

**UN needs more troops for Haitian elections - Annan**

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UNITED NATIONS, May 20 (Reuters) - The U.N. mission in Haiti needs another 750 troops and 275 police to try and ensure free and fair elections later this year in the tumultuous Caribbean nation, Secretary-General Kofi Annan said on Friday.

While the peacekeeping mission has made progress in restoring order in recent months, there are not enough U.N. forces in the country to effectively respond to an unexpected surge in violence or civil disorder, Annan said in a report to the Security Council.

The mission mandate should be extended for a full year, rather than the typical six months, to ensure adequate security is in place throughout the campaign, he added. The current mandate expires at the end of the month.

Balloting to choose local government officials is to be held in Haiti on Oct. 9. Legislative and presidential elections are scheduled for Nov. 13, with a run-off set for Dec. 18.

The elections aim to replace an interim government appointed 14 months ago, after a violent rebellion and foreign pressure forced out Jean-Bertrand Aristide, the country's last elected president.

Neither the interim authorities nor U.N. peacekeepers have been able to ensure stability since Aristide was driven from office in Feb. 2004 -- and into exile in South Africa -- in the face of the rebellion and U.S. and French pressure to quit.

Annan called for the additional forces after U.N. Security Council members visited to Haiti in April, a trip marked by violence in the streets of the capital.

Annan called for an additional battalion of 750 peacekeeping troops, plus 50 staff officers, to act as a rapid-reaction force in case of possible crises, including gang violence in the Cite Soleil neighborhood of Port-au-Prince, the country's most violent and impoverished slum.

An additional 250 police plus 25 officers would help train Haitian police and help with crowd control and other possible disturbances in connection with the election campaign "and the aftermath of the elections," he said.

The increases would bring the U.N. troop ceiling in Haiti to 7,500 from the current 6,700 and the police ceiling to 1,897 from 1,622, Annan said.

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