

Senate floor as being "one of the nation's most respected bodies of scholars and policy makers." For more information, please see our web page at www.coha.org; or contact our Washington offices by phone (202) 223-4975, fax (202) 223-4979, or email coha@coha.org.

http://www.coha.org/NEW_PRESS_RELEASES/New_Press_Releases_2005/05.58_Haiti_OAS_Summit.html

1250 Connecticut Ave. NW, Suite 1C, Washington, D.C. 20036 Phone: 202-223-4975 Fax: 202-223-4979
Email: coha@coha.org Website: www.coha.org

Council On Hemispheric Affairs

MONITORING POLITICAL, ECONOMIC AND DIPLOMATIC ISSUES AFFECTING THE WESTERN HEMISPHERE

Memorandum to the Press 05.58

Word Count: 1350

Monday, 6 June 2005

Fort Lauderdale: An Opportunity for the OAS to Break with Washington while Pursuing Authentic Autonomy for the Entire Region and Insisting on a Progressive Haiti Policy

- French diplomat Paul-Henri Mourral is shot dead in Haiti.
- The UN peacekeeping mission to Haiti (MINUSTAH) has been alarmingly unsuccessful in arresting Haiti's rising death toll, making free and fair elections an even more distant reality.
- The Caribbean Community (CARICOM) has made valiant efforts toward seeking progress in resolving Haiti's malaise, but its efforts have not proven sufficient to balance Washington's offhanded policy of benign neglect toward the island.
- The June 5-7 OAS General Assembly in Fort Lauderdale will make or break the organization's alleged commitment to achieve positive change in Haiti.

Since President Jean-Bertrand Aristide's February 2004 ouster, Haitian police and the 7,400-member UN peacekeeping mission (MINUSTAH) have been struggling to find peace on the island, let alone maintain it. The latest victim of the daily violence and murder taking place in Haiti, French diplomat Paul-Henri Mourral, was killed while driving in Port-au-Prince on

Wednesday, when a group of men opened fire on his vehicle. Earlier in the week, armed men shot up Port-au-Prince's Tete Boeuf market, starting a fire that spread throughout the marketplace and killed at least seven people.

Tragically, this week's events are nothing out of the ordinary as Haiti's death toll grows daily. Human rights groups estimate that 700 people, including 40 police and seven peacekeepers, have been killed in Haiti since June 2004. Elections are scheduled for October and November, but Aristide's Lavalas Party has insisted that it will not participate unless Prime Minister Gerard Latortue's appallingly inept interim government releases hundreds of Aristide supporters and officials who are being held without charge, after being jailed by the island's, if not diabolic, certainly deeply flawed Justice Minister, Bernard Gousse. With the island's continued climate of instability and insecurity, free and fair elections hardly seem an achievable reality in Haiti's near future.

Washington's Ethical Inconsistencies

The truth about Aristide's departure is murky at best, but the former Haitian president has accused both the U.S. and France of being involved in a comprehensive plot to achieve his removal. What we do know is that as anti-Aristide rebel forces were approaching Port-au-Prince, Washington instructed then-UN ambassador John Negroponte to block any move to send an international force to protect the democratically-elected Haitian president. On February 29, Marines escorted Aristide from the U.S. embassy to a Washington-supplied aircraft which carried him to exile in South Africa, after insisting that he sign a virtually extorted letter of resignation. Despite the Bush administration's undeniable role in orchestrating Aristide's ouster, since then it has done embarrassingly little to help the island - except having the State Department's Roger Noriega warning CARICOM countries that if they don't comply with Bush administration policy on Haiti, certain perks would dry up. Washington chose not to send American troops to participate in MINUSTAH, and instead convinced one of its few Latin American allies, Brazil, to lead the UN mission.

In a further demonstration of an inconsistent policy, the Bush administration welcomes so-called Cuban political refugees with open arms, but systematically denies entry to Haitians arriving on the shores of southern Florida in hopes of escaping the violence and murder ravaging their country. For an administration that hails itself as the world's most committed defender of democracy, the White House's Haiti policy has been anything but.

CARICOM Steps Up and Shapes Up

The Caribbean Community (CARICOM) has emerged as Haiti's main champion in the hemisphere and was one of the relatively few international entities to petition the UN Security Council to deploy a multinational force to help bring stability to the island by establishing a transitional government and an independent and non-partisan commission. CARICOM has refused to recognize Latortue's U.S.-imposed regime as a legitimate, constitutional interim government and has attempted to initiate an international probe into the circumstances of Aristide's abrupt departure. However, the international community has been widely unresponsive to CARICOM's efforts, most notably the UN which, under Washington's dominating influence has remained deaf to CARICOM's request for such an

inquiry. With UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan's cave-in, he harmonized UN policy regarding Haiti being a "failed state" with that of Washington.

