and into exile in February 2004.

The first government elected since then was installed in May, and initially set out to negotiate with the leaders of the gangs.

"They kidnap, the government negotiates," said an indignant Nouvelliste, the largest Port-au-Prince daily.

After drawing fire from lawmakers, the government of Prime Minister Jacques Edouard Alexis abandoned its cautious approach and authorized the 7,000 UN troops and 1,300 police to intervene.

"We have a green light from the Haitian government to enter the slums and neutralize the armed gangs," UN envoy to Haiti Edmond Mulet said in December.

Since December 22, the UN launched a series of raids in the vast Port-au-Prince slum Cite Soleil where some 300,000 residents have lived under the shadow of the gangs.

The UN offensives involve hundreds of soldiers with armored cars and helicopters, under the command of Brazilian General Carlos Alberto Santos Cruz.

The gangs "are no longer tolerated," he said last month.

According to a non-official tally, some 15 people have been killed in the clashes and about 30 have been wounded.

Several districts have been returned to Haitian control with UN and Haitian police conducting joint patrols.

If the new UN strategy fails to restore calm in Haiti, the mission will at least have won over a portion of Haitian public opinion.

"It was time for these soldiers who drove around in air-conditioned vehicles to get to work," said Claude, a public transport driver.

MINUSTAH has released to the media footage of joyous residents of Martissant, in the south of the capital, dancing to celebrate the arrival of the UN troops.

According to Doctors Without Borders, between three and 10 people die each day in the neighborhood.

Some Haitians say they are satisfied with the UN presence, while others would rather they leave, accusing them of interfering in Haiti's affairs.

Haiti : The terrible truth about Martissant
mardi 13 février 2007
By Michael Deibert [1]
AlterPresse

Haiti's Commission Episcopale Nationale Justice et Paix recently released a report [2] covering the human rights situation in that impoverished Caribbean nation of 8 million from October until December 2006. The report therein concluded that 539 people were killed by violence in the Port-au-Prince metropolitan region alone in 2006, and especially noting the southern Port-au-Prince district of Martissant, where citizens have been at the mercy of warring gangs with varying political affiliations engaged in sustained conflict since June 2006. A freelance Haitian journalist Jean-Rémy Badio was murdered [3] in his home, evidently by gang-affiliated gunmen from the area, last month.

There have recently been attempts by some - writing, as always, from the safety of the United States - to exculpate one of the gangs in Martissant, the Baz Grand Ravine loyal to the Fanmi Lavalas party of former Haitian president Jean-Bertrand Aristide, from involvement in the appalling violence terrorizing the community there, instead attempting to suggest that the bloodshed comes only from one side, the Lamè Ti Manchèt (The Little Machete Army), affiliated with the Ti Bois and Descartes districts of the neighborhood, and said to be loyal to a former Haitian police captain and other political elements. Simply put, these statements would appear to be intentional fabrications by the writers, conceived with the intention of deceiving the public, and ignoring the fact that, since the August 2005 slaying of at least a dozen people at a soccer match in the district, and indeed long before, all armed groups in the neighborhood have been implicated in the grossest human rights violations by residents fleeing attacks speaking to Haitian and foreign journalists brave enough to venture there.

Last summer, the American photojournalist Thos Robinson, a Haitian radio reporter (whose perilous work dictates that he remain nameless) and I spent several days traveling through and interviewing residents of Martissant [4], during which time we were subject to extremely aggressive and unpleasant questioning by the gangs. The terror we saw that had been created by all the gangs, regardless of political affiliation, killing and burning the neighborhood, was truly an outrage to behold, and we left convinced that the Baz Grand Ravine, like the Lamè Ti Manchèt, was just another group cloaking their criminality and disregard for the community in the thinnest veneer of ideology, and were guilty of terrible human rights violations.

Our conclusions were by no means unique. In fact, they merely reinforced two years of on-the-ground reporting by Haiti's courageous journalists that the wealthy foreign supporters of one of Haiti's political factions would seek to willfully hide from the English-speaking public. Of course, well-to-do activists in North America will point to the fact that many of Haiti's radio stations are owned by some of the wealthier elements in Haiti's stratified society and therefore, by implication, the reporting of the brave, working-class journalists there, conducted in Haiti's native Kreyol in the slums before the reporters return to humble homes often lacking electricity or running water, is somehow worthless. Don't believe it. In addition to the bald-faced hypocrisy of ignoring their own privileged place in the world economy, these first-world apologists do a great disservice to individuals who have consistently, through coup and junta and street violence from many sides, displayed what their detractors lack : the courage to report from the ground. A few of the more relevant examples of their work (recast by the

stations in French for international comprehension), reporting from the scene of the violence are as follows :

A 23 August 2005 broadcast [5] from the capital's Radio Kiskeya stated "inhabitants of various districts of Martissant (a southern slum of Port-au-Prince) launched an S.O.S to the authorities on Monday so that they would forcefully intervene in a zone infested with heavily-armed gangsters. These inhabitants, the majority of them young people coming from 4th and the 5th Avenue Bolosse, describe the reactivation in the district of groups armed under the regime of Jean Bertrand Aristide which have made their residence in the Grand Ravine zone of Martissant."

The 19 November 2005 article [6] "Nouvelle montée de tension à Martissant" from the Haitian media outlet AlterPresse stated "The tension went up of a notch these last days within Martissant, in the southern sector of the capital, where confrontations have occurred between rival bands, residents told AlterPresse. Clashes have occurred on several occasions during the last 8 days between the armed bands from Grande Ravine and the Lamè Ti Manchèt, leaving at least 2 dead and several casualties by bullets."

A 6 November 2006 statement [7] by the president of Haiti's senate, Joseph Lambert, himself a member of the Lespwa party of Haiti's popularly-elected president René Préal, where Lambert directly referred to the violence in Martissant as being part of "Operation Baghdad II," in reference to a fall 2004 explosion of violence by Aristide partisans, and went on to say that "Operation Baghdad 2 takes the form of a means for a sector to politically pressure the executive (branch) in order to find employment."

A 4 December 2006 broadcast [8] from Radio Kiskeya which stated that "according to residents (of Martissant) a local gang called Base Pilate was responsible for four murders. The leaders of this armed group are insane with rage after the death of a police officer considered to be one of their allies...The Base Pilate is committed, under the umbrella of the armed gangs of Grand Ravine, to fight without mercy against the Lamè Ti Manchèt, another rival band based within Sainte-Bernadette lane."

An 8 December 2006 broadcast [9], again recorded on the ground in Martissant, from Radio Metropole, stated "Heavy shooting was recorded in the zone of Martissant yesterday ; witnesses confirm that gangsters of Grand Ravine associated with the gang Base Pilate tried to launch an attack against the districts of Descartes and Martissant 1. Residents of Descartes and Martissant 1 affirm that 2 people were killed and several others wounded yesterday evening. "

A 19 January 2007 broadcast [10] from Radio Kiskeya, which stated that "A wild war has been underway for several months among gangs called Base Pilate and Lamè Ti Manchèt, which imposes the law of the jungle on Bolosse, Grand Ravine and Ste-Bernadette."

Likewise, the links of the Aristide government with armed gangs in the capital and elsewhere in Haiti are well-known and long-standing, and have been covered by, among other reporters, National Public Radio's Gerry Hadden, The Boston Globe's Steven Dudley, The Miami Herald's Marika Lynch, my own reporting from Haiti [11] and, of course, Haiti's own embattled press.

Reporting in a 10 February 2004 piece [12] for National Public Radio entitled "'Haitian Gangs Combat Demonstrators," Hadden reports how a gang leader dubbed Francois "strolls through his filthy fiefdom, several armed lieutenants following behind. Most passersby avoid his eyes, appearing uncomfortable. Francois does not have a real job, though he says he's tried to find one. He says he got the money for a rape victim from the government in exchange for his primary work, defending President Aristide in the street...On a recent morning, students marching downtown were once again stoned by young men claiming allegiance to the government."

In a 19 February 2004 article [13], Dudley described the armed gangs that formed the core of Aristide's latter-day supporters thusly : "Their leaders have ominous names like 'One Shot to the Head' and 'Caesarean Section.' They have up to 30 men in each group, many of them teens, patrolling neighborhoods across the city with M-4 carbines and Beretta 9mm handguns with which they enforce their own justice. They allegedly traffic drugs, extort money from locals, and steal cars. Still, they insist they aren't gangs ; they call themselves "popular organizations" or OPs, and they form the core of President Jean-Bertrand Aristide's governing party, Lavalas."

Recounting the aftermath of a massacre of government opponents in the Haitian town of Saint Marc in a 24 February 2004 article [14], Lynch writes that "St. Marc has been under a terrifying lockdown by the police and a gang of armed pro-Aristide civilians called Clean Sweep...The two forces are so intertwined that when Clean Sweep's head of security walks by, Haitian police officers salute him and call him 'commandant.'"

Lynch's account is confirmed by that of human rights researcher Anne Fuller [15], a Haiti veteran fluent in Kreyol who spent two and a half days in St Marc in late March 2004 looking into the killings that were reported to have happened there the previous month.

"Compiling the available information, I believe at least ten and possibly twelve people were killed in the La Scierie neighborhood and on the nearby mountainside that February 11," Fuller writes "Some but not all were RAMICOS (anti-government) members and sympathizers but they were mostly lightly or not at all armed."

"I count a definite 27 people killed before February 29 and seven from Bale Wouze after," Fuller writes, referring to "Clean Sweep" by their Kreyol name. "There may well have been somewhat more than this, their names and identities lost."

Indeed Haitian journalist Nancy Roc, recipient of UNESCO's Jean Dominique Prize for Freedom of the Press in 2002 and the Freelance International Press's Best Radio Journalism prize in 2004 has written that "a major part of Aristide's heritage was the financing and creation of heavily-armed gangs. Violence in Haiti may be partially due to social injustice indeed, but it is also...highly political, commanded and co-opted by the old regime."

Those of us who have followed Haiti for many years also recall that from 2000 until 2002, the most powerful gang in Martissant was run from Grand Ravine by Felix "Don Fefe" Bien-Aimé, an Aristide loyalist who orchestrated the murder of at least thirteen people when his faction conducted a ghastly siege of the neighboring Fort Mercredi district in June 2001. Following the murders, Bien-Aimé was reported to have met with Aristide at the National Palace along with what was left of a local Fort

Mercredi gang, where the gangs signed a joint statement declaring their conflict over. No one was ever arrested for the killings. Bien-Amié eventually scored a patronage job as the director of Port-au-Prince's main cemetery, and was also said to have been involved in the disappearance of the newborn baby of Nanoune Myrthil from Port-au-Prince General Hospital on February 29, 2000. In September 2002, apparently having outgrown his usefulness (a pattern that would be repeated many times). Bien-Amié was arrested by Haitian police officers and "disappeared," his abandoned car later found burned out at Titanyen, once one of the favored dumping grounds for victims of political murders by Haiti's previous dictatorships. The veracity of Bien-Amié's involvement in the massacre as well as the circumstance of his disappearance, has been noted in a 25 June 2001 broadcast from Radio Haiti-Inter [16], a 9 June 2005 release from the Réseau National de Défense des Droits Humains (RNDDH) human rights group [17] and a 2003 release by Amnesty International [18]. Bien-Amié's alleged involvement in the disappearance of the Nanoune Myrthil infant was reported in an August 2003 interview [19] with former deputy mayor of Port-au-Prince Jean-Michard Mercier.

Though I have often written that I have far more sympathy for some elements of Haiti's gang culture than I do for the corrupt politicians who cynically use them [20], [21], now, more than ever, the international community must demand human rights for all in Haiti, without distinction for political affiliation, as it is truly the only way forward. With so many lives lost in Haiti over the last several years, with so many thousands orphaned, burned out of their homes and clinging with their fingernails to the economic wreck that the ship of state has become, Haiti's friends at home and abroad owe the Haitian people at least that much. It is what those who genuinely care about Haiti, not guided by narrow political ends nor co-opted by the extravagant financial largess of the country's various political actors, need to keep pushing for.

.....

[1] Michael Deibert is the author of Notes from the Last Testament : The Struggle for Haiti (Seven Stories Press). His website is www.michaeldeibert.com.

[2] "Vyolans nan lari zòn metwopolitèn nan 3 mwa : oktòb pou rive desanm 2006," Komisyon Episkopal Nasyonal Jistis ak Lapè (Commission Episcopale Nationale Justice et Paix), 25 January 2007. <http://www.forumcitoyen.org.ht/jilap/>.

[3] "In Haiti, photographer gunned down after receiving gang threats," Committee to Protect Journalists, 25 January 2007. <http://www.cpj.org/news/2007/americas/haiti25jan07na.html>.

[4] "Storm of Killing in Neighbourhood Has Wide Implications for Nation," Michael Deibert, Inter-Press Service, 2 August 2006. <http://ipsnews.net/news.asp?idnews=34213>.

[5] "Situation de terreur à Martissant," Radio Kiskeya, Port-au-Prince, 23 August 2005. <http://www.radiokiskeya.com/spip.php?article1166>.

[6] "Nouvelle montée de tension à Martissant," AlterPresse, 19 November 2005. <http://www.alterpresse.org/spip.php?article3610>.

[7] "Critiques contre les violences des groupes armés," Radio Metropole, Port-au-Prince, 6 November 2006. <http://www.metropolehaiti.com/metropole/archive.phtml>

?action=full&keyword=Critiques+contre+les+violences+des+groupes+arm% E9s&sid=0&critere=0&id=11945&p=1.

[8] "Quatre personnes assassinées à Port-au-Prince," Radio Kiskeya, Port-au- Prince, 4 December 2006. <http://www.radiokiskeya.com/spip.php ?article2866>.

[9] "Nouveaux affrontements entre les gangs de Martissant, 4 morts ," Radio Metropole, Port-au-Prince, 8 December 2006 <http://www.metropolehaiti.com/metropole/archive.phtml ?action=full&keyword=Nouveaux+affrontements+entre+les+gangs+de+Martissant% 2C&sid=0&critere=0&id=12071&p=1>.

[10] "Une nouvelle victime des gangs à Bolosse/Martissant," Radio Kiskeya, Port-au-Prince, 19 January 2007. <http://www.radiokiskeya.com/spip.php ?article3062>.

[11] "Aristide's Tinderbox : Haitian Militants Losing Faith in President's Promise of Reform" by Michael Deibert, Village Voice, August 28 - September 3, 2002. <http://www.villagevoice.com/news/0235,deibert,37823,1.html>.

[12] "Haitian Gangs Combat Demonstrators," Gerry Hadden report for National Public Radio's "All Things Considered," 10 February 2004. <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php ?storyId=1669612>.

[13] "Militias' might key to Aristide's grip on power," by Steven Dudley, Boston Globe, 19 February 2004. http://www.boston.com/news/world/latinamerica/articles/2004/02/19/militias_might_key_to_aristides_grip_on_power/.

[14] "Town taken from rebels feels heat of reprisal," by Marika Lynch, The Miami Herald, 24 February 2004. <http://www.latinamericanstudies.org/haiti/reprisal.htm>.

[15] "The La Scierie Massacre," by Anne Fuller, Le Nouvelliste, 17 April 2005. <http://www.haitipolicy.org/content/2938.htm>.

[16] "Radio Haiti Inter, Port-au-Prince, 25 June 2001, BBC Monitoring Service" <http://www.webster.edu/ corbetre/haiti-archive/msg08259.html>.

[17] "RNDDH calls the public's attention to certain areas of the 3rd District of Port-au-Prince," Réseau National de Défense des Droits Humains (RNDDH), 9 June 2005 http://www.rnddh.org/article.php3 ?id_article=227.

[18] "Haiti : Covering events from January - December 2002," Amnesty International, 2003. <http://web.amnesty.org/report2003/hti-summary-eng>

[19] "Radio Vision 2000, Port-au-Prince, 13 August 2003, BBC Monitoring Service" <http://www.haiti-info.com/spip.php ?article436>.

[20] "Ballots instead of bullets," by Michael Deibert, Newsday, 6 November 2005 .
<http://www.michaeldeibert.com/articles/newsday/article7.html>.

[21] James Petit-Frere and his child, Cité Soleil, summer 2002.
<http://michaeldeibert.blogspot.com/2006/12/james-petit-frere-and-his-child-cit.html>.

OAS Pledges Help for Haiti's Tourism Development
Caribbean Press Releases
February 13, 2007

Washington -- The Organization of American States (OAS), in response to a request from the government of Haiti, has pledged to help that country update its tourism master plan to spur economic development and opportunity. Assistant Secretary General Albert R. Ramdin discussed these and related issues during a meeting with Haiti's Minister of Tourism, Patrick Delatour, at OAS headquarters in Washington (last week).

"Haiti provides a unique tourism product in terms of the culture, the history and the physical landscape," the Assistant Secretary General observed. "Through tourism, we can assist Haiti in the critical objectives of lifting the people out of poverty—providing jobs, creating employment and income."

Ambassador Ramdin assured Minister Delatour that the Organization will explore possible efforts to assist tourism development in Labadie and to look at further development of the tourism potential of Cap Haitien and the Citadel.

Ramdin said assisting the country's tourism can help expand the debate on Haiti beyond political issues to a discussion of how to assist the country's social and economic development. He suggested that Haiti's tourism could benefit from the high-level Haiti Trade and Investment Forum the OAS is coordinating in Haiti in early May. He also noted that a tourism conference is set for later in the year, at OAS headquarters in Washington

Minister Delatour expressed appreciation for the Organization's longstanding and strong advocacy for his country's tourism development based on the wealth of Haitian culture, music, architecture and other elements. The Caribbean people understand that the major competition in the tourism sector is not between countries in the Caribbean but between the Caribbean and the Mediterranean as a destination, he said.

The Haitian official expressed particular interest in Haiti being part of the effort to market the Caribbean as one tourism destination, stressing the strategic interest in a stable Haiti. He went on to note that tourism development must also recognize that the majority of tourists are cultural consumers and are interested in looking at joint destinations in the region.

