

HAITI NEWS ROUNDUP: AUGUST 2 – 8, 2006

Gunmen in Haiti Kill Italian Businessman

By Associated Press

Los Angeles Times

August 8, 2006

ROME -- Gunmen in Haiti have killed an Italian businessman and kidnapped his wife amid a spate of violence in the impoverished Caribbean nation, the Italian Foreign Ministry said Tuesday.

A group of armed men on Monday entered the couple's villa in the capital, Port-au-Prince, shooting 67-year-old Guido Vitiello and leaving him tied to a chair before abducting his wife Gigliola Martino, the ministry said. Vitiello later died of his wounds in a hospital.

Investigators believe Martino, 65, was kidnapped for ransom and the Italian ambassador in the neighboring Dominican Republic has been dispatched to Port-au-Prince to assist the family and keep contacts with local authorities, the ministry said.

Martino was also briefly kidnapped last year and released unharmed. She has been living in Haiti for about 30 years with her husband and two children.

Haiti experienced relative calm after President Rene Preval's February election. Since May, however, dozens of foreigners and Haitians have been kidnapped and gang fighting has forced hundreds to flee their homes in the capital.

Fears grow for Haiti kidnap victim
ANSA, Italia
August 8, 2006

No news of Italian woman seized by gunmen in fatal home raid

(ANSA) - Rome, August 8 - Concern mounted on Tuesday for the safety of an Italian woman kidnapped in Haiti by an armed gang which also killed her husband .

The Foreign Ministry said it had no news of 65-year-old Gigliola Martino Vitiello, who was seized from her villa in the centre of the Haitian capital of Port-au-Prince on Monday .

The kidnappers broke into the woman's home, tied her 67-year-old husband Guido to a chair and then shot him before abducting her .

Guido Vitiello died later in hospital .

The Foreign Ministry said Italy's ambassador to the neighbouring Dominican Republic, Enrico Guicciardi, had been sent to Port-au-Prince to follow the case and help Vitiello's two children, Riccardo and Sabrina .

Vitiello, who was born near the southern Italian city of Avellino, has lived in Haiti for more than 30 years and runs a successful electrical supply business there .

It was the second time she has been kidnapped .

In June 2005, gunmen seized the businesswoman but released her unharmed several hours later, after the intervention of her cousin, a top doctor who is highly respected by the local community .

On Sunday, two other foreign nationals who work for a phone company based in Haiti were also kidnapped. The impoverished Caribbean state has seen an upsurge in gang violence over the past few months .

Dozens of foreigners including missionary workers have been kidnapped, while hundreds of others have fled their homes in Port-au-Prince for fear of being snatched .

Ambassador Guicciardi told ANSA in a phone interview that "violent gangs are targeting Europeans, coming to get them inside their very homes. This is something that has never happened before" .

"The security situation in general in Haiti is getting worse by the day," he said .

The United Nations announced on Monday that it would seek to boost security in the country, the poorest in the Western hemisphere, by strengthening the local police force .

It stressed that better-trained personnel and security advisers were needed .

An 8,800-strong force made up of UN troops and international police is already deployed in Haiti and provides the country's only real security .

U.N. Plans to Increase Security in Haiti

By MYRNA DOMIT

The Associated Press

The Washington Post

Tuesday, August 8, 2006

POR-T-AU-PRINCE, Haiti -- The United Nations intends to step up security in Haiti in an effort to crack down on gangs that are "kidnapping and terrorizing ordinary people," the U.N. chief in Haiti said Monday.

The U.N. Security Council is expected to review within a week a request for strengthening Haiti's national police force with better-qualified personnel, expert security advisers and equipment to stem a surge in abductions and lawlessness.

If approved, the U.N. will begin securing the capital to help the government and humanitarian groups do their work, said Larry Rossin, the U.N.'s acting leader in Haiti. He did not provide further details of what the stepped-up security would entail.

Haiti experienced relative calm after President Rene Preval's February election. Since May, however, dozens of foreigners and Haitians have been kidnapped and gang fighting has forced hundreds to flee their homes in the capital of Port-au-Prince.

"In Port-au-Prince, we have seen a significant deterioration in the security situation," Rossin told The Associated Press. "This is ... criminal activity taking place by these gangs who are kidnapping and terrorizing ordinary people."

"We are working very closely with the president and the prime minister to come up with a policy and to use our forces to help," he added. "We are looking forward to getting this under control."

An 8,800-strong force of U.N. troops and international police provides the only real security in a country plagued with well-armed gangs and a local police force that U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan describes as "inadequately trained" and "infiltrated by criminal elements."

The peacekeepers were dispatched to Haiti to help restore order following the 2004 revolt that toppled then-President Jean-Bertrand Aristide, now exiled in South Africa.

U.N. officials have said the latest crime wave may be an attempt to destabilize the country and pressure Preval into allowing Aristide to return. Preval has said he does not believe the violence is politically motivated.

Invisible Violence: Ignoring murder in post-coup Haiti

by Jeb Sprague

San Francisco Bay Area Indymedia

Monday Aug 7th, 2006

Fairness & Accuracy In Reporting (FAIR)

<http://www.fair.org> Extra! July/August 2006

In an eight-minute report (6/5/05) in which she rode in a U.N. armored personnel carrier and extolled the bravery of U.N. soldiers, NPR correspondent Lourdes Garcia-Navarro cited "human rights organizations" as saying that "things have improved since the Aristide days." The NPR report interviewed two members of the U.N. force, one U.S. police trainer, one Haitian police official and Gérard Latortue, the head of Haiti's unelected interim government. It neglected to quote any victims of the violence perpetrated by the Latortue regime or any human rights organizations critical of the governmental-sponsored violence-perhaps because they might have pointed out that such violence actually increased dramatically during Latortue's time in power.

After Haiti's democratically elected leader, President Jean-Bertrand Aristide, was ousted in February 2004, the United States, Canada and France put into place an interim government made up of members of the opposition. Latortue, a wealthy Haitian-American, was installed as the head of this government.

On April 30, 2004, the United Nations, under U.N. Resolution 1542, established the U.N. Stabilization Mission to Haiti, known as MINUSTAH, grouping more than 9,000 military and police personnel from more than 40 countries under the leadership of Brazil and Canada. For more than 26 months, the interim government used former members of Haiti's disbanded military, along with U.N.-trained paramilitary police, to crack down on the slum-dwelling supporters of the ousted government and of Fanmi Lavalas, the political party which had voted Aristide into office. During this period, the mainstream U.S. press observed a virtual blackout on the state-sponsored violence perpetrated by the U.S.-backed interim Haitian government.

Aristide under fire

For more than two-and-a-half years prior to the 2004 coup, paramilitary rebels led by former Haitian police chief Guy Philippe had attacked Haiti from bases in the Dominican Republic. They killed civilians and government officials, targeted police stations, Haiti's largest dam and even the presidential palace, all sparking further violence. Government aid embargoes by both the Clinton and Bush administrations further stripped bare the foreign aid-dependent Haitian state.

Opposition-aligned political parties and anti-government "civil society" organizations, however, received tens of millions of dollars in training and support funds during that time from U.S., Canadian and European aid agencies, such as the U.S. Agency for International Development, the National Endowment for Democracy and the Canadian International Development Agency. With the Haitian currency, the gourde, plunging in value, poverty-stricken Haitians struggled under mounting prices and political destabilization.

Even under these conditions, the Aristide government continued to invest in education, medical training and a program to fight human trafficking, albeit with a yearly budget of approximately \$300

million for a population of about 8 million. Daring to resist IMF calls to privatize its public industries while raising the minimum wage for Haitian garment industry workers and bringing suit against France for \$21 billion in colonial reparations, the Aristide government accumulated powerful enemies.

Further political polarization resulted in violence, doggedly covered by the mainstream U.S. press throughout Aristide's second administration (2/01-2/04). One of Aristide's most widely publicized North American critics counted approximately 212 politically motivated deaths during Aristide's second government, attributing 50 of those killings to the opposition (Michael Deibert, Notes From the Last Testament).

Murderous operations

By contrast, a National Lawyers Guild investigation documented that "800 bodies" had been "dumped and buried" by the morgue in Port-au-Prince in just the first week following the coup; the usual number under Aristide was less than 100 a month (3/29-4/5/04). The University of Miami Human Rights Investigation, a 10-day survey (11/11-21/04) during the interim government, discovered piles of corpses in Haiti's capital of Port-au-Prince-victims of state security and paramilitary forces (Boston Globe, 4/19/05). World Bank official Carolyn Antsey told this reporter that "thousands died" as a result of the February 2004 events.

Alternative press agencies, human rights organizations and independent investigations, including Amnesty International, the New York University School of Law, L'Agence Haïtienne de Presse (AHP) and Dr. Paul Farmer's Partners in Health, reported a concerted wave of interim government violence and persecution, while much of the U.S. mainstream press remained virtually silent.

Throughout 2004 and 2005, reports from the non-profit alternative news service Haiti Information Project (HIP) uncovered killings of Lavalas supporters carried out by members of the interim government's Haitian National Police (HNP). HIP (7/05) also documented murderous operations, with victims often shot in the head, committed by the Brazilian and Jordanian contingents of MINUSTAH. The University of Miami Human Rights Investigation, conducted by Boston immigration lawyer Thomas Griffin in mid-November 2004, documented mass murder by the HNP, mass graves, cramped prisons, no-medicine hospitals, corpse-strewn streets and maggot-infested morgues-the interim regime's means of dealing with the supporters of the ousted Aristide government. Nine months after Aristide was removed, Griffin wrote,

U.S. officials blame the crisis on armed gangs in the poor neighborhoods, not the official abuses and atrocities, nor the unconstitutional ouster of the elected president. Their support for the interim government is not surprising, as top officials, including the minister of justice, worked for U.S. government projects that undermined their elected predecessors. . . . U.N. police and soldiers, unable to speak the language of most Haitians. . . resort to heavy-handed incursions into the poorest neighborhoods that force intermittent peace at the expense of innocent residents. The injured prefer to die at home untreated rather than risk arrest at the hospital. Those who do reach the hospital soak in puddles of their own blood, ignored by doctors.

A few mainstream outlets occasionally reported on individual incidents of violence perpetrated by the interim government. The Miami Herald (3/1/05) reported: "Haitian police opened fire on peaceful

protesters Monday, killing two, wounding others and scattering an estimated 2,000 people marching through the capital [on February 28] to mark the first anniversary of President Jean-Bertrand Aristide's ouster. . . . Peacekeepers, whose orders are to support the police, stood by as the attack occurred. The police quickly disappeared, leaving the bodies on the street."

On March 24, 2005, the Associated Press wrote: "Police opened fire Thursday during a street march in Haiti's capital to demand the return of ousted President Jean-Bertrand Aristide. Witnesses said at least one person was killed. . . . Associated Press reporters saw police firing into the air and toward protesters." Another AP dispatch (4/27/05) reported, "Police fired on protesters demanding the release of detainees loyal to Haiti's ousted president Wednesday, killing at least five demonstrators." On June 5, 2005, Reuters wrote, "As many as 25 people were killed in police raids on Friday and Saturday in the slums of Haiti's capital."

In one of the most graphic accounts to find its way into the mainstream press, the Miami Herald wrote (9/1/05):

The police carried assault rifles and wore black masks. The gang they accompanied had brand-new machetes. According to witnesses and U.N. investigators, they stormed into a soccer match during halftime, ordered everyone to lie on the ground and began shooting and hacking people to death in broad daylight as several thousand spectators fled for their lives. . . . Some were handcuffed and shot in the head by police, witnesses said. Others were hacked to death.

