

HAITI NEWS ROUNDUP: APRIL 11 – 14, 2006

Haiti, Cuba Expanding Cooperation

Prensa Latina

April 14, 2006

Havana, Haitian president-elect Rene Preval is exploring Friday new areas in which his nation and Cuba can cooperate, such as health and education.

Thursday, Preval and President Fidel Castro discussed issues that could be a starting point for a re-launching of both nation's historical ties.

The two statesmen expressed interest to broaden Cuban aid to Haiti, mostly oriented towards health, but also on other key sectors to achieve stability in the neighbor Caribbean nation.

The president-elect came to the island accompanied by 60 young Haitians who have scholarships to study medicine here and 535 low-income patients who will have free eye surgery as part of Operation Miracle.

During their stay, the Haitian guests will meet with local officials and tour sites of scientific and social interest.

Brotherhood in Fidel and Préval's meeting
Haiti's future is linked to its integration into Latin America and the Caribbean
BY DEISY FRANCIS MEXIDOR—Granma daily staff writer
Granma International, Cuba
April 14, 2006

YESTERDAY afternoon, President Fidel Castro received René Préval, president-elect of the Republic of Haiti at the Palace of the Revolution, where they had official talks in a spirit of friendship, respect and fraternity, all symbolic of the links between the Haitian and Cuban peoples.

After the official photo, Fidel and Préval greeted the participating delegations on both sides. They later reviewed the current state of bilateral relations and covered aspects related to developing the cooperative links initiated during the first presidential term of the Haitian dignitary from 1996-2001.

In the morning the Caribbean leader, in the company of Foreign Minister Felipe Pérez Roque, placed a wreath at the base of the monument to José Martí in the Plaza de la Revolution. Préval continued on with his delegation to the University

of Information Science (UCI).

In a brief discussion with journalists he affirmed that the future of Haiti is strongly linked to its integration with Latin America and the Caribbean, and defended this practice as the only way for our peoples' development.

On the Cuban side, the official talks included Carlos Lage, José Ramón Balaguer and Yadira García, members of the Political Bureau; Felipe Pérez Roque, minister of foreign affairs; Marta Lomas, minister of foreign investment and economic cooperation; and Carlos Valenciaga, member of the Council of State.

Also present were María del Carmen Pérez, acting minister of agriculture; Yiliam Jiménez, deputy minister of foreign affairs; Alejandro González, head of the Latin American and Caribbean Department of MINREX; and Raúl Barzaga, the Cuban ambassador to that neighboring nation.

The Haitian leader takes possession on May 14 and arrived on the island for a working visit on Wednesday, thus fulfilling an invitation from President Fidel Castro.

Food aid to the Republic of Haiti

Source: Government of Japan

ReliefWeb

Date: 13 Apr 2006

Mr. Taniguchi: The last item is about Japan's decision to extend food aid to the Republic of Haiti, amounting approximately US\$3 million (360 million yen). The exchange of notes was done yesterday, on 12 April, in Port-au-Prince, the capital of Haiti, between Charge d'Affaires a.i. of Japan to Haiti Sachiko Nakagawa and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Religion Herard Abraham of Haiti.

It is expected that the program will help relieve the food shortage and thereby stabilize the country.

Haiti's Hope

A tortured country searches for a future

By BEN EHRENREICH

LA Weekly

Wednesday, April 12, 2006

The older people say that *dèyè mòn gen mòn?*; beyond the mountains there are also other cities. Those cities are fading. Those mountains are fading too, because the soil is no longer rich and they expose their stony bones, bleached by wind and storm, to the sun. Beyond these scorched mountains, there are our cities eaten up by termites, our blackened cities, our cities with dirty, laughing kids running around, carrying new cities in their arms and new hope in their eyes.

—General Sun, My Brother

by Jacques Stephen Alexis

The view from the Panorama Bar at the Hotel Montana is magnificent. The hotel sits high in the hills above the Haitian capital, Port-au-Prince. Beyond the city to the west stretches the endless blue of the Caribbean Sea. If your stomach is full and you're bored with the pool, you can stand here on the patio, drink in hand, and gaze down at the world arrayed beneath you, at the beige sprawl of low cinder-block buildings, rusting metal roofs and dusty, unpaved streets. You can see the airport with its single runway, the port and the docks, now all but still. And though in any sense other than the crudely cartographic, Jupiter could not be farther away, you can even make out Cité Soleil, the most emblematic of Port-au-Prince's slums. But from this distance you cannot see the burned-out ruins of Cité Soleil's police station, or the bullet holes beneath a kindergarten's windows. You can't see the alleys of tumbling shacks with patchwork walls constructed not of sheet metal but of tiny, jagged metal scraps. You can't see the listless, naked children, guts swollen with hunger. You can't feel their patchy hair. And when the sun sets gloriously into the sea, most of the city below falls into utter blackness and you cannot see Cité Soleil at all.

This distance — and the proximity it masks — is the key that unlocks most of Haiti's tortured contradictions. But one afternoon in mid-February, six days after Haiti's first election since the 2004 overthrow of President Jean-Bertrand Aristide, the distance between Cité Soleil and the Hotel Montana briefly disappeared. In the public eye, the Montana had become the symbol of the country's Provisional Electoral Council (Conseil Electoral Provisoire, or CEP), which was charged with organizing and counting the vote, and which used the hotel as its press center. For a week, journalists, diplomats and politicians traded gossip at the restaurant, at the bar, in the many quiet lounges. The vote count was not going well. Then, the day before Valentine's Day, thousands of men and women, who would otherwise not have been allowed past the hotel gates, marched from the capital's lowland slums up the winding Rue John Brown. They marched up the Montana's long, steep driveway and pushed past the blue-helmeted Guatemalan soldiers assigned by the U.N. to guard the gates. The crowd flowed into the lobby, the poolside patio, the terraced lounges. The hotel staff hid the food and locked away the booze. But despite all the anger that privation breeds, the protesters hurt no one and destroyed nothing. Instead they laughed and sang. They danced on the patio. They frolicked in the pool. They let a few hours pass, and then walked home.

I wasn't there that afternoon. I was stuck at a roadblock a few hours to the north in a town called L'Esterre. But late that night I made it back to Port-au-Prince, and I dropped by the Montana the next

day. By the time I got there, welders were busily reinforcing the gates, gardeners trimming the trampled shrubs. The pool had been drained.

A week earlier, the night before the election, the Montana hosted a CEP press conference. A reporter asked Jacques Bernard, the council's director general, what part of the process he feared might be most vulnerable to fraud. "I dream about that," he answered. "I try to find out if there is a weak link in the system and . . . frankly I can't find any. I don't see how anybody could possibly, possibly commit fraud in this election."

To many, it seemed a little late to hope for fairness. The last elected president, Aristide, had been pushed out in what journalist Amy Wilentz has called "a slow-cooked coup." Since the spring of 2004, Haiti had been governed, to the extent that it was governed at all, by a president and prime minister installed (albeit indirectly) by the U.S. government and propped up by 9,000 U.N. troops. More than a thousand people had been killed. The economy, never brisk, had ground to a standstill. Elections originally scheduled for autumn had already been canceled and postponed four times. No polling places were planned inside Cité Soleil, home to as many as 300,000. The man initially considered most likely to win — Aristide protégé Father Gérard Jean-Juste, beloved of Haiti's poor — had, like hundreds of others with links to the deposed president, been in jail for months on trumped-up charges. (Most of the charges have since been dropped, and Jean-Juste released, but not until long after he had been barred from running on the grounds that he had failed to register his candidacy with the CEP in person.)

René Garcia Préval, who served as president between Aristide's two interrupted terms, replaced Jean-Juste as the favorite, but the full list of candidates suggested anything other than a healthy democracy. A motley cast of 34 crowded the ballot, most of them either bloodstained or irrelevant. Lining up behind Préval were Leslie Manigat, the aging historian who, in 1988, had been installed as president by the same military junta that tossed him out a few short months later; the sweatshop owner Charles Henri Baker; Guy Philippe, the former police official who led the 2004 coup; the fearsomely named Himmler Rebu, architect of yet another coup; two onetime Duvalier ministers; a Baptist preacher; and the former chief of Duvalier's murderous presidential guard. As late as last fall, the elections felt to many Haitians like a sham, an empty ritual rigged in advance by a political class that had lost even the pretense of credibility. It seemed an easy setup for another Bush-approved exercise in democracy building: Stage a vote and declare all wounds healed, all responsibilities absolved.

But something happened. Against long historical odds, Haitians let themselves hope that a new government might bring lasting change. In the months leading up to the election, momentum began to build. Gang leaders in Cité Soleil, who had been battling U.N. forces and waging a war of social banditry against the Haitian elite, unilaterally declared a truce. They did not want violence to interfere with the election. The kidnappings stopped almost entirely, the shootings too. Port-au-Prince, which had been shrouded in fear and despair for years, was suddenly and strangely safe.

On election day, the 7th, the city buzzed with hope. Lines began forming in front of polling stations before sunrise. By 6, when the polls were scheduled to open, they stretched for blocks. Few opened on time. Convinced that they had been robbed of their opportunity to vote, thousands waiting at polls on the outskirts of Cité Soleil took to the streets and marched on the National Palace. It is misleading to call them marches and equate them with our own desultory spectacles of protest: They were eruptions.

Haitians ran through the streets, waving torn-off branches in the air. They sang Préval's name, and rained curses on the interim government. They screamed with rage and danced with joy. This was a people roused from slumber, suddenly conscious of its power.

The polls eventually did open. Thousands waited for hours to vote in vast, stifling rooms, crammed shoulder to shoulder and belly to back. All day, of the dozens I spoke to, only four people admitted to having voted for anyone other than Préval.

"They have said this is the last-chance election. It truly might be," said Patrick Elie, tapping an unlit Marlboro against the table in front of him, his light eyes searching the bar for someone with a match. "Some days I think we are on the verge of the civil war that we have been avoiding and avoiding." Behind Elie's graying head, a painting illustrated the problem: A fat man in a suit and a wide-brimmed hat sat smoking a pipe and counting his money, while a skeletally thin dog panted at his feet.

Elie looked slightly out of place in the posh, velvet-padded confines of the bar, with his scraggly beard, Che Guevara tee, and sandals that kept slipping from his feet. He had served as defense minister during Aristide's first presidency. He left the government in 1995, a year after Aristide returned a changed man from three years of exile in Washington. It was clear by then, Elie said, that the dream had broken down. But when he spoke about the early days, Elie's face lit up. "The first Aristide campaign [in 1990] was done with nothing. Aristide was running around the country in my car, in a borrowed car. His security at the time was me with a little .380 pistol. It was ridiculous, and still we swept the country. I don't think I'll ever see anything like it again."

If in the United States Aristide is seen only in the most Manichaeian terms — by the hard right as the devil incarnate and by the left as a twice-martyred divine — in those days, at least, he had a more credible claim to saintliness. He lived in voluntary penury. He preached fearlessly on behalf of the poor and powerless in a country where taking the Gospels seriously could be a capital offense. He was hated by the elite and loved with abandon by the poor. He seemed untouchable — bodies fell all around him, but his enemies could not scratch him. The movement he headed swelled like a force of nature. Hence its name, Lavalas, is Creole for "flood," a word that carries a powerful immediacy on this hurricane-whipped island.

Elie would have been chain-smoking if only he had a match. He periodically leaped from his seat to beg a light in English, French or Creole, then sat again, puffing, briefly satisfied. After Duvalier's fall, Elie continued, "We really had this feeling of coming together": the economic elite, intellectuals, the poor. "But it was an illusion."