Besides the assistance in updating the tourism master plan for the preservation of historical monuments and sites, OAS support would also focus on raising awareness among Haitians so they can better appreciate the importance of this effort.

Source: oas.org

OAS S.G. Insulza Calls for Renewed Commitment to Strengthen Institutions in Haiti
Need to renew MINUSTAH's mandate
Caribbean Press Releases
February 13, 2007

Washington -- 13 Feb., 2007 -- The Secretary General of the Organization of American States (OAS), José Miguel Insulza, said that Haiti presents three major challenges to the international community, which have to do with the strengthening of the state apparatus; progress in security and economic development; and the coordination of efforts by organizations working to strengthen the Haitian state in ways that will be effective.

Insulza spoke in Lima, Peru, during a meeting of the nine Latin American countries that make up the United Nations Mission for the Stabilization of Haiti (MINUSTAH), as well as representatives of the UN and the OAS. The meeting analyzed the progress and obstacles encountered in the effort to support the Caribbean country.

“Just over one year after the presidential elections, there is a stable, democratic government, with plans and projects in the works, which is energetically confronting the problem of security,” said Insulza, who cautioned that nevertheless the Haitian political-institutional situation “continues to be marked by instability, nonfunctioning institutions and by growing levels of violence and public insecurity.”

In this regard, the OAS Secretary General expressed the need to renew MINUSTAH’s mandate and noted that this is the time to reconfirm support for efforts to help Haiti, not to talk about deadlines to bring those plans to a close. He said it is important for the countries involved in supporting Haiti to take on new challenges, emphasizing the need to break the vicious cycle that hinders the success of assistance plans for the island nation by tying security issues to the creation of mechanisms for economic development. The weakness of the state apparatus, criminal violence and economic development are closely intertwined, Insulza said, adding that one of the main objectives should be to build the capacity to break this connection and to tackle simultaneously all the elements of this phenomenon that hinders the development of Haitian society.

The Secretary General recognized that since the February 2006 elections, the government of René Préval has shown the political will to change the living conditions of the Haitian people. Insulza underscored in particular the Plan for Social Pacification, which created emergency programs to combat extreme poverty. However, he noted that as long as 66 percent of the national budget relies on international financing, Haiti is forced to depend on external support. Insulza stressed that strengthening the central government should be a priority for international cooperation, adding that until the central power is strengthened, the current situation will not improve. “As long as there is no government capable of controlling public order and advancing economic development plans, the task of international supporters is not completed,” he said.

He went on to explain that until jobs are created, the day-to-day insecurity of the Haitian people has few prospects for a solution, and he noted that the first challenge is to stop the violence, thus stimulating investment that will help generate jobs. “The OAS proposes to develop, through the Inter-American Council for Integral Development, projects that are directly related to socioeconomic development, specifically in areas related to tourism, agro-tourism and reforestation,” Insulza said. He

added that it should be possible to substantially improve the quality of public security, of the police and of the judicial and prison systems, in order to create a climate of security and put an end to the economic standstill.

Insulza said the “backbone” of OAS efforts in Haiti in 2007 will be a program related to the civil registry. “The Modernization of the Civil Registry and the Electoral Registry, which will be incorporated into a Permanent Integrated Identification System, will constitute a new phase of OAS assistance to Haiti,” he said. The absence of a document to identify Haitian citizens from birth constitutes one of the biggest problems of a society that has not been able to organize its public apparatus at the most basic level, he said.

During the meeting, which was opened by the Peruvian Minister of Foreign Affairs, José Antonio García Belaúnde, the UN Secretary General’s representative in Haiti, Edmond Mulet, provided a detailed summary of the current situation in Haiti, expressing concern for statistics related to violent crimes.

Source: oas.org

Haiti: The struggle against imperialism intensifies
Tuesday, February 13, 2007
By: Natividad Carrera
Party for Socialism and Liberation

The author delivered the following talk at a Feb. 9 Party for Socialism and Liberation branch meeting in Los Angeles.

Almost two years ago, on Feb. 29, 2004, U.S. Marines escorted Haitian president Jean Bertrand Aristide from his home in Tabarre outside Port-au-Prince and flew him to the Central African Republic. While they claimed Aristide resigned, Aristide himself charged that he was kidnapped and forced from power. Since then, tens of thousands in Haiti and around the world have called for his return to power.

The situation that led to the coup d'état and the current state of affairs in Haiti is a stark lesson in the hypocritical nature of U.S. "democracy" and the ends to which imperialism will go to hold a nation under the heel of colonial rule.

Haiti is one of the poorest nations in the world and the poorest in the Western Hemisphere. But this is not because of lack of human or natural resources. It is rather a situation that has been engineered by colonialism and imperialism after centuries of resistance and struggle by the Haitian people.

Slave revolution

Haiti was born out of the struggle of slaves who rose up against the French empire in 1791, and subsequently had to fight against the interest of the Spanish and British empires for its freedom.

At the time, Haiti was the "crown jewel" of the French empire. It was its most prosperous colony and supplied half of Europe with sugar, coffee and cotton. And two-thirds of France's foreign trade was centered on the island. All of this was produced by slave labor—men, women and children who were constantly being forcibly brought from Africa. From 1787 on, 40,000 slaves were brought to Santo Domingo each year.

Eventually, after much maneuvering by the colonialists, Haiti won not only the emancipation of its slave population but the independence of the country in 1804 when General Jean-Jacques Dessalines and thousands of Haitian liberation fighters defeated the French. It was a revolution carried out by slaves and former slaves against one of the most powerful military forces in the world.

In his inaugural address to the new Republic of Haiti, Dessalines declared, "Never again shall colonist or European set foot on this soil as master or landowner." Dessalines' legacy still rings down through history today. He is looked upon as the a guiding light for what the Haitian sovereignty should mean.

The Haitian people would still have to pay a great a great price for their freedom. Dessalines was eventually assassinated and the Haitian masses were betrayed by the newly emerging bourgeoisie.

In 1825, France recognized the independence of Haiti on the condition that the Haitian government pay France 150 million gold francs. The Haitian government finished repaying the debt over 100 years later, in 1946.

The United States was also hostile and disruptive to Haiti's early development. Slavery was not abolished until six decades after Haiti. It also looked at any country in the Caribbean as part of its own backyard.

Imperialist interference

The recent events in Haiti are a reflection of hundreds of years of capitalist hostility to Haitian independence.

During the "Cold War," the U.S. government backed the repressive regimes of Francois "Papa Doc" Duvalier and his son Jean-Claude "Baby Doc" Duvalier, largely because of their anti-communist credentials and their willingness to liquidate the left. The transition from Papa Doc to Baby Doc is very important to note because it laid the basis for the introduction of neo-liberal policies that have made Haiti one of the poorest and most indebted nations in the world.

In the late 1980s and early 90s, the United States tried to provide cover for its most repressive client states by promoting so-called democracy—really, veiled attempts at trying to preserve the old power structures, but with a veneer of human rights.

The Duvalier regime was so repressive, however, that such attempts did not work. Even Haiti's bourgeoisie began to look for another way out.

Jean-Bertrand Aristide entered the political scene in the 1980s. He was elected by a huge margin to the office of president.

At first, Aristide was accepted by the ruling class because they thought he could be controlled by them. While Aristide himself is not a revolutionary and has social democratic politics, even the small reforms he wanted to institute for the working and poor people of Haiti were not acceptable to the ruling class in Haiti or the United States.

In 1991, Aristide was kicked out in a CIA-engineered coup. However, the regime that took Aristide's place in Haiti was so chaotic that the U.S. government had to bring Aristide back in order to restore order.

Once again, the U.S. government and the Haitian capitalists thought they could control Aristide. But when he started implementing "wild" and "outlandish" policies like outlawing child slavery, setting a minimum wage and improving education for the masses, the imperialists and their lackeys thought it was too much.

Aristide did implement some rather radical reforms that sought to improve the lives of peasants and workers. He also disbanded the army, which everybody saw as the tool of the U.S. imperialists in the

country. Most importantly, Aristide objected to the neo-liberal dictates of Washington. He did not want them to ravage completely the Haitian economy.

The coup and after

The U.S.-engineered coup in 2004 that ousted Aristide was almost a textbook CIA operation. So-called rebels situated across the border from Haiti in the Dominican Republic launched repeated raids against Aristide's government. Meanwhile, the bourgeois media tried to make it seem as if there was a popular uprising.

The coup was, in fact, a carefully planned action directed by the U.S. government. Its foot soldiers were Haitian paramilitary elements from the repressive former dictatorships. Eventually, they successfully ousted the democratically elected leader Aristide by kidnapping him. The United States began another occupation of Haiti.

Since then, the Haitian people have not let up in their resistance to colonial occupation. They have demanded, along with all progressive people around the world, an end to foreign domination and the return of their democratically elected leaders.

The United Nations quickly took over what was a U.S. occupation and provided international cover for war crimes and mass killings. Major world powers like France and Canada have supported the U.N. occupation.

Brazil commands the U.N. occupying force. Its ruling class and political elites are trying their hardest to impress the United States by showing how useful their country can be as a proxy force for imperialism in Haiti.

Massacres and repression

The most recent round of severe repression took place against the Haitian people in December 2006.

According to residents of Cité-Soleil, U.N. forces attacked their neighborhood in the early morning hours of Dec. 22, 2006, killing more than 30 people including women and children.

Samuel Leconte, an eyewitness to the U.N. massacre, said that although the U.N. troops shot and killed many people, "They will never stop our demands for the return of President Aristide. We will keep demonstrating and will never stop until the land of Dessalines is truly free and independent!" Mr. Leconte was arrested soon after witnessing the massacre. He is currently being held in prison by Brazilian troops from the U.N. mission.

Footage of the massacre, taken by videographers from the Haiti Information Project, shows unarmed civilians dying as a result of indiscriminate gunfire from U.N. forces.

Although the U.N. denied firing from helicopter gunships, an unidentified 28-year-old man is shown on camera stating that he was shot in the abdomen from a circling U.N. helicopter raining death upon those below.

This is not the first time that the United Nations has denied murdering unarmed civilians in Cité-Soleil.

For many, Dec. 22, 2006, was a repeat of another U.N. massacre on July 6, 2005. That day, more than 26 people were killed in a successful assassination attempt on Emmanuel "Dred" Wilmer and four of his closest followers.

Wilmer was openly hostile to the U.N. military occupation of his country and opposed the ouster of the Aristide. He led armed resistance and inspired others to do the same against the brutal Haitian police and the irreparably corrupt legal system.

The occupation force also denied killing unarmed civilians on July 6, 2005.

At the time, Eloufi Boulbars, a U.N. spokesperson stated, "We saw five people killed, that's what we could count. Armed bandits who had tried to resist were either killed or wounded."

But documentary evidence finally forced the United Nations to admit that unarmed civilians had been killed by "peacekeeping" forces, despite the body's attempts to cover it up. Undeterred, the United Nations only admitted that it had used "disproportionate force" in the massacre.

The pretext for the most recent U.N. massacre in December 2006 was a "strike against kidnappers." This, of course, turned out to be completely false.

One anonymous survivor of the massacre recounted how the U.N. troops entered the neighborhood with guns blazing. The witness saw a pregnant woman and a young man die in the shooting.

Another witness, former political prisoner Annette Auguste added, "We saw young men and women gunned down by U.N. forces in Cité-Soleil. Young people shot dead. Were they all kidnappers too?"

The real cause of the U.N. massacre seems to have been a massive demonstration of Aristide supporters that began in Cité-Soleil.

About 10,000 people had demonstrated a few days earlier to demand the return of Aristide. It was a clear condemnation of the foreign military occupation of their country.

Mass protests, resistance

Despite the wanton killing by U.N. forces, resistance to the occupation of Haiti continues to intensify.

On Feb. 7, the ANSWER Coalition (Act Now to Stop War and End Racism) and the Party for Socialism and Liberation, supported demonstrations to protest the recent repression of the Haitian people and call for an end to the occupation. These actions were echoed all around the world and especially in Haiti where many people demonstrated.

The Haiti Information Project reported that crowds estimated at well over 100,000 took to the streets of seven major cities throughout Haiti on Feb. 7. Demands included an end to the U.N. occupation, freedom for political prisoners and the return of exiled president Aristide.

Although the largest demonstrations took place in the capital of Port-au-Prince and Haiti's second largest city, Cap-Haitien, thousands were reported to have joined similar actions in Port-de-Paix, Hinche, La Kay, St. Marc and Miragoane. Smaller actions were also reported in the towns of Jacmel, Leogane and Gonaives.

Today, just two days later, the Associated Press reported that hundreds of U.N. peacekeepers raided Cité-Soleil to arrest "gang members" (that is, anti-occupation forces) and seize a section of it. Like the Dec. 2006 massacre, the Feb. 9 U.N. action came after large anti-occupation protests.

More than 500 blue-helmeted troops in armored vehicles entered Cité-Soleil before dawn and tried to seize several

U.N. occupation troops attempt to keep protesters at bay after a repressive Feb. 9 raid on Cité-Soleil.

abandoned buildings that had been reportedly used by "gangs" to stage attacks on U.N. forces, said Maj. Gen. Carlos Alberto Dos Santos Cruz, the Brazilian commander of the 9,000-strong international force.

Dos Santos, speaking from Cité-Soleil even as gunfire continued to echo through the streets, said "gang members" fired thousands of rounds at U.N. troops, wounding two.

AP journalists saw the blood-spattered body of a young man in a street. Witnesses said he was walking through the area when he was shot by U.N. troops. Residents moved the body inside a building.

Later, AP journalists saw people from the neighborhood use a wheelbarrow to carry out a motionless woman bleeding from her chest. Slum residents said she was struck by a stray bullet at home.

Afterward, about 100 people from Cité-Soleil protested outside the U.N. military base in the neighborhood, waving a white sheet and chanting, "We want peace!"

"We want this fighting to stop so innocent people of Cité-Soleil can stop being victims and live as human beings," Damas Augustin, one of the protesters, said as U.N. troops put up barriers to keep them at bay.

Haiti and the anti-war movement

The U.S.-backed U.N. massacres also remind us why the call for ending colonial occupation in Haiti is such an important demand for the anti-war movement and why ANSWER has included it in all of our mobilizations since the ouster of Aristide.

Unlike some liberal organizations that seek to appease the Democratic Party, like United for Peace and Justice, we believe that we must oppose imperialism everywhere. Haiti, like Palestine, is a litmus test

for the anti-war movement. The struggle of all people around the world fighting imperialism must be supported.

There cannot be self-determination under military occupation. The removal of all foreign troops from Haiti is a necessary precondition for the self-determination of the Haitian people.

I think the words of Ben Dupuy, general secretary of the National Popular Party in Haiti, point the right direction for our orientation to the struggle in Haiti.

Dupuy told *Socialism and Liberation* magazine in September 2004: "It is very important for U.S. progressive forces to understand the dynamics of the struggle in Haiti and to be aware of the force of the traditional media in shaping public opinion. Sometimes even progressive people fall victim even unconsciously to this form of propaganda. We think that the struggle in Haiti should not be looked at from a racist standpoint but from a class struggle standpoint, and as a struggle for national liberation, which is the only basis that can create the conditions for a new socialist society."

U.N.: Stability to gang turf in Haiti
UPI
February 13, 2007

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti -- A top U.N. commander says a large-scale security operation has brought stability to a gang-infested slum in the Haitian capital of Port-au-Prince.

Approximately 700 U.N. troops went to the area dubbed "Boston" Friday. The mission was aimed at dismantling a major gang and led to the arrest of seven presumed bandits and the seizure of weapons, U.N. Stabilization Mission in Haiti Military Force Commander Maj. Gen. Carlos Alberto Dos Santos Cruz said in a news conference Monday.

"The situation has been stabilized and U.N. troops have re-established conditions in this quarter for the government and international organizations to work there for the well-being of the population," said Dos Santos Cruz.

MINUSTAH was set up in 2004 to help re-establish peace in Haiti following an insurgency that forced then President Jean-Bertrand Aristide to go into exile.

Criminal gangs have effectively controlled certain neighborhoods of the capital and gang violence often resulted in civilian deaths, according to a recent report by Human Rights Watch. In July 2006, for example, 22 people, including children, were killed in Grand Ravine, a poor neighborhood in Port-au-Prince.

"Under no circumstances can MINUSTAH troops accept that the local population should be victims of armed violence," said Dos Santos Cruz, referring to Friday's operation, which is part of an ongoing campaign by U.N. peacekeepers against criminal gangs in the capital.

The Haiti File
Editorial
Mary Anastasia O'Grady
Wall Street Journal
February 12, 2007

A government file pertinent to two civil law suits alleging bribery doesn't just get up and walk out of a supposedly secure federal-agency record room in Washington. When said bribery allegations involve politically influential individuals on both sides of the aisle and a notoriously corrupt former Haitian president that the U.S. supported for a decade, it's even more troubling.

In a December email to a lawyer in one of the law suits, the Federal Communications Commission said that its "Haiti file" was missing. The file is the record of which U.S. telecom companies that did business with the government of former Haitian President Jean Bertrand Aristide actually complied with U.S. law by submitting their contracts to the FCC. An official at the commission told me on Friday that "we don't have the file but we are continuing our active efforts to locate it." I'm not sure whether the missing file would fit into Sandy Berger's socks. But given the number of political heavyweights-both Republican and Democrat-who might welcome the disappearance of these documents, it's a bit difficult to write the whole thing off as an accident.

Since 2000 I have followed allegations that Haiti's Mr. Aristide took bribes from U.S. telecom carriers doing business in his country. These charges arose first in conversations with Haitians familiar with operations at the state-owned phone company, Teleco. More recently they have been aired in two separate civil suits filed in two different U.S. federal courts.

The alleged quid pro quo for the U.S. companies that agreed to pay the bribes was access to the Teleco network at rates below the uniform "international settlement rate" set by the FCC. During the course of my investigations, two different long-distance suppliers told me that Teleco officials offered them just such a special rate in exchange for payment made to specially designated accounts.

