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## Gangs on Prowl in Storm-Wracked Haiti

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**GONAIVES, Haiti** - Victims who lost relatives, homes and belongings in Tropical Storm Jeanne are now tormented by street gangs who attack food convoys, raid homes at night and shoot those who get in their way.

The failure of Haiti's U.S.-backed government to disarm the gangs that helped oust President Jean-Bertrand Aristide has created a climate of instability that further jeopardizes lives after the calamity Jeanne visited on Gonaives 10 days ago.

"There's a big problem with gangs," the security chief of the U.N. stabilization mission in Haiti, John Harrison, told The Associated Press.

On Tuesday, he was looking for safe places to distribute food and stopped at the port, where he found armed men.

"I think things could get worse," he said.

While planeloads of aid have arrived from around the world, getting it to the people who need it has become the hard part.

The entrance to the city has been a flashpoint for looters but was being secured Tuesday by Uruguayan troops in the U.N. peacekeeping force.

Interior Minister Herard Abraham, a retired Haitian army general, said the Uruguayans needed time to settle in and that security would improve soon.

The United Nations rushed 150 more soldiers to Gonaives at the weekend to reinforce some 600 peacekeepers already in the city. Brazilian Gen. Augusto Heleno Ribeiro Pereira, in charge of the U.N. force, said Monday he has only 3,000 of the 6,700 troops he needs and could use more help from Haiti's police force.

On Tuesday, police from Haiti's demoralized and ill-equipped force passed a water truck as looters chucked out bottles to a gleeful crowd that followed. They did nothing.

"We believe the lootings are planned by gangs," Agriculture Minister Phillipe Mathieu told a news conference in the capital, Port-au-Prince. "They organize people jumping on trucks."

Police Commissioner Abner Vilme confirmed street gangs were breaking into people's homes in the blacked-out city at night. He said his men - down to about 15 since the storm - had tried to negotiate with the gangs, but that they did not keep promises to behave.

Dr. Jean-Claude Kompas, a New York physician who rushed to volunteer his services last week, said he has treated 30 people for gunshot wounds received in fights over scarce food.

Officials say more than 1,500 people have died and 900 are missing since the storm passed 10 days ago. Many of the missing must be presumed dead - washed out to sea or buried in debris still not reached by rescue workers.

The toll will rise as rescuers reach areas that have been inaccessible so far, officials say.

Some are in Gonaives, a city of 250,000 still caked in the storm's mud where 200,000 are homeless, thousands live on sidewalks and roofs of flooded homes and the slow pace of help has left thousands hungry, overwhelming officials and aid workers.

Outside the city, in the farming community of Dalcarida, one decomposed corpse clung to a tree and the hand of another reached out from several feet of mud clogging an irrigation canal flooded when the storm roared through.

Three other corpses were visible in coagulating mud. Farmers, many wearing masks against the stench, said they thought 50 had died and they did not know what to do with the bodies.

Another 50 people were missing from Dalcarida since Tropical Storm Jeanne's torrential rains unleashed mudslides and burst river banks that engulfed this northwest area of Haiti.

"It was like a wave," Delva Delivra, a 64-year-old father of five, said of the disaster. "All of a sudden it was five feet and it was just killing everybody."

Homes in the village are flattened, along with crops of corn, onion and bananas.

No help has arrived, and the community was surviving on cassava and beans bought from nearby farmers who salvaged what they could from the mud. An AP reporter reached Dalcarida from Gonaives in a 15-minute drive east and an hour-long slog on foot to cover five miles of storm debris.

Near the main road entering Gonaives, peasant farmers have been trying to stop aid trucks with signs saying they need help too.

They have had less luck than men with guns and machetes who at the weekend looted a government convoy of aid supplies.

Some of the gangs are purely criminal, but many are allied and armed by rival political parties. Some say they were armed by Aristide's henchmen to terrorize his political opponents.

The rebellion that led Aristide to flee the country in February was started by a street gang in Gonaives, the Cannibal Army.

U.S. troops arrived as Aristide was leaving and helped install an interim government whose praise of the rebel leaders as "liberators" has scandalized Caribbean leaders. They say the rebels helped oust a democratically elected leader and that the United States has installed an unconstitutional government that they refuse to recognize.

On Tuesday, Cannibal Army leader Wynter Etienne, now an executive officer of the rebels' Front for National Reconstruction party, was on his way to a meeting in the Primature - the building housing Latortue's offices - when he was asked about the looting in Gonaives.

Etienne said he had brought in three truckloads of aid and chief rebel leader Guy Philippe another two that all had been partially looted.

He said the city was suffering problems of disorder and aggression but "We don't really have a problem with arms."