"I cannot talk of the leadership without saying we. I was part of it." He blew out a long, smoky sigh. "You start playing the game and you forget what you got in it for. I must say that we were also under siege. It's no excuse, but we've been under siege, man, from the very day, and we fell for it."

The siege was intense: a military coup in 1991 followed by the systematic murder of Aristide supporters throughout the early '90s by the Front for the Advancement and Progress of Haiti (FRAPH), a U.S.-sponsored paramilitary group. After Aristide's return, it took on subtler forms: unending pressure from the World Bank and international lending institutions to open up Haitian markets, privatize the national industries, slash the public sector. Aristide, and after him Préval,

obliged the banks in many respects but resisted in a few. The banks responded brutally: Loan disbursements were cut off entirely in 1995 and again in 2001. That year, the United States blocked more than \$470 million in funds from the Inter-American Development Bank, which then perversely demanded that Aristide's government make payments on loans it had not received. As the banks strangled Haiti economically, the U.S. applied the political squeeze. Under the guise of democracy building, groups like the International Republican Institute funded, encouraged and advised Lavalas opponents of all stripes, and spurred them toward a political confrontation. (The result, post-coup, is a painfully fragmented political class: 34 candidates on the presidential ballot, more than 100 parties on the scene, almost all lacking any popular legitimacy.)

The trap was set, and, as Elie put it, they fell for it. The movement grew defensive, repressive and corrupt. "Fanmi Lavalas became a power machine," he said. "Many of its members were behaving in a traditional Haitian way, vying for power, vying for money. It was the exact opposite of what we started out to be."

That failure, and the disillusion that came with it, help to explain the despair that has clouded the last two years. Many people's hopes had dimmed long before Lavalas crumbled. After the 2004 coup, said Elie, who had begun lighting his cigarettes end from end, "it was like the whole country went into depression."

This time last year, Elie was encouraging people to boycott the election, to protest a system rigged against them. Few needed the encouragement. But when the vote got closer, "people started going in throngs to register. There was a new dance that the Haitian people were dancing. Now there is a will to vote that is palpable." Elie smiled, and crumpled his empty pack in his palm. "This is one reason why I'm anguished. If this will to vote is frustrated, I really don't know what might happen."

After the election, I caught a ride to the downtown slum of Bel Air. Electoral law required each local polling place to post its individual results on the door, and I wanted to take a look. Compared to the shantytowns of Cité Soleil or La Saline, Bel Air was almost pretty. There were a few trees here and there, and dusty bougainvillea spilled over the walls. Just down the hill, you could see the bay, and to the south, the white-domed National Palace. A woman fried plantains and chicken over a charcoal brazier. Bone-thin dogs limped through the trash in the gutters.

Polling took place at the school on the corner, a low building stuccoed a dingy turquoise. I met Lyonel Barthelemy in the doorway of the school. Like most young men in the neighborhood, he had been unemployed for the last two years. Barthelemy had worked for Teleco, the national telephone company, but lost his job after Aristide's overthrow. (The interim government quickly purged the state-owned enterprises of Lavalas supporters, firing thousands in the months after the coup.) Barthelemy pointed to a rubble-strewn lot on the corner. Until last year, a house had stood there, he said, but the owner had been involved with Lavalas, and the police burned it down. He took me around the block and showed me the charred remains of another home. The police again, he said. They arrested everyone who had lived there. And he pointed down another street, Rue Montalais, where police had gathered 11 young men, all suspected of ties to Lavalas. The policemen made them lie on the ground side by side, then shot them one by one.

The sheets taped to each door along the school's one dank hallway gave the totals for that room's polling table. The results were not surprising. On the first, Préval had 194 votes. All the other candidates combined had 17. The tallies from the other rooms were much the same.

"I love Préval," Barthelemy grinned. "All the people love him. He's the only hope."

That night, the CEP gave another press conference. "The process is moving along rather quickly," said Jacques Bernard. About 10 percent of the ballots had been counted. But the CEP announced the results only in French, which the vast majority of Haitians do not understand. (Metaphors in Haiti tend to be unsubtle: The rich and poor in Haiti literally speak different languages. The elite speak French, the masses only Creole.) And they refused to give national totals, releasing results region by region. Journalists quickly did the math. Préval had 61.5 percent of the vote.

Just before the election, I had telephoned Charles Henri Baker, one of the few candidates deemed to have any chance of facing Préval in a runoff, should Préval fail to win a clear majority. Baker's wife answered in English, and told me to come to their house the next day. But to tell the story of my meeting with Baker, I have to first tell the story of Lafanmi Selavi, because it was Marc and Gerard who guided me through the twisting streets of Port-au-Prince to Baker's compound, and Marc and Gerard, now 20 and 19, were veterans of Lafanmi. Those are not their real names, but in Haiti, little things can catch up to you in unexpected ways. Suffice to say that Marc was as short and shy as Gerard was tall and extroverted, and, though not related, both were members of the same small, sad family. They were, without being overly dramatic, the abandoned children of Aristide.

Lafanmi Selavi (Creole for "the family is life") was an orphanage opened by Aristide in 1986. Marc and Gerard's parents were alive, but had been unable to care for them, and both arrived at Lafanmi in the early part of Préval's first presidency. They worked at Radyo Timoun (Children's Radio), a station set up by Aristide and run entirely by youth from the orphanage, who reported and broadcast everything that went on the air themselves.

In the beginning, Aristide dropped by Lafanmi all the time. He knew the kids by name, and they adored him. They would visit him at home and swim in his pool. He met with the kids who ran the radio station two times a week and called them often on the phone. His work with Lafanmi became a focal point of Aristide's international support. Wealthy liberals from Canada and the States sent checks. But sometime in 1998, Aristide grew distracted. He came around less often, and turned the orphanage over to political appointees who didn't care much for the kids. Conditions deteriorated. In 1999, the orphans staged a protest. Aristide had promised to find jobs for the older boys and hadn't delivered. The boys shut down the radio station, blockaded the building and stopped traffic in the street. The police broke it up with tear gas and arrested more than a dozen kids.

Two months later, the shelter closed. "Aristide came one afternoon," Gerard's brother remembered. "It was raining." He told the kids there had been a bomb threat. "It's not safe to stay here," he said. "We'll stay in touch." He didn't. Lafanmi never reopened. Those who could lodged with friends or relatives. The rest went back to the streets.

The next year, they took the radio station away. Adults took over and turned the station into a propaganda machine for Lavalas. It was still called Radyo Timoun, but the kids were thrown out.

When they tried to see Aristide at his office, aides chased them away. They talk about him now more with sadness than with anger, like children who've matured too fast, whose weak-willed parents have disappointed them one time too many. "He didn't need us anymore," Gerard's brother told me and shook his head in silence.

Many graduates of Lafanmi were killed by the police after the 2004 coup. Some are living in the streets. Marc and Gerard and the others I met were still as close as a family. They were among the few Haitians I spoke to who did not join in the general enthusiasm for the elections. "The system is corrupt, and once you get in it, same virus," one explained.

"I don't believe in leaders," Marc told me the first day we met, not in elections or government, only in something vague and beautiful, which he called revolution.

It took two tap-taps to get to Baker's compound. Tap-taps are Haiti's closest thing to public transport — wildly painted pickup trucks with narrow benches welded along the beds. We climbed off the first one, crawling over the knees of the other passengers. I followed Marc and Gerard through a market crammed with people, everyone and everything in motion, women hawking batteries and plastic razors, coffee and sugar wrapped in teaspoon-size portions, a few stunted carrots or bruised mangoes. We hopped another tap-tap and got off at the end of the unpaved road that leads to Baker's home.

Every house on the block hid behind high walls, but the razor wire set Baker's apart, as did the sandbags, the guard on the roof, and the man at the gate with a shotgun. More guards waited inside, where light-skinned women who spoke perfect English bustled purposefully about. After five minutes, Baker emerged from behind a closed door and beckoned me into his office. Marc and Gerard sat at my side, wearing jeans and black knit caps embossed with the bereted image of Che Guevara.

Baker is a tall man with straight, white hair and a skin tone that would not look out of place at a Rotary Club luncheon in Maine. He was one of the more vocal leaders of the Group of 184, the coalition of opposition groups that helped push Aristide from power. He owns a factory not far from Cité Soleil that sews uniforms for American nurses. Baker represents what has, for better or worse, been the only functioning sector of the Haitian economy in recent years besides cocaine trafficking. In large part due to U.S. economic policies, Haiti now imports 58 percent of its foodstuffs and virtually all of its consumer goods. What industry there is produces nothing: Raw materials are shipped in, assembled in Haiti and shipped back out. Haiti's sole marketable asset is its poverty. Labor costs are cheaper here than anywhere else in the hemisphere. The minimum wage is less than \$2 a day, and even that is rarely paid. Baker represents the tiny slice of Haitian society that has profited from this arrangement.

But profits are down. Five of the Baker family factories have been burned in the last two years, and the one that remains employs less than half the people it once did. Foreign companies do not want to take the risk of doing business in Haiti, and the focus of Baker's candidacy has been to lure them back. His campaign slogan, plastered on walls all over town, consists of three austere words: order, discipline and work. The security situation, Baker told me, would be his first priority. The only solution, he said, was "overwhelming force."

On the wall behind Baker's desk hung two crossed sabers and a Haitian flag tacked upside down to symbolize the nation's disarray. It was the day before the election, and I asked Baker how, if elected,

he planned to bridge Haiti's staggering class divide. He answered with another question: "Is there really a class divide in Haiti, or is that a figment of the imagination of the international community?"

I tried again. Did he fear, I asked, that as a wealthy, light-skinned man he would have difficulty convincing the masses of Haiti's poor, whom he did not resemble in the slightest, that he had their best interests in mind?

Baker turned first to Gerard and then to Marc. He addressed them in Creole, and asked whom they planned to vote for. Discomfited at being spoken to, both answered with shy defiance, telling him in turn that they were revolutionaries and did not plan to vote for anyone. Perhaps Baker had expected them to defer to his authority with a humble "You, Mr. Baker," but if he had, his face registered no disappointment. Instead he muttered something in Creole about how Americans should arrive in cars, and not with dust on their shoes. Then he turned to me and, in English again, at last returned to my question about his perceived inability to win the trust of the masses. "I don't have that problem," he said.

Outside, as soon as the gate clanked shut behind us, Marc and Gerard doubled over, laughing. "Baker is shit," Marc sighed between guffaws. They high-fived each other, and high-fived me, and then led me back down the dusty road to the corner, to flag another tap-tap.

Three days after the election, I spoke to a U.N. official involved in monitoring the vote. He was furious. "The CEP is partisan, completely partisan." More than 60 percent of the ballots he had seen, he said, were for Préval, but the CEP had "tried every possible dirty trick" to stall and skew the process. "We're not going to let them fuck this up," he insisted.

At the Montana that night, the CEP released more figures. They had tabulated about half the votes. Préval had fallen to just above the 50 percent required to avoid a runoff. By a strange quirk of Haitian electoral law, blank ballots would be counted as part of the total, which set the bar still higher for Préval. At that point, more ballots had been left blank than had been cast for all but four of the 34 candidates.

"You know how Haiti is," one council member explained. "There are a lot of people who really don't have the capacity to vote."

René Préval had been silent all week. Just before the election, his campaign duties accomplished, he retreated to his home in the small northern town of Marmelade, a six-hour drive from the capital. He would not return to Port-au-Prince, his advisers said, until the final results had been announced.