If the allegations are true, it would mean that the Foreign Corrupt Practices Act was violated, right under the nose of the FCC and the Department of Justice, during Democratic and Republican administrations. It would also mean that while Haitians were placing their trust in Uncle Sam to help them construct a democracy, millions of dollars that might have gone to building an infrastructure were siphoned off by a corrupt tyrant and U.S. business partners with friends in high places.

In 2000, questions arose about Fusion Telecommunications, which had a concession to terminate calls in Haiti and which, according to sources, had an office inside Teleco. Marvin Rosen (finance chairman for the Democratic National Committee from September 1995 until January 1997), former Democratic Congressman Joseph P. Kennedy II, and Bill Clinton confidante Thomas (Mack) McLarty III were all on the board of Fusion. Mr. Rosen was Fusion chief executive officer.

Rumors abounded in Haiti that Fusion had a sweetheart deal with Mr. Aristide that gave the U.S. firm rates well below the international settlement rate. When I inquired about the company's Haiti business while preparing a Jan. 2001 op-ed, I was immediately referred to a company lawyer who refused to either confirm or deny that the company was even doing business in Haiti. In September 2005, Fusion

told me it had always filed what was required at the FCC and denied making any illegal payments to Teleco. In 2001 Mr. Kennedy's office released a statement that he had any "no joint venture, partnership or business arrangement with the president of Haiti or for that matter, anyone in Haiti" and that he was not involved in running Fusion. Nevertheless, in a Feb. 7, 2001 op-ed in the Boston Globe, he wrote, "I was proud to help bring more than \$1 million in private investment from Fusion into Haiti." That was peanuts when you consider that Teleco once had annual revenues upwards of \$60 million. By the time Mr. Aristide was forced into exile by a political uprising in 2004, the company was losing money.

The whole thing might have been swept under the rug if it weren't for Michael Jewett, who in 2003 had been an employee at New Jersey-based IDT, headed by former Republican congressman Jim Courter. Like Fusion, IDT had a number of seasoned politicians on its board. In March 2004 Mr. Jewett filed suit in federal court in Newark, N.J. alleging that he was fired from IDT because he objected to an illegal deal between the company and Mr. Aristide. Mr. Jewett's allegations seem to echo the charges swirling around Fusion. IDT responded much like Fusion, insisting that its arrangement with Haiti Teleco was a trade secret. In fact, IDT had a legal obligation to make its arrangement public and the information was unsealed, revealing that IDT had been granted a rate of nine cents per minute versus the FCC mandated rate of 23 cents. Mr. Jewett also claims in court documents that IDT agreed to make payments to an offshore account in Turks and Caicos called "Mount Salem," ("Mont Salem" in French) for the benefit of Mr. Aristide.

After Mr. Aristide was driven from power in February 2004, the interim government pried open Teleco's books and alleged that the company had been looted. In November 2005 it filed suit in U.S. district court in southern Florida. "The fraudulent scheme to steal Teleco revenues was carried out in part through defendant Mont Salem," the government claimed, adding that, "At Aristide's direction, Inevil, Duperval and Beliard [Haitian nationals] directed at least two of the Class B carriers, IDT and Skytel, to make their payments for Teleco's services to Mont Salem. At Aristide's direction, Teleco's then-counsel also caused Teleco to request at least one other Class B carrier, Fusion, to make payments through Mont Salem." Mr. Jewett's case has already revealed a lot, but it won't tell Haitians where millions of dollars in lost Teleco revenues went throughout the 1990s. That will require a more thorough airing, such as the civil suit Haiti filed in Florida. Unfortunately, Haiti has had to withdraw its suit for lack of funds. Its request for a share of assets forfeited by Haitian drug kingpins-which could be used to reinstate the suit and pay legal fees-has been resisted by the DOJ. First DOJ said it couldn't release the assets because the cases were on appeal. Now it says that it doesn't yet have the forfeited assets.

Another way to get at the truth would be if DOJ used the mountain of evidence it seems to be sitting on to indict Mr. Aristide, since he has often asserted that he won't remain silent about his dealings with highly placed American politicians if he is brought to trial. Why the DOJ would turn down an offer like that is a mystery, a little like the missing file.

Write to O'Grady@wsj.com

Peace troops take offensive against Haiti gangs

By Stevenson Jacobs

ASSOCIATED PRESS

The Washington Times

February 13, 2007

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti -- On the dusty streets of Haiti's largest slum, young men in baggy clothes lounge outside bullet-pocked shacks, listening for the rumble of armored vehicles carrying U.N. peacekeepers.

In the seaside slum of Cite Soleil, those are the sounds that precede gunbattles and bloodshed, sending the youths and everyone else rushing for cover.

Frustrated by unrelenting kidnappings for ransom, killings and other crimes, the United Nations is taking on the powerful gangs that have flourished in the chaos after the ouster of President Jean-Bertrand Aristide in 2004.

The raids have the blessing of current President Rene Preval, who angrily warned gangs last year to "disarm or die."

Most U.N. peacekeeping forces deploy after the guns have fallen silent, but the Haiti mission goes on the offensive nearly every day. Sent in more than two years ago, the 9,000-strong force is pushing deeper into Cite Soleil and holding its ground with bases and checkpoints.

Haiti's ruling class welcomes them, and the veto-wielding governments on the U.N. Security Council are united in wanting an end to the Caribbean country's nearly two decades of political upheaval.

"It's a new experience in U.N. peacekeeping," said David Wimhurst, a spokesman for the U.N. mission. "It hasn't been easy, but we're making headway."

The crackdown has led to the killing or capture of several reputed gangsters. Critics say it also has taken innocent lives in Cite Soleil, where 300,000 people scrape out a meager existence on streets lined with ditches of raw sewage.

In a major operation Friday, more than 700 U.N. troops stormed Cite Soleil to seize a large swath of the slum from gang control. A firefight lasting several hours left two soldiers injured and at least one gang suspect dead.

"We're encircling them. It's like a medieval siege, just trying to put pressure on them," Edmond Mulet, the U.N. special envoy to Haiti, told reporters at U.N. headquarters on Jan. 29.

Mr. Mulet said the force takes fire "every day" and called gang leaders "psychopaths" who wantonly kidnap and kill law-abiding Haitians.

Alix Fils-Aime, a top security adviser to Mr. Preval, said the gangs win favor in Cite Soleil partly by sharing their loot with the poor. Robert Argant, president of the Haitian Chamber of Commerce, said, "These guys are using the money they steal from people to get others around them to support them."

The gang members insist they are soldiers fighting for equality in a country where about 80 percent of people live on less than \$2 a day and a tiny elite controls the economy.

"They call us gangsters, but everyone in this world is a gangster. When you're hungry, you're angry. When you're thirsty, you're angry. When somebody is against you, you have to be angry," said a gang member who identified himself only as Yamoska.

Mr. Preval, overwhelmingly elected a year ago, has sent emissaries to the gangs to negotiate a peaceful disarmament, while at the same time deploying the national police to Cite Soleil for the first time since Mr. Aristide's ouster.

The government also encourages the gangs to trade their weapons for job training and economic aid, but that effort has disarmed only about 100 men and recovered a small pile of rusty, antiquated guns.

The gang members are no strangers to struggle. After Haiti's now-disbanded army toppled Mr. Aristide in a 1991 coup, paramilitary death squads sprayed Mr. Aristide's slum strongholds with gunfire, killing an untold number of people. Some of today's gang members were orphaned by the killings, which eased in 1994 when U.S. troops restored Mr. Aristide.

Committed to maintaining support in the slums, Mr. Aristide sent the gangs money, food and -- by some accounts -- weapons. Many gang members remain loyal to him today and say the United Nations is allied with their enemies. Several told the Associated Press that they want to lay down their arms but fear being vulnerable to U.N. raids.

The latest U.N. offensive began late last year, prompted by a string of bold, daylight kidnappings. Many victims were schoolchildren snatched off the street. One teenager was slain by her captors after her family failed to come up with a ransom. She was shot in both eyes.

On Dec. 22, peacekeepers stormed Cite Soleil to break up a kidnap gang. When fighting ended five hours later, at least six persons were dead and an unknown number wounded, the United Nations said.

The U.N. force said that only gang members died, citing information from informants. But people in Cite Soleil said at least 10 persons were killed and none was a gang member. They gathered the bodies in an empty schoolhouse and demanded justice as female relatives sobbed.

"People have been killed, houses have been burned and lives have been destroyed. We want an investigation," said Webster Maurice, a Cite Soleil activist.

U.N. officials say peacekeepers try to avoid harming bystanders.

In most of the 15 U.N. peacekeeping missions around the world, international troops are used mainly as police to maintain order in post-conflict countries. Peacekeepers have clashed with militants

in Congo and Sierra Leone, but only in Haiti do they routinely take on armed street gangs, said Mr. Wimhurst, the U.N. mission spokesman.

"We normally deal with rebel groups or armed factions who have leaders and have agreed to disarm or enter into a political agreement. Here, none of that is true. They're just a bunch of gangs who fight us," he said.

Fifteen foreign soldiers and policemen, including several killed in clashes with gangs, have died.

In most raids, blue-helmeted peacekeepers enter the slums in armored cars and on foot to secure gang-controlled neighborhoods, arrest criminals and recover weapons. They may fire only if attacked.

Few in Haiti think Cite Soleil will calm down unless its staggering poverty is addressed.

The United States has announced a \$20 million grant to create jobs and provide other aid, and foreign donors are helping improve the ill-equipped police force. But the country still has only about 6,000 police -- an eighth of what it is thought to need.

U.K. medical journal The Lancet clears Haiti report of bias
The Associated Press
International Herald Tribune
February 12, 2007

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti: British medical journal The Lancet has found there was no evidence of systematic bias in a recent study it published that said 8,000 people were slain under Haiti's previous interim government.

In a clarification published in its Feb. 3-9 issue, The Lancet said it opened a probe into the Aug. 31 study after learning that its American co-author, Athena Kolbe, had written articles about Haiti under the name Lyn Duff without disclosing it.

The Lancet said it also learned that Kolbe had volunteered at an orphanage founded by former president Jean-Bertrand Aristide, whose ouster after a violent uprising led to the appointment of the U.S.-backed interim government that led the country from 2004 to 2006.

The Lancet said it opened an inquiry to determine if Kolbe's past work and ties to Aristide constituted a conflict of interest.

As part of the investigation, The Lancet said 100 randomly selected questionnaires used in the study were reanalyzed and that the results matched the report's initial findings, which also said up to 35,000 women were sexually abused while the interim government ruled the Caribbean nation.

Today on IHT.com

Britain to pull out some of Iraq force Opposition calls on Italian government to resign Japanese rate rise unlikely to interrupt flow of yen overseas "There was no evidence of systematic bias," The Lancet said of the study, which was co-authored by Royce Hutson. "On the basis of this investigation, The Lancet has confidence in Kolbe and Hutson's findings as published."

Richard Horton, editor of The Lancet, declined further comment Monday in an e-mail.

Kolbe, a researcher at Wayne State University in Detroit, said she and Hutson were not surprised to be cleared.

"Now that the investigation is complete I hope attention really turns to the victims and holding the people responsible for human rights violations," Kolbe said in a telephone interview.

The London-based journal said it has amended Kolbe and Hutson's study to make readers aware that Kolbe had written past stories about Haiti under a different name.

The study used a random sample method to question 5,720 Haitians in Port-au-Prince about their experience after Aristide's ouster, which set off a bloody wave of clashes among Haiti's national police, pro- and anti-Aristide gangs, U.N. peacekeepers and rebels who participated in the uprising.

The Lancet report blamed half the killings and rapes on criminals, but said Haitian police and anti-Aristide gangs also were involved.

Former Prime Minister Gerard Latortue, who led the two-year interim government, has rejected the report's findings.

Armed gangs fleeing from Haiti cross the Dominican border, the Military says
The Dominican Today
February 13, 2007

Santo Domingo. - Dominican Military Intelligence revealed that gangs of Haitians which flee persecution from their country's authorities and have taken refuge in the border zone have crossed to Dominican territory to steal and commit other crimes.

The Army's Intelligence Division (G-2) said that in the last weeks 27 guns have been confiscated from as many Haitians who would have used them to commit robberies and other crimes in the Dominican border region.

The authorities said that the weapons seized include pistols and the homemade 'chilenas.' The confiscations were conducted in border communities of Dajabón, Elías Piña and Jimaní provinces, among others.

The military entity said that gangs of Haitians cross the border armed with guns to rustle cattle and rob motorcycles, as well as to commit holdups of Haitian and Dominican merchants who conduct business between both nations.

Some of those arrested were part of gangs operating in Haiti's capital Port-au-Prince, who fled from persecution by the neighboring country's police and sought refuge in the border area, where they tried to regroup, added the military.

In addition to the Army's G-2, the Armed Forces J-2 and Border Intelligence (FOIF) agents take part in the operations

Army Intelligence chief colonel Elvis Almonte said that the situation is of concern because of the proliferation of the Haitian gangs which operate throughout the border.

He said that charges were filed against all of the Haitians arrested for illegally having a gun.

The Haiti-Dominican border is easily crossed.

What Next for Haiti's Cite Soleil?
Written by Dr. John Carroll, MD
Upside Down World
Monday, 12 February 2007

On February 7 I looked over the balcony rail from the second floor of our clinic in Cite Soleil. Five UN (MINUSTAH) tanks were patrolling the streets directly below us and passing by slowly in single file. Their guns were not aimed at the clinic like usual as I took their picture. A TV cameraman from Channel 4 in London took a long video of them as they passed and waved.

Despite the friendly waves, two days later, in the early morning hours, 700 UN forces, mainly Brazilian, entered the slum and had a fierce gun battle with a gang in the Boston region of Cite Soleil. The shooting lasted for hours. All the main roads into the Soleil were blocked by tanks. People were allowed out on foot and were not allowed to return until late afternoon when the shooting had stopped.

The UN was successful in destroying a prominent gang leaders base in an area of Soleil known as Boston but was unsuccessful in capturing or killing him. Apparently one civilian was killed and two UN soldiers were injured.

The gangs in Soleil shot thousands of rounds of ammunition at the UN. The gangs have M-14's, 9 mm weapons, 38's, American-style machine guns, and hand grenades. I have seen these weapons up close and personal and they appear even more menacing in the hands of shirtless, 19-year-old young men, who are hungry and on the run-being hunted by UN forces. The UN tanks have 50 mm machine guns and on Friday they had a remote control airplane circling Soleil.

Cite Soleil is considered one of the poorest and most dangerous slums in the world. The UN has peacekeeping forces in many parts of the world, but from what I understand, Haiti is the only country where the UN has a peace keeping mission which has taken on heavily armed gangs.

The shooting and war that is occurring in Soleil now is horrific. Hundreds of thousands of people are trapped inside this slum paying homage to the gangs and their soldiers or are running from the bullets from the MINUSTAH tanks and automatic weapons. However, the violence hurts the people of Soleil in so many other ways than just death and injury from bullets.

Father Tom Hagan has a program here in Haiti called Hands Together. Father Tom has eight schools in Soleil, a medical clinic, and feeds 10,000 children each day in this massive slum.

On Friday, he was unable to enter Soleil in a vehicle and so he walked in and was able to free up food for eight thousand people from his two main feeding centers. A radio station in Cite Soleil made announcements that food would be given out as usual to his students in those two areas.

One of Father Tom's centers is in the Bois Neuf area of Soleil. After freeing this food, Father walked down the middle of the main road in Soleil, saying the rosary, and opened his other feeding center at Soleil 24. There was no traffic except UN tanks. Forty UN tanks were inside and outside of Soleil at that point.

Father's schools were closed because his teachers could not get in the slum. And with the shooting, parents were afraid to send their kids to school. It says quite a bit when Haitian parents are too frightened to send their kids to school because that means no education and probably very little food that day for their children.

People delivering food into Soleil were not allowed in on February 7, and so the women who sell in the main market had nothing to sell even if they could have during the barrage of bullets. This weekend, there has been very little food for hundreds of thousands of people.

In an area of Soleil called the Wharf, The Daughters of Charity have six sisters who do incredible work. They have a medical clinic that sees several hundred children a day for acute medical problems. They also have a pediatric vaccination program and a malnutrition program for 50 very malnourished babies. They provide two hot meals for these babies Monday through Friday. While the babies are napping, their mothers participate in a well-organized sewing program, designed to teach them a skill.

The sisters also have a school in Soleil near the clinic that has 600 students. Each day the sisters provide 1,200 hot meals for the kids in their schools and programs.

None of this happened on Friday. The medical clinic was closed. The school was closed. The malnutrition program was closed. Nobody got fed. And most of these people had no food in their homes this weekend either.

One of the sisters had a scheduled vacation to her home country in South America and had to walk out of the slum with her suitcase in her hand amid the gun fire. She was picked up outside the slum by a driver who took her to the airport.

A friend of ours who runs an orphanage four miles from Soleil was besieged by twenty women from Soleil who had snuck out of the slum with their babies asking her to take their kids, feed them, clean them, and put them up for adoption. Our friend had to deny their requests because she already has over 100 children in the orphanage and absolutely no where to put these kids or give them adequate care. They all had to return to Soleil.

Today, Sunday, Father Tom picked me up and we went to Soleil in his jeep. He says mass on Sunday mornings at Saint Ann's which is in the back part of Soleil called Soleil 17.

We easily entered Soleil from route National One. There were no UN tanks blocking the entrance.

The main street in Soleil seemed quiet with fewer people. However, the machan-women street merchants-were selling at their market near Bois Neuf. However, it did not appear that there was much food to sell.

We went down Soleil 1 and turned left on Soleil 17. We saw no MINUSTAH tanks on our way to church. St Ann's is one block down the street on the right. The church is a large structure on a corner. There were no other cars around and gang members from that area sat on the corner and wandered in and out of church. Every one seemed unconcerned.

The altar in the church is simple but there is a beautiful crucified Black Jesus on the cross painted on the wall behind the altar. Red blood pours from his hands and the wound on his right side. There were about 150 people at mass, mostly children and elderly ladies.