Missing the story

But such forthright reporting was exceptional, particularly in the most prominent news outlets. Studying the last two years of coverage by three leading mainstream U.S. newspapers—the New York Times, Los Angeles Times and USA Today—along with National Public Radio, Extra! found that 98.6 percent of the pieces related to Haiti ignored the role of state-sponsored violence and persecution. The few that did mention them provided a few isolated examples, usually working to discredit the documented incidents as partisan political allegations. The human rights reports citing a high number of political prisoners and killings by the interim government's HNP were rarely cited by the mainstream press.

Following the 2004 coup, press accounts based on interviews with interim government, MINUSTAH and U.S. government officials ensured that an official version of events prevailed. These media outlets demonized Lavalas supporters as "gangs" and "supporters of violence," and justified the foreign-backed destabilization and overthrow of the constitutional government.

The New York Times published 642 pieces that mentioned Haiti between March 1, 2004 and May 1, 2006—close to one a day. But only four dealt with the violence against and persecution of members and supporters of the former government. While the New York Times reported (10/26/04) on the imprisonment of Father Gerard Jean-Juste, a pro-Aristide priest imprisoned for political reasons, it failed to investigate the nearly 1,000 other political prisoners, many underfed and living in dilapidated jails for more than two years without being charged.

Meanwhile, the Los Angeles Times had 244 pieces mentioning Haiti from March 1, 2004 to May 1, 2006, but only five discussed-briefly-the violent persecution of Lavalas supporters. At the same time, the paper managed to cover every single death of a MINUSTAH soldier.

Well over half of all the quotes in L.A. Times articles dealing entirely with Haiti came from official sources. One L.A. Times article covered the imprisonment of former Prime Minister Yvon Neptune (7/5/05), but failed to mention the evidentiary weakness of the charges leveled against him by a U.S.-funded NGO (Baltimore Sun, 5/29/05), or that there were nearly a thousand other political prisoners languishing in the jails of the interim government.

With a smaller international section, USA Today had 13 articles specifically on Haiti between March 1, 2004 and May 1, 2006. Two (1/4/05, 9/27/05) were critical of the Latortue government, citing its involvement in human rights violations. One of these was followed by a rebuttal from Roger Noriega (1/12/05), then assistant secretary of state for Western Hemisphere affairs and a primary architect of the 2004 coup. USA Today's pieces also showed an extreme source bias toward U.S. government and U.S.-installed interim government officials. In its articles, seven U.S. government officials, one U.N. official and 16 Haitian government officials were quoted, compared with only one human rights official and one member of Lavalas.

NPR, according to its website, had approximately 79 stories covering Haiti between March 1, 2004 and May 1, 2006. Only three mentioned violence against Lavalas supporters (10/4/04, 10/7/04, 1/25/06), all of these placing the majority of the blame on pro-Aristide "political and gang" violence, failing to interview victims of state-sponsored or U.N. violence. The role of MINUSTAH and the HNP was almost completely ignored.

The introductions of sources in articles covering Haiti illustrates the reliance on official sources: "diplomats say," "an anonymous diplomat says," "a source involved in the palace brainstorming," "a U.S. diplomat in Port-au-Prince said," "U.N. officials say," "Haitian police say," "USAID workers explain," "a member of Haiti's electoral council said," "the new commander of the U.N. peacekeeping force assured," "council members said," "interim officials say," "State Department officials say," etc. Rarely, if ever, do we read what the wounded, imprisoned and exiled say-the testimonies that don't sustain the official story.

<http://www.fair.org/index.php?page=2937&pr...>

Man charged in Sears Tower plot seeks release

August 8, 2006

BY CURT ANDERSON

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Chicago Sun-times

MIAMI-- One of seven men charged with plotting terrorist attacks on Sears Tower sought to distance himself from the group and wanted nothing to do with such mass destruction, his attorney said Tuesday.

"He didn't like what was going on, did not want to be any part of it," defense lawyer Joel DeFabio said at a hearing on Lyglenson Lemorin's request for release on bail.

DeFabio added that Lemorin left Miami in the spring after members of the group pledged allegiance to the al-Qaida terrorist network, moving his two children and wife to Atlanta and taking a retail job under his own name.

"He made no effort to conceal his whereabouts. He did nothing to hide," DeFabio said.

Federal prosecutors, however, portrayed the 31-year-old Lemorin as part of the "inner circle" of followers of Narseal Batiste, who they claim sought to turn the group into an arm of al-Qaida that would try to blow up the Sears Tower and government buildings in major cities.

The group never obtained any explosives and never got beyond the preliminary planning stages, authorities said after their arrests in June. All seven have pleaded not guilty to a four-count terrorism conspiracy indictment and face trial in March.

Lemorin gave a statement to the FBI the day of his arrest making similar claims that he sought to get away from Batiste, a man who made him "do things he didn't want to."

Richard Getchell, an assistant U.S. attorney, said Lemorin was one of the select few allowed contact with a man Batiste believed was an al-Qaida operative sent to help the group formulate its plot but who was actually an FBI informant.

"His inner circle was allowed to meet with the informant, who they thought was from al-Qaida," Getchell said.

Lemorin also was the first of this key group to take the oath of allegiance to al-Qaida at a videotaped ceremony on March 16 at the group's headquarters in Miami's Liberty City neighborhood. Getchell said his decision to leave for Atlanta was more likely because he feared imminent arrest.

"We would say it's not a coincidence that Mr. Lemorin, after 16 years, sought to leave the area," Getchell said.

U.S. Magistrate Judge Barry Garber did not issue an immediate ruling on the bail request and scheduled a second hearing for Thursday. The other six defendants are being held without bail.

Lemorin is a legal permanent U.S. resident but could face deportation to Haiti even if he is not convicted of the terrorism charges, Getchell said. He lived in Haiti before coming to the U.S.

Storm of Killing in Neighbourhood Has Wide Implications for Nation

Michael Deibert

Inter Press Service News Agency

August 2, 2006

GRAND-RAVINE, Haiti, Aug 2 (IPS) - In this neighbourhood overlooking the placid bay of Haiti's capital, Port-au-Prince, a ghostly silence wraps itself around the burned tin shacks, concrete hovels gutted and scorched black by flames, and jagged rocks that form the paths of the hillside slum, spattered with blood.

"Go down there and you can see for yourself," says Brunet Pierre, a silver-haired resident who lifts his orange t-shirt to reveal a fresh bullet wound in his side. "There is nothing but death in this neighbourhood, no life at all."

He motions toward a dirt path surrounded on all sides with still-smouldering shacks, shell casings littering the ground, and scorched animals lying among the ruins.

Across the mountaintop slums that ring Port-au-Prince's southern quarter, collectively known as Martissant, hundreds of home lie burned and abandoned.

A steady stream of refugees head daily down the Avenue Bolosse, their belongings piled on their heads, fleeing the violence. Some 300 have taken refuge in a nearby Baptist mission, where women and young children sleep on the concrete floor of a steaming conference hall, sheltered from the summer rains.

"They were shooting a lot of people and everybody had to run," says Marie Julien, a 44-year-old who fled Grand-Ravine with her six children and now sits under the blazing sun in the mission's parking lot. "They burned our house. I don't know why they are doing this."

Some residents say that gangs operating from the neighbouring zones of Ti Bois and D'escartes have launched a campaign to purge the area of supporters of Haiti's former president, Jean-Bertrand Aristide, who was ousted amidst armed revolt and street protests in February 2004.

After a period of calm following the February election of President René Préval, a one-time Aristide ally who also served as Haiti's president from 1996 until 2001 and has since become estranged from the former priest, the violence that often wracks the impoverished Caribbean nation of eight million appears to have returned.

Neither Haiti's Police Nationale d'Haiti (PNH) police force, nor the 6,500 strong United Nations Stabilisation Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) peacekeeping force seem able or willing to stop it. At least 30 people have been reported killed in the past two weeks, though the true total could be higher.

In front of a shuttered 'borlette' (lottery bank) in Grand-Ravine, a group of fierce-looking young men, pistols bulging from underneath some of their shirts, sit swilling rum from a champagne glass.

"You can see what the gangs from Ti Bois have done," says the group's leader, who says his name is Wilkens and is dressed in a New York Knicks basketball jersey and a baseball cap pulled down over a scar that criss-crosses one eyebrow. "They have killed people, burned down their houses, some police are giving them weapons," he adds.

Many Grand-Ravine residents blame rogue elements within the PNH for involvement in the killings, specifically charging a former police official with financing and organising a gang known as Lamè Ti Machet (The Little Machete Army).

Residents charge that Carlo Lochard, who served as PNH director for the West Department, of which Port-au-Prince is a part, under the interim government (March 2004-May 2006), is involved in the recent violence. Lochard had been dismissed from the PNH for alleged human rights abuses under the first Préval administration, and reintegrated into the force under Aristide, where he served as director of the police commissariat of the adjoining neighbourhood of Carrefour, later transferred to the affluent Petionville suburb.

Lochard had been arrested for his alleged involvement in an August 2005 attack on a football match in Martissant which saw over a dozen people killed, but he was released from prison on the orders of Haitian judge Jean Perez Paul in March of this year. Attempts to locate Lochard for comment in his Carrefour-Feuilles neighbourhood proved unsuccessful.

"The situation started getting worse in Martissant in June," says Pierre Esperance, executive director of the Réseau National de Défense des Droits Humains (RNDDH) human rights group, whose organisation sent a letter to Haitian Prime Minister Jacques Edouard Alexis in late June denouncing the incipient violence and warning the authorities not stand by and watch "the transformation of these conflicts into war between the zones."

"Leaders of armed groups secretly (recommenced) their operations over the weekend of June 3-4, 2006," the letter read. "Given the precedent of previous conflicts between (the neighbourhoods)...We deplore that no concrete action has been implemented by the UN forces in collaboration with the PNH, up to this date, to apprehend the leaders of these armed groups."

However, the people of Ti Bois and Dés cartes have their own tales of woe.

"We have children and we are very afraid," says Ti Bois resident Destine Jocelyn, as she nervously peers out from a square, concrete home on an otherwise largely deserted path. "Those gangs from Grand-Ravine come to kill us."

"We are suffering. They burn houses, they kill people with guns and machetes," says a young man amidst a group loitering at a small, abandoned bandshell further up the path, marking the apex of a hill covered with gutted homes. He throws a blue tank-top over his head to shield himself from the blazing sun. His leg sports a recently healed bullet wound.

Residents who gather around produce crude colour photos of at least half a dozen bloody corpses, including that of a pregnant woman, whom they say the gangs from Grand-Ravine have killed in the

last year. Locals also tell of a secret grave in a coconut palm grove where the gangs dump their victims' bodies.

Recently, a gang leader named Dymesley "Ti Lou" Milien, who had been arrested in connection with the murder of Haiti's most prominent journalist, Jean Dominique, in April 2000, but who escaped from prison in February 2005, was said to have been leading a gang based out of Grand-Ravine. The Lycée Jean Dominique, a high school built in tribute to the journalist and straddling the border between Grand-Ravine and Ti Bois, is now abandoned and riddled with bullet holes, as if in mute testament that the violence that felled the reporter is still a part of daily life.

Numbering fewer than a dozen, the Sri Lankan UN soldiers, interspersed in groups of threes throughout Martissant, are unable to communicate with the population as they lack a common language. No Haitian police personnel were visible anywhere in the district.

"We cannot prevent that. We don't have an executive mandate," explains Edmond Mulet, Head of Mission for MINUSTAH. As of yet, there has been no request made by the Préval government for UN forces to support PNH personnel to stop the violence in Matrissant. "We are here to support the government and we always have to go in accompanying or supporting PNH actions."

The districts have a history of violent conflict between politico-criminal elements and the politicians who act as their patrons. In June 2001, a gang based out of Grand-Ravine and led by a local boss named Felix "Don Fefe" Bien-Aimé, killed more than a dozen people in the adjoining Fort Mercredi slum. Bien-Aimé was later appointed as director of the Port-au-Prince cemetery by Aristide and was subsequently seized by Haitian police from a car he was driving in September 2002, never to be seen again.