By last summer, it appeared that the Organization of American States (OAS) was finally preparing to take a more responsible position on the breakdown of democracy in Haiti. At its June 2004 General Assembly in Quito, the OAS approved a CARICOM-driven resolution to undertake a "collective assessment" of the situation in Haiti, despite objections from Washington and Latortue. Under Article 20 of the organization's charter, the OAS can call for an investigation "in the event of unconstitutional alterations of the constitutional regime that seriously impairs the democratic order." The OAS also issued statements urging Haiti's interim government to promote stability so that free, fair and democratic elections could be held as soon as possible. In a November 2004 "Memorandum of Understanding" between the OAS and the UN, the OAS General Secretariat accepted responsibility for conducting voter registration and helping to establish the Electoral Cooperative Committee (ECC).

OAS Follows Suit with Washington and the UN

But now it seems that the OAS decrees were nothing more than pandering by coming up with a hurried compromise to appease CARICOM, and that no one actually expected the organization to honor its pledges—simply one more pseudo event at the hands of the then outgoing Secretary-General, Caesar Gauria. Nearly one year after the OAS' initial promise was made, fewer than 60,000 Haitians have been registered to vote (out of the island's population of 4.5 million), and an official investigation into Aristide's ouster has yet to yield any hard findings. Despite issuing volumes of lofty rhetoric promising a brighter future for Haiti, the OAS has failed to adequately address the turmoil on the island. Luigi Einaudi, acting secretary-general of the OAS, issued a May 6 statement expressing concern for former Haitian Prime Minister Yvon Neptune's rapidly declining health. This was an admirable step for Einaudi to take, and should be considered to be a partial exculpation for his role which eventually ended up with his protégé, Roger Noriega, becoming Assistant-Secretary of State for Western Hemispheric Affairs, and the catastrophic impact on U.S.-Latin America relations which resulted from the appointment of that arch ideologue to his present office.

Neptune began a hunger strike in March to protest his being imprisoned without charge and inhumane living conditions for prisoners. Many of these prisoners were detained upon the order of Latortue's antipathetic Justice Minister, Bernard Gousse. Einaudi warned Latortue that "If Mr. Neptune's health deteriorates to the point of no return, the Government will be held accountable for its inability to prosecute him and failure or refusal to release him." But Einaudi also admitted that the OAS did not act upon a request made by Haiti's Minister of Justice to provide a forensic anthropologist to help gather evidence in the Neptune case. Such a professional initiative on Gousse's part has to have some murky reference, given the offensive nature of the man. The OAS General Assembly, to be held this weekend in Fort Lauderdale, will provide a crucial opportunity for the organization to leave behind its irresponsible recent history and prove that it is serious about helping Haiti and about itself.

Unfortunately, CARICOM nations will face an uphill battle in making Haiti the center of debate in Florida. The meeting's agenda, which to a large extent has been determined by

Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, instead is certain to focus on reevaluating the organization's Democratic Charter with specific references to Washington's nemesis, Venezuela's Hugo Chávez. Ultimately, the remaining 33 OAS member nations will be forced to decide if they will allow Washington's sometimes inconsistent and always irresponsible policies of diplomatic shock and awe to continue to dominate the hemisphere, or if the OAS will make an authentic and sincere effort to bring long-overdue stability and serve the momentum of the movement for autonomy that is now sweeping across much of Latin America.

This analysis was prepared by Research Fellow Sarah E. Schaffer.

June 5, 2005

The Council on Hemispheric Affairs, founded in 1975, is an independent, non-profit, non-partisan, tax-exempt research and information organization. It has been described on the Senate floor as being "one of the nation's most respected bodies of scholars and policy makers." For more information, please see our web page at www.coha.org; or contact our Washington offices by phone (202) 223-4975, fax (202) 223-4979, or email coha@coha.org.

To subscribe to our free press releases, send an email to coha@coha.org with "subscribe" as the subject.

This press memorandum can be translated into Spanish upon request.

Discover Yahoo!

Have fun online with music videos, cool games, IM & more. [Check it out!](#)

Yahoo! Groups Links

- To visit your group on the web, go to:
<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/HaitiSolidarity/>
- To unsubscribe from this group, send an email to:
HaitiSolidarity-unsubscribe@yahoogroups.com
- Your use of Yahoo! Groups is subject to the [Yahoo! Terms of Service](#).