After Mass, I spoke with the local gang leader and his soldiers and, they all claimed they were hungry and the thousands of people they control are hungry. They also think that if they lay down their arms, MINUSTAH will arrest them, turn them over to the Haitian National Police, and they will be tortured and die in the Haitian Penitentiary.

The look on their faces is hard, cold, and scared. I asked them what they thought MINUSTAH was going to do next, and the gang leader shrugged his shoulders, looked at the ground, and said he didn't know.

Father Tom hopes to be able to bring in dry food into Soleil tomorrow, which will be bags of rice and beans, and distribute it with the help of the gang soldiers.

Father Tom and I then walked through the slum. While we were on a paved road, two UN tanks quietly came down the street. The soldiers waved at us. Their guns were not pointed at the homes or people or us. The tranquility had to be appreciated by the worn out population of Soleil.

We walked into the back neighborhoods where we were surrounded by children and one gang member continued to walk with us. A lady approached and asked me if I would examine her daughter.

I turned around and walked back with her and stepped into her shack. Lying on a bed was her 19 year old daughter who was shot in the back, abdomen, and left arm by MINUSTAH on December 27 as she sat outside her shanty. She was hospitalized at St. Catherine's, a small hospital in Soleil, where she underwent abdominal surgery and was hospitalized for 8 days.

She was lying on a small bed with perspiration covering her forehead in this hellhole. She complained of abdominal pain and said she is not able to eat. Her surgical dressing is still in place and she said she has an appointment tomorrow at St. Catherine's.

Her 3 month old baby girl was lying at her feet. The baby had not had milk in four days because she says she has no breast milk and they have no powdered milk in the one room shack which serves as their home. I saw the empty tin can of Alaska powdered milk next to her bed. They have been giving the baby some boiled water and mashed up cookies in water. The baby seemed fairly content under the circumstances.

I told the 19 year old mom and her mother that I would find the baby some powdered milk and bring it to them.

Father and I continued on and arrived in the Boston section of Cite Soleil and then crossed over to another district of Soleil called Beleco. I went over and talked to a Beleco gang of soldiers. They immediately asked me what I was going to do for them. They were armed and are the soldiers of the escaped gang leader Evans who is hiding in the slum. They said they are hungry also.

People are loyal to Evans. Even though he kills and extorts money, he still feeds thousands of people. He is hidden among them now and no one will say where he is. His name isn't even mentioned. However, the people of the slum fear him and his soldiers less than they do MINUSTAH which shoot to kill from their big white tanks that pass through their neighborhoods.

While I was talking to the soldiers of Evans' gang, a 40 year old lady with a low voice asked me if I would check her mother, who was very sick. As I was walking to her shack in the maze that never seems to end in Soleil, I stumbled onto a lady selling te (earth) which are circular 5 inch diameter pies made of mud with butter and salt mixed in. They are baked in the sun. They are made right in the slum to stem people's hunger. They offered me one which I declined. A pretty 20 year old girl took a big bite of one of these toxic patties, chewed it up and swallowed it while she smiled at me.

I followed the lady with the sick mother and arrived at their shack about 30 yards from the road.. Her 62 year old mother lay on the floor next to a bed lying on her right side. She was covered with flies and groaning softly. Her family obviously could not give her any significant care. They said she was not eating and could not stand.

When I examined her on the floor, she was lethargic and had a hard mass in her abdomen that seemed to be originating from her liver. The family showed me some worthless medication she was taking.

The family carried her to Father Tom's vehicle and we loaded her in back. As we left Soleil, the gang members from Boston waved and smiled as they walked down the road. We took her to a home for dying and abandoned adults run by the Missionaries of Charity in a different part of PAP. This Sisters graciously accepted her and her death will be easier now than it would been on her floor in Soleil.

So what to do----

This is all a dynamic, tricky business. The focus is on the gangs and their soldiers and the UN soldiers. However, these two fighting factions represent only a miniscule of the people affected. Hundreds of thousands of people's lives and well being are at stake now. What will this week bring? There is no tomorrow for Soleil unless sound and beneficent decisions are made within the next few days.

The UN should bring in massive amounts of rice and beans and start feeding the starving people of Cite Soleil. tomorrow morning (Monday). They should do all they can to provide clean water. They should build roads and create a sewer system for Soleil.

MINUSTAH should stop their indiscriminate shooting in densely packed neighborhoods of innocent people. They need to get down off their tanks and walk into the maze of poverty with real human beings living inside.

MASH-type medical clinics need to be set up by MINUSTAH, which could take care of the vast majority of medical problems found in the slum now.

Where is the Catholic Church? Catholic leaders from Haiti and all over the Americas need to come here, walk through Soleil and visit the people. They need to have meetings with MINUSTAH and the

gang leaders. The Church needs to promote meaningful dialogue and change now for the poor that are begging for their help.

Will the people continue to starve as they offer their babies up for adoption or will meaningful dialogue occur? If people don't start talking tomorrow morning in Haiti's slum and agree to stop all of the violence, the despair and death in Soleil hasn't even started.

Dr. John Carroll, an American doctor who works in some of the most oppressed areas of Haiti, can be reached through the [DyinginHaiti](#) website.

Haiti no drain on CDB resources
The Nation Newspaper, Barbados
2/12/07

A COMMITMENT has been made by officials of the Caribbean Development Bank (CDB) that Haiti's entry as a member will not cause a drain of resources to the hemisphere's poorest nation.

Adrian Deblque, the CDB's deputy director for corporate planning, made this clear when he responded to questions about the impact of Haiti's membership on the regional financial institution based in Barbados.

Saying it was not unreasonable to raise questions about possible redirection of CDB funds because of the enormity of economic and social problems facing the French-speaking nation, Deblque said the bank had to respond to the needs of all its members.

"We have to be responsive to all the membership and, in fact, our donors who are also members of the bank are also of the view that we need to be responsive to all of our membership.

"We have devised a mechanism for treating with Haiti, in terms of their resource needs, without being unfair or reducing our ability to respond to the needs of other countries within our membership," he told members of the media during the CDB's annual Press conference last Tuesday at its Wildey, St Michael office.

Deblque said in order to handle the needs of the newest CDB member all donor countries including borrowing members had agreed that about 20 per cent of the bank's grant funds would be set aside specifically for Haiti.

"That set-aside amount does not necessarily diminish our capacity to respond to our existing members," he noted. (GE)

Haiti's local roots recognized

A South Florida priest turned Haitian political figure was touched to see the gratitude of people he had helped in North Miami, as the city honored him and other Haitian-American pioneers.

BY TIM HENDERSON

Miami Herald

February 11, 2007

When they arrived, few in South Florida knew anything about their homeland. Post office clerks sometimes asked if they had misspelled "Tahiti" on their letters home.

Today they're considered pioneers of what's now Little Haiti, and many now have roots in North Miami as well. The city honored many of them in recent weeks, including a suspended priest named Gerard Jean-Juste, once considered a leading candidate for president of the island nation.

Like many of Little Haiti's pioneers from the mid-1960s, Jean-Juste helped the thousands who fled later, helping them adjust and demanding social justice for them.

He was visibly moved Wednesday as speaker after speaker from North Miami praised his efforts to help their families as they arrived in Little Haiti, either personally or through the Haitian Refugee Center he founded in 1978.

"I did not even remember these things. I had forgotten," Jean-Juste said at a city-sponsored ceremony marking his 60th birthday. "The way I work, I finish one and go on to the next case. I didn't expect anything from the person."

He was also surprised that so many of his people had moved to North Miami since he went to Haiti in the early 1990s. He is now living in Broward County and undergoing cancer treatment as he fights to overturn his suspension for political activism and return to Haiti.

"I did not know there were so many Haitians in this city," he said. He was always familiar with the city, and still uses his brother's address there to receive mail, he said.

At least 80,000 Haitian-Americans live in the North Miami and North Miami Beach areas, according to the U.S. Census.

Others were honored at a ceremony Feb. 1 for those mentioned in a new book on the pioneers of Little Haiti, including North Miami Councilman Jacques Despinosse. Despinosse was known for his early radio shows devoted to encouraging citizenship and political power through voting.

"North Miami is the second step," Despinosse said. "You start out in Little Haiti because it's easy to get a little place, you don't have to learn the language, and everything's close so you don't have to have a car.

"Then you go to North Miami and then maybe you think about Miramar. But Little Haiti is always there. It's not going anywhere."

The book's author David Brown, who runs cultural tours of Little Haiti, said it's important for Haitian Americans to remember Little Haiti even if they've moved on geographically.

"It's a natural extension of the Haitian population," Brown said of North Miami. "There's a lot of Haitians in El Portal and Miami Shores, and then of course a much higher percentage in North Miami."

Trying to stay safe in Haiti
BBC News
February 10, 2007

As the United Nations decides to keep its peacekeepers in Haiti for another 12 months, Nick Caistor travels to the country to find out how dangerous the situation is for himself.

The Republic of Haiti is the Caribbean's poorest nation

Whenever possible, I like to travel into Haiti by bus from the neighbouring Dominican Republic.

It is a long seven-hour ride, but it allows me to take the political temperature at the border and to see if there is any improvement in the crippling poverty immediately obvious in the Haitian countryside before I am submerged in the sprawling mess of the capital, Port-au-Prince.

I also get to meet interesting travel companions and this time was no exception.

The man I fell into conversation with was Charles, a retired engineer from New York State. Since his retirement, Charles told me, he has been spending his time on projects sponsored by the International Rotary Club.

At the moment, he is working hard in Haiti to bring proper drinking water to some 200,000 school children who at present - like most of the Haitian population - have no access to safe water.

This was interesting enough but it was Charles's other news that particularly caught my attention.

Random ransom

The last time he had been in Haiti, he said, he had been kidnapped.

While his car was held up in one of the inevitable Port-au-Prince traffic jams, four men had pulled up alongside in a jeep, fired shots underneath his vehicle and forced him out.

They held him for several days, while they tried to get somebody to pay a ransom.

They called all his Rotarian friends and anyone else whose business card he happened to have on him.

When the first group of kidnappers was unsuccessful, they passed him on to others who tried again. In the end, though, all they got was the money he had in his wallet, and his captors set him free.

As Charles proudly told me, the US embassy reckoned his was the only case of someone being released by kidnappers in Haiti without a ransom being paid. When I asked why he thought he was an exception, Charles modestly reckoned that it was because the gangs got fed up with him talking so much.

Returned criminals

But he also confirmed what many people in Haiti believe - that his captors, who spoke English, were people who had been deported back to Haiti from jails in the United States.

My own slender guarantee against being kidnapped is my Haitian driver, Jean-Pierre, who speaks Creole

The Bush administration has been sending back an average of 50 Haitians a month and, although this may ease their prison population problems, many of the returnees are wreaking havoc in the slums of Port-au-Prince.

The Haitian army was demobilised in 1995, after the United States intervened to help overthrow the last military dictatorship. This was a good move, except for the fact that the Haitian state now has no monopoly on force or weapons in the country.

The small police force is hopelessly outgunned and will hardly ever venture into the worst slums of the capital, where gangs and drug-runners are in control.

Troops on tour?

The threat from the criminal gangs is the main reason why the United Nations force of 7,000 soldiers from many different countries is staying on in Haiti for another year.

The UN troops' lack of local knowledge has earned them the nickname of 'tourists'

They are the only ones with the weapons and the logistical backup to be able to take on the criminals and win. So far, though, their success has been strictly limited.

Recently one patrol was caught out when their armoured vehicle broke down in Cite Soleil - or Sun City - the ironically named vast, dark slum down near the capital's seafront.

The UN contingent apparently ran off, leaving their armoured vehicle and its heavy machine-guns to the crooks. The United Nations was then forced into embarrassing negotiations just to get their own weapons back.

My own slender guarantee against being kidnapped is my Haitian driver, Jean-Pierre, who speaks Creole.

Jean-Pierre says that the biggest problem for the UN troops is their lack of local knowledge, which has earned them the nickname of "tourists".

Whenever they raid the slums, the Haitian gangs simply hide their weapons, secure in the knowledge that none of their neighbours will dare give them away.

Faith in a fast car

But Jean-Pierre also says there is a political point behind many of the apparently random kidnappings. Supporters of Jean-Bertrand Aristide, who was ousted from power in February three years ago, claim he was "kidnapped" by the United States and France, the old colonial power.

So the gangs are replying in kind and are trying to destabilise the government which, under President Rene Preval, has been making some timid progress.

Jean-Pierre's own tactics are to drive as quickly as he can, to avoid the slums whenever possible and to make sure we are back in a safe area before nightfall.

So far it has worked but, as the bus out of Haiti crosses the border back into the Dominican Republic, I still give thanks to Papa Legba - or any other voodoo deity I can think of - for protecting me, at least until now.

Dead in UN Operation in Haiti
Prensa Latina
February 12, 2007

Port of Prince, Three civilians killed and five were injured in a weekend operation by the UN Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH), which also caused a massive exodus of civilians and numerous protests.

Col. Magno Barroso, commander of the Brazilian contingent, said seven members of armed groups were arrested, but fugitive leader Evans Ti Kouto escaped, and operations will continue.

Friday, MINUSTAH sent in 700 blue helmets, armoured vehicles, helicopters and reconnaissance planes to the poor northern city of Cite Soleil.

During the operation, using tear gas and firing shots, the fugitive leader's house was occupied and the UN forces found some 5,000 bullets, but only one gun, press reported.

Although he threatened suicide at the loss of his lieutenant Vanyan Atis, the powerful gang leader is alive and in perfect health, according to Radio Kiskeya.

The National Episcopal Justice and Peace Commission estimates 539 Haitian deaths just in the last months of 2006, both from gangs and the blue helmets.

Meanwhile, the UN Security Council is still debating the controversial prolongation of MINUSTAH for six months or a year. The blue helmets are supposed to leave on Thursday.

Haiti, Another Preval Electoral Victory
Prensa Latina
February 12, 2007

Port-au-Prince, The Provisional Electoral Council of Haiti announced another victory by President Rene Preval's Lespwa party in the local and complementary legislative elections, Radio Metropole reported on Monday.

The full results of the balloting, delayed due to accusations of fraud in several localities, will be revealed in Le Moniteur official gazette this week, electoral adviser Francois Benot stated.

"Lespwa won in Tabarre," the official announced, after declaring there is a list of over 50 verdicts already in the Council's legal office.

Preliminary results of December 3 indicate that Preval's party won 276 posts, followed by other government coalition parties.

Fusion reached 171, OPL (Organization of the People in Struggle) 159, Union 89 and Alliance 77.

If these are the final results, the largest cities will be controlled by the five official parties, leaving only northern zone Gonaves (PON) and Cap-Haitien (Fanmi Lavalas).

U.N. Troops Fight Haiti's Gangs One Battered Street at a Time

By MARC LACEY

The New York Times

February 10, 2007

For years, street gangs have run Haiti right alongside the politicians. With a disbanded army and a corrupted wreck of a police force, successive presidents have either used the gangs against political rivals or just bought them off.

Recently, something extraordinary has occurred. President René Préval decided to take on the gangs and set the 8,000 United Nations peacekeepers loose on them, a risky move that will determine the security of the country and the success of his young government.

"We're taking back Port-au-Prince centimeter by centimeter," said Lt. Col. Abdesslam Elamarti, a peacekeeper from Morocco. "We're pressing these gangs so the population can live in peace."

The offensive by the United Nations forces, who arrived here in 2004 after the ouster of President Jean-Bertrand Aristide, began in earnest in late December. One of the fiercest battles took place on the morning of Jan. 25 with a raid by hundreds of United Nations forces on a gang hide-out on the periphery of Cité Soleil, this sprawling seaside capital's largest and most notorious slum.

After a fierce firefight in which gang members fired thousands of shots, United Nations officials succeeded in taking over the hide-out, a former schoolhouse that gang members had once used to fire upon peacekeepers and to demand money from passing motorists. The United Nations said four gang members had been killed in the battle.

Other raids have followed, and though it is still too early to judge the operation, gang leaders seem to be on the run, and armored United Nations vehicles now rumble through the crowded streets of Cité Soleil.

[Some 700 United Nations peacekeepers raided strongholds in Cité Soleil before dawn on Friday trying to take control of abandoned buildings used by gang members. One person was killed and several others wounded, including two peacekeepers, United Nations officials said.

["There will be no tolerance for the kidnappings, harassment and terror carried out by criminal gangs," Maj. Gen. Carlos Alberto dos Santos Cruz, the commander of the United Nations forces, said in a statement on Friday. "I will continue to cleanse these areas of the gangs who are robbing the Haitian people of their security."]

The biggest of the United Nations operations have been aimed at one of the most wanted and feared of all the gang leaders, an unlikely and unpredictable power broker in his 20s who goes simply by the name Evans. Evans and his groups have been linked to a rash of kidnappings in the capital, and lately his men have been locked in fierce battles with United Nations peacekeepers.

Within the confines of Cité Soleil, Evans's every whim is enforced with absolute authority. Deeply superstitious, he recently said he suspected cats of bringing him bad luck after one appeared during a raid by United Nations troops on one of his hide-outs, local residents and United Nations officials said.

So he issued an order that all cats were to be killed in his patch of the slum. His gunmen would be rounding them up and roasting them, he told the people. When one woman resisted, he or one of his men shot her, United Nations officials say.

Evans and the other leaders now hide in the maze of tin-roofed shanties that are home to some 300,000 of Haiti's urban poor. Meanwhile, the local population debates which is a more effective strategy for dealing with these young toughs, confronting or conversing with them.

Haiti, the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere, has a long tradition of politics mixed with thuggery. In the 1970s and '80s, François Duvalier and his son Jean-Claude employed the Tontons Macoute, dreaded paramilitary hoodlums.

Mr. Aristide was elected president in 1990 and again in 2000 with the support of the poor. Gang leaders, who act as de facto spokesmen for long-neglected slums, gained entry to the presidential palace and helped dole out jobs and other spoils to their men.

In his initial months in office, Mr. Préval, who had been Mr. Aristide's prime minister as well as president from 1996 to 2001, followed a similarly conciliatory tack. He negotiated with gang leaders, including Evans, inviting them at times to face-to-face meetings in the presidential palace, officials say.