Some observers in Haiti view the violence in the district as a direct challenge to Préval's authority and the security team he has surrounded himself with.

"President Préval's honeymoon was a short one and there is no doubt that there are forces that want him to fail," says one member of Haiti's business elite who has been largely supportive of the president since his return to office. "Andresol is doing some cleaning up and there are some forces saying 'Over my dead body.'"

Haiti's police chief Mario Andresol, who has a reputation of integrity in an institution not otherwise known for the trait, had served as the head of the country's judicial police during Préval's first tenure, charged with, among other things, investigating high-profile crimes such as the Dominique murder, and that of Jean Lamy, a former army officer thought likely to one day head the PNH.

During his years in the force, Andresol survived at least two assassination attempts, and was jailed for nearly a month without trial after Aristide's return to office in 2001. Upon his release, Andresol went into exile in Florida, and only returned to head the police last year.

Préval's closest advisor during his electoral campaign, former police official Robert Manuel, served as Secretary State for Public Security in Préval's first government, and was forced to flee the country in 1999 under direct threat from thugs representing Aristide's Fanmi Lavalas Party. The man who now

holds Manuel's old job, Luc-Eucher Joseph, had previously served as Inspector General of the PNH, before fleeing Haiti under pressure from Aristide-linked groups in 2000.

"We think he (Andresol) is an excellent professional," says MINUSTAH chief Mulet. "He knows what he wants, he's a decent person (and) he's very committed to fight against corruption within the police force at large and in Haiti overall."

In the struggle for power, though, the population of Matrissant continues to be caught in the middle -- defenceless victims of a battle they did not want and cannot stop.

"We can't sleep, we are very hungry because we have nothing to eat," says Avile Pierre, an elderly woman, as she sits among the exhausted refugees at the Baptist mission. "Our homes are gone, and we don't have any money to go anywhere else."

New Jersey & Aristide, Perfect Together
Mary Anastasia O'Grady
Wall Street Journal
August 4, 2006

There has never been a shortage of "off-the-record" allegations that Haiti's Jean Bertrand Aristide stole liberally from the public purse. But a case being heard in federal court in Newark, N.J. might actually prove it.

It is there that Michael Jewett has alleged that in 2003 his then-employer, politically influential New Jersey-based telecom giant IDT, entered into a shady deal with then-Haitian President Aristide in violation of U.S. law.

In court documents Mr. Jewett claims he was wrongfully fired because he objected to the agreement. The deal, as he describes it in his complaint, was also highly unethical because it facilitated the theft of Haiti's telecom revenues -- one of the few sources of hard currency for the starving nation.

Mr. Jewett's claim has enough credence that the U.S. Department of Justice has been investigating it, according to his lawyer in court documents. But now federal magistrate judge Mark Falk has issued a blanket protective order prohibiting Mr. Jewett from talking to Justice about whatever IDT deems confidential in the discovery phase of the case. It leaves one wondering what IDT, which did not return phone calls for comment, doesn't want Justice to find out.

This case has implications that go far beyond the rights of the plaintiff. Based on what has already been revealed in the case, it seems quite possible that if he is allowed to tell his story, Mr. Jewett could help Justice get to the truth about Mr. Aristide's financial misdeeds, allegedly aided and abetted by IDT and other U.S. corporations during the decade that he controlled the country.

In the past two weeks at least 30 people have died in gang violence in Port-au-Prince and 300 others were forced to flee their homes. The Economist Intelligence Unit reported on Monday that "U.N. representatives fear that the recent attacks in the capital's slums may be designed to exert pressure on [President René] Préval to allow Mr. Aristide, now in exile in South Africa, to return to Haiti." U.N. peacekeepers may not be the most effective fighting force but they tend to be in the know about who is behind trouble. Their observations support the claim that until Mr. Aristide is convicted and put in jail for his many transgressions -- alongside Panama's Manuel Noriega -- Haiti cannot begin to stabilize.

The interim Haitian government of Gerard Latortue (March 2004-May 2006) compiled a mountain of evidence against Mr. Aristide, alleging the theft of revenues from the telecom monopoly Haiti Teleco. In a civil lawsuit filed in a federal court in Florida in November, Haiti alleged that Mr. Aristide had given foreign carriers preferential settlement rates in return for their agreement to place payments in offshore bank accounts belonging to him. This is precisely what Mr. Jewett's claim against IDT alleges.

Unfortunately, Haiti has withdrawn its case in Florida, citing troubles with legal fees. The case may be refiled, but until then, the keys to unlocking the wider truth of the Aristide telecom business lie with the Jewett case and the Justice Department.

In the early stages of the case, IDT thought it could avoid scrutiny by claiming that its Haiti Teleco deal was a trade secret. In May 2004 it submitted a sworn affidavit saying just that. Judge Falk concurred and permitted the sealing of the pricing agreement in the complaint. But Mr. Jewett's attorney, William Perniciaro, later showed the affidavit to be false by presenting to the court Federal Communication Commission regulations that state that the FCC sets a single price for all U.S. carriers doing business with a given foreign monopoly. Mr. Perniciaro also showed that, according to FCC rules, agreements between U.S. carriers and foreign monopoly carriers must be publicly disclosed. Whereupon, IDT agreed to have the price unsealed. What was revealed was a deal that gave IDT access to the Haiti Teleco network at nine cents a minute, while the FCC's set price was 23 cents a minute. In other words, IDT had broken the law.

That's bad enough. Now, months later, in barring Mr. Jewett from discussions with Justice, Judge Falk has cited a new IDT affidavit that again claims the Haiti Teleco deal was a trade secret.

In his court filings, Mr. Jewett claims that the quid pro quo for the cut-rate price was an IDT agreement to deposit payments in an offshore account called "Mount Salem," for the benefit of Mr. Aristide. This is otherwise known as bribery. The Haitian complaint in Florida also alleged that there was a similarly named offshore account for the benefit of Mr. Aristide.

The federal court in Newark seems to be making discovery of this information also difficult. Mr. Perniciaro, Mr. Jewett's attorney, was given permission to submit 20 questions to each of the 12 defendants. Since the law stipulates that to prove a whistleblower case, you have to prove the connection between the firing and what the employee alleges went on, Mr. Perniciaro submitted questions related to the Teleco Haiti deal.

Federal Judge John Lifland ruled that the questions went against his instructions to keep the inquiry narrow and issued an order for Mr. Perniciaro to show why he should not be held in contempt. When the attorney argued the importance of motive in proving his case, Judge Lifland admonished him: "You are on thin ice by going into that, Mr. Perniciaro. It has very little to do with the reason we are here today." Mr. Perniciaro was held in contempt.

Under Judge Falk's gag order, Justice will have a hard time learning more from Mr. Jewett. If the plaintiff speaks to federal investigators he will have to keep clear in his mind what he has learned in discovery and what he knew already. If he makes a mistake, he could be sanctioned in some manner by the court.

Herb Denton, president of Providence Capital, a New York investment firm, has this to say about Mr. Jewett's allegation: "If it is true then one has to ask questions about the dozens of other notoriously corrupt countries throughout the Caribbean, Latin America, and Russia and its former republics where IDT does business."

That suggests one possibility for why IDT doesn't want Justice to know what, under FCC regulations, should be a matter of public record. It doesn't explain, though, why a federal court would want to assist in the effort.

US team reveals weaknesses at the Dominican-Haiti border

The Dominican Today

August 7, 2006

Santo Domingo.– US experts who studied the situation at the Dominican-Haiti border reported a series of weaknesses that lead to all kinds of illicit activities, placing in doubt the work of the military in that frontier.

The study revealed the lack of and in many case bad shape of the Dominican Army's facilities, the lack of training, logistics, weapons, vehicles, garments, as well as low wages and bad nutrition.

The report, which has not been presented officially, recommends that there should be helicopters deployed in the region and the creation of a Border Guard.

Paul Farmer on Haiti and Global Health Issues

Article previously published in Haitian Connecticut Voice

Monday 7 August 2006

By Jean André Constant

Submitted to AlterPresse on August 2, 2006

On June 16th, 2006 from 5 to 7 PM, the scholar and humanist Paul Farmer well-known for his commitment to Haiti and his prolific publications regarding health issues and US foreign policies (among others), was the guest of Yale University for the 11th International Festival Arts and Ideas in New Haven. Mr. Farmer's presentation at Woolsey Hall was formatted as an academic dialogue and took place with one of Yale University's Professors. Therefore, they reminded their vast audience of the old Greco-Latin tradition of Socrates' teaching as reported by Plato.

Paul Farmers has been involved in health-related and community-based projects in Haiti since the early eighties. Such experiences inspired him to found the NGO "Zanmi Lasante" (Partners in Health) in 1987, primarily based in Plateau Central and providing a wide range of health-related services and programs such as school, clinics mainly centered on TB and HIV, trainings for health outreach workers, a mobile unit that screens residents of area villages for preventable diseases and more. Partners in Health has now been extended to six other countries: Boston (US), Peru, Guatemala, Mexico, Russia and Rwanda. Those worldwide initiatives have strongly enriched Farmer's vision of health issues and tailored his academic works centered on inequality and health disparities. With his familiar sense of humor, Paul Farmer responded to delicate questions regarding Katrina's catastrophe in the US, global health issues and his vision of NGOs in developing countries. His main points were:

Considering the wealth gap between developed and developing countries, any search for drugs or cure efforts to address international health challenges and concerns related to pandemics such as HIV/AIDS, should be conducted along with strategies to reduce poverty and foster equitable accessibility to health care.

NGO's work in developing countries often offers room for foreign and privileged benefactors to reflect some arrogance in their rapport with the recipient countries' citizens. Farmer looks at the interactions between privileged and underprivileged people as a two-way learning process that requires humility and respect. He urged international NGO staff to listen to and learn from the communities they serve, and to work with them as opposed to working for them.

NGOs should dialogue and work along with local partners in coordination with the public sector in the countries they serve as to improve their outcomes.

Paul Farmers' presentation appealed to policy makers, scholars, politicians and communities facing many health and power-related challenges. As he spoke, the conflict between giant global drugs corporations' interests and the needs of worldwide countless suffering people, dimmed as one of the biggest obstacles to worldwide health equity. As Farmer stated, the solution does not rely on complaining but in mobilizing resources and communities as to face the challenges.

Hartford, Connecticut

Fortify police forces to restore order, Annan tells Haiti
Fri, 04 Aug 2006
CBC News

Haiti has made "great strides" in recent months but must still bring a recent upsurge in kidnappings and violence under control, UN Secretary General Kofi Annan says.

"We have achieved a lot but much, much more needs to be done," Annan said Thursday in a speech at the National Palace during his first official trip to Haiti.

Annan recommended that the UN Security Council extend the deployment of its current Brazilian-led peacekeeping force for another 12 months, instead of the standard six months.

Peacekeepers were sent to Haiti to restore order following the 2004 revolt that toppled then-president Jean-Bertrand Aristide.

In recent months, hundreds of people have fled their homes to escape gang fighting in the capital, Port-au-Prince. Dozens of foreigners and Haitians have also been kidnapped.

President Rene Preval, who was elected in February, has struggled to maintain order with the help of an 8,800-strong force of UN troops and international police.

But Annan said local police forces have been "inadequately trained" and "infiltrated by criminal elements." He said a strengthened police force would help counter the widespread lawlessness in the country.

"These criminals should be ashamed to call themselves Haitians when the nation is at a critical stage of rebuilding itself," Annan said.

Annan will also visit the Dominican Republic during his two-day visit, where he will meet with President Leonel Fernandez on Friday.

With files from the Associated Press

U.N. Leader Makes First Trip to Haiti

By MYRNA DOMIT

The Associated Press

The Washington Post

August 3, 2006

POR-T-AU-PRINCE, Haiti -- U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan, making his first trip to Haiti, called Thursday for strengthening the national police force to stem an upsurge in kidnapping and lawlessness.

