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**U.N. peacekeeping chief says Haiti will likely need foreign troops for several years**

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CAP-HAITIEN, Haiti (AP) - Haiti will likely need U.N. peacekeepers for several years as the impoverished nation struggles to rebuild its ill-equipped police force and overcome mounting violence since the bloody uprising that ousted President Jean-Bertrand Aristide last year, the **U.N. peacekeeping chief** said Saturday.

The U.N. Security Council last week extended a year-old peacekeeping mission's mandate for another eight months, but the volatile nation will need their presence for longer, said Jean-Marie Guehenno, the U.N. undersecretary-general for peacekeeping operations.

"Haiti will need peacekeepers beyond the present mandate, there's no question about that," Guehenno said in an interview with The Associated Press aboard a U.N. flight from this northern city to the capital of Port-au-Prince. "Haiti will need peacekeepers so long as there's not a credible, effective police and judiciary."

Guehenno, wrapping up a five-day visit to evaluate peacekeeping efforts, said troops would be needed while the U.N. helps revamp a police force prone to corruption and outnumbered by armed street gangs, a process he said would take "a few years."

"There's no quick fix," he said. "Rebuilding the police is not going to happen in three months, or six months or even a year. These efforts take time."

Haiti, the poorest country in the Americas, has about 4,000 police officers for a population of 8 million. Experts estimate the country needs up to 10 times more.

Guehenno urged nations with peacekeepers in Haiti "to stay the course" and called on wealthier countries and humanitarian groups to come through with more financial aid and workers.

Foreign donors last year pledged more than US\$1 billion in development aid, but only a fraction of the funds have been disbursed to date, a delay blamed on bureaucracy and a shortage of properly vetted projects.

"The international community owes it to Haiti to give (people) more hope and that would require significantly greater presence of humanitarian and development actors ... in the cities and slums," he said. "I don't see enough."

Guehenno met with interim officials, police, U.N. military commanders and organizers of fall elections during his visit.

Haitian and U.S. officials have warned that persistent violence could undermine the elections and have criticized the 7,400-strong peacekeeping force for not being aggressive enough in confronting street gangs, many of which are loyal to Aristide.

More than 700 people -- including 40 police -- have been slain since September, when Aristide supporters

stepped up calls for his return from exile in South Africa. Aristide loyalists accuse peacekeepers of ignoring police atrocities against them.

Guehenno said the Brazil-led peacekeepers were stepping up raids in volatile slums. But he said the risk of hurting innocent civilians hinders efforts to fight gangs waging "urban warfare."

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