I caught a ride to Préval's hometown with two journalist friends working for a Venezuelan television network. Nestled high in the mountains, Marmelade is a lovely place. Just one ridge over, the hills are brown and barren, but around Marmelade, the peaks are almost lush. After Préval's first presidency, from 1996 to 2001, he did something almost unheard-of: He left politics. Préval returned to Marmelade and concentrated his energy on developing his hometown. He persuaded the Cubans to send doctors and teachers for a clinic and a music school, and the Taiwanese to sponsor an agricultural cooperative that grows citrus, coffee and bamboo. The surrounding villages are muddy clusters of crumbling huts,

but Marmelade's streets are cobbled. There's even a solar-powered computer center and a park with a gazebo and electric lamps that come on at night.

We waited for several hours at the edge of that park and watched the bats skip and dive in the lamplight until Bob Manuel, Préval's campaign manager, invited us into the candidate's modest white stucco house. The news from Port-au-Prince was bad. The CEP had released the latest figures. Préval had slipped below 50 percent. Thousands of protesters had filled the streets around the National Palace. Even if the CEP's tally was clean, their method of releasing information — drop by drop and with Préval's lead leaking steadily away — could not have been better calculated to breed suspicion. But inside, Préval seemed relaxed, almost amused. He sat in a rocking chair beneath a bare fluorescent bulb. He scratched his beard and smiled. "Forty-nine percent," he said, "did you hear?"

By morning, Préval's mood had shifted. The bodyguards and hangers-on outside Préval's home passed a sheet of paper between them. It was a printout from the CEP Web site listing two conflicting figures: the 49 percent announced the night before and a pie graph that gave him a 52 percent slice of the vote. Préval appeared on the porch every half-hour or so. He listened to the men argue about the significance of the discrepancy, and went inside without a word. He re-appeared, shaking his head. "It's not that they don't know how to do the numbers," he said. "They're cheating badly."

When he next appeared, he was dancing, but there was no smile on his face. "Yo vole vol nou," he sang ("They're stealing our votes"), circled the patio and pranced back inside his home.

Late that morning, Préval gave an impromptu press conference on a park bench across the street. A good portion of the village gathered around the few journalists in town. Préval was tense and impatient, and after about 20 minutes, he stood and ended the interview as suddenly as he'd begun it, with a terse "Okay, thank you very much." But until that moment, he spoke in two distinct registers. The first was abstract and political. It was reasonably polished, calculated to offend no one. It appeared to bore him. In that key, he spoke of the importance of "creating an atmosphere for private investment," of decentralizing the Haitian government as mandated by the largely unimplemented constitutional reform of 1987, of developing a functioning educational system, investing in health care and agriculture, and eliminating corruption. He said nothing that might cause a World Bank official's gray heart to flutter.

It was when Préval spoke in metaphor that his voice came alive. I asked him the question I had asked Baker, what he planned to do about the gulf between the classes. He answered very differently. His response was allegorical and anything but concrete, but it nonetheless communicated more than anything else he'd said, and it clearly gave him pleasure to speak without recourse to technocratic vagaries. Préval had someone fetch a Coke bottle. "Look," he said, pointing first to the wide base of the bottle and then to its narrow mouth, "this is larger than this. This is tiny." He balanced the bottle by the narrow end. It wobbled in his palm. "If you put it like that, instability." He turned the bottle over. "If you put it like that, stability. Because the economic power is here," he said, indicating the base again, "but," he pointed to the mouth once more, "the political power is here."

Préval balanced the bottle wrong side up once more. "The country is upside down now." He let the bottle topple, caught it and, with a gap-toothed smile, stood it on its base again. "You understand."

In the end, though he had said he wouldn't, Préval spoke about the election. "My job was to go and campaign," he said. "Now it's up to the CEP to give the results. They just gave two results, a graph with 52 percent, and the figure 49 percent. There is a problem now. If I see the 52 percent, I will claim victory. If the people see the 52 percent, they will claim victory."

The danger, he implied, was not just incompetence or fraud. It was the peril of letting the people in the streets believe they had triumphed, and then trying to yank their victory away.

By evening it was already too late. The word was out that Préval had won. Carnival was still two weeks away, but it started early in Marmelade. Rara bands marched around the plaza, drumming and blowing long, hand-tooled horns. The villagers filled the streets, drinking and dancing. Préval was the only one not celebrating. Flanked by bodyguards, he paced in the rain outside his house, anxious and slightly stooped, conferring with Bob Manuel.

In Port-au-Prince, thousands marched up the hill to the Hotel Montana. They stopped at the gates that day, and went no farther. But the ritual CEP announcement of Préval's dwindling count did not occur that night. The council members couldn't get past the crowds.

My friends and I left Marmelade at 3 the next morning, hoping to get back to the capital before it all blew up. We didn't get far. The car broke down at the edge of Gonaives, a desolate city a few hours north of Port-au-Prince. The deforestation is so severe in the surrounding countryside that Gonaives feels less like the Caribbean than a strange outpost in a post-apocalyptic Arizona. Hot, sandy winds blew through the rutted streets. We flagged down scooter taxis for a ride to the bus depot and bought tickets to the capital. But after waiting for 20 minutes in the back of an old converted American school bus, it became clear that we wouldn't be going anywhere. The radio had reported shooting in Port-au-Prince, and none of the drivers was willing to risk the trip.

Within a few hours, the car was running again. But our progress was slow. The main roads were all blocked. The country had been brought to a stop. Angry young men manned barricades composed of stones, tree trunks, burning tires and the remains of ancient cars. U.N. troops had cleared the roads near the center of town, but at the outskirts, the barricades were standing. We talked our way through some and bribed our way past others. We took a long detour through the back roads and made it clear into the plains south of Gonaives. But in L'Esterre, the next town of any size, the road was blocked every 100 yards. A man named Joel who appeared to have some local clout guided us past the first few. We skirted several others on our own, but finally stopped at a wall of tractor-trailers. The crowd at the barricades was angry, and didn't like us much. They wouldn't let us pass. For a little while, they wouldn't let us back out either. Only Joel's intervention got us out. We had no choice but to head back for Gonaives. It was at about that time that we heard via cell phone that protesters in the capital had breached the gates of the Montana and were celebrating in the hotel pool.

Driving in silence back toward Gonaives, we got extremely lucky. We came across a caravan of eight SUVs parked on the side of the road. One had blown a tire. In their windows were drawings of a three-leaved branch, the symbol of Lespwa ("hope" in Creole), Préval's political party. It was Préval's security detail, heading for Port-au-Prince. A U.N. helicopter had flown their boss to the capital that morning to meet with the interim government and the leader of the U.N. delegation. Only Préval, it was clear, could keep the country from exploding.

We asked Préval's head of security, whom we recognized from Marmelade, if we could join the caravan. He assented, and we struggled to keep up as the trucks sped down the rutted highway. In L'Esterre, in St. Marc, in Cabaret, in every town and clutch of leaning huts along the way, crowds poured out to greet us, dancing, cheering, singing Préval's praises and literally jumping with joy. The barricades disappeared in our path. We heard the news on the radio on the outskirts of the capital: 92 percent of the ballots had been counted. Préval had slipped again, to 48 percent.

The next day was a roller coaster. In the morning, the roadblocks were up, the crowds as angry as I'd seen them. Standing at a barricade on Delmas, one of the major thoroughfares through Port-au-Prince, I asked a man named Junior what he thought would happen if the final count did not give Préval a win. "Oh, shit," he answered in English, shaking his head, his eyes widening at the thought. "This country going to be on fire."

A few hours later, the tension dropped. Préval gave a press conference. Every ear in Port-au-Prince was glued to a radio. "We believe we have evidence of gross errors and massive fraud," Préval said. He asked his followers to dismantle the barricades and let traffic pass, but not to give up the streets: "Demonstrate, but demonstrate in peace." Préval's one asset was his support in the streets. He had played his cards skillfully and kept the pressure on. The barricades came down.

The reprieve was short-lived. That evening, word got around that ballot boxes had been discovered in a dump at the edge of town. By morning, when I drove over to check it out, the roadblocks were up. Tires were smoking in the streets again. The dump was in an area called Truittier. It sprawled for acres at the edge of a grove of banana trees not far from Titanyen, the lowland flats used as clandestine burial grounds by death squads since the days of Duvalier. The air was sharp with black, acrid smoke. Pigs and goats rooted through endless heaps of burning trash. A crowd had gathered around the ballots — wide sheets of newsprint stamped with photos of all the candidates. Thousands of them littered the ground. Crude black X's had been marked beneath Préval's face on most of the presidential ballots. A dump employee told me the ballots had been hauled in by the truckload the day after the election. When the scavengers who live around the dump approached to inspect the ballots, she said, the truck drivers beat them and told them to stay away and let the ballots burn.

They hadn't burned, though. Some were singed, but only casually so, through contact with the perpetually smoldering trash. And though it had poured for two of the previous three nights, the ballots were barely damp. It was hard not to suspect that they had not been dumped, but planted to provoke a conflagration. And it looked like it might work. As I was leaving, a crowd of scavengers began marching out of the dump, waving tattered ballots in the air and chanting Préval's name. "We were looking for you," they sang, "and we have been delivered."

Later that day, I saw more recovered ballots fluttering among the angry faces of the thousands who had gathered in the Champ de Mars, across from the National Palace. They had become a symbol of the word that had been on Haitians' lips all week: magouy, fraud. Whatever the motivations of whoever dumped the ballots — and the possibilities are legion — their discovery made two things clear. First, even a final, complete count would resolve nothing: Too many ballots had been lost, and no one trusted the people counting them. The solution would have to be political. And second, the peace could not last much longer.

At about 11 o'clock, Préval met with the CEP and several ministers from the interim government. He reportedly made the case to them that if the blank votes were discounted, he had clearly won a majority. Then the CEP talked it over for the next 15 hours. Early the next morning, they announced their solution. It was tidy enough: Electoral law required that the blank ballots be counted. They would be, but they would be divided proportionately between the candidates according to the percentage of marked ballots they had won. Baker finished with about 8 percent, Leslie Manigat with 12. Most of the others had less than 1 percent. Préval had 51. You could feel the relief in the streets the next morning. People were smiling. They seemed to move with more ease and fluidity than they had the day before, as if they had shrugged off a few layers of old and calloused skin. It was over.

It was also just beginning. Haiti was no richer than it had been the day before. Eighty percent of its population was still living on less than \$2 a day. That, of course, means hunger, constant and gnawing, but also no money for electricity or even water, no medical care and no chance at education. It means a life without options. Half the population was still malnourished, half still illiterate, and more than one in 20 infected with HIV. Too many had quicker access to guns than to newspapers. But for the first time in a decade, many Haitians could taste hope.

Life went on. Préval fell silent again. Leslie Manigat held a press conference behind the walls of his lushly landscaped compound. In wildly over-enunciated French, he called the CEP's decision an "electoral coup," a "Machiavellian comedy" and a "tragedy for the Haitian people." Within a few breaths, the aging professor compared those same Haitian people to a dog that returns to its vomit. Baker huffed and puffed as well and, like Manigat, accused Préval of profiting from the threat of violence in the streets. They seemed genuinely disturbed that the demands of the majority had been allowed to influence the democratic process. But it was all just noise. No one was listening anymore.

A U.N. spokesman confided to me that there was absolutely no possibility that the runoff election for parliamentary seats would occur on schedule. ("Delays in this country tend to aggravate people," he said, laughing nervously.) American Airlines, which had canceled flights to Port-au-Prince for more than a week, resumed flying. Jacques Bernard read the writing on the walls (literally: His name was graffitied all over town, usually preceded by *aba*, Creole for "down with") and fled to the United States.

He returned 15 days later and demanded that his enemies be purged from the CEP, which spent weeks floating dates for the runoff. They eventually agreed on April 21. Préval's inauguration receded into the distant future.