Annan, who was embraced by President Rene Preval at the airport, said the challenges facing the troubled Caribbean country remained vast, but "great strides" had been made in recent months.

"We have achieved a lot but much, much more needs to be done," Annan said in a speech at the National Palace.

Annan said the U.N Security Council should extend the current security operation, led by a U.N.-led Brazilian peacekeeping force, for another 12 months instead of the standard six months.

"I am challenging the member states to accept this longer-term proposition," he said.

Haiti experienced relative calm after Preval's February election victory but since May, dozens of foreigners and Haitians have been kidnapped and gang fighting has forced hundreds of people to flee their homes in the capital, Port-au-Prince.

"These criminals should be ashamed to call themselves Haitians when the nation is at a critical stage of rebuilding itself," Annan said.

Annan toured a Haitian police academy and met with two Brazilian peacekeepers who were wounded by gang gunfire in July.

An 8,800-strong force of U.N. troops and international police provides the only real security in a country plagued with well-armed gangs and a local police force that Annan has said is "inadequately trained" and "infiltrated by criminal elements."

The peacekeepers were dispatched to Haiti to help restore order following the 2004 revolt that toppled President Jean-Bertrand Aristide, who is in exile in South Africa.

Annan has called for elite police tactical teams and advisers to bolster the U.N. force to help counter a renewed surge in kidnappings and gang violence.

Annan is in Haiti for a two-day official visit that will also take him to the neighboring Dominican Republic, where he will hold talks with that countrys President Leonel Fernandez on Friday.

China deploys fourth peacekeeping police contingent to Haiti
People's Daily Online
August 4, 2006

A 30-member contingent of Chinese riot police on Thursday embarked on a plane for Haiti as part of a United Nations peacekeeping mission.

The contingent, part of a 125-strong riot police team, is China's fourth deployment to Haiti and is expected to be stationed in the Caribbean country for eight months.

The contingent included combat forces, logistics and medical personnel, and officials in charge of communications, said a source with the Ministry of Public Security.

Members of the team were selected from border police units in the southeastern province of Fujian, and had an average age of 28.

They will replace the third team of peacekeepers who left Beijing in December.

The police were trained on the language, shooting, driving, and combat skills, the police authority said, adding they had been appraised by UN officials.

Source: Xinhua

Annan Defends Military Presence in Haiti
Prensa Latina
August 6, 2006

Port-Au-Prince, During his first visit to Haiti this week, UN Secretary General Kofi Annan asked for the multinational stabilization mission (MINUSTAH) to remain for another year in the Caribbean island.

MINUSTAH, composed of 9,000 soldiers and policemen from 40 countries, should leave Haiti on August 15 amid flaks by parliamentarians who term it a spectator.

Congress members emphasized on the need to redefine the role of the UN forces, which do not support the national police in its efforts to reestablish peace.

Others considered the presence of the UN chief in Port-Au-Prince as the opportunity to denounce MINUSTAH's passivity, present demands and recommendations on that international contingent.

During his stay, Annan met with Haitian President Rene Preval, Prime Minister Jacques Edouard and Foreign Minister Jean Renald Clerisme.

Missionaries face violence in Caribbean

Foreigners are kidnapped, shot at; many stay home

BY STEVENSON JACOBS

The Associated Press

The Miami Herald

August 5, 2006

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti -- An American minister and his companion kidnapped on their way to church. Franciscan friars abducted on a busy street. A Canadian pastor seized at gunpoint from his rural orphanage.

Foreign missionaries have become prime targets in Haiti, where an upsurge in violence has made their jobs more difficult and dangerous at a time when they are needed most.

Religious workers, mostly Protestant and Roman Catholic, say they are trying to lower their profile in the often-lawless country, cloistering themselves in fortified compounds protected by razor-wire walls and armed guards and going out as little as possible.

Others have decided to stay in their home countries. Several groups said the violence has scared off volunteers who once streamed into Haiti on short-term mission trips to build homes, install plumbing and pass out meals in some of the poorest, most desolate areas.

"It's really shut down the visitors," said Tom Osbeck, of Fort Wayne, Ind., whose Protestant-run Jesus in Haiti Ministry operates a school in a rural town north of the capital. "People are leery of coming. They read about the kidnappings in the news."

There is no official census of foreign religious workers in Haiti, but there are thought to be as many as 1,000 in the country of 8 million that is the poorest in the Western Hemisphere.

Besides seeking converts, missionaries and church groups run a vital network of hospitals, orphanages, schools and food-distribution sites, bolstering Haiti's cash-strapped government.

For many Haitians, missionaries fill an urgent need that the weak government simply can't, especially in education.

Missionaries run or support 2,000 primary schools attended by 600,000 students -- one-third of Haiti's school-aged population, said Adriano Gonzalez, the UNICEF representative in Haiti.

"Because of missionaries, half a million children can go to school," Gonzalez said. "They are irreplaceable."

But the kidnappings have kept workers away, depriving missions of sorely needed staffers, along with the donations they typically bring, said Matthew Marek, the Haiti-based director of Norwich Mission House, part of the Connecticut-based Haitian Ministries.

"We've been hit pretty hard financially," said Marek, whose Catholic group welcomed about 200 volunteers per year during calmer times.

Missionaries say they think they're targeted only because they are more vulnerable than U.N. and foreign embassy personnel, who often travel in armored convoys.

Most of the kidnappings are blamed on well-armed street gangs, which have flourished in the aftermath of the February 2004 revolt that toppled former President Jean-Bertrand Aristide. Some gangs are loyal to Aristide and want his return from exile in South Africa.

An 8,800-strong U.N. peacekeeping force has stepped up offensives against the gangs but hasn't penetrated most of the dense slums where they operate.

Annan makes first trip to island

AP

The Jamaica Gleaner

Friday, August 4, 2006

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti

U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan, making his first trip to Haiti, was embraced by President Rene Preval upon his arrival at the airport Thursday and quickly went into private meetings with Haitian and U.N. officials, who are trying to bring peace and stability to the impoverished Caribbean nation.

Annan was scheduled to later tour a Haitian police academy and meet with a wounded Brazilian peacekeeper during his one-day trip. An 8,800-strong force of U.N. troops and international police provides the only real security in a country plagued with well-armed gangs and a local police force that Annan has said is "inadequately trained" and "infiltrated by criminal elements".

The peacekeepers were dispatched to Haiti to help restore order amid the chaos that followed the 2004 revolt that toppled President Jean-Bertrand Aristide.

In Haiti, Annan seeks solutions

BY MYRNA DOMIT

Associated Press

Miami Herald

August 4, 2006

POR-T-AU-PRINCE - U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan called for strengthening Haiti's national police force with better-qualified personnel, advisers and equipment to stem an upsurge in kidnapping and lawlessness.

Annan, making his first trip to Haiti, said Thursday the challenges facing the troubled Caribbean country remained vast and that Haitians were "impatient" for change, but that "great strides" had been made in recent months.

"We have achieved a lot but much, much more needs to be done," Annan said in a speech at the National Palace. ``These criminals should be ashamed to call themselves Haitians when the nation is at a critical stage of rebuilding itself."

Haiti experienced relative calm after President René Préval's February election victory but since May, dozens of foreigners and Haitians have been kidnapped and gang fighting has forced hundreds of people to flee their homes in Port-au-Prince.

Annan said the U.N Security Council should extend the current security operation, led by a U.N.-led Brazilian peacekeeping force, for another 12 months instead of the standard six months.

"I am challenging the member states to accept this longer-term proposition," he said.

Annan, who praised Préval's leadership, toured a Haitian police academy and met with two Brazilian peacekeepers who were wounded by gang gunfire in July.

An 8,800-strong force of U.N. troops and international police provides the only real security in a country plagued with well-armed gangs and a local police that Annan has said is "inadequately trained" and ``infiltrated by criminal elements."

U.N. steps in as kidnappings soar in Haiti

By NANCY SAN MARTIN

Fort Worth Star-Telegram

AP

August 4, 2006

POR-AU-PRINCE, Haiti -- One victim was grabbed in the afternoon on her way home from work. Another was stopped at gunpoint in evening traffic and yanked out of the car. A third victim, this one a child, was snatched at midnight from inside a house as family members remained helpless in saving the child from heavily armed thugs.

Les kidnappings, as the crime is referred to here, is at an all-time high, averaging at least one a day after a short period of relative calm following the election of President Rene Preval in February. At least 47 citizens and foreigners were kidnapped last month -- the highest number so far this year.

"I thought they were going to kill me," said a woman released by kidnappers last week after three days of captivity. "I was so scared. All I kept thinking was that I wanted to live. I didn't want to die."

Almost everyone in this overpopulated city has heard about someone who was present one moment and gone the next. No one is immune from capture, no time of day is safe.

"Nobody wants the situation to stay like this," said the kidnap victim, who was beaten, burned and threatened with guns. "My hope is that things will get better."

Preval's government has taken some steps to deal with the crime issue: A former police official was recently appointed to serve as the national security undersecretary, the prime minister has promised a "carrot and stick" approach to reduce violence and the police chief has spoken out against a judicial system accused of accepting bribes in exchange for releasing suspected criminals without charges. But those efforts have yet to yield any results.

Although Haiti has a long history of political unrest and violence from warring gangs, kidnappings have been unusual. More than 100 cases have been reported so far this year -- nearly half of those in the month of July.

The problem is so prevalent, the U.N. security force last year formed an anti-kidnapping unit, which includes several Haitian-American police officers from South Florida who provide technical assistance to the understaffed Haitian National Police. The police component of the international security force, known as UNPOL, recently tried to raise public awareness by releasing tips on kidnapping preparedness. Among the advice: Don't discuss private affairs in public, install an alarm system and don't talk on the cellphone while driving.

Those calling for an end to the violence place kidnappings at the top of the long list of Haitian problems, but authorities are at a loss on how to combat it quickly -- unless the 8,800-strong U.N. peacekeeping force is allowed to take on a stronger role in assisting the Haitian police force.

"Kidnappings are the biggest threat right now," said Leslie Dallemand, coordinator of the anti-kidnapping unit for UNPOL. "So many people are making financial gains, that it's become widespread. Every day, when you step out in the street, you're a potential victim."

"Those kidnappers are very well-organized and armed, probably more armed than [Haitian] police officers," said Dallemand, a retired Miami police officer and one of about 15 Haitian Americans that form part of the international peacekeeping mission.

The Haitian National Police do not have the manpower, equipment or training to launch an effective offensive, and the U.N. officers can only provide technical assistance. They are not allowed to make arrests or enforce the law, although there is widespread consensus that the Haitian and international security forces must be allowed to deal with the problem immediately.

"I can't tell [Haitian] police officers what to do," said Emmanuel Nelson, another retired Haitian-American officer from Miami-Dade County. "I can only show them, if they are willing to learn."

UNPOL has tried to address the kidnapping issue within the limits of their power.

They provide assistance with investigations, document cases and a year ago set up a hot line for citizens seeking help.

But victims' families are often too afraid to seek help because there is little faith in Haiti's severely broken justice system, even when arrests are made. Few kidnappers remain behind bars for long.

Nelson, a 25-year veteran who served with Miami-Dade police and retired as a lieutenant for Surfside, Fla., said recruiting more Haitian Americans for UNPOL could help bridge a cultural gap that is hindering efforts to properly train Haiti's understaffed police force.

"There is no country that can operate in a climate of insecurity," Nelson said.

Kofi Annan concludes short visit to Haiti
Friday, August 4, 2006
by Vario Sérant
Caribbean Net News

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti: The United Nations General Secretary concluded a short visit to Haiti Thursday evening.

The Haitian President agreed by congratulating the United Nations for their efforts on stabilization in Haiti. Préval referred in particular to the recent elections having allowed the return to constitutional order.