But he has grown increasingly impatient with the gangs as they resisted surrendering their guns and continued wreaking havoc on Port-au-Prince.

The kidnapping spree at the end of last year was the last straw. As the country prepared for Christmas, street thugs began grabbing people off the street, taking them into the slums and demanding ransoms.

Then the kidnappers began singling out children. In one horrible episode, a teenage girl was killed and her eyes were gouged out. Then, a school bus of children was seized by gunmen, prompting many terrified parents to keep their children hidden at home.

Mr. Préval, who has support among Haiti's poor as well as its elite, found his coalition government under attack as well, with opposition politicians in the Senate and Chamber of Deputies denouncing him for allowing the violence. The president changed course, calling off negotiations with the gangsters and giving the United Nations the go ahead to go after them.

Some local residents say that the raids are stirring up the gangs and that innocent people are getting caught up in the cross-fire.

David Wimhurst, the spokesman for the United Nations mission, said that the peacekeepers were careful to single out only combatants and that gang members had themselves killed civilians and then blamed the United Nations.

Not everybody agrees that confrontation is the best way of calming the slums. "The gang men can change," insisted Meleus Jean, 45, a pastor who runs a tiny church in Cité Soleil and who was once almost hit by a stray bullet while delivering a Sunday morning sermon. "I talk to them and I think they are gang men because they have nothing else. Fighting them will not change them."

One of those who has been criticized in the past for dealings with gang members has been Wyclef Jean, the Haitian-American rapper formerly of the Fugees. "The problem is much bigger than the gang leaders," he said in a telephone interview from New York. "I'm not saying they are not part of the problem. When people are killing people, that's a problem. But we don't have enough conversation."

But United Nations officials say the time for talk is over.

"If one of them goes to Préval and says, 'I want to give up,' and waves a white handkerchief, that is fine," said Edmond Mulet, a Guatemalan diplomat in charge of the United Nations mission here. "That's the kind of conversation we want."

At the same time, nobody believes that arresting or killing the gang leaders will be enough to calm Port-au-Prince. The violence is linked, most say, to the dire poverty.

"The people didn't ask to be born here," said Christy Jackson, 42, headmaster of a school in Cité Soleil. "We didn't ask to live like this."

The United States government recently set aside \$20 million to create jobs for young people in Cité Soleil once the violence is quelled. In Solino, a neighborhood where the gangsters were chased away, people are being paid to clean garbage from a clogged drainage ditch.

Mr. Jean, the singer, has numerous social projects under way, including a program to bring giant mobile movie screens to poor neighborhoods, which have no cinemas.

Mr. Mulet, of the United Nations, said he believed that the gang leaders were beyond rehabilitation. "They've been killing people, kidnapping people, torturing people, raping girls," he told reporters recently in Washington. "It is very difficult to reinsert into society someone like that. A psychiatric institution would be the best place to place them in the future -- after we arrest them."

Even if the gangsters are all rounded up, the country's justice system is ill-equipped to handle them.

Justice is bought and sold in Haiti, with both police officers and judges routinely allowing bribes to determine guilt or innocence. Jails are packed with people awaiting trial, most languishing for years.

On top of that, more and more narcotics have begun flowing through Haiti to the United States, law enforcement officials say. It is Haiti's weakened state that is the big attraction to narcotics traffickers, officials say.

In a recent report on Haiti's woeful law enforcement apparatus, the International Crisis Group, a nonprofit group committed to preventing and resolving deadly conflicts, said that without urgent reform "the current escalation of organized violence and criminality may come to threaten the state itself."

As bullets fly, everyone is under threat. One stray shot pierced the outer wall of a hospital in Cité Soleil recently. "We don't know who shot it," said Marie Yves Noël, the chief nurse. The bullet continued on through the maternity unit and then broke the glass of a pediatrics ward. Nobody was hit.

United States Applauds Extension of U.N. Mission in Haiti
Haiti expert cites importance of stabilization mission
By Eric Green
USINFO Staff Writer
US State Dept.
February 20, 2007

Washington -- The United States has applauded a unanimous decision by the U.N. Security Council to extend the world body's stabilization mission in Haiti for another eight months, to October 15, with the intention to renew for further periods.

Brian Nichols, director of the U.S. State Department's Office of Caribbean Affairs, told USINFO February 20 that the decision to extend the U.N. mission, known by the French acronym MINUSTAH, "demonstrates the international community's resolve to provide the Haitian people with the security and stability that will allow them to strengthen their democracy and let international assistance take root."

Another U.S. official, Alejandro Wolff, Washington's acting representative to the United Nations, said in a statement supplied to USINFO that the resolution sends "an important signal of the determination of the international community" to support MINUSTAH.

"This is good news," Wolff said, noting that all previous extensions for the MINUSTAH had been for six months and that this was the lengthiest extension for the mission.

In a resolution adopted unanimously February 15, Security Council members agreed to extend the U.S.-backed force -- comprising almost 8,400 troops and police -- to help establish stability in Haiti, the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere.

The United States maintains a small military contingent in Haiti as part of MINUSTAH, which was created by a Security Council resolution on April 30, 2004. The mission's original mandate was to remain in Haiti for a six-month period. It has been extended several times since its initial approval.

R. Nicholas Burns, U.S. under secretary of state for political affairs, said February 1 that the United States was providing a \$20 million grant to the Haitian government to aid one of the country's poorest neighborhoods, Cité Soleil, where gang-related violence runs rampant. (See related article).

As the largest single-country donor to Haiti, the United States has delivered more than \$640 million in assistance to Haiti since 2004.

Robert Maguire, director of the Haiti program at Trinity University in Washington, told USINFO February 20 that while "there are some voices in Haiti that are speaking out against the MINUSTAH extension, I would not support those voices at all. I believe the majority of Haitians would support the mission, particularly since it is helping the country to move forward and gain more stability after the past six years of real instability."

Maguire said that while the “obstacles are enormous” for achieving that stability and MINUSTAH is challenged by those obstacles, “without MINUSTAH, Haiti could possibly descend into another round of chaos and violence.”

Although the “track record” for MINUSTAH has been “mixed,” said Maguire, he added that the mission has done a “very solid job” in “view of the resources available to the mission and the environment in which it finds itself” in the country.

Maguire said he welcomed MINUSTAH’s attempt to shift its emphasis “a little more away from peacekeeping” operations and toward backing up the Haitian police to stabilize neighborhoods where gangs have been terrorizing local residents. Maguire indicated that an international civilian police monitoring component in Haiti (known as CIVPOL) is helping to rebuild and train Haiti’s police force.

UNITED NATIONS, ORGANIZATION OF AMERICAN STATES WEIGH IN

The Security Council resolution authorizing the MINUSTAH extension specifically requests that the U.N. mission continue “the increased tempo of operations in support” of the Haitian national police “against armed gangs as deemed necessary to restore security,” especially in Haiti’s capital of Port-au-Prince.

The United Nations said violence is most acute in the Port-au-Prince slums of Cité Soleil and Martissant, where some armed gangs have been operating for years, long before MINUSTAH arrived in Haiti in 2004.

José Miguel Insulza, secretary-general of the Organization of American States (OAS), said in a February 12 statement that Haiti has a “stable, democratic government, with plans and projects in the works, which is energetically confronting the problem of security.”

Insulza, who made his statement in Lima, Peru, during a meeting of the nine Latin American nations in MINUSTAH, said a major challenge for Haiti and for the international community supporting the Caribbean nation is to stop the violence, “thus stimulating investment that will help generate” employment in the country.

The full text of the Security Council resolution on Haiti is available on the U.N. Web site.

A press release on Insulza’s remarks is available on the OAS Web site.

More information on MINUSTAH is available on the mission’s Web site.

For additional information on U.S. policy, see *The Caribbean*.

(USINFO is produced by the Bureau of International Information Programs, U.S. Department of State. Web site: <http://usinfo.state.gov>)

U.N. chases gang chief; 1 killed in slum firefight
Hundreds of U.N. peacekeepers raided Haiti's largest and most violent slum Friday, seizing a portion of it in a six-hour gun battle that left one dead.

BY JACQUELINE CHARLES

Miami Herald

February 10, 2007

PORT-AU-PRINCE - U.N. peacekeepers seized a chunk of Haiti's worst slum controlled by a notorious gang leader after a lengthy firefight Friday that left at least one dead and four wounded, including two Blue Helmets.

Barbed wire and heavily armed U.N. police officers guarded several entrances into the Cité Soleil slum late Friday after the predawn raid by several hundred of the U.N. forces.

The peacekeepers seized control of four strategic locations, including a house suspected of housing kidnap victims, a water tower, and the center of the area known as Jamaica Base, that one of Haiti's most notorious gang leaders, known as "Evans," used as his center of operation.

Evans, one of a handful of key gang leaders that the U.N. peacekeeping forces are focused on putting out of business, was not captured, but at least one Haitian was killed and four other persons were injured, including two peacekeepers.

"We have not captured him. We don't believe we have killed him," Laurie Arellano, spokeswoman for the U.N. peacekeeping mission, said just 2 ½ hours after the Blue Helmets finally took control of Evans' Jamaica Base.

"The objective was to secure the area. If we had killed or captured him, that would have been a big impact. It doesn't change what we set out to do," Arellano added.

Arellano said Evans and his gang of supporters were terrorizing the population, using them as human shields in firefights with authorities and extorting money from local businesses.

"By us having soldiers in Jamaica Base, they have no place to operate. There is no place for them to go and hide," she added. ``You can't have security if you have gangs running sections of the town."

By about 5 p.m. residents slowly began returning to their homes but were patted down by U.N. police before they were allowed to walk through a tiny entrance on the road, blocked by barbed wire and trucks. Amid the gunfire, many had ran out to a main highway nearby for safety.

"I don't know why they won't leave the population alone," Changlet LaFleur, 24, said about the U.N. forces, angry at what he described as their entry into the neighborhood while firing their guns.

Both U.N. and Haitian authorities have come under criticism for their recent aggressive attacks on the gangs, which have many of them running scared and changing locations.

But Prime Minister Jacques-Edouard Alexis told The Miami Herald Friday that the government is serious about cracking down on the wave of kidnappings and other crime.

"Our job is to protect the population," he said. ``We asked them [gang members] to turn over their guns. They started to, then afterward we saw a change in their direction. More kidnappings and killings."

Haitian carnival anthems take aim at U.N

STEVENSON JACOBS

Associated Press

Miami Herald

February 19, 2007

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti - Songs lampooning politicians have always been a fixture of Haiti's carnival, but this year, musicians have a new favorite target: U.N. peacekeepers.

The airwaves have been filled with satirical songs about the U.N. force, known by its French acronym MINUSTAH, which has been trying to restore order to Haiti since the 2004 rebellion that toppled President Jean-Bertrand Aristide.

"MINUSTAH, you're really just a tourista. You're holding back my country," the group Vwadezil sings in one popular song. "You're just lounging around so why don't you get ... out."

The songs, known as "meringues," add a political dimension to the three-day carnival celebrations. The rum-fueled festivities bring even more chaos to the bustling streets of downtown Port-au-Prince, with tens of thousands of people dancing to live bands on floats.

Haiti's government spent \$2 million on this year's carnival, hoping to lure tourists, especially Haitians living in the United States.

The former French colony, plagued since independence with political upheaval and dire poverty, has a long history of skewering public institutions during carnival.

U.N. troops are only the latest addition to a rhetorical menu that typically includes crooked government officials, outgunned police and kidnapers who prey on the population of 8 million.

The peacekeepers have recently become more aggressive in battling the gangs blamed for rampant kidnappings. On Sunday, they captured a gang leader known as Ti Bazil in the Cite Soleil slum.

But many Haitians feel that the force, which combines soldiers and police from more than a dozen countries, has been too slow in stemming violence.

"MINUSTAH, you've invaded our country, you must make things better," the popular group T-Vice warns in one of its meringues.

Other meringues accuse U.N. bureaucrats of spending more time dining in posh restaurants and sunning themselves on the beach than working to solve the poor country's troubles.

"Since the U.N. is now a part of our society, I touch upon it in my music," the band Vwadezil's lead singer, Fresh La, said in an interview. "They're taking a long time to bring peace to the country, and that's keeping us from moving forward."

The U.N. mission takes the jabs in stride.

"I think it's part of the Haitian tradition of carnival to make fun of things, even serious things," said Edmond Mulet, the special U.N. representative to Haiti. "It's a way of conveying some sentiments which are genuine and I don't blame for them that. On the contrary, I think they should be welcomed."

Some singers have caused problems for the U.N., however.

At last year's carnival, the group Demele performed a profanity-laced song that accused peacekeepers of stealing goats belonging to peasants. Despite denials by the U.N. mission, the accusation spread through the streets and became a common chant during anti-U.N. street protests.

"That song caused a lot of issues between MINUSTAH and the population," said that group's frontman, also known as Demele. He alleged that the offending lyric got him uninvited from this year's carnival lineup.

U.N. officials and carnival organizers denied censoring any artists.

"Musicians have the right to write any song they like," said Yanick Louis, a member of the carnival's artistic committee.

And despite the harsh tone of some songs, other artists said they mean no offense.

"I ridicule the U.N. in the spirit of carnival, which is about having fun and letting go," Vwadezil's Fresh La said.

Haiti: UN peacekeepers arrest gang chief in ongoing anti-crime blitz
UN News Center
February 20, 2007

United Nations peacekeepers in Haiti have arrested a gang leader blamed for several murders as part of their ongoing operations to clean up the notoriously crime-ridden Cité Soleil quarter of Port-au-Prince, the capital.

Johnny Pierre Louis, also known as Ti Bazil, “the presumed perpetrator of numerous murders and other bloody crimes,” was picked up on Sunday night during a patrol in the Key Boyle residential of section Cité Soleil, the UN Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) said in a statement.

“His arrest represents one more step towards re-establishing security, peace and stability, conditions necessary for the development of Cité Soleil,” it added, noting that he often acted under the orders of an ex-gang chief named Evens, whom MINUSTAH recently ousted from the Boston area of Cité Soleil.

Ti Bazil is believed to have been involved in the “physical elimination” of two families participating in the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme and to have forced local residents to take part in his criminal activities. He also instigated the digging of trenches in Cité Soleil to prevent MINUSTAH patrols from circulating.

MINUSTAH, set up in 2004 to help re-establish peace in the impoverished Caribbean country after an insurgency forced President Jean-Bertrand Aristide to go into exile, has launched several anti-gang operations in recent weeks. Earlier this month, a 700-troop-strong operation by the mission’s Brazilian contingent cleaned up Boston and transformed Evens’ former headquarters into a free medical clinic.

The mission has reported that armed criminal gangs are forcing children to take part in their operations, often under threat of killing them, and using them as human shields in confrontations with the police.

In Haitian slum, gangs retreat but misery persists

BY JACQUELINE CHARLES

Miami Herald

February 19, 2007

PORT-AU-PRINCE - Schoolboys kicked a tiny red ball around in the shadow of a bullet-riddled building in the Cité Soleil slum. Women walked to and from market with baskets on their heads, and families packed a tiny church nearby.

But the children never strayed too far from their play area, afraid of a return of the firefights between local gangs and United Nations peacekeepers that once regularly ripped through the squalid area, leaving gang members and civilians dead or wounded.

"You can't let your children out of your sight," said Marguerite Joseph, 32, tightly clutching her 2-year-old daughter in fear as four black and white U.N. armored vehicles ferrying blue-helmeted troops rumbled by her cement-block shack.

Over the past weeks, hundreds of U.N. peacekeepers have slowly seized sections of Cité Soleil, a densely populated slum of about 200,000 people, once dominated by heavily armed gang members who kept kidnap victims there, extorted local business people, and allegedly raped local women.

The flags of the United Nations and Haiti now flutter from atop the crumbling blue bullet-pocked building, once used by the gangs to snipe at U.N. peacekeepers, and now a U.N. command post and symbol of progress in Haiti's crackdown on the gangs that mushroomed in the wake of former President Jean-Bertrand Aristide's 2004 ouster.

"We want the capital to regain its peace," Prime Minister Jacques-Edouard Alexis told The Miami Herald during the U.N. forces' predawn raid on Feb. 9 to take control of the area known as Boston, about a quarter-mile from the building.

It is quiet in Boston now, at least for the moment.

U.N. forces now control about 20 percent of Cité Soleil, and the gangs appear to be on the run. Scores of gang members have been arrested, and three gang leaders -- including Boston's feared former ruler, a young man known as Evans or "Ti-Kouto" (Creole for Little Knife) -- have contacted Haitian authorities, offering to turn in their guns.

Still, many problems remain in the seaside shantytown, a historic stronghold of support for Aristide where graffiti still hail him as "King." Residents live in row after row of corroding tin-roof shacks next to mounds of garbage and open sewers. Money and work are scarce. Misery is plentiful.

"People are hungry," said one of a group of young gang members in Cité Soleil who blocked a reporter from walking deeper into the slum.

Where there were once chimeres, slang for gunmen loyal to Aristide, who doled out government food and jobs to dirt-poor residents, there are now bandi -- bandits who kidnap and rob but provide food and water in exchange for residents' silence.

The U.N. peacekeepers first went on the offensive against Cité Soleil's gangs in December, after an unprecedented rash of child kidnappings and increasing pressure by Haitian lawmakers on Alexis and President René Préal to improve the security situation.

Several hundred U.N. peacekeepers and Haitian national police began to launch raids into gang-controlled areas and eventually seized control of the Bwa Neuf section of the slum after several firefights. Then, on Feb. 9, they seized the Boston section in their largest raid to date.

"There are between three and five big bandits [in Port-au-Prince]. . . . Those are the ones we really want," said Edmond Mulet, the head of the U.N. mission in Haiti, known as MINUSTAH.

Some of the gang leaders are now fighting for control of the Martissant slum on the southern outskirts of Port-au-Prince in battles that have forced many residents to flee their homes.