Traffic clogged the streets again. The schools reopened. Marc and Gerard returned to their studies. Despite their ages, they have two years left before they finish the equivalent of high school. Neither would admit to any newfound faith in the political system, but they seemed to smile a little more freely. Education, Marc told me, education and love were the only answers. He was crashing on a friend's sofa, and I would see him there every night, falling asleep sitting up, his books spread open on the couch around him.

Haitian reaction; Opinions on Immigration raids over weekend vary

By LEDEDRA MARCHE

Senior FN Reporter

Freeport News, Bahamas

April 13, 2006

Haitians living in Grand Bahama and Abaco had mixed opinions Tuesday about the mass weekend immigration raid executed on three Family Islands.

While some agree there needs to be some sort of control of the amount of immigrants that come into the country, they despise the way the raids were carried out and how the Haitian nationals — some of them children — were treated.

Reports say some 300 illegal migrants are being detained following the raids in Eleuthera, Exuma and Ragged Island, where immigration officials swooped down on a number of homes before dawn and arrested adults and children.

In North Eleuthera, where a reported 187 immigrants were picked up, reports say 166 had to be released after they were found to have work permits.

The Freeport News visited the Pinder's Point and Lewis Yard communities yesterday and heard from Haitians and Haitian-Bahamians who are convinced Haitians get treated differently by Immigration officials than any other foreigner, illegal or otherwise, in the country.

Theo came to Grand Bahama in 1983 and now has a four-year-old son and says he doesn't mind if the government says they have to leave, but for the officers to come in the middle of the night and remove people from their home is inhumane.

"I have paper. If immigration catch up with me and tell me go, I can't carry him (his son) to Haiti. He don't know Haiti. When I leave him here, who take care of that (his son) for me," he said.

Theo says Haitians should not be treated inhumanely, adding that "black people all together. We all the same colour."

He says the news of the raids and the hundreds of people who were flown into the capital took a toll on one of his male friends, who had to be hospitalized yesterday.

"He get scared. He tell me he don't want immigration catch him in the night when he sleeping. He got little children," said Theo, pointing out that he worries about what will happen to them.

FaithRose, the mother of an 11-month-old baby boy, says she can't leave her baby behind if immigration officers decide to take her away.

In fact, she says she has been waiting to hear from Immigration for some time.

"I don't feel well," said Jean, who has spent much of his life in Grand Bahama, about how the migrants were treated.

He said when immigration officers pick up the people in surprise raids they have to leave everything.

"It don't make sense," he said repeatedly.

Another man who called Grand Bahama home since 1953, says if he was home and Immigration came to his door in the middle of the night he would be scared.

He says he would prefer if they are allowed to secure their personal possessions before having to leave so abruptly.

"Yeah, I be scared. All my stuff, I build my house myself. I don't want nobody to take my things," he said, adding that he has a 22 and a 40-year-old son who were born in The Bahamas and know nothing about Haiti.

In the Pigeon Pea and The Mud, two predominantly Haitian communities in Abaco, residents told The Freeport News correspondent the migrants come to The Bahamas looking for a better life because the situation in Haiti is bad.

Some believe the raid should take place as there are too many Haitians there, too many of them are having children and the illegal ones should go.

But, they say, the casualties are the children who were born in The Bahamas and become "stateless" and have no status when they end up in Haiti with their parents.

"These kids, they don't have any status in Haiti, no status in The Bahamas. Haiti don't want you, The Bahamas don't want you, so who are you," said one female resident who is concerned about the children's welfare when something like that happens.

She believes there should be a system in place that provides for the children who are sent to Haiti and become of age to be able to come back to The Bahamas.

"Some of these kids are in school already here. What happens to them? When they get to Haiti they can't go as Haitians because they aren't," she said. "That's why some have to come back the illegal way because they don't want to be in Haiti."

And then there are those residents who have been in Abaco for 30-plus years and yet have no status and know very little about Haiti. These people, some say, should get a chance to stay here.

Haitians In GB Respond To Immigration Blunder

By Daphne McIntosh

The Bahama Journal

April 13, 2006

Haitians in Grand Bahama responded to the wrongful detention of 179 immigrants who were suspected of being in the country illegally, saying that the blunder pointed to the discrimination often experienced by their community.

The migrants were apprehended in a round-up conducted last weekend in North Eleuthera. Out of the 193 migrants who were brought to New Providence, authorities were forced to release 179 after it was determined they were in the country legally.

The incident has sparked a heated debate, with some praising immigration minister Shane Gibson for the "crackdown" and others saying he ought to apologise for the foul-up. Reports of the incident have also been forwarded to the human rights watch-dog group Amnesty International.

Bolivar Gustave, who was born in Abaco but is of Haitian descent, said it is only a matter of time before such "injustices will end" and Haitians will return to their homeland.

"Every prayer has an Amen. Maybe the situation in Haiti also," Mr. Gustave told The Bahama Journal.

"There is no place like home and Haiti is the home of all Haitians, so anything [good] happen in Haiti, you don't have to tell us go, we will go."

Mr. Gustave, who says he has lived in The Bahamas for 45 years, said that while he understands that Mr. Gibson has a job to do, he hopes that other members of the immigration team are also doing their jobs.

He claimed that it is well known that Haitians have been "exploited" and "taken advantage of" in The Bahamas.

"We know that but we have to take [it]. We don't have any choice but when we finally have a choice we will not take it," Mr. Gustave said.

He said that Haitians have provided much in the way of employment in The Bahamas and have contributed in many ways.

Mr. Gustave said that if all Haitians were to leave The Bahamas, some in the community would suffer and ask for their return.

Jetta Baptiste, an entrepreneur of Haitian descent, said she was saddened by the events.

"Haitians are always the whipping dog. Haitians are always being abused. Haitians are always being the victims and it is not fair and it's not right," said Ms. Baptiste, who feels the government has not competently dealt with the immigration issue.

"Yes, it is a political issue. Yes, it is an economic issue. Yes, we understand what games are being played. [No], we are not happy with it. In time, one day all things are going to change," Ms. Baptiste told The Journal.

Given that immigration is a hot button issue all over the world, Ms. Baptiste said she expected Bahamian officials to have a better handle on the local problem.

While many said they understood the need to control the influx of Haitians, Darin Nixon, a Haitian journalist who has been living in the Bahamas for the past five years, said more is expected from a country "purporting Christian values."

He said political leaders who value Christian principles should know the best means of addressing the immigration problem.

"What I like in The Bahamas is that there are leaders who believe in God, so now that you believe in God you have the Bible in your hands... It doesn't mean that because you have the Bible you have to deal with everybody good, good, good, it means that you will have a way to be compassionate to other people," Mr. Nixon told The Journal.

He lamented the fact that so many persons with legal status were treated unfairly during last week's round up and said that should never have happened.

Michel Dersosier, a young barber of Haitian descent who was born in the Bahamas, said Bahamians in general put all Haitians in one category, despite their status.

Mr. Dersosier, who said his family has been living in the Bahamas for the past 50 years, advised Haitians to speak up so that others can have respect for them.

"Even though we come here, we don't come to bring nothing bad to this country. We are trying to help our families, like everyone else," said Mr. Dersosier.

"It is just discrimination, when something like that happens, what happened in Eleuthera."

President of the Grand Bahama Human Rights Association (GBHRA) Fred Smith condemned last weekend's round up, describing the tactics used in the exercise as "Gestapo-like."

"Each of the 179 immigrants who were unlawfully arrested are entitled to sue the Bahamas government for assault, battery, false imprisonment and breaches of their Constitutional rights and obtain damages, punitive damages, and constitutional damages against the government for this arbitrary behaviour," Mr. Smith said in a statement released yesterday.

While acknowledging the challenge illegal immigration presents to the Bahamas, Mr. Smith called on the government to observe the Rule of Law and due process in its efforts to manage the issue.

"In enforcing our laws, we call upon the government to do so humanely, respectfully and in a dignified and civilised manner," Mr. Smith said.

Haiti's interim leader orders corruption probe
Miami Herald
April 12, 2006

Amid reports of corruption and mismanagement by interim officials and courts, Haiti's interim prime minister ordered an audit of all government agencies.

PORT-AU-PRINCE - (AP) -- Haiti's interim leader announced a probe into the finances of all government agencies amid allegations of corruption by state officials in the aftermath of a bloody revolt that toppled the previous government.

The audit will be conducted by Haiti's High Court of Accounts and Administrative Disputes and will cover the administration of the U.S.-backed interim government, interim Prime Minister Gérard Latortue's office said in a statement released Monday.

Jean-Junior Joseph, Latortue's communication director, said all government ministers and their aides have been ordered to cooperate with the probe, which comes amid growing reports of corruption and mismanagement by interim officials and courts.

Last month, several judges were placed under investigation for allegedly accepting thousands of dollars in bribes to grant bail to a group of jailed kidnapping suspects, Joseph said. The judges have been suspended pending a review of their case.

"Based on the rumors of corruption, the prime minister took this step to . . . unveil suspicions of corruption," Joseph said of the audit. "Any government official who signs checks will be audited, including the prime minister himself."

The interim government was appointed in March 2004 to replace President Jean-Bertrand Aristide, who fled the country amid a three-week revolt in February 2004.

René Préval, a former president and one-time Aristide ally, won Feb. 7 presidential elections and is due to take power next month.

It's unclear when the audit will be completed, but a full review could take months or longer. Investigators probing corruption during Aristide's rule have yet to make public their findings.

Latortue's government had alleged that state funds disappeared under Aristide, who is living in exile in South Africa. Aristide has denied stealing state funds.

Haiti: World Bank Approves \$16 Million Grant to Improve Roads and Basic Infrastructure in Rural Areas

Press Release - World Bank

April 12, 2006

The World Bank's Board of Directors today approved a \$16 million grant to promote income-generating opportunities for small farmers, who represent the majority of the rural productive population. The new project also aims to lower costs involved in moving goods from producer to consumer, especially for small farmers.

“Agriculture continues to play a dominant role in the Haitian economy accounting for two thirds of employment in rural areas, and three fourths of employment for poor people,” said Caroline Anstey, World Bank Country Director for the Caribbean. “Improving infrastructure so as to make it easier for small farmers to get their goods to market can generate important multiplier effects for the rest of the rural economy.”

Linking small farmers to markets can lower transactions costs and increase competitiveness, thereby helping them reap the highest returns from rural farmers' limited resources. This project also aims to improve living standards in rural communities, and to improve access to basic services.

The Transport and Territorial Development Project has three key components:

Improve road rehabilitation and maintenance of important transport corridors by connecting two key regions: the Dondon-St. Raphaël region, which covers five communes in the Northern Department, and is connected to Cap-Haïtien the second biggest city in the country (production of coffee, vegetables, beans, corn and citrus peels; the Thiotte-Anse à Pitre region, which covers four communes in the South-Eastern Department (production of coffee, cattle and fishing).

Territorial Development Window will put in place a process to prioritize and assess initiatives to promote growth.. This component, which is a consultative process with local stakeholders, will be used to identify priorities.

Project administration, monitoring and evaluation: This component would finance expenditures for environmental management, monitoring and evaluation as well as the project's impact evaluation.

“The project has been designed to empower local stakeholders and communities in decision-making,” said Nicolas Peltier-Thiberge, World Bank Infrastructure Economist and Task Team Leader for the project. “Strong local oversight and participation will continue to be central to ensure both the appropriateness of local investments and their sustainability, particularly in the case of road maintenance.”

Haiti remains primarily a rural and agricultural country, with almost 5 million of Haiti's 8.6 million people living in rural areas, and approximately 60 percent of the rural population earns less than US\$1 a day.