The UN General secretary placed his recent recommendation in favour of an extension of the mandate of the Mission of Stabilization of the United Nations in Haiti (MINUSTAH) for a one year period, instead of six months, within the framework of the initiatives aimed at reinforcing the capacity of the regular security forces to neutralize criminal elements in Haiti.

Préval, whose administration has been in place for two months, also promised to do his best to solve the serious problems which afflict the insecurity of Haitian population.

Confrontations between rival gangs during the last several days resulted in about thirty fatalities in Port-au-Prince, whereas abductions for ransom are increasing.

MINUSTAH has recently been derided by public opinion because of its incapacity to neutralize the armed gangs which plunge the Haitian population into mourning.

"For fifty years, UNO has never solved any problem and has failed everywhere in the world. These men (blue helmets) must go away," alleged a deputy belonging to the Hope Platform, the presidential party, on Wednesday.

In a more measured tone, the president of the Senate, Joseph Lambert, on Wednesday wished that the UN General Secretary had visited some districts of the Haitian capital transformed into "no man's land" to get a right idea of the tragedy of the population and the work of the blue helmets.

Annan assured the Haitian authorities of the full support of the UN within the framework of the initiatives aimed at rebuilding the country.

"We are here to support the projects of the governments of Haiti, not to apply our program," emphasized the secretary-general.

"Together, we achieved creditable goals. But much remains to be done," said Annan, referring here to the need for creating the conditions for the development of Haiti and the reinforcement of its institutions.

The UN general secretary was due to arrive in Port-au-Prince on Wednesday, but his trip was delayed following technical problems with the plane which was to transport him to Haiti.

Imagine a relaxing Caribbean getaway - in Haiti
JENNIFER KAY
Associated Press
The Bradenton Herald
August 5, 2006

MIAMI - Imagine gazing at the Caribbean's turquoise waters from a hammock strung between two palm trees. The hotel chefs who offered either fresh lobster or shrimp for dinner will soon bring the dishes to the beach. Cocktails are quickly refreshed.

An ideal, relaxing vacation.

In Haiti.

That's the image a South Florida company wants travelers to have in mind when booking their next Caribbean getaway.

"Visit Haiti. Don't listen to what you see on the news," says Wilfrid Belfort of MWM & Associates in North Miami Beach. "Visit Haiti, because you are the only one who can save Haiti right now."

Recent news from Haiti does not promise relaxation: Gang violence and kidnappings have surged in the capital of the Western hemisphere's poorest country.

Belfort is asking travelers to look beyond the problems in Port-au-Prince and give the rest of the country a chance. His Haitian-American-owned company sees increasing tourism as Haiti's best chance to improve its crippled economy and finally achieve political stability - a plan Haiti's new president also proposed at a Florida tourism conference in June.

Just 112,000 tourists visited Haiti last year while 4 million came to its Hispaniola neighbor, the Dominican Republic, President Rene Preval said at the conference hosted by MWM.

The company offers all-inclusive, four-day getaway packages to Cap-Haitien on Haiti's north coast, Cotes des Arcadins on the central coast and Jacmel and Ile-a-Vache in the south. One upcoming package goes for \$499 per person including airfare.

Ads promoting a "Secret Paradise" in Haitian-American media and on Miami billboards aren't aimed at adventure tourists or travelers participating in community service. MWM arranges tours for traditional beachgoers expecting room service, lounge chairs and drinks with umbrellas; the trips also include guided sightseeing and nighttime dancing.

Theonne Armand's hotel room balcony overlooked the beach in Jacmel and tour guides introduced her to local artists creating masks for upcoming carnival celebrations when she joined an MWM tour in January. She was born in Saint-Marc, Haiti, but had never traveled to the southern coast.

"Everything worked out good, price-wise and the place and the accommodations," said Armand, a 50-year-old nurse who now lives in Loxahatchee. "I felt it was very, very safe. Everything you hear is not happening in Jacmel. It's quiet."

Belfort hopes increasing tourism will attract internationally known investors such as Royal Caribbean Cruises, which brings cruise ship tourists on day trips to its private Labadie Beach in northern Haiti.

"If we had five Labadies, that would make change in Haiti," Belfort said.

But an unstable country dotted with exclusive resorts does not appeal to Kevin Danaher of San Francisco-based Global Exchange, which stopped offering its immersion tours to Haiti after former President Jean-Bertrand Aristide's ouster in 2004.

"We offer 'Reality Tours,' but reality includes everything short of people getting killed," Danaher said. "We're looking forward to going back when it's safe. We don't believe in enclave tourism, because it doesn't show people what the country is really like."

Most tourists likely heed a U.S. State Department warning discouraging travel to the Caribbean nation. More than 50 Americans, including children, have been kidnapped in Haiti in the past year, according to the state department.

Recent posts in an online forum hosted by travel guide publisher Lonely Planet advise against visiting Haiti, listing food poisoning among the risks. "Just don't go!" one says.

The warnings unfairly paint Haiti as the only victim of crime and poverty in the Caribbean, said Pierre Chauvet, president of Agence Citadelle, a Port-au-Prince travel agency his father opened in 1946.

"It's like saying problems in Miami mean one shouldn't go to Florida. In Jamaica, not everybody goes to downtown Kingston - everybody goes to Montego Bay," Chauvet said by phone from Port-au-Prince.

Despite a recent boost from Japanese and Taiwanese tour groups booking cultural excursions in Haiti, Agence Citadelle has focused on selling airline tickets for travel out of the country, he said.

"We've had to push the ticketing side of the business because of the downfall of Haiti's tourism," Chauvet said. "There are no tourists to Haiti, period, because of the political turmoils we have experienced for the past 20 years."

Tourists who like to visit the Caribbean because of its proximity and safe reputation cannot get travel insurance for trips to Haiti because of the ongoing unrest in Port-au-Prince, where the main airport is located, said Priscilla Myers, a McLean, Va., travel agent and member of the American Society of Travel Agents.

"Flying through Port-au-Prince is still risky. It's like going to the jail to get to Miami Beach, and who wants to go through jail to get to Miami Beach? That's the scenario they have there. They don't want to end up in an airport and have a mob attack them," Myers said.

Few airlines schedule flights into Port-au-Prince, and transportation within Haiti is also a challenge; Preval has said the country needs new roads to support tourism. MWM flies its tour groups from the capital to the coastal resorts.

Haiti had 3,000 hotel rooms in the early 1980s, but only about a third remain open after the steep drop in tourism, Chauvet said.

"They don't have an international brand name. The hotels are owned by the Haitians, not the French, not the Holiday Inn. If right now we had a Marriott hotel in Haiti, you would see the publicity change," Belfort said

Haiti gang leaders seek disarmament 'without bias'

04 Aug 2006

Reuters

By Joseph Guyler Delva

POR-AU-PRINCE, Haiti, Aug 4 (Reuters) - A gang leader in Haiti's largest slum said on Friday that he and others would be willing to lay down their arms as part of a broader disarmament process in the impoverished and violent Caribbean nation.

The comments from Ti Blanc -- who heads a gang in Cite Soleil and said he was speaking for other gang leaders there -- came a day after newly installed President Rene Preval held out an olive branch to the disparate groups linked to continuing political bloodshed and kidnappings in Haiti.

"Several armed groups want to hand over their weapons, but they need guarantees," said Preval. "We have opened a dialogue with them to see how they can give up their weapons in a peaceful manner."

Cite Soleil, a teeming warren of shantytowns on the outskirts of Port-au-Prince, is known as a hotbed of support for ousted former President Jean-Bertrand Aristide, who fled into exile in 2004 facing an armed revolt.

"We heard the president's call and we want to disarm, but the disarmament should be done without bias," Ti Blanc told Reuters.

He was referring to concern among Cite Soleil's gangs that rival armed groups, some allegedly linked to the Haitian police and to a U.S.-backed interim government installed after Aristide's ouster, would be allowed to keep their weapons.

Cite Soleil's gangs have made other tentative offers to disarm but none of them have borne fruit so far.

After Preval won an election in February, the level of violence in Haiti declined markedly. But it spiked again in July, prompting U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan, who visited Port-au-Prince on Thursday, to advise the Security Council against cutting back a U.N. peacekeeping force in Haiti.

UN ready to help Haiti on the long road of nation-building, says Annan
August 4, 2006
UN News Centre

4 August 2006 – Although Haiti has made significant electoral and political progress in recent months, the Caribbean country still faces enormous challenges as it attempts to climb out of impoverishment and violence and the United Nations stands willing to play a key role in helping out, Secretary-General Kofi Annan said last night during an official visit.

In a joint press conference in Port-au-Prince, the Haitian capital, with President René Préval, Mr. Annan said he has asked the Security Council to extend the mandate of the UN Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) by 12 months, instead of the usual six, as a signal of his belief that many difficulties lie ahead for the country.

“We have achieved a lot, but much more remains to be done... Nation-building is a long-term proposition. It does take time, it is hard, it is difficult and it requires everyone to play his or her part,” he said.

The Secretary-General identified security as a crucial issue for Haiti, where kidnappings are relatively common and crime rates are high, and he called for the judiciary and penal system to be strengthened and the police to be professionalized.

To further that aim, Mr. Annan urged UN Member States to back his plan for a year-long extension of MINUSTAH’s mandate and to appoint additional trainers to assist the national police force.

But he congratulated the country for staging free and fair elections earlier this year and establishing a broad-based government. Haiti’s 18-member cabinet includes representatives from seven different political parties.

Mr. Annan praised the work of MINUSTAH during a meeting with mission staff, and he also held talks with officials of the UN police in Haiti and the national police.

After his visit to Haiti, Mr. Annan travelled to Santo Domingo, capital of the Dominican Republic, where he and President Leonel Fernández took part in a forum on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

The Secretary-General is scheduled to give a speech to a gathering organized by the Global Foundation on Democracy and Development and then attend a state dinner with Mr. Fernández.

Haiti: Resurgent Majority Takes Power
by Roger Annis
Thursday Aug 3rd, 2006

Haiti's occupiers and elites badly needed the legitimacy of a "democratic" election. Unfortunately for them, the poor majority took them at their word....

By Roger Annis
Briarpatch Magazine
August 2006

Sometimes even the best-laid plans of the powerful go astray. Such was the case in Haiti in February of this year when Haitians turned out in overwhelming numbers to elect René Préval as president. Préval, who first served as president from 1996 to 2001, is an ally of the deposed President Jean Bertrand Aristide, and thus his election was a powerful rebuke to the foreign powers, including Canada, that conspired to overthrow Aristide's government in February 2004.

The US, France, and Canada drove Aristide from office because his government sought to protect Haiti's poor majority from the worst ravages of the world economic order. Aristide's foreign policy measures, including the forging of diplomatic and economic ties with Cuba, were deemed equally unacceptable. This placed Aristide and his popular, mass-based movement, Lavalas, at odds with the economic powers in the Caribbean region, for whom he and his government served as a dangerous example.

With Aristide shipped out of the country and Haiti's foreign-appointed "interim government" brutally suppressing dissent, and in the face of a growing international outcry over systematic human rights violations by the coup regime and occupying force, the local and foreign elites needed the legitimacy of an election to justify the coup. But the Haitian masses refused to be intimidated on election day, and soundly rejected the elite's chosen candidates.

The plan, and its unraveling

In spite of significant barriers to participation, Haiti's poor majority mobilized in massive numbers on election day. Leading up to the election, a complex electronic voter registration system had been put in place that effectively disenfranchised many. Less than one-tenth the number of polling booths were made available compared to the last election six years ago. Many poorer, heavily populated districts in the capital, Port au Prince, had few or no polling booths, while many rural voters had to travel long distances in order to cast a ballot. Lineups were long on voting day and required lengthy waits. And on the day of the vote, many polling stations opened late or required protest action by voters in lineups before doors were opened at all.