Since the Feb. 9 raid, 45 gang members from both Martissant and Cité Soleil have been arrested by the Haitian National Police and the peacekeepers, U.N. military spokeswoman Laurie Arellano said. But how long they will remain behind bars is unclear because Haiti's jails already are severely overcrowded.

Also seized during the Cité Soleil raid were a Galil assault rifle, about 6,000 rounds of ammunition, two telescopes, one binoculars, two laptop computers and 27 cellphones. The raiders also found the national identity cards of several kidnap victims, Arellano said.

"Now it's possible to walk in Boston without fear, without problems, without criminals circulating freely in that area," said Brazilian Maj. Gen. Carlos Alberto dos Santos Cruz, the U.N. military commander, as he showed off the seized loot.

Although Evans was not captured, Dos Santos Cruz said his forces were still looking for him.

A Haitian official familiar with a months-old effort to disarm the gangs told The Miami Herald that Evans and two other Cité Soleil gang leaders had offered to disarm after the U.N. raid Feb. 9 -- in exchange for a one-way ticket out of Haiti.

No deal, said the official, who asked for anonymity because of the sensitivity of the disarmament program.

But while a degree of normalcy has returned to Cité Soleil, some Aristide supporters have complained that the U.N. forces used "brutal tactics" in their raids.

The U.S.-based Institute for Justice & Democracy in Haiti, headed by Brian Concannon Jr., issued a statement Wednesday alleging that the raids caused unnecessary ``collateral damage among children, young adults and elderly, men and women killed or injured by U.N. bullets."

Haitian news media reported four civilians dead in the Boston raid, but U.N. officials said they could not confirm that number. Fifteen U.N. peacekeepers have died and 40 wounded since the U.N. force was deployed to Haiti in 2004.

U.N. officials say they use caution in their offensive and try to limit civilian casualties. Many gang members use the same caliber of bullets as the U.N. peacekeepers, so it's almost impossible to prove which side shot a person, they add.

During a recent walk through Cité Soleil, few residents were willing to discuss the gangs or the kidnappings with a correspondent, choosing instead to talk about how tough life had become since Aristide's departure.

"Given where we are currently, the fact we have not died yet, it is only because of God," said Perle Estelan, 47, a husband and a father of three who gets by doing odd jobs. ``He's the one who is protecting us, keeping us alive."

Some international and local organizations have tried to help in Cité Soleil. A group of Haitian businesses, for instance, provide water through a recently started foundation, donating about \$1,000 a month. Peacekeepers also contribute food and water in areas they have taken control of. And recently, the United States announced that it would give Haiti \$20 million to help create jobs for youths in Cité Soleil.

Mulet, the U.N. chief, and others welcome the aid, saying that more than military muscle is needed to root out Haiti's burgeoning gang problem.

"People in Cité Soleil need to see some kind of dividends," Mulet said. ``They need to see the state, the government, is moving in rebuilding schools, hospitals, providing development projects."

Straight to the point• CALM IN HAITI

Miami Herald

Opinion

Monday, February 19, 2007

The United Nations Security Council wisely decided last week to extend the mandate of its military mission in Haiti for another eight months -- but that's not long enough. Haiti has enjoyed a rare period of relative calm for the last few months thanks to the 8,800-strong U.N. force. But real political stability is a long way off.

Give credit to Guatemala's Edmond Mulet, head of the U.N. mission, and Brazil's Major Gen. Carlos Alberto Dos Santos Cruz, the new commander of the security force. With more effective diplomacy and aggressive military tactics, they have helped Haiti's political establishment begin to function. They've also helped to curb Haiti's gang violence. It's a shame they weren't around earlier.

Haiti surely needs more than eight months to achieve self-sustaining peace and democracy. Yes, another extension can be granted later, but both the U.N. mission and the government need to lay plans that extend beyond an eight-month horizon. The Security Council should keep that in mind the next time it considers the future of its mission in Haiti.

• STOP THE RAIDS

Thanks to Miami-Dade Commissioner Katy Sorenson for sending the right message to the White House: Stop deporting undocumented immigrants who could earn legal status under immigration reforms that Congress promises to consider this year.

The County Commission is sponsoring a resolution urging an end to the detention and deportation of immigrants without criminal records.

Immigration authorities have been stepping up efforts to deport immigration-law violators. Immigration and Customs Enforcement arrested almost 180 people during a weeklong effort early this month. Most of them have no criminal records and have contributed their labor to our economy. They deserve a chance to legalize. We urge the commission to adopt the resolution.

• FUN ON THE BEACH

When it comes to fun on the beach, Hollywood's policy has been: "Not in our surf or turf." You can't fly a kite on the city's beach. You can only surf or surf-fish in certain sections. You can't picnic there. No skating or skateboarding except at the north end of the Boardwalk.

But all that may change when the \$14 million beach Boardwalk renovation is finished. In addition to the Boardwalk there will be bike paths and a jogging track. Fun beach sports like volleyball and kite flying will be allowed. The dickest change would be to allow picnicking. It could bring litter. All the city can do is discourage littering with signs and trash receptacles. City officials and beach vendors hope this will attract newcomers of all ages to the beach who have felt unwelcome because of the restrictions.

Good idea. Just letting folks play on the beach for a change should help.

As Haiti stabilizes, progress still slow

By Jacqueline Charles

McClatchy Newspapers

February 18, 2007

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti - For the first time in years, Haiti is enjoying relative political stability.

There is not-so-good news as well. Progress has been slow, frustrations are growing, international donors are complaining and lawmakers are bickering. Crime remains high, and the slow pace of government may be steering the nation back toward paralysis.

"We are building a country, and it's not easy," said Prime Minister Jacques-Edouard Alexis, defending the government. "I don't think there is a form of government as difficult as a democracy."

But confounding problems face President Rene Preval. Following his election a year ago this month, Preval formed a coalition government in hopes of avoiding a repeat of what happened during his first presidential term from 1996 to 2001, when a nonfunctioning parliament paralyzed his government.

"The problems in Haiti are so enormous that you could justify prioritizing almost every one at the top of the list," said former Florida Sen. Bob Graham.

"But you cannot put 50 items at the top of the list," Graham said, echoing criticisms that the government's priorities change from meeting to meeting and lack strategies for implementation.

"Initially Preval said education; six months later, roads, roads, roads. There needs to be a commitment to a clearly articulated short list of priorities and then demonstrate the ability to organize and get something done," Graham said.

Graham, who visited here in October, said he has been waiting months for a list of what kind of experts the government needs as part of a planned \$10 million effort to recruit Haitians in the United States and Canada to work in Haiti. The program is being funded by the Inter-American Development Bank.

"We are ready to go to be of assistance, but we still haven't gotten that list of requirements," Graham told The Miami Herald.

Alexis said the criticisms are unwarranted. Haiti, he said, is still waiting on donors to turn over "the kind of dollars they need to give for the country to develop."

"President Preval and I have defined where we want to go," he told The Miami Herald. "I don't believe they have a problem with our priorities. I believe it's their bureaucracy."

Donors publicly downplay concerns, preferring to tout their aid programs, including almost \$10 million to train parliament members. Privately, however, they say they are telling Preval and Alexis to get moving or risk losing badly needed dollars.

Victor Benoit, head of one of the six major political parties in Preval's fragile coalition government, agrees. "The population doesn't have the sense that the government is moving forward," he said.

Alexis acknowledged that little progress has trickled down to the people, but he listed several government advances:

_For the past two weeks, Preval has been meeting at 5 p.m. every day with Alexis and cabinet ministers, asking for updates on projects and pledged dollars.

"Before the elections you had political fragmentation. Today, we have a government capable of governing," said Albert Ramdin, assistant secretary general of the Organization of American States. "There is an active engagement of people in the process."

_Graduated 500 new Haitian National Police officers to help fight the wave of kidnappings and other crimes gripping the capital, and began tough vetting of police officers for signs of corruption. Both the government and the U.N. peacekeeping mission here have beefed up efforts to reclaim chunks of the city once controlled by armed gangs.

"Haiti today is horrible, the level of violence, kidnappings, corruption," said Edmond Mulet, head of the U.N. mission here. "But if you compare the picture of Haiti today with a year ago, it's a very positive evolution. It's very complicated, difficult. It will be better."

_Formed a task force to help Haiti take advantage of HOPE, a U.S. bill for duty-free textile exports approved by Congress last December and expected to create thousands of jobs in the poverty-stricken nation of eight million.

Preval has remained relatively silent amid the burgeoning complaints, choosing instead to run public service TV and radio announcements telling Haitians to respect one another.

Determined not to return the government to paralysis, he has instructed Alexis to prevent a clash with parliament. But with most of the lawmakers being first-time politicians and new to their duties and powers, some Haitians say clashes are inevitable.

Preval will have to do more than just take out ads, some analysts say. He'll have to shake things up, replacing ineffective ministers.

"We have political peace," said Jean-Marie Pierre, 20, who lives in the Bel Air neighborhood, near the presidential palace. "But the people are dying from hunger; dying from misery. This country is finished, completely broken."

Said Leon Saint-Louis, a professor of public law at the State University of Haiti: "The population is losing confidence. They don't see them working, they only see them fighting," he said.

Opposition Sen. Rudy Boulos said he doesn't share the anxiety about the 129-member parliament. It's growing pains, he said.

"They have slipped up a little bit, gotten into fights that took their time and were not vital neither for democracy nor governance," he said. "This is in the normal result of getting to know one another and acting within a group and facing other centers of powers."

For a while, parliament appeared to be playing its role. Members passed the budget in record time and threatened Alexis with a vote of no confidence over the deteriorating security environment.

Then came the traffic ticket.

A member of the lower chamber alleged that he was beaten by a police inspector after being pulled over for driving the wrong way. The issue erupted into a fight between parliament and the National Police, with the chamber of deputies passing a nonbinding resolution demanding the inspector be fired.

Soon after, the Senate was rocked by allegations that several senators had accepted \$200,000 in bribes to pass a resolution nullifying a decision by the executive on a bank merger. Parliament announced last week that a five-member commission would investigate the allegations.

"They don't see this as a unique window of opportunity Haiti has," Mulet said, referring to the parliament and its lack of focus on big issues. "They are acting as if this is a traditional country. Haiti has special problems and should have special and exceptional actions and measures to solve them."

American dream turns to nightmare for U.S. resident and her Haitian family in Collier

By Ryan Mills

Naples Daily News, FL

Tuesday, February 20, 2007

For eight years Louis and Angelene Dorcelian lived their own version of the American dream.

After fleeing Haiti, the couple met in Immokalee, were married and started a family. Louis found work as a painter, Angelene as a cook.

They stayed active in the Elim Seventh-Day Adventist Church in Golden Gate, where Louis was a deacon. In 2002 the couple bought a small, one-story house in Golden Gate where they could raise their growing children.

Those were happy times, Angelene Dorcelian recalled.

"It was so good," she said, in broken English.

On Nov. 19, 2006, Louis Dorcelian's two children from a former relationship legally immigrated to the United States from Haiti to live with Louis, Angelene and their now three young children.

Around that time Angelene Dorcelian discovered that she was pregnant with the couple's fourth child.

But nine days after his children immigrated to the United States from Haiti, the growing Dorcelian family was broken apart when Louis Dorcelian, 40, was arrested and then deported to Haiti.

Local leaders in the Haitian immigrant community say it never should have happened.

"We are facing a big snafu here," said Adrien Alpendre, a counselor with the Jerusalem Haitian Community Center, an East Naples-based organization that helps lower-income people and members of immigrant communities with social and economic issues.

Now, 27-year-old Angelene Dorcelian, pregnant and alone with five children, is struggling to provide the basic necessities for her family, and is fighting to bring her husband back into the country.

In 1997 Louis Pierrot Dorcelian escaped Haiti by boat, where he told his family he was frequently beaten by bands of government-funded hooligans called "chimeres," Angelene Dorcelian said. He landed in the United States, applied for asylum and received a work permit.

In February 1998, Angelene Dorcelian, then Angelene Doreus, came into the country with a green card, which was sponsored by her father.

The two met about a month later.

"I met him at a friend's house in Immokalee," Angelene Dorcelian said. "He used to go to church. He invited me to church. ... He was a good guy; a nice person."

In 2000 Louis Dorcelian's application for asylum was denied and he filed an appeal. On June 4, 2000, Louis and Angelene were married. Louis Dorcelian's appeal was denied shortly after, but because he was now married to a permanent resident, Angelene was able to file for his adjustment of status.

"According to U.S. law, it is lawful for the wife to legally apply for the husband," said Jacques Sinjuste, the executive director of the Jerusalem Haitian Community Center. "There is no doubt that he is going to get it."

With Louis Dorcelian's status in the United States seemingly secure, he and his wife began their family. Their first child, a son, Wibens Louis Dorcelian, was born in August 2000, followed by daughters Wisenny Dorcelian in July 2002, and Widney Dorcelian in May 2005.

Also in 2005, Angelene Dorcelian applied to bring her husband's 11-year-old daughter and 9-year-old son, who were living in Haiti, into the United States.

Everything was going as planned until April 2006, when the Dorcelians learned that the Department of Homeland Security had issued a removal order for Louis stemming from the denial of his application for asylum, Sinjuste said.

Though his application for adjustment of status was pending, Sinjuste said his attorney should have filed for a withholding of the removal order.

"I don't think it was filed," Alpendre said.

Joann Hennessey, a Miami-based attorney who was handling Louis Dorcelian's case at the time, said she was unaware of the removal order.

"I didn't get that notice," she said. "I didn't know about the order to remove."

From past experiences with the immigration processes, Sinjuste recommended that Louis Dorcelian apply for refugee status in Canada, where he could go to wait for his green card and not have to worry about the removal order.

Louis Dorcelian was hesitant to leave, Sinjuste said.

"He told me... 'I have big responsibilities. I have a wife and children; a house payment and car payment. I cannot leave my wife alone with all these bills,'" Sinjuste recalled.

But Louis Dorcelian did apply for refugee status in Canada, and was scheduled to leave on Nov. 28, 2006.

That September the family received news from the Department of Homeland Security that Angelene Dorcelian's petition for her husband had been approved, but that he wasn't yet eligible to file an adjustment of status application. On Nov. 19, 2006, Louis Dorcelian's two children from Haiti came to live with the family.

Nine days later, and just hours before he was scheduled to board a plane for Canada, Louis and Angelene Dorcelian were pulled over by a Collier County sheriff's deputy for a minor infraction. Apparently there were too many trinkets hanging from Angelene Dorcelian's rear-view mirror, she said.

The deputy was about to let them go, Angelene Dorcelian said, but before he did he found that there was an immigration hold on Louis Dorcelian, who was then arrested.

Sinjuste heard about the arrest and immediately contacted Collier County Commissioner Jim Coletta to find out what happened. Coletta contacted Collier Sheriff Don Hunter.

"I have a suspicion that this arrest may have been made in conjunction with an Immigration and Customs Enforcement operation," Hunter wrote to Coletta in an e-mail. "Just for the record, we do not conduct independent immigration operations, but rather assist our federal partners from time to time with criminal alien arrests."

Louis Dorcelian was sent back to Haiti on Dec. 27, 2006.

"They should have just adjudicated the file and allowed him to adjust," Hennessey said. "He shouldn't have been deported. His petition was approved."

Attempts by the Daily News to contact the Department of Homeland Security for comment on the case were unsuccessful.

Without her husband's help, Angelene Dorcelian said she is struggling to support her family. She's still working as a cook, but can't work as often as she used to. She is starting to sell her belongings to help pay bills, she said.

The small yellow house in Golden Gate that Angelene and Louis Dorcelian bought to raise their family is now for rent or for sale.

"I don't have no choice," Angelene Dorcelian said.

Angelene Dorcelian cried when talking about her children.

"The keep asking me for their dad sometimes," she said. "I tell them he's coming home soon. I don't know what to do."

Sinjuste and Alpendre are working with Angelene Dorcelian to get her husband out of Haiti and into Canada, where he could be reunited with his family.

"The only way out of that nightmare they call Haiti is for him to go to Canada," Sinjuste said. "We are realistically optimistic."

Hennessey said there also is a chance Louis Dorcelian could get a waiver from the Department of Homeland Security. He currently faces a 10-year bar to re-entry into the United States.

"He has a U.S. citizen spouse and U.S. citizen children who are going to suffer extraordinary hardship," she said. "It would still be a long period of time. If he could get to Canada, he could apply for a waiver in Canada."

Louis Dorcelian's story is just one example of how and why the immigration system needs to be streamlined, Hennessey said.

"It's very difficult to get something through the immigration process smoothly. You're always fighting with a system that is too big to deal with," she said. "The Haitians are definitely given the least amount of attention. ... They don't give their cases a lot of weight and the laws need to be changed."

Anyone interested in helping Angelene Dorcelian should contact the Jerusalem Haitian Community Center at (239) 430-1421.

Haiti's carnival a chance to lure expats

As Haiti carnival kicks off today, the government makes a \$2 million tourism push for Haitians living abroad to come home and enjoy.

BY JACQUELINE CHARLES

Miami Herald

February 18, 2007

PORT-AU-PRINCE - In the waiting lounge at the international airport, images of colorful masqueraders flash on the TV screen. In the city, public service ads on radio tell patrons to leave their weapons at home: Carnaval is a time for fun.

And on northbound I-95 in Miami, a red-and-black billboard urges South Florida's burgeoning Haitian-American community to come home. Rio de Janeiro, it says, is a 480-minute flight away. Port-au-Prince, 90 minutes.

More than just a street party, Port-au-Prince's three-day pre-Lenten carnival celebration, which kicks off today, is a carefully orchestrated attempt by Haitian President René Prével's government to set the stage for one of its most challenging goals: revive Haiti's long-collapsed tourism industry.

"We are making the statement that there is not a problem of insecurity in Haiti. Yes, there is insecurity in certain areas, but not in the entire country," said Tourism Minister Patrick Delatour. "This is not a country either at war or one coming out of civil war."

Case in point: Last weekend's carnival in the southern port city of Jacmel attracted large crowds of both Haitians and foreigners, who jammed the narrow streets.

"There was between 300,000 and 500,000 people and no security problems. Nobody was killed. Nobody was shot," said Delatour, who attended the event.