The Bank's activities in Haiti are outlined in a Transitional Support Strategy (TSS) prepared in 2004 and endorsed by its Board in January 2005. The TSS presents the Bank's two-year program aimed at delivering hope to the population and restore credibility in public institutions by helping the Interim Government provide basic services, create jobs, and launch reforms that promote longer-term economic governance and institutional development. The Bank is committed to a long-term engagement in Haiti.

This project was made possible by an International Development Association (IDA)-funded grant of US\$16.0 million.

World Bank approves grant to help Haiti's small farmers
Radio Jamaica
April 12, 2006

The World Bank has approved a US \$16 million grant to promote income-generating opportunities for small farmers in Haiti.

The Transport and Territorial Development Project aims at lowering the costs involved in moving goods from producer to consumer.

It targets small farmers who represent the majority of the rural productive population in Haiti.

World Bank Country Director for the Caribbean, Caroline Anstey, says linking small farmers to markets can lower transaction costs and increase competitiveness.

The new projects have three key components including improving road rehabilitation and maintenance of important transport corridors.

Haiti remains primarily a rural and agricultural country, with almost five million of its 8.6 million people living in rural areas.

Bangladeshi doctor, Haitian family planning provider win UN Population Award
UN News Centre
13 April 2006

A pioneering family planning doctor from Bangladesh and a major reproductive health foundation in Haiti have won this year's United Nations Population Award, the lead agency on the issue (UNFPA) announced today.

Dr. Halida Hanum Akhter is the Director-General of the Family Planning Association of Bangladesh, one of the world's oldest Planned Parenthood affiliates. She also chairs the Board of Directors of the Program for Appropriate Technology in Health. In 1986, she founded the Bangladesh Institute of Research for Promotion of Essential and Reproductive Health and Technologies.

The Fondation pour la Sante Reproductive e l'Education Familiale, is a private, non-profit organization devoted to reproductive health and the promotion of family life in Haiti. Formed in 1988, it provides reproductive health care for more than 1.2 million people through a network of 26 centres. The Fondation has provided basic training on reproductive health to 500 teachers and 6,500 young workers, and created a network of 30,000 young volunteers who disseminate information on reproductive health, including HIV/AIDS.

The Award goes each year to individuals and institutions for their outstanding work in population and in improving the health and welfare of individuals.

The winners were chosen from 27 nominees, including top-level policy makers, researchers and health workers from around the world by a committee consisting of 10 UN Member States supported by UNFPA. Each winner will receive a diploma, a gold medal and an equal share of a monetary prize. The awards will be presented on 7 June at the United Nations, New York.

Seeking an "Even Playing Field": Washington and UN Work to Undermine Lavalas
By Jeb Sprague,
The Narcosphere
April 13th, 2006

As Haiti's legislative run-off elections approach, it is worthwhile to review elements of Washington's campaign to build the vote in favor of its local client parties. This "democracy promotion" – which is anything but that – is strategically critical to winning the Haitian parliament, with which President-elect René Préval will name the new prime minister, Haiti's most powerful executive post.

In the years leading up to Haiti's 2006 presidential and legislative elections, whose second round are now set for April 21, the International Republican Institute (IRI) helped form and coach three coalitions of right wing and social-democratic parties, which were all partisans of the Feb. 29, 2004 coup d'état against President Jean-Bertrand Aristide and his democratically elected Fanmi Lavalas (FL) government.

IRI's goal was the "strengthening [of] democratic political parties," according to an October 2004 IRI document I obtained through a recent Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request. But in the past, as pointed out in Irwin Stotzky's *Silencing The Guns in Haiti*, the IRI proposed "leadership training exclusively for non-Lavalas centrist political party representatives," considering supporters of Lavalas as "undemocratic." All of the client parties trained and facilitated by the IRI were arrayed against the FL in the Democratic Convergence political front, supporting the 2004 coup.

Nonetheless, IRI had a hand in merging a rump faction of former FL leaders into a coalition with the Movement for the Installation for Democracy in Haiti (MIDH) of Marc Bazin, whose ill-fated campaign as a fictitious "Lavalas" presidential candidate netted him only 0.68% of the recent February 7 vote. According to interviews conducted by a Canadian journalist Anthony Fenton, the IRI was involved in meetings to merge the rump "Lavalas" supporters of Bazin and MIDH. FOIA discoveries by researcher Jeremy Bigwood have, in the past, also indicated that Marc Bazin was involved in meetings with IRI prior to the 2004 coup. Numerous foreign press reports leading up to the January 2006 election (NPR, LA Times, etc), falling for the IRI's attempts at dividing up Haiti's largest social and political movement into various factions, touted Bazin as "representing Lavalas".

The IRI with numerous grants from the National Endowment for Democracy (NED), a quasi-official foundation, which carries out Washington's "democratization" programs in nations around the globe – working to promote candidates and parties that further U.S. strategic interests. IRI has worked continuously to undermine democracy in Haiti, as made clear in the New York Times article "Mixed U.S. Signals Helped Tilt Haiti Toward Chaos" (January 29, 2006). IRI's Democratic Party counterpart at the NED is the National Democratic Institute (NDI). In addition to other funding, the IRI and NDI have a joint \$5.7 million contract in Haiti for 2002-2006 with USAID. Fabiola Cordove, a program officer at the National Endowment for Democracy (NED) in Washington D.C., recently explained that, "Aristide really had 70% of the popular support and then the 120 other parties had the thirty per cent split in one hundred and twenty different ways, which is basically impossible to compete [with]."[1]

Meanwhile, through another FOIA request, I have learned that the U.S. State Department's Agency for International Development (USAID) recently funneled \$3 million through the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS) to provide "logistical support to democratic political parties during the 2005 electoral campaign." According to the released USAID document, USAID and UNOPS "invited the democratic parties" – again no mention of who the "undemocratic" parties are – "to attend an information meeting on Friday, November 4 [2005]." At that meeting the parties were asked to "sign memoranda of understanding" that would allow them to use SUVs and minivans "for outreach and election-monitoring activities in outlying cities." The USAID money also went to "purchasing media time for campaign messages" and the providing "shirts, posters, campaign materials, etc." as well as the all important "operational expenses for political party representatives" monitoring the elections. All this for "democratic parties" who came to an "understanding" with USAID and UNOPS. USAID's Haiti Country Team selected the "democratic and law-abiding political parties and coalitions... in consultation with" IRI and NDI. According to the document, the \$3 million was to be disbursed from August 22 through December 31, 2005 "with possibility for extension... due to election delays."

Reportedly, René Prével's Lespwa party refused at least some of the UNOPS/USAID support.

Meanwhile, leaders of the Lavalas Family party were jailed or exiled by the de facto government. With millions going to help rival political parties in Haiti, it is no wonder that USAID says that its UNOPS project would help "even the playing field for the upcoming elections."

It is also interesting the importance that IRI gave to helping create a "socialist" coalition between the Struggling Peoples Organization (OPL) of Paul Denis, the National Progressive Revolutionary Haitian Party (PANPRA) of Serges Gilles, the National Congress of Democratic Movements (KONAKOM) of Victor Benoit and Micha Gaillard, and Ayiti Kapab.

The OPL's Paul Denis surely had a suspicion that his IRI and USAID support was not going to put him in the lead. Just before the election, he "denounced what he termed the lack of determination by the Provisional Electoral Council to make corrections to the electoral process before February 7, 2006, the date of the first round of the presidential and legislative elections," the Haitian Press Agency (AHP) reported. "The OPL provided an upbeat assessment of [Denis's] electoral campaign and considered that the failure to regularize the situation will result in a low voter turnout, which could in turn lead to doubts about the legitimacy of the results of the election and a new confrontation in Haiti. Mr. Denis said he feels assured of victory, but he regrets that his advice was not taken into account by the actors involved in the electoral process."

Here is an extract from the IRI documents my FOIA request released: "Since 2002, IRI has formulated seminars, targeted at women and youth from political parties and civil society, on campaign management, political party structure, fundraising, polling, political communication, platform development and the uses of Internet Technology to strengthen political parties. . . From July 31 to August 1, 2004, leaders of left of center parties, Ayiti Kapab, KONAKOM, OPL, and PANPRA met to discuss ways to accelerate a merge and the various techniques needed to advance the goal at the municipal level. At the end of the session, they put in place a work plan for the departments and municipalities to implement the merger of the four parties, now called the Groupe Socialiste. . . IRI is

still working with the Christian democratic parties for a similar coalition. . . IRI's information technology trainings have helped political parties create their own websites:. . . OPL. . . GFCD. . . MDN. . . Generation 2004."

The Haiti Democracy Project, an elite-funded think tank, put on its website an interview between pro-coup journalist Nancy Roc and Paul Denis. In the interview, Denis discusses the OPL's role in Democratic Convergence's campaign against Haiti's democratically elected government: "We had a Convergence which gathered parties from the left and the right, but we were joined together around the same objective: the fight against Aristide and for his departure." (translation)

This is the kind of "democratic and law-abiding" party that the IRI and USAID are spending millions to support.

[1]Anthony Fenton, Declassified Documents: National Endowment for Democracy FY2005, Narco News,
http://narcosphere.narconews.com/story/2006/2/15/2_05828/741

Visit Jeb Sprague's blog at <<http://www.freehaiti.net>> and read a French version of this article in Haiti Progres Weekly.

Haiti's president-elect praises Cuban medical help
Caribbean Net News
Friday, April 14, 2006

HAVANA, Cuba (AFP): Haitian President-elect Rene Preval praised Cuba's medical help for impoverished Haiti and called for closer ties ahead of a meeting with President Fidel Castro, the official Granma newspaper reported Thursday.

Preval, visiting Cuba with a delegation that includes future members of his government, praised Cuban-trained doctors for the healthcare they have given needy Haitians as he toured a medical school in Santiago de Cuba, according to Granma.

"There's a saying in Haiti: 'After God, there are Cuban doctors,'" Preval was quoted as saying, adding: "They have done more than eight million consultations and over 100,000 operations."

Preval, who is due to take office on May 14, also called for increased bilateral links between the two Caribbean states and said he and Castro "are going to look at all the possibilities that cooperation offers".

The Haitian president-elect was due to meet Castro later Thursday at the Palace of the Revolution in the Haitian capital. Preval arrived in Cuba on Wednesday for a four-day visit.

Ties between communist Cuba and Haiti, the hemisphere's poorest country, were broken for more than 30 years until being restored during Preval's first presidency (1996-2001).

Haitian President-Elect Visits Cuba

By VOA News

13 April 2006

Haitian President-elect Rene Preval is in Cuba Thursday, for a visit that will include talks with Cuban President Fidel Castro.

The president-elect is traveling with a delegation that includes several members of his future government. Mr. Preval was elected in February and is due to take office next month.

The Associated Press quotes a Haitian government spokesman as saying that the two leaders are expected to discuss Cuban aid for Haiti.

Mr. Preval was president of Haiti from 1996 to 2001. During that time, ties between Cuba and Haiti were warmer. But relations have suffered since a U.S.-backed interim government was appointed to replace former Haitian president Jean-Bertrand Aristide, who was ousted by a revolt in 2004.

René Préval in Havana

BY DEISY FRANCIS MEXIDOR—Granma daily staff writer—

The Granma, Cuba

April 13, 2006

"It is very clear that cooperation is going to continue," affirmed René Préval, president-elect of Haiti, after his arrival at 6:00 p.m. yesterday at José Martí International Airport in response to an invitation from President Fidel Castro.

Préval commented that he is to meet with his "friend Fidel and look at all the possibilities there are for cooperation." He added that his presence in the capital was not only in response to the invitation from the leader of the Revolution but is also a working visit, which began yesterday morning in Santiago de Cuba, where a further 60 young Haitians have arrived to study Medicine on the island.

