

Haiti News Roundup
January 7, 2005

Rep. Maxine Waters
<http://www.house.gov/waters/>

January 07, 2005

Haiti: Rep. Maxine Waters and 13 Other Members of Congress Urge President Bush to Oppose Payments to Thugs by the Interim Government of Haiti

PRESS RELEASE -- Washington, D.C. -- Today, Rep. Maxine Waters (D-CA) sent a letter to President Bush, urging him to immediately inform the interim government of Haiti that he opposes providing any payments to former members of the Haitian army. The letter also requests that he take all necessary steps to ensure that no U.S. foreign assistance funds or other U.S. government funds are diverted for use as payments to these thugs and killers. Thirteen of the Congresswoman's colleagues signed her letter. Copies of the letter were sent to Secretary of State Colin Powell and Secretary of State Designate Condoleezza Rice. The text of the letter follows:

We were outraged to learn that the interim Haitian government has begun to provide financial payments to former members of the dreaded Haitian army. We urge you to oppose any payments from the interim government to these thugs and killers who have terrorized the Haitian population and refused to disarm, and we also urge you to make certain that U.S. funds are not used for this purpose.

As you know, the Haitian army overthrew President Jean-Bertrand Aristide in a coup d'etat in 1991, less than one year after he was first elected president of Haiti. During its three-year reign in Haiti from 1991 to 1994, the Haitian army committed widespread human rights violations, including murder, rape and torture. President Aristide disbanded the Haitian army after he was restored to power in 1994, but its soldiers were never disarmed.

According to recent press reports, the interim government has agreed to provide payments over the next three months to all of the estimated 6,000 former members of the Haitian army. The payments will average about \$4,800 per person. The cost of these payments will be an estimated \$29 million, an enormous price for the Western Hemisphere's poorest country. The interim government has not explained where the funds for these payments will be obtained, but Interim Prime Minister Gerard Latortue has already distributed checks to dozens of armed individuals who claim to be former soldiers.

These former soldiers are thugs and killers who refuse to lay down their weapons and who currently illegally control several Haitian towns. They are the same thugs and killers who attacked police stations, freed criminals from prisons and assisted in the coup d'etat that overthrew President Aristide last February. Since then, they have murdered untold numbers of Lavalas Party supporters, terrorized the Haitian population and demanded ten years of back pay.

Remissainthes Ravix, the self-appointed leader of the former soldiers, has even called on ex-soldiers from across Haiti to organize a guerrilla war against the interim government. These thugs and killers should be disarmed. They should not be rewarded for their crimes.

We respectfully request that you immediately inform the interim government of Haiti in no uncertain terms that you oppose providing any payments to former members of the Haitian army. We also request that you take all necessary steps to ensure that no U.S. foreign assistance funds or other U.S. government funds are diverted for use as payments to these thugs and killers.

Sincerely,

- Maxine Waters
- Barbara Lee
- John Conyers
- Raul Grijalva
- Donald Payne
- Jan Schakowsky
- Stephanie Tubbs Jones
- Major Owens
- Chaka Fattah
- Edolphus Towns
- Melvin L. Watt
- Corrine Brown
- Sheila Jackson-Lee
- Eleanor Holmes Norton