Still, in a country struggling with an unprecedented wave of kidnappings, and sections of this capital city still suffering from gang violence that has made even Haitians living abroad reluctant to return for visits, staging the annual "Haiti Kanaval" presents a formidable challenge.

To pull it off, the government is beefing up security this weekend around the capital, just as it did along the winding mountain roads to Jacmel for that carnival. Motorists going to Jacmel, on the southern coast, were subjected to two separate police searches of their vehicles for weapons.

CREATING A BUZZ

The Haitian government has invested \$2 million in creating a carnival-season buzz through billboards and a website, www.haiticarnaval.org, to encourage Haitians in South Florida, New York, Boston and Montreal to return home.

Past attempts to use Haitian expatriates as a springboard for reviving tourism here have been met with little success as Haiti seemed to carom from one violent crisis to another.

"We have a great opportunity here," Prime Minister Jacques-Edouard Alexis told The Miami Herald last week, as he mentioned several annual celebrations here, including carnival, that already attract Haitians from abroad.

Private companies like MWM & Associates have recently tried to create a buzz by hosting an annual Haiti Tourism Summit in Miami Beach and offering packaged trips to the island.

"The numbers are increasing slowly but surely," MWM executive general manager Ginette Lilavois Villedrouin said about the number of Haitians who have booked trips to Haiti through her company.

Convincing Haitians to visit is key, tourism officials say, in order to attract visitors beyond the foreign missionaries and aid workers who now flock here. Outside of the estimated 600,000 Royal Caribbean cruise ship passengers who are expected to visit Labadee, a few miles west of Cap-Haitien, the government lacks statistics on how many tourists Haiti attracts annually.

FILM ATTRACTION

While carnival is the country's one big tourist draw, an international film festival in Jacmel is also drawing visitors.

Last December, an estimated 50,000 visitors attended the town's film festival where Haiti-born hip-hop artist Wyclef Jean performed. Jean has been designated an honorary ambassador by Préval to help lure tourists.

"This is a new day for Haiti," said Josette Darguste, chairwoman of the government's carnival committee. She added: "We want Haitians to come back home; come see the cultural riches your country has to offer."

This includes the 4,000 masqueraders, and konpa musicians who will jam at Champ de Mars, the downtown Port-au-Prince square where Haiti's heroes are immortalized. The government is estimating 2 million people will join the party.

Among those responding to the call to come home will be two of Haiti's most popular musical performers: the T-Vice group and konpa singer Michel Martelly, aka Sweet Micky, who now call South Florida home.

"I want to make carnival this year something fun and successful," said Sweet Micky, who after opting not to participate in Haiti carnival last year now says he has poured \$100,000 into his float, a decorated 18-wheeler from which he will perform.

Miami-based Island TV will carry the carnival live on the Comcast cable network.

While Sweet Micky has chosen to stay away from political messages in his performance this year, T-Vice, keeping up the tradition of having carnival songs reflect what's going on in Haitian society, has composed a song urging Haitians to reconcile after years of political strife.

"It's time for us to look forward, come together hand in hand and work to rebuild Haiti," said T-Vice singer Roberto Martino.

UN refocuses Haiti mission

February 17, 2007

Caribbean Net News

UPI

By William M. Reilly

UNITED NATIONS -- The UN Security Council has unanimously extended until October 15 the UN peacekeeping force in Haiti, ordering it to "continue the increased tempo of operations" in support of a national police campaign against armed gangs to restore security in crime-ridden areas of the capital, Port-au-Prince.

The mission has an authorized strength of nearly 7,500 military troops and 1,800 police. But length of the extension approved Thursday was a compromise of eight months.

China, which does not have diplomatic relations with Haiti, opposed doubling the usual six-month length of mission as supported by the friends of Haiti, Britain, Canada, France and the United States.

Port-au-Prince is one of the few capitals recognizing Taipei's Taiwan instead of Beijing as the "one China" in the United Nations. Taiwan split from mainland China during a civil war in 1949 although Beijing continues to claim sovereignty over the island.

However, Ambassador Wang Guangya of China explained the shorter duration was sought with an eye to reducing the size of the Haiti mission and transforming it into a peacebuilding assignment.

The old mandate of the UN Stabilization Mission in Haiti, known by its French acronym MINUSTAH, set to expire Thursday, was under Chapter VII of the UN Charter, meaning it is authorized to use force. It continues under Chapter VII.

After adoption of the resolution, China's representative said MINUSTAH's central task for the upcoming phase was to assist Haiti in its transition from peacekeeping to peacebuilding.

He said MINUSTAH's recent military operations against armed gangs, while necessary, was not a long-term strategy and in the coming months, it should yield more to a political process for solving long-term problems.

In recent days, MINUSTAH has garnered headlines because of its anti-gang operations in the notorious slum areas of Cite Soleil on the north and Martissant on the south of Port-au-Prince.

MINUSTAH, set up in 2004 to help re-establish peace in the impoverished Caribbean country after an insurgency forced President Jean-Bertrand Aristide to go into exile, had reported armed criminal gangs were forcing children to take part in their operations, often under threat of killing them, and using them as human shields in confrontations with police.

There have been conflicting reports about the operations and the number and type of civilian casualties.

Within a few hours of the council approving the mandate extension, MINUSTAH spokesman David Wimhurst Thursday briefed a few reporters at UN World Headquarters in New York from his headquarters in Port-au-Prince via a video teleconference on the Caribbean isle.

Until last Friday, when the world organization launched a 700-troop-strong operation in the Boston area of Cite Soleil, Jamaica Base was the headquarters of the gang chief named Evans, who used it to coordinate his activities in a country that has seen a surge in extortion, kidnappings and the recruitment of children into gangs.

Now, doctors and dentists from MINUSTAH's Brazilian contingent tend to local residents at what is a new community center.

Wimhurst explained the gangs in Cite Soleil had their turf defined and respected each other's boundaries, where in Martissant to the south, gangs were fighting each other over territories.

He said the gangs evolved from political links, with a criminal element, to the former president.

They stole, kidnapped for ransom, sold drugs, committed gang rapes and "terrorized; were thuggish and extremely violent," he said, adding the UN operation learned it cost about \$70,000 a month to keep a gang in operation.

"We've seized thousands and thousands of rounds of ammunition," Wimhurst said of the operation, adding he didn't know from where weapons and ammunition were coming into the country -- whether across the "very porous" border with the Dominican Republic or were smuggled across Haiti's very long coastline, past an ill-equipped coast guard.

The resolution passed by the Security Council also specifically authorizes support for the coast guard.

As for conflicting reports on casualties, the spokesman said, "The pro-Aristide lobby orchestrates a very virulent information campaign in the United States" asserting MINUSTAH troops fired into slums, deliberately killing civilians.

While he denied any civilians had been deliberately targeted, citing strict rules of engagement to fire only when fired upon or against an armed threat, he admitted there had been civilian casualties.

"At 3 a.m. or 4 a.m. no one can honestly say where bullets are landing," Wimhurst said, pointing out gang members will fire straight up in the air at a helicopter and if they miss "the bullets come straight down."

Still, he said, "Local people are quite supportive," and even applauded when MINUSTAH forces entered the Boston in the southeast quarter.

Asked if he thought the resolution just passed was long enough, Wimhurst, said, "We cannot complete the job in eight months."

'What If Foundation' works with youth in Haiti

February 17, 2007

By Wadner Pierre

Caribbean Net News

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti: The What If? Foundation is a unique Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) currently working in Haiti. It is led by Mrs Margaret Trost and the Reverend Gerard Jean-Juste, the pastor of Sainte Claire's parish of Ti plas kazo.

Jean-Juste a theologian and critic of the 2004 ouster of Haiti's democratically elected government has dedicated his life to the poor. His parish is located in the north of the Delmas commune, near Delmas 33.

For more than five years many people have supported the foundations work at the parish, aiding the educational and nutritional needs of the local community. Numerous young Haitians have benefited from the Foundation's programs.

During the festival of Saint Joseph on March 19, 2000 Mrs. Tost and the Reverend Jean-Juste launched the What If? Foundation. The first goal was to provide food for local poor children and the most vulnerable.

At the begining the program had the capacity to provide only 300 to 400 dishes on Sunday's with the assistance of the Depstre family. Mrs. Depstre explained she was helped by Manmidet, her daughter, and the Ketty Depestre.

Not long after the program expanded to Friday's with the help of La Sainte Famille of Saint Claire. Ms Gabriel Dorissant, head of Saint Claire, provided generous support for the expansion of the program.

Today the program has reached its zenith and offers a dish of food to the most needy, five days a week. More than one thousand people, among them mainly children from the organization's educational program, pass through daily. More then 100 young people have passed the school's education program and six have already finished their secondary studies.

The program provides an educational alternative to the expensive private schools that are most common in Haiti. The public sector in Haiti has been traditionally underfunded, although previous elected governments have invested in education. Following the 2004 coup thousands of workers were fired from civil sector jobs and some teachers at public funded schools were persecuted.

Today the program in Sainte Claire is run by the poor for the poor, a stark contrast to many other programs where highly paid staff drive around in luxury 4x4s.

The Foundation has also run a summer camp, established three years ago, which had more than 500 young people and children attend over the summer of 2006. In its first term it was directed by Manmidet and for the second term it was directed by the parish's youth and its chief principle Jean Mari Noel of the group MEJ.

Under the direct advisement of Mrs Trost and Father Jean-Juste the camp has been a success. One youth involved in the summer camp explained, "I benefited greatly from the program and a great man, the Reverend Gerard Jean-Just, a defender of the rights of the Haitians and the Pastor of the parish Sainte Claire Tiplas kazo."

He is the defender of the young people the children explain. "To all Our friends that have contributed to the success and the continuity of all the programs of the What If? Foundation, a thousand mercies."

Visit the What If? Foundation website at <http://www.whatiffoundation.org/>

Drug dealer denies he was kingpin
Appeals for softer sentence. Gang gave students first hit of crack free
The Montreal Gazette
Tuesday, February 20, 2007

Bernard Mathieu, convicted of controlling a group of drug dealers who gave high school students their first hit of crack cocaine free of charge, made an impassioned speech from the prisoner's box yesterday, saying he would pay for what he'd done, but not for what he's been accused of.

Mathieu, who came to Canada from Haiti 27 years ago when he was just 8, said he might have trafficked a few kilograms of cocaine, but was never the boss of a network of dealers that held Pelletier Ave. in Montreal North hostage.

He was convicted last month of gangsterism, trafficking in cocaine, crack and marijuana and conspiracy to traffic, along with several others.

"Not one of the 15 accused (in this case) had the courage to say I wasn't their leader," Mathieu said during sentencing arguments.

At times crying, Mathieu said almost two years in prison has taught him that he doesn't belong in the criminal milieu and once out, would like to work with youth to keep them from entering gangs.

A landed immigrant, he will also fight deportation to Haiti, not for himself, but for his mother, 74, who sat in the court crying.

Earlier in the day, the court heard from a street-gang expert that students at Calixa-Lavallee School in Montreal North were given "juices" - a marijuana cigarette laced with the highly addictive residue that comes from making crack.

"They think it's just pot, but once they smoke it, they discover it's much more," said Montreal police Det.-Sgt. Jean-Claude Gauthier.

Mathieu, a smooth-talking businessman, controlled Pelletier for at least a decade, Gauthier testified, saying the gang intimidated and frightened residents.

Mathieu's version is that he was respected on the street and often gave people advice for their problems.

The Crown is asking that Mathieu be given a sentence of between 12 and 15 years.

"Selling drugs at a high school is a violent crime," said prosecutor Eric de Chamblain.

Defence lawyer Clemente Monterosso argued such a harsh sentence would be more appropriate for dealers working on an international scale and would send the message that if you're going to deal, you might as well go big, because the sentence will be the same. He suggested Mathieu get between six and eight years.

Jean-Robert Pierre Antoine, who has been out on bail, collapsed on the stand after he was unable to clarify how much money he'd made for trips to Ottawa to pick up cocaine. The Crown seeking a nine-year sentence for him.

Quebec Court Judge Jean-Pierre Bonin is to render his decision tomorrow.

Earlier yesterday, two members of the gang, Loukens Fevrius, 24, and Clinton St. Thomas, 30, were sentenced to six years in prison for trafficking and gangsterism.

Once time already served is deducted, they have two years and three months left in their sentences.

smontgomery@thegazette.canwest.com

Haiti Challenges United Nations
Prensa Latina
February 17, 2007

Main Desk, Authorized by the Security Council to stay in Haiti for another eight months, the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti must prove its efficiency to achieve peace in a nation in favor of governance.

In an effort to curb violence in the Caribbean country, Brazil will keep its 1,200 troops until October, after the renovation of the mandate of the MINUSTAH.

Military incursions have been welcomed by President Rene Preval, who warned criminal gangs last year to surrender their weapons or die.

The National Police, made up of just 4,000 poorly armed agents, many of whom are vulnerable to corruption.

Preval, thinks that the administration s current conditions are insufficient and weak to end violence.

Main gang leaders agree to join the Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Plan, they condition their involvement on the withdrawal of MINUSTAH.

The United Nations confirmed that the headquarters of a gang in Cite Soleil had been turned into a clinic to provide free medical treatment to the people.

CHILE'S TROOPS TO REMAIN IN HAITI ANOTHER EIGHT MONTHS
UN Says Peacekeeping Mission Must Continue
The Santiago Times, Chile
February 16, 2007

The United Nations Security Council voted unanimously to renew its peacekeeping mission in Haiti on Thursday, after calls from various international authorities to end the gang warfare that prevails in the Haitian capital Port-au-Prince. It is now expected that UN forces, which include a strong Chilean presence, will remain in Haiti for another eight months.

UN troops have been in Haiti for almost three years, as part of the UN Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH). In February 2004, former President Jean-Bertrand Aristide was ousted and went into exile after months of violent unrest (ST, March 3, 2004).

Chilean troops arrived in Haiti on March 4, 2004, in what then Defense Minister Michelle Bachelet called "one of the most important military operations of our time." Since then, Chile has been one of the most active countries in the international aid efforts, contributing almost 500 troops to the total 6,800 that form the peacekeeping force. The mission was stepped up recently to root out armed gangs that hold sway in slums in Haiti's capital, Port-au-Prince. The gangs are blamed for a wave of kidnappings and other violence.

The original deadline for the removal of troops from Haiti was Thursday, February 15. However, the United States and the UN secretary-general's office, as well as the nine Latin American countries involved in the peacekeeping mission met in Peru earlier this week to discuss the issue. In conclusion they advised troops should remain in the country for another year. However, China argued that the mission should be renewed for six months, with a review at the end of the period. A compromise of eight months was later reached.

The UN resolution, drafted by Peru, requests that peacekeepers increase the "tempo of operations" against criminal gangs "as deemed necessary to restore security, notably in Port-au-Prince," in conjunction with national police.

Earlier this week, foreign ministers and their deputies from Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Ecuador, Guatemala, Paraguay, Peru and Uruguay attended a meeting in Lima, Peru to discuss the mission in Haiti. At the meeting, Organization of American States (OAS) head and possible 2009 Chilean presidential candidate José Miguel Insulza argued that troops need to remain in Haiti until conditions have significantly improved.

"This is the time for us to confirm our work to help Haiti, not to speak of when those plans should come to an end," said Insulza. "We should be able to significantly improve the quality of public security, legal and jail systems, which, due to lack of control, create the bulk of crime in this state."

Since Haiti's President Rene Preval was elected almost a year ago, politically motivated violence appears to have eased. However, poverty, unemployment and drug trafficking still fuel widespread crime. Corruption is also a problem – in 2006, Haiti was ranked as the most corrupt country in the World by Transparency International (TI).

According to the International Crisis Group, violent and organized crime threaten to overwhelm Haiti because the justice system is too dysfunctional to cope with it.

“The judiciary is encumbered by incompetence and corruption, partly due to inadequate pay,” the ICG said. Some 96 percent of the inmates at the National Penitentiary are kept without trial.

It was precisely for this reason that China wanted the mission to be extended only for another six months, so that the UN could consider withdrawing troops in the near future. China's U.N. Ambassador Wang Guangya told the council the text had the wrong priorities and concentrated too much on military operations against armed gangs, which could not “be a long-term strategy.”

According to the Chinese ambassador, the main challenge should be to assist the Haitian government in building up civilian institutions – an area that Chile has been working on for some time. Sparked by growing concerns within the governing Concertación coalition about the high political cost of the continued military presence, Chile began to place more emphasis on the social and civil restoration mission in the country. Recently, Chilean instructors helped Canadian forces construct a police academy, and at the end of last year, Chile sent a delegation of education experts and health advisers.

“Chile needs to continue to support development in Haiti, because if not, the presence of troops there will become unending,” said Juan Gabriel Valdés, former UN representative in Haiti.

In spite of the apparent success of the peacekeeping mission, Chile's presence in Haiti is increasingly causing controversy in political circles. Chile's rightist Alianza coalition, especially the far right Independent Democratic Union Party (UDI), has repeatedly called for the removal of troops from Haiti. Last October, the Senate voted 25 to 8 in favor of continuing the troops' presence, but the UDI argued that the expense of maintaining troops was not worthwhile. According to Sen. Juan Antonia Coloma, stationing soldiers in Haiti has cost Chile approximately US\$95 million thus far.

By Cate Setterfield (editor@santiagotimes.cl)

Analysis: U.N. refocuses Haiti mission

By WILLIAM M. REILLY

UPI

February 16, 2007

UNITED NATIONS, -- The U.N. Security Council has unanimously extended until Oct. 15 the U.N. peacekeeping force in Haiti, ordering it to "continue the increased tempo of operations" in support of a national police campaign against armed gangs to restore security in crime-ridden areas of the capital, Port-au-Prince.

The mission has an authorized strength of nearly 7,500 military troops and 1,800 police. But length of the extension approved Thursday was a compromise of eight months.

China, which does not have diplomatic relations with Haiti, opposed doubling the usual six-month length of mission as supported by the friends of Haiti, Britain, Canada, France and the United States.