The election was organized and administered by a "Provisional Electoral Council," an extra-constitutional (and therefore illegal) authority that was established by the post-coup regime. Funding and many staff were provided by the foreign occupation powers. Canada was a key contributor. Officials of Elections Canada, including its director, Jean-Pierre Kingsley, were central figures in the planning and administration of the election.

“Préval called on his supporters to stay in the streets and block the apparent attempt by the election authorities to steal the vote.”

Initially it seemed as if Haiti’s election was to be stolen and handed to the elite’s favoured candidate. Haiti’s constitution requires that a presidential candidate receive fifty-percent-plus-one of the vote, or a run-off vote is required. As the “official” count for Préval dropped further and further below fifty percent in the days following February 7, widespread protests broke out in Port au Prince. Préval called on his supporters to stay in the streets and block the apparent attempt by the election authorities to steal the vote.

Then, on February 14, news images hit television screens in Haiti and around the world of piles of ballots marked for Préval burning or otherwise left scattered in a Port au Prince garbage dump. This clear evidence of vote tampering did much to undermine the legitimacy of the Provisional Electoral Council and United Nations agencies, who were responsible for the security of the ballots and their proper counting. Anger in the streets exploded, and rallies of tens of thousands of people paralyzed the capital. The elites were finally forced to bow to the reality that Préval had won an overwhelming first-round victory. His closest rival received a scant twelve percent of the vote.

A reassertion of Haitian sovereignty

The new Préval government has set a priority on ending the foreign occupation. Newly appointed Prime Minister Jacques Edouard Alexis declared in early June that his government will work to create the conditions for Haiti to recover its sovereignty. “No true Haitian can accept the presence of foreign troops on the national territory,” he told the newly elected Haitian Senate.

Alexis acknowledged, however, that a foreign presence was necessary in the short run because the country does not have the necessary police and military power to defend the new government and to assure safety in daily life for ordinary citizens.

Préval has repeatedly spoken of the need for fundamental social reform for Haiti’s poor majority. In a statement issued in late March entitled “Less poverty, more hope,” he declared, “Though ravaged, Haiti is not the wretched land as so often described in the media. It is a land of hope for more than eight million people. I cannot achieve miracles, nor have I been promising any. But I feel I have the responsibility to the Haitian people to open doorways on a brighter future: less poverty, less inequality, more wealth, more hope.

“This is why I ran again for president.”

The new government has put forward an economic program that will focus on promoting tourism and agriculture. The government will also encourage foreign investment in light manufacturing, and seek foreign funding to repair Haiti’s devastated natural environment and its social infrastructure. So far, Préval has received important commitments of aid from Venezuela and Cuba, and Haiti has been welcomed into the Petrocaribe program initiated by Venezuela, which offers cheap oil to the poor

countries of the Caribbean. Cuba has promised to extend and expand its medical mission in Haiti and its free medical training of young Haitians.

Many problems persist, however. Six months after the presidential elections, there are still several hundred political prisoners languishing in Haiti's jails. They include Yvon Neptune, who was Prime Minister in Aristide's government, and Haiti's most beloved folk singer, So-Anne Auguuste. The total prison population numbers some 4,000, most of whom have never been charged with a crime. Haiti's Ministry of Justice is still largely staffed by officials appointed after the coup or who are otherwise beholden to anti-popular forces.

While some prisoners have begun to be released, it's not fast enough for most Haitians. Many believe the new government could and should be moving more decisively to gain their release. An open letter to Haitian authorities calling for the rapid release of prisoners has been signed by more than one thousand people, and the number of signatures is growing. The letter and signatures were printed in the June 30 edition of the weekly newspaper Le Nouvelliste. Activists are planning protest actions to highlight their concerns.

Canada's role in the occupation of Haiti

Along with France and the United States, Canada is one of the three main pillars of the illegal coup and foreign occupation in Haiti. Troops from these three countries and Chile invaded in February 2004 and "secured" the country in the months that followed, before passing Haiti to the current 9,000 member UN-sponsored occupation force. The UN force is drawn mainly from Brazil and Chile, but also includes troops and police from such disparate countries as Jordan, China, and Sri Lanka.

Canadians continue to hold key advisory positions in government ministries. They head up the UN police force, and the RCMP has spent the past two years training the notoriously repressive Haitian National Police. Several Canadian military officials hold high-ranking positions in the UN occupation authority, known by its French acronym, MINUSTAH.

To this day, not a single member of the Canadian Parliament has denounced the coup, nor the human rights disaster that followed. After much prompting by solidarity activists, some New Democratic Party MPs began to voice concern about human rights violations in Haiti, and foreign affairs critic Alexa McDonough began to refer to the coup as the "removal" of Aristide from office (the occupiers describe the coup as a "voluntary departure" by Aristide).

The NDP's only call to action has been to ask the Canadian government to investigate conditions in Haiti. But a government investigation is meaningless without a recognition of Canada's own role in creating those conditions. This was amply demonstrated in late May and early June, when the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development held extensive hearings on Haiti. Questioning by MPs and testimony by government and "democracy-promotion" witnesses were entirely self-congratulatory and uncritical of Canada's policy.

Following a trip she made in May of this year, McDonough spoke very favorably of Canada's ongoing role.

The occupying powers have yet to declare that they will respect the new government's request for an end to the foreign occupation, and the precise division of powers and chain of command between the newly elected government and the UN mission has yet to be clarified. This sets the stage for more political confrontation between the Haitian masses and the occupying powers if the occupation is perceived to be dictating or unduly interfering in government policy.

NGOs and the “strategic use of aid”

The coup in Haiti revealed a new and nasty side of Canadian foreign policy: a concerted effort to draw non-governmental organizations (NGOs) into the operations of the imperial ambitions that now drive Canadian foreign policy.

Writing in reference to Afghanistan in the March 2006 issue of Walrus magazine, Sean Maloney and Tom Fennell explained:

“One unique aspect of the new [Canadian military] strategy is the way that development and humanitarian aid are being used specifically for the purpose of building loyalty toward coalition forces and democratic reforms. The American, British, and Canadian governments all have representatives from their international development and relief agencies stationed in Afghanistan; the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) alone plans to spend \$616 million there by 2009. [...]

“The strategic use of aid may offend some, but this approach is gaining credibility and has been adopted by CIDA and Foreign Affairs.”

In Haiti, some of Canada’s best-known NGOs were either supportive of the 2004 coup or silent on the massive human rights violations that followed. Development and Peace, the international aid organization of the Catholic Church, for instance, responded to critics of its Haiti policy in a Background Paper in March 2006 in which it wrote, “The international media has shrouded the departure of Aristide on 29 February 2004 with conspiracy theories, going so far in some cases as to claim that the CIA deposed the president in a coup d'état...In fact, Aristide himself was largely responsible for the circumstances that led to his forced departure.”

“Common to all the Canadian and Haitian NGOs who supported Aristide’s “departure” was a scandalous failure to protest the human rights violations that followed the coup.”

The Haitian Platform to Advocate for an Alternative Development (PAPDA) is a Haitian NGO closely partnered with the Quebec-based Alternatives NGO. In January 2004, PAPDA issued a statement in which it, “praises the courage and foresight of the Haitian people who are mobilizing in greater numbers every day to demand the resignation of President Jean-Bertrand Aristide. PAPDA is happy to associate itself with this demand and reiterates its conviction that President Aristide’s departure constitutes an essential element of any real way out of the crisis facing the country today.”

The director of PAPDA, Camille Chalmers, is a member of the board of directors of Alternatives. Most of the latter’s funding is provided by the Canadian International Development Agency.

Development and Peace and its partners in Haiti were among those who applauded Aristide's "departure" from office. On March 25, 2004, its Quebec director, Marthe Lapierre, told the Canadian Parliament Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, "I'd like to begin by saying that what characterized President Aristide's government was its inability to govern, which is not necessarily the case now. It seems to me the transitional government that has been appointed does have some ability to do that...it is creating hope among the Haitian population, based on what we've observed."

Common to all the Canadian and Haitian NGOs who supported Aristide's "departure" was a scandalous failure to protest the human rights violations that followed the coup. Extensive human rights investigations were sponsored or issued in 2004 and 2005 by such reputable organizations as the National Lawyers Guild in the United States, the Harvard University Faculty of Law, the School of Law at the University of Miami, and Amnesty International. They all painted a grim picture of killings and jailings of Aristide supporters by UN forces and the Canadian-trained Haitian National Police, as well as destruction of the Haitian economy and social infrastructure.

Yet the following commentary is typical of the organizations that either called for or applauded Aristide's removal. In February 2006, Francois L'Ecuyer of Alternatives wrote, "Put in place in the days following the departure of President Jean-Bertrand Aristide, the interim government set to work on the heavy job of rebuilding the country. Initially, an important part of the population was prepared to support this government...." The article then goes on to report the utter failure of this same government to govern effectively, without any explanation as to why, nor of the massive rights violations over which it presided.

An article by the same author in May 2006 reviews the challenges facing the new, elected government in Haiti without any reference whatsoever to the severe damage done during the coup years.

OXFAM Quebec maintained a similar silence on the suppression of democracy in Haiti in its annual report for 2004-2005.

The democracy-promotion agency of the Canadian government, Rights and Democracy, has also been a strong supporter of Aristide's "departure."

Challenging "Responsibility to Protect"

The foreign intervention in Haiti is the first fruit of the new "Responsibility to Protect" doctrine, authored by prominent liberals in Canada and increasingly accepted as policy by the United Nations. Under its terms, the great powers of the world grant themselves the authority to declare a people or country "failed" and then intervene militarily to install compliant governments. This doctrine was analyzed by Anthony Fenton in the December 2005 issue of Briarpatch.

Haiti represents a considerable challenge to progressive forces in Canada. The Canadian government has emerged unscathed from its complicity in the overthrow of Haiti's elected government and its direct hand in training that country's notoriously brutal police force. If such practices, and the doctrine underlying them, are not challenged, then we will see more foreign policy adventures similar to Haiti and Afghanistan. This bodes very badly for the future of political and social rights, not only abroad, but increasingly at home as well.

Solidarity committees sprang up across Canada in 2004 in response to the terrible news coming out of Haiti. That year, these committees formed the Canada Haiti Action Network to coordinate solidarity across the country. Members of the network held a meeting in Montreal in May of this year and pledged to continue their work. Priorities in the coming months will be:

- * To continue exposing Canada's complicity in the detention of political prisoners in Haiti and the flagrant violation of Haiti's constitution pertaining to the rights of arrested and detained persons.
- * That Canada withdraw its police and military forces from Haiti, under terms set by the new Haitian government.
- * To end the use of aid money and NGO projects as weapons that undermine the institutions of the sovereign government of Haiti. Instead, Haiti needs massive amounts of aid with no strings attached for rebuilding the shattered economy and social infrastructure.

In the recent election in Haiti, the Haitian people mobilized massively to impose their desire for a democracy and social progress and for an end to foreign occupation. Canadians should respond by stepping up solidarity with their struggle.

Roger Annis is a coordinator of the Vancouver-based Haiti Solidarity BC and the Canada Haiti Action Network.

<http://briarpatchmagazine.com/news/?p=299>

Annan to visit Haiti, wants to keep strong UN force

Aug 1, 2006

By Irwin Arieff

Reuters

UNITED NATIONS (Reuters) - U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan announced plans on Tuesday to visit Haiti as he advised the Security Council against cutting back the U.N. peacekeeping mission there after elections last February.

The U.N. mission now numbering nearly 7,100 troops and 1,700 police was sent into Haiti in June 2004 to support an interim government installed after President Jean-Bertrand Aristide fled into exile under international pressure.

After new President Rene Preval took office in May, the level of violence declined only to spike again in July, Annan said in a progress report on Haiti to the 15-nation council.

A thriving illegal trade in drugs and arms, gang violence and kidnappings will remain a problem, Annan's report said.