That also meant that he brought "some 40 patients for Operation Miracle." Thanks to that humane project 25 flights have come from that sister Caribbean nation with sick people and "approximately 600 have been treated already."

In a brief meeting with the press, Préval emphasized that "close to 500 Haitian health troops are being trained in Cuba" and praised the role of the Cuban medical brigades lending their services in Haiti, and who "are working very hard. They have done more than eight million consultancies and performed more than one million operations. In Haiti, it's said that the Cuban doctors are next in line to God."

President-elect will visit Castro
Miami Herald
April 13, 2006

PORT-AU-PRINCE - (AP) -- Haitian President-elect René Préval left for Cuba on Wednesday in an unannounced trip aimed at rekindling relations between the Caribbean neighbors.

Préval, a former president who is due to take power next month, will meet with Cuban President Fidel Castro during the three-day trip and is expected to discuss Cuban aid for his impoverished country, Préval spokesman Volce Assad said.

Relations between Haiti and Cuba were warm during Préval's 1996-2001 presidency, but ties have suffered since a U.S.-backed interim government was appointed to replace former president JeanBertrand Aristide, who was ousted in a February 2004 revolt.

"President Préval had a good relationship with Cuba so he's going there to restart the relationship," Assad said. ``Cuba has done a lot to help Haiti, and the president wants to see how we can make the relationship better."

About 600 Haitians are currently receiving medical training in Cuba.

The communist country also has provided engineers to help refurbish and operate a sugar refinery in Haiti's countryside.

Preval: Haiti Future Linked to Unity
Prensa Latina
April 13, 2006

Havana, Haiti President-elect Rene Preval asserted Thursday that the future of his nation is closely related to its integration with Latin America and the Caribbean.

Accompanied by a group of Haitian patients and scholars during his working visit to Cuba, Preval recalled the beginning of the cooperation between both nations and the Island's association with the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) during his first presidential term (1996-2001).

The Haitian president-elect committed to encourage political, economic and cultural integration as the only possible way to boost the development of his nation, and referred to the complex election that resulted in his definitive win, after which the situation of security improved.

Rene Preval will assume the Haitian presidency on May 14, beginning a term expected to change the outlook of the poorest nation in the Western Hemisphere.

Haiti Needs Cooperation With Cuban, Says Rene Preval
Cuban News Agency
April 13, 2006

Havana, Upon his arrival at Havana's Jose Marti international airport late Wednesday, Haitian President-elect Rene Preval commented on his interest in expanding cooperation with Cuba.

Rene Preval traveled to Cuba with the objective of analyzing with Cuban authorities all possibilities for expanding links with Cuba, the president told the Prensa Latina news agency.

Before flying to Havana, Preval made a stopover in the eastern city of Santiago de Cuba for a few hours, where he was greeted by throngs of Haitian university students enrolled there.

Haiti's president-elect is accompanied by a large delegation made up future government officials, 60 young nationals who will begin studying medicine in Cuba and more than 500 Haitian patients who will receive treatment here – including forty people who will undergo eye surgery as part of the joint Cuban-Venezuelan "Operation Miracle" program, which provides free ophthalmologic assistance to low-income people from Third World nations. In the case of Haiti, around 25 flights have landed in Cuba, where 600 eye patients who have been treated and operated upon, said Preval.

Preval noted that close to 500 Haitians are currently studying medicine in Cuba, while he expressed thanks for the work of Cuban doctors in his nation. These physicians have made more than 8 million calls and have carried out some 100,000 surgeries in Haiti, he pointed out.

The President-elect and his delegation will hold official talks on Thursday with Cuban President Fidel Castro. Following those discussions, Preval and his party will continue with an intense work program that includes visits to places of scientific and social interest and meetings with other Cuban government officials, reported the Prensa Latina news agency.

This past February 7, Rene Preval won the presidential elections in his country. As leader of the Lespwa movement ("Hope" in Creole), he obtained the majority of votes and therefore winning the presidency in the first round.

Haitian president-elect Rene Preval travels to Cuba to rekindle ties

AP

Jamaica Observer

Thursday, April 13, 2006

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti (AP) - Haitian President-elect Rene Preval left for Cuba yesterday in an unannounced trip aimed at rekindling relations between the Caribbean neighbours.

Preval, a former president who is due to take power next month, will meet with Cuban President Fidel Castro during the three-day trip, and is expected to discuss Cuban aid for his impoverished country, Preval spokesman Volce Assad said.

Relations between Haiti and Cuba were warm during Preval's 1996-2001 presidency, but ties have suffered since a US-backed interim government was appointed to replace former president Jean-Bertrand Aristide, who was ousted in a February 2004 revolt.

"President Preval had a good relationship with Cuba so he's going there to restart the relationship," Assad said. "Cuba has done a lot to help Haiti and the president wants to see how we can make the relationship better."

About 600 Haitians are currently receiving medical training in Cuba, and the communist country also has provided engineers to help refurbish and operate a sugar refinery in Haiti's countryside.

Preval praised the Cuban sugar workers during a visit to the refinery Tuesday but made no mention of his trip to Cuba.

No reason was given for not announcing the visit, which is part of Preval's push to secure aid and development assistance from Latin American and Caribbean countries.

Preval will be accompanied by a delegation of more than 100 people, including Haitian musicians and agriculture officials, Assad said.

Who really killed Jean Dominique and Jacques Roche?

by Kevin Pina and Father Gerard Jean-Juste

April 12, 2006

Haiti Action Committee

Kevin Pina recently interviewed legendary Haitian priest and human rights activist, Father Gerard Jean-Juste from Miami, Florida on the program Flashpoints heard on the Pacifica network. The following is a transcript of the interview made possible by Kevin Salinger.

Kevin Pina: Good afternoon, this is Kevin Pina with Flashpoints on Pacifica. Today's very special guest is my dear friend, and a man who has fought tirelessly for justice in Haiti, who has fought tirelessly for human rights in Haiti, Father Gerard Jean-Juste. Father Gerard Jean-Juste is currently in Miami, he is undergoing chemotherapy. He was, of course diagnosed with leukemia while he was being held without charges in a Haitian jail. He was tested by Doctor Paul Farmer, who then smuggled out his blood and diagnosed him with leukemia. Finally the US, United Nations-backed forces, the US-backed government, installed government of Gerard Latortue was forced to free Father Gerard Jean-Juste to allow him to begin his medical treatment. Father Gerard Jean-Juste, good afternoon, and welcome to Flashpoints.

Fr. Jean-Juste: Good afternoon Kevin, good afternoon to all the listeners of Flashpoints.

Kevin Pina: Well, now you've had a little bit of time, you've been in Miami. How are the treatments going Father, how are you feeling?

Fr. Jean-Juste: It has been improving for a while, and I feel better now. I thank God; I thank all of you for your prayers, and for your support. And also, I'm getting ready right now for the second cycle of chemotherapy treatment. I have about five more cycles left, so the first one went very well, and I hope the second one will go well too, and the other ones, so they hope within five months I may recuperate pretty good.

Kevin Pina: Now I know that, in theory, your case is still pending in Haiti, but I'd like to get into that a little bit, particularly in light of the fact that there's been a lot of talk lately by Reporters Without Borders, and by the widow of Jean Dominique lately, raising the question of Jean Dominique, in particular the involvement of Lavalas in the murder of Jean Dominique; and I can't help but think of the parallels, in that, you of course are accused of being involved in the kidnapping and the murder -- a preposterous accusation of course -- and the murder of Jacques Roche. Jacques Roche was a reporter who was, really, I guess a sort of slanted reporter, I guess there is another term for it, a reporter who worked with the Group 184, which was, of course, the opposition group that helped to oust President Jean-Bertrand Aristide on February 29, 2004. But Father, I don't think that we ever really heard from you. How did you feel when you first heard this preposterous accusation against you? I know you must have felt it was preposterous.

Fr. Jean-Juste: Definitely, definitely, it was ridiculous to charge me with such a preposterous accusation. I was in Miami on business, and then I returned to Haiti on the 15th, two days or three days after the Jacques Roche assassination. So I had nothing, absolutely nothing to do with Jacques Roche. Of course, now they are looking for a way to get rid of me, to shut my mouth, and also to stop Lavalas

from participating in the election, in order for them to go to the elections and carry all the posts. But, unfortunately for them, and fortunately for us, within time the case of Jacques Roche has been dying -- inaudible -- because the search found nothing about us, they dropped the charges. But I would like to see Jacques Roche obtain justice, in the sense that they should try to find the true killers and go after them, and bring justice to the case. But now we have to ask the question: who was the true killers of Jacques Roche? Because it seems to me this is a political killing in order to capitalize, in order to benefit out of the exploitation of the death of Jacques Roche. And this is the beginning of what we call the "arming of ti machet." That was the first in a series where we've been attacked at the church, it was something plain, by some officers of the de facto government, and later on we discovered that the death squad was in full speed going after Lavalas people, even at the soccer game, organized, or sponsored by the USAID, where so many Lavalas people have been assassinated and killed in cold blood. So I guess there was a -- inaudible -- going on, and they were looking for a way to trap us Lavalas, and put everything on our back, and then get rid of Lavalas. So they have failed, Lavalas has survived, and now we hope we will keep moving forward, obtain justice, not only for myself, but for the other political prisoners, and for everyone else accused falsely in the case.

Kevin Pina: It seems so hard though to figure out the truth and to be able get justice, when people seem to politicize incidents like this, and use it as a tool of political persecution against those who are associated with Lavalas. Of course there's the most recent example of your own where you were not involved with Jacques Roche, but yet we know that the minister of culture under the Latortue government got up and accused you personally, accused Lavalas of involvement. Without any proof it was printed in the media, in the mainstream media and in the Haitian press, and there were very few questions raised as far as the validity of it until you were finally released when the charges were dropped. But I can't help but also think about the Jean Dominique case.

Reporters Without Borders alleged that Sò Anne played a role in the Dominique assassination, this is the first time that her name has ever come up as a "suspect."

And now I hear about Michelle Montas, who of course I have respect for, and I hear Reporters Without Borders who I have very little respect for, bringing up the Jean Dominique case again. But I also remember when those same forces had accused President Jean-Bertrand Aristide of having given Senator Dany Toussaint the order to have Jean Dominique, Haiti's most famous journalist, assassinated. I remember quite clearly, everyone, the political line was President Jean-Bertrand Aristide gave Senator Dany Toussaint the order to kill Jean Dominique. And yet, Senator Dany Toussaint, in the recent presidential elections, ran as a candidate for the presidency, and nobody said a word about it again. But yet the damage had been done. Father, can you help us to understand how these sorts of mysterious murders are used for political reasons, for a tool of political persecution against Lavalas, how accusations are made, peoples' lives are destroyed, and then suddenly we find out that what they told us was the truth, wasn't the truth.

Fr. Jean-Juste: Yeah, it is unfortunate Kevin that in Haitian politics, some politician can do anything to blame, or to condemn the opponent, the adversaries. So, this is a very bad practice. It reminds me of the tactic on the international level, once in awhile we see that whenever they want to create a problem for a president, for a party, for a group, they manage to get somebody killed, and then they manage to blame some group they want to get rid of. In French we always say that -- speaking in French -- we say that whenever we want to get rid of somebody, just look for an alibi, look for a case we hear of murder,

and put it on the back of the person, and then we make propaganda about it. So it is unfortunate. And in the case of Jean Dominique, Jean was a Lavalas, strong Lavalas, and helping the peasants, helping the poorest ones. And who should profit off the killing of Jean? Who should profit off getting rid of such a great journalist? You understand, so they use Jean to put pressure on the Lavalas government. It's like having a family, where someone will try to kill the son or the daughter of the family, and now try to blame the whole family for the killing. It is ridiculous. So in that sense, we are putting it so Jean Dominique could obtain justice. But I think that Reporters Without Borders is just using the case for their own purpose. Understand that the last three years we heard nothing about the case. Why is it now coming back again on the scene? It seems that every time a Lavalas, comes back- is running, they try to bring up something in order to stop the government of the people.

