

# HAITI

**The Miami Herald**

## **Senior U.S. official visits unsettled Haiti**

**9 June 2005**

**Deputy Assistant Secretary of State Roger Noriega arrived in Haiti as some groups called for the resignation of Prime Minister Gerard Latortue.**

The U.S. State Department's top man for Latin America and the Caribbean arrived in Haiti on Wednesday to assess a surging wave of violence and increasing demands for the resignation of U.S.-backed Prime Minister Gerard Latortue.

Deputy Assistant Secretary of State Roger Noriega met with the political head of the U.N. peacekeeping mission and other top officials in Haiti at the start of his two-day visit.

Haiti's violence has turned so worrisome that even the so-called Council of Wisemen — a group of respected Haitians that picked Latortue to head the interim government after the hasty departure of former President Jean-Bertrand Aristide last year — has lost confidence in him.

"It's a failure," said Ariel Henry, a neurosurgeon and vice chairman of the seven-member council. "There is no governance." He added that the council will soon issue an ultimatum to Latortue: bring the country under control in 30 days or resign.

What leverage the council has is unclear. But Henry's statement carries

political weight.

During the weekend, a meeting of about 20 political parties sponsored by the U.N. mission here came largely to the same conclusion about Latortue, although three major parties say they would not go so far as to call for his resignation.

The Bush administration has pinned its hopes for stability on Latortue's ability to pave the way for elections this fall. But many Haitians doubt the country is ready, given a paroxysm of recent violence in the capital.

The 7,400-strong U.N. peacekeeping mission that began arriving in Haiti after Aristide fled during an armed revolt has not been able to tamp down the kidnappings, carjackings and shootouts that have left hundreds dead in recent months and have kept a ruined economy from recovering.

Washington has stood by Latortue and focused more on the need to strengthen the U.N. peacekeeping force, which has been criticized as too passive. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice this week said the U.N. mission needed to increase its forces or conduct more aggressive operations. She appeared to reject a growing push among the Haitian political class for the return of the U.S. Marines deployed here in the three months after Aristide's departure. She said it was crucial that the Brazilian-led force in Haiti succeed.

"It was a real breakthrough for this hemisphere to have Brazil in the lead and then to have other Western Hemisphere states actually engaged in peacekeeping," Rice said at a news conference Tuesday. "We are devoted to making that mechanism work, and so we are talking with the U.N. about what more needs to be done."

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