The Security Council should maintain its troop ceiling at 7,500 and keep in place the 1,000 officers serving in trained riot police units while increasing the number of civilian police to 1,951 from the current ceiling of 1,897, he said.

The mission's mandate, due to expire August 15, should be extended an additional 12 months -- the minimum needed to make progress in reforming the legal system and improving local and national governance, he said.

"It would also send an important signal to the Haitian people of the enduring commitment of the international community," said Annan, who has complained that previous international aid efforts in Haiti failed because they ended before reforms could take hold.

U.N. spokeswoman Marie Okabe said Annan would travel to Haiti on Wednesday, where he will meet with Preval and address a joint session of parliament. He will then go on to the Dominican Republic, where he will meet President Leonel Fernandez before returning to New York over the weekend.

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Americans among those kidnapped for ransom in Haiti

By James Gordon Meek

New York Daily News

August 3, 2006

WASHINGTON - At least 80 Americans have been kidnapped in Haiti in the past year, including four murdered by thugs seeking big ransom payoffs, the New York Daily News has learned.

The victims, ranging in age from 2 to 70, were seized from cars, homes and even ripped from their beds amid a rash of abductions plaguing the impoverished Caribbean country.

Last year, 800 people, mostly Haitians, were kidnapped, according to U.S. officials. More than 60 were abducted in just the last two months.

Most of the Americans seized were released, but three were killed during kidnapping attempts and one was slain in June after the family paid a ransom, FBI officials said.

U.S. officials would not disclose the names of any victims, but Charles Adams of Queensbury, New York, was one.

Adams, 70, once owned an Albany TV station and sports teams but now works with the Rotary Club and nonprofit Pure Water for the World on clean-water projects.

On July 16, he and his Haitian driver were carjacked near the airport in the capital Port-au-Prince, where most abductions occur. Held in the Cite Soleil slum for a day, Adams was freed without paying any money - a first.

"The gang that had me was making between \$30,000 to \$50,000 a week in ransom," Adams said. "It's like catching fish. It's a big business."

The ransoms demanded vary - and often are unreasonable, given victims' finances - but families usually pay something, sources said.

"If they decide to pay, we provide them with counsel on how to negotiate with hostage-takers," Alejandro Barbeito, the FBI agent in charge of the Miami Extraterritorial Squad, told The News. "That's so they don't get taken for a ride."

None of the U.S. citizens taken hostage since early 2005 - including at least 35 reported this year - were kidnapped for political reasons, FBI officials said.

Barbeito advised U.S. citizens to "not draw attention to yourself" with flashy jewelry or cars. Missionaries are often targeted, and traveling alone at night and always driving the same route also makes visitors more vulnerable.

Gerard Latortue, who was Haiti's prime minister until June, said thugs often get tipped off about Americans with wealthy relatives from friends they've made locally.

"Sometimes Americans in Haiti are not careful enough," Latortue told The News.

Mark Schneider, a Haiti expert at the International Crisis Group think tank, said the spate of kidnappings began last year when corrupt cops realized Haiti's government and the UN weren't going to get rid of them.

"It just was another way to make money," Schneider said.

Eight Haitians turned over to U.S. authorities since last year have pleaded guilty to kidnapping.

They included three men who recently pleaded guilty to snatching a 9-year-old American girl from her bed and threatening to kill her if they didn't get ransom money. Two other men admitted in court they had kidnapped a 5-year-old boy and "threatened to cut him into pieces" unless they were paid \$300,000, prosecutors said. Both children were rescued.

Despite challenges, Haiti has foundations for recovery and renewal, says UN report
UN News Centre
1 August 2006

Haiti stands ready for peaceful development after the successful staging of elections earlier this year and the subsequent formation of a broad-based government with ambitious but balanced policy goals, Secretary-General Kofi Annan says in his latest report on the United Nations mission to the Caribbean nation.

But he warns that the challenges faced by the country – the most impoverished in the Western Hemisphere – remain so vast, especially in tackling crime and insecurity, that international donors must be willing to step up their support for Haitian authorities.

In his report to the Security Council on the UN Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH), Mr. Annan says that the country is poised for a fresh start. “A new page in the history of Haiti has been turned,” he writes. “Today, the people of Haiti have a unique opportunity to break the cycle of violence and poverty and move towards a future of stable and peaceful development.”

Mr. Annan praises President Rene Préval, who assumed office in May, for reaching out to “all political and social forces in Haiti in a spirit of reconciliation and dialogue,” and notes that the country’s 18-member cabinet has representatives from seven different political parties.

But he voices concern about the security situation across the country, particularly in the capital, Port-au-Prince, where the number of kidnappings by armed groups has started to surge again after declining at the beginning of this year.

Illegal drug and arms trafficking remains a major problem, and has led some civil society groups to criticize the Government and MINUSTAH for their perceived inadequate response.

To address this, the Secretary-General calls for strengthening the MINUSTAH police “with SWAT-qualified personnel and equipment, as part of its formed police units, as well as with expert advisers in counter-kidnapping and anti-gang operations, as part of its police contingent, to better support the Haitian National Police.”

At the same time, he cautions against inflated expectations. “It is important to recognize that there are limitations” to MINUSTAH’s mandate, he says. “While the Mission intends to maximize its crime prevention role, it will not be able to respond to criminality in an exhaustive manner. Neither will the MINUSTAH security presence at border crossings and selected ports and crossroads be sufficient to fully deter illicit activities, including the trans-shipment of drugs and weapons.”

Given these conditions, the Secretary-General calls for international help, particularly from regional partners, such as the Organization of American States (OAS) and the Caribbean Community (CARICOM).

The report has been issued as the Secretary-General prepares to head to Haiti tomorrow on the first leg of an official tour that also includes a visit to the Dominican Republic.

'Les kidnappings' are Haiti's latest misery

By NANCY SAN MARTIN

Miami Herald

August 2, 2006

In Haiti, no one is immune, no time of day is safe from the threat of kidnapping. Police seem helpless to prevent the abductions.

PORT-AU-PRINCE - One victim was grabbed in the afternoon on her way home from work. Another was stopped at gunpoint in evening traffic and yanked out of the car. A third victim, this one a child, was snatched at midnight from inside a house as family members remained helpless in saving the child from heavily armed thugs.

Les kidnappings, as the crime is referred to here, is at an all-time high, averaging at least one a day after a short period of relative calm following the election of President René Préval in February. At least 47 citizens and foreigners were kidnapped last month -- the highest number so far this year.

"I thought they were going to kill me," said a woman released by kidnappers last week after three days of captivity. ``I was so scared. All I kept thinking was that I wanted to live. I didn't want to die."

Almost everyone in this overpopulated city has heard about someone who was present one moment and gone the next. No one is immune from capture, no time of day is safe. The problem has gotten so out of control, U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan is likely to discuss the matter with Préval during a visit to Haiti today.

BEATEN, THREATENED

"Nobody wants the situation to stay like this," said the kidnap victim, who was beaten, burned and threatened with guns. ``My hope is that things will get better."

Préval's government has taken some steps to deal with the crime issue: a former police official was recently appointed to serve as the national security undersecretary, the prime minister has promised a "carrot and stick" approach to reduce violence and the police chief has spoken out against a judicial system accused of accepting bribes in exchange for releasing suspected criminals without charges. But those efforts have yet to yield any results.

Although Haiti has a long history of political unrest and violence from warring gangs, kidnappings have been unusual. More than 100 cases have been reported so far this year -- nearly half of those in the month of July.

The problem is so prevalent, the U.N. security force last year formed an anti-kidnapping unit, which includes several Haitian-American police officers from South Florida who provide technical assistance to the understaffed Haitian National Police. The police component of the international security force, known as UNPOL, recently tried to raise public awareness by releasing tips on kidnapping

preparedness. Among the advice: Don't discuss private affairs in public, install an alarm system and don't talk on the cellphone while driving.

TOP OF LIST

Those calling for an end to the violence place kidnappings at the top of the long list of Haitian problems, but authorities are at a loss on how to combat it quickly -- unless the 8,800-strong U.N. peacekeeping force is allowed to take on a stronger role in assisting the Haitian police force.

"Kidnapping are the biggest threat right now," said Leslie Dallemand, coordinator of the anti-kidnapping unit for UNPOL. "So many people are making financial gains, that it's become widespread. Every day, when you step out in the street, you're a potential victim."

"Those kidnappers are very well-organized and armed, probably more armed than [Haitian] police officers," said Dallemand, a retired Miami police officer and one of about 15 Haitian Americans that form part of the international peacekeeping mission.

The Haitian National Police do not have the manpower, equipment or training to launch an effective offensive, and the U.N. officers can only provide technical assistance. They are not allowed to make arrests or enforce the law, although there is widespread consensus that the Haitian and international security forces must be allowed to deal with the problem immediately.

"I can't tell [Haitian] police officers what to do," said Emmanuel Nelson, another retired Haitian-American officer from Miami-Dade County. "I can only show them, if they are willing to learn."

The woman abducted last week, a foreigner who has lived in Haiti for more than six years, is a typical case.

She was a passenger in a vehicle when several men climbed in and ordered the driver to keep going. The kidnappers put dark glasses over her eyes.

"When they put the glasses on me, I knew what was happening," said the woman, whose identity is being withheld because of the ongoing investigation. The men took her cellphone, had the driver take them to an unknown location and placed her into a room alone.

AFRAID TO SEEK HELP

"Three people took turns hitting me," the woman said. The kidnappers told her they wanted money and threatened her with guns to make their point. "I had like three or four firearms pointed at me, as if one wasn't enough to kill me."

UNPOL has tried to address the kidnapping issue within the limits of their power.

They provide assistance with investigations, document cases and a year ago set up a hot line for citizens seeking help.

But victims' families are often too afraid to seek help because there is little faith in Haiti's severely broken justice system, even when arrests are made. Few kidnappers remain behind bars for long.

"They need to prosecute them fully, punish them," Dallemand said.

Nelson, a 25-year veteran who served with Miami-Dade police and retired as a lieutenant for Surfside, said recruiting more Haitian Americans for UNPOL could help bridge a cultural gap that is hindering efforts to properly train Haiti's understaffed police force.

"There is no country that can operate in a climate of insecurity," Nelson said. "This is a real problem and that has to change. The only ones who can change that is a professional police force."

\$520 Million in Aid to Haiti

By Lee Berthiaume

The Embassy

August 2, 2006

With an eye on Quebec's large Haitian population and the U.S.'s interest in getting other countries involved in aid efforts in Haiti, experts say the government can only win by boosting its commitment to the Caribbean nation.

Days after Canada pledged \$520 million over the next five years to continue rebuilding and reforming Haiti, former Haitian prime minister Yvon Neptune was released from jail where he has spent the past two years, despite repeated calls from Canada and other countries for his release.

While officials from Foreign Affairs and the Canadian International Development Agency deny any link between Mr. Neptune's July 21 release and Canada's pledge, made at an international donors' conference in Port-au-Prince last week that raised \$750 million for the beleaguered Caribbean nation for the next year, others question the timing.

Yvon Neptune served as Haiti's prime minister from 2002 to 2004 and was imprisoned in 2004 following allegations he was involved in the killing of opponents of former Haitian president Jean-Bertrand Aristide, allegations Mr. Neptune has repeatedly denied.

No charges were ever filed against him and his detention has served as a point of contention for Haitians who are split between their support for Mr. Aristide and the new government.

"I am pleased with the decision to liberate Mr. Neptune," Foreign Affairs Minister Peter MacKay said in a statement last Friday. "Canada has been concerned with the prolonged detention of Haiti's laws and international obligations. I welcome the new Haitian government's commitment to improve delivery of justice and respect for human rights."