Kevin Pina: And of course Reporters Without Borders said absolutely nothing, or very little about this thing of Abdias Jean. You know we don't know, there's no clear evidence who killed Jean Dominique, but we know that there were eyewitnesses who say that the Haitian police summarily executed Abdias Jean in January 2005, in the neighborhood of Cite de Dieu. We know that for a fact.

Fr. Jean-Juste: Yeah, that's true. Unfortunately, this is the type of reporting we have coming from France. And understand that some French officials have been helping some Haitian students in order to make them rise against the Lavalas government all the time. And because President Aristide was apparently asking for France to repair it, to repair, to uh -

Kevin Pina: Give reparations.

Fr. Jean-Juste: - for reparations, and they [owe] 22 billion dollars to Haiti, and France refused, and in that case, I guess Reporters Sans Frontiers is trying to think ahead, to make us forget what we are looking for. We're looking for reparations, we're looking for restitution, and I think its about time that France stop- and deal frankly with the issue, otherwise, they cannot understand the issue. We're still alive, and probably after Jacques Chirac or some other government, we'll still continue to demand reparations and restitution, and we will gain justice someday.

Kevin Pina: Now you know, sometimes it almost seems like a cultural war for me. When I see the attacks, the character assassination on leadership of Lavalas, when I see the attempt to destroy the reputation of Lavalas, when I see the attempt to paint it with a wide brush stroke, that it was a violent movement at the behest of Jean-Bertrand Aristide, the dictator of Haiti, all of this sort of propaganda machine within culture. And a latest example is this film that was just released, which I haven't seen yet, but the main theme of it, its called Ghosts of Cite Soleil, its produced by the son of Jorgen Leth, Asgar Leth. Jorgen Leth of course was the former Danish honorary counsel to Haiti, who had to resign because he had written a book that detailed his sexual exploits with his 17-year-old house servant, and that created a very moral uproar and he had to resign from that position. But his son Asgar Leth now has produced a film called Ghosts of Cite Soleil, in which he now chronicles the exploits of two gang leaders in Cite Soleil called Tupac and Billy. And according to this film, there are these phone calls that are made reportedly, in this film, that say that they are being made by those close to Jean-Bertrand Aristide, who is getting leadership to the gangs in Cite Soleil to go out and kill the opposition. Father Gerard Jean-Juste, I've never asked you this question before: what is your opinion about the accusations that have been leveled against Jean-Bertrand Aristide, that he was using the state to sponsor violence against the opposition in Haiti?

Fr. Jean-Juste: Well its completely false, its completely propoganda, its completely unjust doing that to President Aristide. The president was elected by the people, the president was well-loved by the people, by most Haitians, as the president was being so good to the poorest ones in Haiti by offering education to everyone, regardless that the international community had stopped all aid, all assistance to President Aristide as well as President Preval in the past; and these presidents, loved by the people, had managed to offer maximum services to the people. And that is the reason that now we have so many people coming out, still supporting these Lavalas presidents. So I guess the enemy should take a lesson, instead of trying to destroy all those who want good for the grassroots, who want good for the people in general, who want good for everyone in general, rich or poor, who want possibilities for the poor, want - going after these good Haitians; and I think they should, instead, try to find ways to bring cooperation and help us better the life of the people. That's the way how I see it, but unfortunately we have a long way to go to make these people, to make the enemies of the Haitian people understand that. Its not the proper way to live, its not the proper way to operate, and they should come on the side of the people. So we hope with our prayers, with our discipline, we shall convince them, someday they will change. That's why hope, or otherwise I'll see why people who are educated, who are supposed to know better, will go in a way of -- inaudible -- that leads to the assassination of so many Haitian brothers and sisters. And President Aristide, he is loved by the Haitian people, not because he is President, or because he has done something great, its because he has shown complete love for the people. Poor people can enter the palace and eat with the president, and party with the president, as well as rich people. So President Aristide has been opening his arms and heart to everyone. So at the moment that the people have tasted this type of service, this type of offer coming from the president -

Kevin Pina: Open government.

Fr. Jean-Juste: - from the government -- you can do whatever you want, they will give their life for the movement, because the movement is in their advantage, giving them more dignity, and more hope, and improve their living. So that's the best way to operate. The best way to operate is completely to come with some services that allow people to receive basic human needs. So this is the best way, and you're going to have the Haitian people with you forever. But the other ways, exploiting them, killing them, and telling them nonsense -- they won't accept any of that nonsense.

Kevin Pina: You know Father, there seems to be a revision of history going on as well. People seem to be wanting to sweep under the rug what life has been like in Haiti the past two years, which I can only describe as a human rights hell. But I wonder if you could just help our listeners to understand, if you could describe, define what the last two years have been like in Haiti before the elections, after the coup against Aristide, February 29, 2004. How would you describe that period of history, Father.

Fr. Jean-Juste: Well as you just were referring, it was hell in Haiti, cause, imagine that we had a democratic government functioning, and in effect, within the international community, they come together and, with some putchist leaders, coup leaders, and they get rid of this elected president. And that has been quite a blow to us Haitians. So many innocent people have been killed for nothing, and the people who have survived have received no services at all, and all the public places that were built, to serve the people, to welcome them -- the parks, the public institutions in education, meant to serve the people -- everything has been either destroyed or disappeared. And so the de facto government that has been imposed on us the last two years has received more assistance from that sector of the

international community -- from the international community at large, I should say -- and has done nothing for the people in concrete. Look at Haiti now: they are still without electricity, no roads, and no food for the people, and -- inaudible -- it's very expensive. And on the human rights level forget it. The jails are overcrowded with innocent people, most of them Lavalas people. And so this is a situation where they have tried to force a government in the throat of the people, and the people have stood up and thwarted them. So I think we have a great lesson today, and Haiti should never, never live such a sad, hellish moment, like we've had the last two years, in its history. So we have to find ways now to make democracy a growing, and find ways to make sure that human rights of all in Haiti are respected, and find ways to correct whatever wrong has been done by the previous de facto government, and move ahead to see if we can bring as many Haitians -- to bring them together, as many as possible, and to rebuild this beautiful country God has given us. So that's the way how I see it, because it is true that I'm not able to speak more, but you know, in the condition I'm now, I'm in the middle of treatment and I'm taking a lot of medication right now.

Kevin Pina: I understand Father. This is Kevin Pina on Flashpoints on Pacifica, our guest today is Father Gerard Jean-Juste. Now Father they've set you free to undergo chemotherapy for lymphatic leukemia, which of course is very dangerous. They had held you to the point where it had become life-threatening, and of course your treatment had to commence immediately. But technically you're still a political prisoner, because technically after your treatment you're supposed to return to Haiti. Is that right?

Fr. Jean-Juste: Yes, I'm looking forward to returning to Haiti. As far as my case is concerned, in order to send me for treatment the government wanted to pardon me. I said, what have I done to deserve a pardon? So I am the one who went on appeal. I'm going on appeal, and I would like to win the case all the way, all the way, and I won't back off until I receive justice from the government of Haiti, probably now would be under government under Preval administration, yeah.

Kevin Pina: Well I can't thank you enough Father Gerard Jean-Juste. God bless you sir and thank you so much for your time. Please take care.

Fr. Jean-Juste: Thank you very much Kevin. My greeting to all the listeners, and I hope God bless every one of us. Thank you.

See Also:

The Assassination of Jean Dominique:

Is it part of Washington's offensive? best to start in the beginning. Go back to April 2000 and read the first impressions of the progressive community the week of Jean Dominique and Jean-Claude Louissaint's murders. It wasn't long after the event that the spin of the U.S. subversion began to hit the corporate media.

" At 6:15 a.m. on Apr. 3, a gunman entered the courtyard of Radio Haiti Inter and shot to death pioneering radio journalist Jean Dominique, 69, as well as the station's caretaker, Jean-Claude Louissaint. Dominique, who was just arriving by car to prepare for his hugely popular 7:00 a.m. daily news roundup, was struck by one bullet in the head and two in the neck. He was loaded with

Louissaint into an ambulance, but both men were pronounced dead on arrival at the nearby Haitian Community Hospital in Pétionville." Apr 2004

Skull-carrier pleads guilty

BY JERRY BERRIOS

Miami Herald

April 13, 2006

After three felony charges were downgraded to a single misdemeanor, the woman who brought a human skull from Haiti awaits sentencing.

The Haitian woman who brought a human skull into the United States to ward off evil spirits as part of her Vodou religion pleaded guilty Wednesday in Fort Lauderdale federal court to illegally storing human remains.

Myrlene Severe, 30, was originally charged with three federal felonies -- intentionally smuggling a human head into the United States, not having the proper paperwork and bringing hazardous material onto an airplane.

However, those charges were downgraded to a misdemeanor.

She entered her plea in front of U.S. District Judge James I. Cohn at the federal courthouse in Fort Lauderdale.

"She is glad that part of it is over," said Kenneth Hassett, Severe's attorney. "She is anxiously awaiting the sentencing for closure. We are cautiously optimistic as to the result."

Severe's sentencing is scheduled for July 28.

Although the felonies were federal charges, Severe is being charged with violating state law, which prohibits storing human remains except at a facility such as a medical examiner's office or cemetery.

The misdemeanor charge can carry a maximum penalty of one year in jail.

On Feb. 9, U.S. Customs and Border Protection officers at the Fort Lauderdale-Hollywood International Airport found a human skull in Severe's luggage.

She was returning to Florida from Cap Haitien, Haiti.

The skull, with black curly hair, was nestled in a cotton rice bag along with a banana leaf, dirt, small stones and a rusty iron nail.

Severe is a permanent legal U.S. resident.

Her attorney said he believed that if she had been convicted of the felonies, she would have been deported to Haiti.

No change in American policy towards Haiti, says ambassador

Friday, April 14, 2006

by Vario Sérant

Caribbean Net News Haiti Correspondent

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti: According to US Ambassador Janet Sanderson, there will be no significant changes in American policy towards the future government of Haiti.

On Wednesday, the new ambassador of the United States to Haiti said at a press conference at her residence at Bourdon, east of Port-au-Prince, "We are confident (in the election) process started last February 7 and will continue with the April 21 parliamentary elections (that) will lead to a Parliament which will discharge its mission adequately."

The American diplomat recalled that her country dreams of a "democratic, stable, prosperous and secure Haiti," and announced that the U.S. government will be tuned into priorities defined by the future government - as they currently do for the provisional government - to help them to materialize.

"I was charged by President Bush to reinforce the bilateral relations. We will continue the consultations with the Haitian leaders to reconcile our actions with the priorities established by the Haitian authorities," stressed Sanderson.

During a three day visit to the U.S. at the end of March, the president-elect requested additional aid of forty million dollars from the American administration for Haiti. Rene Préal justified this step by the need for the immediate creation of jobs throughout the country. This request has yet to be approved by Washington.

The future tenant of the Haitian Presidential Palace has been in talks with American officials about a textile development project dubbed "Hope" whose application could generate ten thousands of jobs, according to Rene Préal.

Responding to questions on this topic, the new American ambassador in Haiti said she recognizes that this "draft legislation can encourage the textile sector in Haiti," taking care to remain somewhat aloof about the specific discussions.

According to Sanderson, the American government has "an extremely important aid program in Haiti," and has given Haiti more than five hundred millions dollars in assistance. "We are continuing our assistance program into the future."