Port-au-Prince is one of the few capitals recognizing Taipei's Taiwan instead of Beijing as the "one China" in the United Nations. Taiwan split from mainland China during a civil war in 1949 although Beijing continues to claim sovereignty over the island.

However, Ambassador Wang Guangya of China explained the shorter duration was sought with an eye to reducing the size of the Haiti mission and transforming it into a peacebuilding assignment.

The old mandate of the U.N. Stabilization Mission in Haiti, known by its French acronym MINUSTAH, set to expire Thursday, was under Chapter VII of the U.N. Charter, meaning it is authorized to use force. It continues under Chapter VII.

After adoption of the resolution, China's representative said MINUSTAH's central task for the upcoming phase was to assist Haiti in its transition from peacekeeping to peacebuilding.

He said MINUSTAH's recent military operations against armed gangs, while necessary, was not a long-term strategy and in the coming months, it should yield more to a political process for solving long-term problems.

In recent days, MINUSTAH has garnered headlines because of its anti-gang operations in the notorious slum areas of Cite Soleil on the north and Martissant on the south of Port-au-Prince.

MINUSTAH, set up in 2004 to help re-establish peace in the impoverished Caribbean country after an insurgency forced President Jean-Bertrand Aristide to go into exile, had reported armed criminal gangs were forcing children to take part in their operations, often under threat of killing them, and using them as human shields in confrontations with police.

There have been conflicting reports about the operations and the number and type of civilian casualties.

Within a few hours of the council approving the mandate extension, MINUSTAH spokesman David Wimhurst Thursday briefed a few reporters at U.N. World Headquarters in New York from his headquarters in Port-au-Prince via a video teleconference on the Caribbean isle.

Until last Friday, when the world organization launched a 700-troop-strong operation in the Boston area of Cite Soleil, Jamaica Base was the headquarters of the gang chief named Evans, who used it to coordinate his activities in a country that has seen a surge in extortion, kidnappings and the recruitment of children into gangs.

Now, doctors and dentists from MINUSTAH's Brazilian contingent tend to local residents at what is a new community center.

Wimhurst explained the gangs in Cite Soleil had their turf defined and respected each other's boundaries, where in Martissant to the south, gangs were fighting each other over territories.

He said the gangs evolved from political links, with a criminal element, to the former president.

They stole, kidnapped for ransom, sold drugs, committed gang rapes and "terrorized; were thuggish and extremely violent," he said, adding the U.N. operation learned it cost about \$70,000 a month to keep a gang in operation.

"We've seized thousands and thousands of rounds of ammunition," Wimhurst said of the operation, adding he didn't know from where weapons and ammunition were coming into the country -- whether across the "very porous" border with the Dominican Republic or were smuggled across Haiti's very long coastline, past an ill-equipped coast guard.

The resolution passed by the Security Council also specifically authorizes support for the coast guard.

As for conflicting reports on casualties, the spokesman said, "The pro-Aristide lobby orchestrates a very virulent information campaign in the United States" asserting MINUSTAH troops fired into slums, deliberately killing civilians.

While he denied any civilians had been deliberately targeted, citing strict rules of engagement to fire only when fired upon or against an armed threat, he admitted there had been civilian casualties.

"At 3 a.m. or 4 a.m. no one can honestly say where bullets are landing," Wimhurst said, pointing out gang members will fire straight up in the air at a helicopter and if they miss "the bullets come straight down."

Still, he said, "Local people are quite supportive," and even applauded when MINUSTAH forces entered the Boston in the southeast quarter.

Asked if he thought the resolution just passed was long enough, Wimhurst, said, "We cannot complete the job in eight months."

Guns for meat: Jamaicans, Haitians in 'strange' trade-off - Possible link to rise in praedial larceny

Tuesday | February 20, 2007

Glenroy Sinclair and John Myers, Staff Reporters

Jamaica Gleaner

The drugs-for-gun trade between Jamaica and Haiti has taken a strange twist with so-called Jamaican fishermen now exchanging animal carcasses with their Haitian counterparts for high-powered weapons, according to the police.

The local police believe the Haitians are exchanging the weapons for animal meat, which the Haitians use for food.

Preserving the meat

It is uncertain how the Jamaicans preserve the animal remains throughout the trip which sometimes lasts up to eight hours.

"The time the trip takes depends on a number of factors, such as the type engines, the point from which you leave, and the condition of the sea," said Superintendent Marlon Dietrich, who is in charge of the Marine Division.

On their return from Haiti with the guns, the 'fishermen' are said to carry out various transactions in the waters around Portland, an area in which the police have now increased their patrols, both on land and sea.

When contacted yesterday, Dr. Henry Rainford, chief executive officer of the Jamaica Livestock Association (JLA), said he was unaware of the strange trade-off, but insisted that he would not be surprised if it was in fact taking place.

"I know there have been a lot of missing cattle in St. Elizabeth but we can't say where they are gone to," Dr. Rainford said. "There was quite a bit of stolen cattle in St. Elizabeth like one guy losing 45 heads, another one lost 22 heads and there was another that lost 30-odd heads," Dr. Rainford explained.

Would need investigation

For his part, Senator Norman Grant, President of the Jamaica Agricultural Society, said he was unaware of animal meat being traded for guns.

"It would be a matter (in which) we would certainly want to carry out some intense investigation to ascertain how factual is that information and what are the implications for the sector," Senator Grant told The Gleaner.

Head of Operation Kingfish, Assistant Commissioner Glenmore Hinds, told The Gleaner yesterday that a Jamaican fishing boat was intercepted in Haitian waters Sunday night. "They (our overseas counterparts) boarded and searched the vessel but no contraband was found," Hinds said.

More 'stop and search

With the help of their foreign counterparts, ACP Hinds said alot more 'stop and search' operations are now taking place on the high seas as the police step up efforts to stamp out the illegal activities. "Sometimes when they see law enforcement agents approaching, they throw the contraband over board," said Mr. Hinds. He said persons involved in the guns-for-drugs trade can easily make a 300 per cent profit on whatever money they put into the illicit trade. It is for this reason that detectives attached to Operation Kingfish are probing a number of local businessmen, some of whom have been under surveillance for several months.

HAITI: UN PEACEKEEPERS TURN FORMER GANG CHIEF'S HEADQUARTERS INTO HEALTH CLINIC

Press Release - UN News Center

Feb 15 2007

Just days after launching a large-scale security operation to clean up one of Haiti's most notorious hotbeds of criminal gangs, the United Nations peacekeeping mission has transformed the former crime boss's headquarters into a free medical clinic, with clowns to cheer up sick children.

"We are here to help the Haitian people," the commander of the UN Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) Brazilian contingent Claudio Barroso Magno Filho said. "And this aid cannot be achieved if there is not first security and peace. That is why our security operations are immediately followed by our humanitarian assistance."

Until last Friday, when the UN launched a 700-troop-strong operation in the Boston area of Cité Soleil, one of Haiti's most crime-ridden neighbourhoods in Port-au-Prince, the capital, Jamaica Base was the headquarters of the gang chief named Evans, who used it to coordinate his activities in a country that has seen a surge in extortion, kidnappings and the recruitment of children into gangs.

Now, doctors and dentists from MINUSTAH's Brazilian contingent tend to local residents at what is today a new community centre. At its inauguration yesterday, Raymond Jean-Baptiste turned up with his seven-month-old daughter, happy for the free consultation. Clowns came too, dancing with the children, and the Brazilian peacekeepers handed out free footballs.

They also brought soup and clean drinking water for Boston's residents. "It's above all the lack of drinking water," Brazilian doctor Mario Cesar Furtado Joris said. "Most of the patients have allergies, skin disease or intestinal infections. They are suffering from diarrhoea and malnutrition. All these illnesses are due to a lack of food and drinking water. Moreover the garbage causes allergies."

A woman, about 40 years old, holding some cans joined the line for water. "The situation is already much better, but small time thieves are still here," she said. "At night there are still security problems."

The Boston operation follows a similar strategy that the Brazilians used when they cleaned up another notorious neighbourhood, Bel Air. "The security operations were designed to restore calm and peace in order to allow the return of social activities," Major Barroso said. "At present the Boston area is completely under MINUSTAH's control."

MINUSTAH, set up in 2004 to help re-establish peace in the impoverished Caribbean country after an insurgency forced President Jean-Bertrand Aristide to go into exile, has reported that armed criminal gangs are forcing children to take part in their operations, often under threat of killing them, and using them as human shields in confrontations with the police.

The Dominican Army considers Haiti a threat
The Dominican Today
February 16, 2007

SANTO DOMINGO.- The Chief of Staff of the Dominican Army said today that, because of its particularities, Haiti poses a danger for the Dominican Republic, citing among the absence of an Army, and lack of logistical support to fight crime and drug trafficking.

"Undoubtedly that it would mean a danger for us, for anybody, if any country has a neighbor with those characteristics it's a danger for that country," said General Juan A. Campusano.

He said the Army works around the clock to confront narcotics traffickers, contraband and other crimes.

The senior official defined the border as a strainer, because despite the Army's efforts drug trafficking continues. "The border is a strainer and if we are there it's for that reason."

He said that he has not been informed on reports that heads of recognized gangs and Haitian criminals have entered the country. "We are watchful to avoid that this has an affect against us," he said.

Campusano said that periodically the Army exchanges information with the Haitian authorities regarding criminals that operate in that country. "There is reciprocal cooperation," the military official said.

The head of the Army, speaking with he press during a wreath laying ceremony this morning in the Altar of the Nation, also announced that 800 solders are being trained to work in the various military installations at the border.

The Proxy War in Martissant and Gran Ravine

By: Tom Luce –

HaitiAnalysis.com

February 15th, 2007

The so-called gang warfare which Michael Deibert has once again featured in his latest AlterPresse article (Feb. 13) is a war by proxy that should be stopped. Whoever the people wreaking this slaughter are aligned with must be convinced that it is not in their own best interests to engage in this manner of deadly fighting for their rights. Polemicist articles like Deibert's, though, only continue to play the tit for tat song that contributes to the prolongation of this proxy war, poor people killing poor people, as a way for the more affluent and powerful to keep their hands clean and keep hold of their power.

Notwithstanding Deibert's rallying cry at the end of his article that "the international community must demand human rights for all in Haiti", I call upon him to stop contributing to the proxy war. Militant polemicists never seem to be able to be involved in peaceful, just undertakings to resolve the conflicts. Instead of the ballot, they support the bullet. Instead of calling for reconciliation they promote killing. Only when one side is dead and gone will this kind of proxy war end. Muddying the waters over who killed free-lance journalist, Jean-Remy Badiou, is a sickening example of the war by proxy. The weapons are words, innuendo, and rumors and the insinuation by Deibert is that pro-Lavalas/Aristide forces were just as likely to have done this as the other side. Conclusion: keep it up, poor people. Even the score. Killing is the way of life in Haiti.

Hurah, Inc. is a US based human rights group that works with a Haitian human rights group, AUMOHD. Both groups follow a non-violent and non-partisan philosophy in confronting conflicts that involve human rights abuses among the poor. The fact that 99% of the poor we work with are Lavalas or associated with Lavalas does not justify polemicists labeling us as a "pro-Lavalas" organization. AUMOHD was in court before the coup against Aristide in 04, defending victims of human rights abuse. Since then the facts are that human rights abuses of the poor are overwhelmingly against Lavalas.

Deibert's attack on Sprague's attempts to get the facts straight about Badiou's killers--objectively reported to be the Little Machete Army-- particularly irked me because he zeroed in on territory I know first-hand. His invocation of the impressive name of the Catholic peace and justice commission (CENJP) as the framework for his article as somehow bolstering his story about violence in Martissant was disingenuous. As an ex-priest who studied in the 1960's with Haitian human rights advocate, Fr. Max Dominique, SP, I know something about Haitian human rights and I know that the CENJP is for non-violent reconciliation in these neighborhoods, a very hard mission that Deibert doesn't mention at all, let alone promote.

Let's just take the Martissant situation. I take issue with Deibert's picture and analysis, not that I deny any violence on the part of people either self-proclaimed Lavalas or accused of being such, but because he is perpetuating a harangue of revenge that gets us nowhere in 2007. He launches into his article's point that the "terrible truth about Martissant" is that it is a place "where citizens have been at the mercy of warring gangs with varying political affiliations engaged in sustained conflict since June 2006." "Since June 2006?" He gives no detail of this wholesale inter gang warfare between 2006-07 leading his readers--with no proof- to assume that the score is tied for this period. He makes no mention of the

July 7, 2006 massacre of 20 innocent men, women and children plus 300+ torched homes in Grand Ravine--not Martissant-- done by the Little Machete Army, an assault of major proportions, nor does he try to assert any comparable assault by any alleged Lavalas group in that time frame. He then begins quickly moving back to 2005 and then to 2000 trying to prove that Lavalas--a gratuitous identification--violence is equal to opposition violence giving us footnotes as proof that the unsuspecting reader would feel obliged either to accept or to stop and conduct his/her own research. So already he has obfuscated the truth of the 2006-7 period and quickly drags us back into the past assuming that no one will notice the difference and will think that the Little Machete Army is just one insignificant perpetrator indistinguishable from others.

Let's go further into the Martissant situation. Not that I deny any violence on the part of alleged Lavalas people but because the demands of the truth and reconciliation process must deal with facts, not impressions. Deibert says, "since the August 2005 slaying of at least a dozen people at a soccer match in the district, and indeed long before, all armed groups in the neighborhood have been implicated in the grossest human rights violations by residents fleeing attacks speaking to Haitian and foreign journalists brave enough to venture there." He has just grossly misled us about 2006-7 and now he begins his blurring of the past with the infamous, "soccer" massacre, wanting his readers to believe that this is but one example of the "grossest human rights violations" that have been regularly perpetrated on both sides in the "neighborhood." Whoa! Let's be factual here.

I know something about the "neighborhood." My on the ground (not Stateside) involvement in this area began with the so-called "soccer" massacre of Aug. 05. This was indeed done in Martissant, but its victims were innocent, non-combatant Lavalas residents of another "neighborhood" called Grand Ravin miles away. I walked every inch of the soccer field, its stands and bathrooms, the surrounding streets looking for victims in hiding, talking with neighbors, with UN personnel, accompanying victims to the hospital. At the time the Haitian police were nowhere to be seen and were greatly feared because they had been the planners as well as the executors of this slaughter. (Even RNDDH in its report had to admit the police and the Little Machete Army were the perpetrators, seeking vigilante/lynching style executions of a list of people.) Deibert doesn't mention there were two massacres, the first on Aug. 20 at the St. Bernadette soccer field in Martissant, and the second on Aug. 21 accompanied by house torchings in Grand Ravine, carried out again by the police and their civilian butchers with machetes. I would beg Mr. Deibert to find comparable gross human rights violations in the 2005-2007 period just to get the statistics straight as we head toward a just and enduring peace.

Who killed Jean-Remy Badiou, one of the latest in this proxy war? Objective reports (Le Nouvelliste, AHP) have consistently said that his friends and family accuse the Little Machete Army. But people like Deibert and Reporters Without Borders want to keep stirring the pot and throw into their apologies for the anti-Lavalas/Aristide side unfounded rumors that Baz Grand Ravin could equally be responsible, a group he wants us to believe is actually supported by Lavalas members and even Aristide himself--another gross gratuitous allegation. What really matters is that the people Deibert pretends to be reaching out to, those who want the best for Haiti, or at the least, for basic human rights, should be informed by him as well as others about the work--more demanding than violent solutions--to bring the war by proxy to an end, peacefully.

AUMOHD immediately following the 05 massacres (#1 in Martissant, #2 in Grand Ravine) began working with leaders in the community, a gathering now known as the Grand Ravine Community

Human Rights Council (GR-CHRC). The purpose of the GR-CHRC was to work on the basis of non-violence and non-partisanship to be accepted as credible tool to begin sifting out the facts of grievances and violent acts, to identify victims and their need for justice, and to find ways to reconcile toward an enduring peace. In the fall of 05 through March of 06, a dozen meetings, facilitated by AUMOHD, were held involving hundreds of people armed and unarmed from several "neighborhoods" including Martissant and even representatives of the Little Machete Army. By previous agreement the Haitian National Police (HNP) and MINUSTAH did not get involved so as to allow the community the opportunity to achieve an authentic peace and to allay the fears of further dreaded HNP and MINUSTAH atrocities. It was quickly agreed upon by all parties that the killing of one another's neighbors was clearly an outsider-induced conflict that made no sense.

My personal contact with the GR-CHRC and other participants convinced me that they and the majority of residents were non-violent, were also Lavalas supporters, not to be lumped into one maligned group of violent gangs. These people had studied and practiced non-violence from the beginning in spite of the violence heaped on them and their forebears by the Duvalierists, the military juntas, and by Gen Raoul Cedras and his paramilitary death squads in 91 and by the persecution of the Feb. 04-Feb. 06 interim government. They willingly admitted that some Lavalas adherents did take up arms in defense of their lives and property before and after the 04 coup. They readily admit to the existence of individuals, self-proclaimed or alleged to be Lavalas who practice criminal violence. But to lump them all into one violent Lavalas encampment thus making them fair game for lynching is itself a gross violation of human rights that has to stop.

The GR-CHRC has continued on pursuing justice--non-violently. Something--yet to be determined--happened to the peace agreement of March 06 and tragically the July 7, 2006 massacre and massive house burning--perpetrated solely by the Little Machete Army--happened. In the fall of 06 the GR-CHRC coordinator, Esterne Bruner a totally non-violent practitioner, was brutally assassinated by the Little Machete Army. In December Mr. Jean Baptiste Hilaire, a staff person of the Haitian Disarmament Commission (CNDDR), was brutally murdered as he began setting up contacts with armed groups. The "something" that happened to the 06 peace agreement is what the war by proxy is all about. Some are continuing to use the poor to kill one another for their own profit. They don't want non-violent approaches like the GR-CHRC or the government disarmament program. Let's stop the deplorable score-keeping game in the media and get down to the business of lasting peace through truth-telling and genuine reconciliation.