This was the first public meeting between Ambassador Sanderson and the Haitian press since her accreditation a month ago.

Dominican military cooperates with Haiti on cross-border fugitives
The Dominican Today
April 13, 2006

SANTO DOMINGO.- Armed Forces minister Sigfrido Pared Perez yesterday denied that the country protects Haitian fugitives, are under suspected of committing dozens of contract kidnappings and murders in Haiti.

The senior military official said that in no way would the military branches provide impunity to people who have committed crimes in their country and have taken refuge in Dominican territory.

He affirmed that the Armed Forces do not have information on those Haitians' whereabouts, "in a list of 30 people given by the chief of Haiti's Police, Mario Andresol, alerting the Dominican authorities on their possible entry to the country via the border."

Pared said that at least five of the 30 persecuted Haitians were arrested in this capital by members of military agencies and given to Haiti's authorities to be processed in that nation.

He added that some 30 Haitian thugs would be in the country after fleeing from the Haitian authorities, wanted in connection with dozens of murders and kidnappings of even American officials in Haitian territory, attributed to them.

Haiti and al Qaeda
The Strategy Page
April 12, 2006

American intelligence has picked up indications that the ongoing chaos in Haiti may be providing Islamist terrorist groups with a safe haven, and an opportunity to plan, organize, and train. This sort of thing was also suspected in Somalia, and known to be happening in remote parts of Pakistan and the Philippines. It's no accident that al Qaeda has been unable to set up permanent and productive training operations anywhere. Many, if not most, of the U.S. Army Special Forces deployed worldwide are not in Afghanistan or Iraq, but in dozens of out-of-the-way and lawless places like Haiti. Restoring order to Haiti would not only do wonders for the economy (especially the once booming tourist business), but provide enough bright lights and bustle to shoo away al Qaeda. But at the moment, Haiti is most hospitable to gangsters and thugs. Every thing is for sale, and justice comes out of the barrel of a gun. The presence of UN peacekeepers in Haiti provides some muscle to go after any terrorist groups setting up shop. While the proximity to the United States may appear attractive to some Islamic terrorists, others know that this proximity works both ways. Keeping some Special Forces in the country on a regular basis, if only for intelligence gathering, would appear as the best antidote for al Qaeda infestation.

Preval Brings Pupils, Sick to Cuba
Prensa Latina
April 12, 2006

Havana, Haiti's President elect Rene Preval is beginning a working visit to Havana Wednesday, on an invitation by his Cuban counterpart Fidel Castro.

Preval is accompanied by several of his future cabinet members and other Haitian figures, Granma daily reported.

His visit coincides with the arrival in Cuba of young Haitians who will study here, as well as low-income patients who will have free eye surgery as part of Operation Miracle.

The president elect and his delegation will be welcomed by the Cuban leader and complete an extensive agenda that includes visits to places of scientific and social interest, as well as talks with other local authorities, the daily added.

Preval, former Haitian president from 1996 to 2001 and former prime minister in 1991, won the presidential elections last February 7.

Diaspora Forum in Haiti
Dumarsais M. Siméus
April 12, 2006
Haiti Democracy Project web page

Subject: Diaspora Forum Friday, May 12, 2006 in Haiti

To: Haitians Everywhere & Friends of Haiti

Please mark your calendar for a major Diaspora event in Haiti on Friday, May 12, 2006. We are inviting Haitians from all over the world as well as our friends of Haiti to participate in a Diaspora Forum, which will deal with the inclusion of all Haitians in the socio-economic and political affairs of Haiti. President Préval has been invited and, based on his upbeat message to the Diaspora, we anticipate his welcoming remarks during the conference. Specifically, the following items will be discussed:

1. New and Modern Constitution
2. Diaspora as members of the Constitutional Assembly
3. Future representation of the Diaspora in parliament
4. Voting rights for the Diaspora
5. Ministry of the Diaspora and selected satellite offices abroad
6. Recruitment of talent from the Diaspora to serve in the Government
7. Potential areas of investments by the Diaspora and Friends of Haiti
8. Creation of Investment Funds to provide access to capital to all Haitian entrepreneurs
9. Haitian Peace Corps

Dr. Serge Parisien is the point of contact and principal coordinator for the forum. You will hear from him regarding venue, agenda items, speakers, conference fees, etc. no later than April 15, 2006.

We look forward to seeing you in Haiti.

Sincerely,

Dumarsais M. Siméus
Chairman
Diaspora Forum

Caribbean news briefs
South Florida Sun Sentinel
Wire Reports
Posted April 12 2006

Caribbean
U.S. carrier group
sets war games

The USS George Washington aircraft carrier strike group moved into the Caribbean this week for two months of training and joint military exercises in what the military hopes will be a show of its commitment to the region.

The military has dismissed as ridiculous allegations by Venezuelan President Hugo Chávez that it is planning an invasion of his country.

Still, analysts say the show of force sends a strong signal to Chávez and other Latin American leaders, as well as to China, which has a growing presence in the region, about U.S. commitment in the Caribbean area.

Brazil

Latin peacekeepers

to remain in Haiti

BRASILIA · Chile and Brazil have agreed their troops will remain in Haiti for as long as they are needed, Chilean President Michelle Bachelet said Tuesday during a visit to this capital.

Bachelet made the comments after meeting with Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva during her one-day visit.

Bachelet said Brazilian and Chilean troops would remain in Haiti for as long as "the democratic forces of Haiti and the United Nations consider their presence necessary."

Brazil heads the peacekeeping force composed of troops from more than 40 countries, including Argentina and Uruguay, that were sent to Haiti cities to help restore democracy after a rebellion overthrew President Jean-Bertrand Aristide in February 2004.

43 Haitians who landed at Hillsboro Beach are facing deportation

By Ruth Morris

South Florida Sun-Sentinel

April 12 2006

The likely deportation of 43 Haitians who landed on Hillsboro Beach last week points to the federal government's unequal treatment of immigrants who reach the nation's shores, advocates said this week.

Although federal officials will allow a Cuban from the overcrowded boat to stay in the United States, they probably will return many of the Haitians and a Jamaican man to their homelands.

Seizing on the differing legal fates, immigration advocates and Haitian community leaders demanded that authorities release the Haitians, whom police detained on Friday. They have been in custody since their 45-foot cabin cruiser ran aground alongside a stretch of luxury condominiums.

The landing highlights a double standard toward Haitians that makes it extremely difficult for them to win political asylum and earn legal status here after fleeing their chaotic homeland, advocates said. Meanwhile, the United States allows Cubans who make it ashore to stay.

"We think it's imperative they're released. They'd have a much better opportunity to find attorneys," Cheryl Little, executive director of the Florida Immigration Advocacy Center, said of the 43 Haitians. "The cards are really stacked against them."

Little said her organization has not located the Haitians in U.S. detention. That will leave them unprepared for interviews with federal authorities, she said.

To earn an asylum hearing, illegal immigrants who make it to the United States must convince authorities they have a credible fear of persecution in their homeland. Only 11 percent of Haitians seeking asylum in the United States win their cases.

Those who don't have lawyers, or can't afford them, have a smaller chance of success.

The Friday landing was the largest since more than 200 Haitian refugees reached Virginia Key in October 2002.

Advocates also renewed their longstanding call for the U.S. government to extend temporary protective status to Haitians. The provision, already in place for Hondurans and Salvadorans, grants limited stays to immigrants from countries hobbled by political violence or natural disaster.

"It's simply wrong to deport anyone to Haiti right now," said Steven Forester, senior policy advocate for the Haitian Women of Miami, a social services agency. "This makes starkly apparent the decades-long discrimination of Haitian refugees by the U.S. government."

Haiti held relatively peaceful elections in February, but president-elect Rene Preval has yet to take office because of delays in a legislative vote. The country suffers from drastic unemployment and rampant kidnappings.

As to the federal government's policy of admitting into the United States Cubans who make it to land, Forester said it is the double standard that advocates find objectionable.

"We are delighted that other nationalities enjoy the benefits they do. The Cuban community is sympathetic ... but it's about pulling Haitians up."

Randy McGrorty, executive director of Catholic Charities legal services in Miami, said he was sure the Haitians who landed in Hillsboro Beach would convince U.S. officials they fear persecution in Haiti, given the chance.

"I'm sure they'll all pass," he said. "We're going from a period of two years of no government control at all [in Haiti] and we hope for the best, but it'll take them time."

Ruth Morris can be reached at rmorris@sun-sentinel.com or 954-810-5012.

Haitian activists protest treatment of 43 migrants
Tuesday, April 11, 2006
Baynews9.com

MIAMI (AP) - Haitian leaders and activists are protesting the efforts of federal authorities to send 43 Haitian immigrants back home after their boat landed in Broward County on Friday.

One Cuban aboard will be allowed to stay in the United States because of the wet-foot, dry-foot policy.

Under the policy, Cubans who reach dry U.S. soil are eligible to stay here and apply for residency.

But Haitians and other foreigners must convince an asylum officer they have a "credible fear" of persecution if returned home or they are sent back.

Activists have repeatedly urged the Bush administration to include Haitians under the Temporary Protected Status, now accorded to many Central Americans whose countries were hit by recent natural disasters. The Department of Homeland Security has given no indication it will do so.

Immigration Activists Call on US to Soften Stance on Haitians

By VOA News

11 April 2006

Haitian leaders in the United States are criticizing a decision by U.S. immigration officials to detain 43 illegal immigrants from Haiti while allowing a Cuban traveling with them to go free.

A fishing boat carrying the Haitians, the Cuban and a Jamaican landed on a beach in the southeastern U.S. state of Florida last Friday. The migrants were picked up by U.S. authorities.

Washington allows Cubans who reach U.S. shores to stay and apply for citizenship, but it requires refugees from other countries to be sent home. Exceptions can be made if the refugees can prove they have a credible fear of persecution if they are sent back.

The head of a Miami-based Haitian women's group, Marleine Bastien, has called on the government to give each of the boat's passengers a so-called "credible fear" interview.

Other activists say the United States should extend Temporary Protected Status to Haitians, allowing them to remain in the United States for a limited time because of problems in their home country. Some Central Americans have such status in the United States because their home countries were devastated by natural disasters.

Activists say Haiti's political turmoil should qualify its citizens for the protected status.

GOLD AND COPPER EXPLOITATION OPERATIONS TO RESUME IN THE NORTH AND NORTH EAST DEPARTMENTS of Haiti.

Radio Kiskeya reporting,

April 8, 2006

**Unofficial English Translation by Fondasyon Mapou |
eugenia@fondasyonmapou.org**

The Canado-Haitian firm Sainte Genevieve/Haiti, a subsidiary of the Sainte-Genevieve Group, will resume their operations of exploitation of gold and copper reserves in the North and North East departments by the end of April, according to a report on Wednesday, from the Office of Mines and Energy

The Firm, which was forced to suspend its activities in those regions due to unrest in 2005 , will officially reopen their Offices in Port-au-Prince on Friday. On Thursday, the Directors made themselves available to potential Haitian Investors at The Caribe Convention center (Juvenat, East of Port-au-Prince) in an effort to encourage the growth of the Society's portfolio.

A 25 year deal granted to the Firm in 1997 and reaffirmed in 2005, authorizes the exploitation of gold and copper reserves in 3 distinct localities in the North and the North East. The Haitian Government has in addition GIVEN 5 MORE PERMITS to the Firm for the prospection of more of less significant reserves in other areas of the same Departments.

The estimated value of those reserves are: 1.1 million tons, with an average range of 2.4 grams of gold per ton and 1.3 million tons of copper with an average range of 0.5%. The exploitation will resume at the end of the month.