Haiti's Ambassador to Canada, Robert Tippenhauer, also denies any link between Mr. Neptune's release and the donor conference says Mr. Neptune was released on a "humanitarian basis" because the former prime minister's health had been in decline. However, Mr. Neptune has not been absolved of all wrong doing and despite Mr. MacKay's optimism, it was unclear whether he would be in the future.

"He's still at the disposal of the court," says Mr. Tippenhauer.

The ambassador praises Canada and the international community for their continued support of Haiti and is confident that "the right steps will be taken" in getting the country on its feet.

Canada Can Do No Wrong

Professor Yasmine Shamsie, a Fellow at the Centre for Research on Latin America and the Caribbean at York University and co-editor of *Haiti: Hope for a Fragile State*, says "there could definitely be a link" between the donor conference and Mr. Neptune's release.

She says his release is "important diplomatically and for reconciliation of the country" and Canada's decision to continue providing aid to the country was "a no-brainer."

"When it comes to Haiti, Canada can do no wrong," says Ms. Shamsie. Not only does Canada score points with the United States by taking an active role in the Caribbean country's redevelopment—Canada is the second-largest donor to Haiti after the U.S.—but it also serves to appease Quebec's large Haitian population.

After making inroads into the province in the last federal election, the Conservative government has been taking active steps to bolster the Quebec vote, especially in Montreal where the Conservatives failed to attain any seats, in the event of an election in the near future. Montreal is home to the majority of Haitian Quebecers.

With last week's pledge, Haiti emerges as the second largest recipient of Canadian foreign aid after Afghanistan, with the money to be used for various reconstruction efforts, including support for judicial reform in the country, which is considered essential for the country's success.

Denzil Douglas, prime minister of St. Kitts and Nevis and chairman of the 15-nation Caribbean Community, says he "would expect nothing less than full support on the part of Canada to Haiti.

"We think progress has been made," he said in an interview with Embassy during a trip to Ottawa last week. "There is no question about how far we have come from three years ago. We have seen, for a large extent, the expectations keeping pace with what is happening on the ground."

However, Mr. Douglas admits there have been problems with the distribution of aid for a variety of reasons, including corruption and instability.

"A lot of the aid that has been earmarked, less than half has been dispersed simply because of Haiti's capacity," he says. "We need to ensure there is a strengthening of the institutions that would allow the Haitian government to be able to access and properly distribute and utilize the aid that has been provided by the international community."

While Canada had dispersed \$197 million over the past two years, experts say only now with a fragile peace and stability having come over the country in recent months following the election of President René Préval in February has the money started flowing.

Mr. Tippenhauer disputes comments that aid is not flowing in Haiti, saying of \$1.4 billion originally pledged to the country, \$950 million has already been dispersed with dozens of projects underway.

Still Many Problems

Tim Donais, assistant professor of political science at the University of Windsor, says while some progress has been made in Haiti, there are still many endemic problems, starting first and foremost with corruption in the judiciary and government.

"[Mr. Préval] is inheriting an entire government infrastructure that is notoriously corrupt," he says. "That didn't change the day Préval came into office. It's hard to say how things will unfold."

Bloc Québécois foreign affairs critic Francine Lalonde is happy Canada is contributing development money to Haiti, but says Canada needs to increase aid to other countries around the world.

Alexa McDonough, the NDP's foreign affairs and CIDA critic, says Canada is "duty bound" to help Haiti given its past involvement in the country, and Mr. Préval's election has presented the country and international community with an opportunity to help the country.

"There is a unique opportunity for Canada to be a constructive player," she says. "I think it's appropriate that the level [of funding] be high. And Canada has to be prepared to maintain this level of assistance [around the world]."

Plane woes postpone Annan's Haiti trip

Associated Press

The San Jose Mercury News

August 2, 2006

POR-T-AU-PRINCE, Haiti - U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan postponed a visit to Haiti Wednesday due to airplane problems, officials said.

Annan was scheduled to arrive Wednesday afternoon but now will land Thursday morning in the Haitian capital, Port-au-Prince, U.N. spokesman David Wimhurst said. Wimhurst said Annan's American Airlines flight had unspecified "technical problems."

Annan was expected to address Haiti's parliament, tour a police academy and a hospital and meet with newly inaugurated President Rene Preval.

Annan called Tuesday for elite SWAT teams and expert advisers to bolster the country's U.N. peacekeeping force amid surging kidnappings and gang violence.

Aid Worker, Kidnapped in Haiti Back Home

By CARA ANNA

Associated Press Writer

Los Angeles Times

August 2, 2006

ALBANY, N.Y. -- The 70-year-old aid worker who may have charmed his kidnappers in Haiti into releasing him two weeks ago is back at home, still unsure why he was freed without a ransom payment.

"There are lots of questions, but no answers," Charles Adams said Tuesday after arriving at Albany International Airport.

Adams, who doesn't speak French, said he made efforts to bond with his kidnappers during the brief ordeal that started July 19, even opening his shirt to show off the bandages from a recent surgery to install a pacemaker.

Adams was being driven back from a humanitarian meeting July 19 when a group of armed men ambushed his vehicle while it was stuck in traffic near the airport in Port-au-Prince. The retired businessman was in Haiti working on a water treatment program for Pure Water for the World, a Rutland, Vt.-based nonprofit organization.

Not long after Adams' driver escaped early the next morning, kidnappers told Adams he was free to go. They gave him an armed escort through a gang-ridden neighborhood.

"Tell them that we were nice to you," he recounted them telling him. They had wanted \$500,000, he said, but got nothing other than his computer, key documents and his clothes.

Adams is among dozens of people kidnapped since President Rene Preval took power in May, raising fears that street gangs could destabilize the new government. Violence in Haiti's capital is increasing.

Saundra Aubin, a friend and colleague who stayed in contact with Adams after his release, said he continued his work in Haiti before heading to the Dominican Republic on Friday. Adams, a little thinner and a little greyer, planned to take a hot shower and get a haircut after arriving back in the United States.

He smiled as held up a yellow T-shirt presented to him with the writing, "I survived a coup de kidnapping."

But the smile faded as he talked of the results of his experience. In a twist, the kidnapping has brought more attention to his passion -- providing clean drinking water to the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere.

"You'd never want to confuse this with a PR stunt, for sure," Adams said.

He plans to return to work in Haiti in September.

Haiti -- Donors' Meeting in Port-au-Prince

Statement by Przemek Gajdeczka

Advisor, Western Hemisphere Department

International Monetary Fund

July 25, 2006

I. Introduction.

1. Objectives. This donor's conference provides a timely and important occasion for the international community to express its commitment in support of the political and economic renewal of Haiti. This can be an important turning point in Haiti's turbulent history, and a strong and focused continued engagement of the international community is crucial. We have been encouraged by the President's commitment to entrench recent reforms, focus on the needs of Haiti's poor, and improve the security situation. These are important preconditions to get the economy growing and to improve the country's prospects for sustainable higher living standards over time. We at the IMF have been pleased to be part of the effort thus far to stabilize the economy, and we look forward to continued and intensified involvement. The main objective of our engagement will be to enable higher economic growth through a set of focused reforms aimed at securing macroeconomic stability and strengthening institutional capacity needed to support the development of social and economic infrastructure.

II. The Setting.

2. Better policies. The transition government made an important contribution by stabilizing the economy, and improving governance and transparency in public sector operations. Reliance on central bank financing of the budget and the use of ministerial current accounts were reduced dramatically, government budgets were approved before the start of the fiscal year, annual auditing of government accounts resumed, and information on budget execution was published on the government's website. Revenue buoyancy and lower-than-anticipated spending to date could reduce the budgetary gap through September 2006, although the authorities have expressed their confidence that spending on the programme d'apaisement social and other projects would leave the budgetary gap at US\$18.5 million as previously estimated. Also, I am glad to report that the macroeconomic program established with the support of Fund Emergency Post-Conflict Assistance remains on track. Finance Minister Dorsainvil recently confirmed that, according to available preliminary data, the end-June indicative targets have been met comfortably. IMF staff projections suggest that end-September targets are also likely to be met.

3. Better outcomes. These efforts were fruitful and macroeconomic stability has been strengthened. Although exports have slowed, after a very good performance in 2005, and credit to the private sector has weakened somewhat, construction and manufacturing have strengthened. Inflation has eased to 14 percent per year; while this is still well above the original program's end-September target of 10 percent, the authorities expect a further gradual decline supported by stable fiscal and monetary conditions. The gourde has remained broadly stable, and net international reserves are around US\$115 million at end-June, well above target.

4. External support. These achievements required tight fiscal discipline, including on the part of the new government. But at the same time, it is clear that the new government's agenda of reform, particularly in the crucial area of social spending, cannot be fully carried out without additional external financing. In particular, the financing needs include direct external budgetary assistance, or, alternatively, donor support for specific budget items (e.g., Canada covered debt-service payments to the IDB).

5. Financing needs. Even assuming a relatively tight fiscal stance, the budgetary gap for FY 2006/07 is estimated to be in the order of US\$112 million. A number of donors have expressed their intentions, and potential budget support could be US\$35 million. Preliminary estimates of HIPC interim assistance--if approved by the IMF and World Bank Boards--could be US\$14 million in the first year, and other potential contributions could be US\$22 million. If realized, these contributions would leave a remaining gap of around \$41 million. As I said, meeting these needs will be essential if the authorities are to balance critical social and security needs with continued financial stability. Also, filling the financing gap is a precondition for approval of a program supported by the Poverty Reduction and Growth Facility (PRGF) by the IMF.

III. The Road Ahead and the Role of the IMF

6. Fund support. Building on two successfully-implemented EPCA programs, the Fund is working diligently with the new government on a PRGF-supported program and participation in HIPC. At the authorities' request, Fund staff visited Haiti in June to begin discussions on a program that could be supported by the PRGF. Good progress was made toward a broad outline for the 2006/07 budget, a macroeconomic framework for the medium term, and a structural reform agenda. Following this conference, we will have additional discussions on the draft budget, and another mission is envisaged to conclude program discussions in late August. If everything falls in place, a PRGF arrangement could be considered by the IMF Executive Board in October.

7. PRGF. The PRGF-supported program will focus on sustaining macroeconomic stability through fiscal discipline and prudent monetary policy. More specifically, strengthening revenues will be necessary to underpin increases in social spending and public investment. Structural reforms will aim at strengthening economic governance, enhancing the efficiency of the financial system, and creating conditions for private sector-led growth. Sound macroeconomic policies, sustained donor support and rising private sector investment could enable medium term real GDP growth of 4 percent per year, similar to the level achieved in the 1970s. the amount of subsidized financial assistance to be provided under the PRGF has yet to be determined, but could amount to as much as US\$70 million, spread over the three years of the arrangement.

8. Technical assistance. The program will also be accompanied by substantial technical assistance from the IMF. Our technical assistance will be largely in public sector financial management, financial sector reform, monetary policy, and central bank recapitalization. Moreover, the IMF and World Bank are planning to conduct a comprehensive Financial Sector Assessment in Haiti early in 2007; this should provide a number of useful recommendations that will be incorporated into the PRGF-supported program thereafter.

9. HIPC/MDRI. The IMF team also discussed with the authorities, together with World Bank staff, possible completion point triggers for Haiti's participation in the enhanced Heavily-Indebted Poor Countries Initiative. In the past months, the authorities worked intensively with the two staffs to reconcile debt data with creditors, and the staffs have now produced a draft preliminary HIPC document which is now under internal review in both institutions. The preliminary HIPC document will propose completion point triggers that must be set at the stage of the decision point. Consideration of the preliminary document by the two Executive Boards is scheduled for early September, and the HIPC decision point could be considered simultaneously with approval of the PRGF arrangement. After the HIPC completion point—typically two-three years down the road—Haiti could become eligible for a Multilateral Debt Relief Initiative (MDRI) which could lead to a further substantial reduction in Haiti's external debt.

IV. Conclusion

10. In conclusion, please let me reiterate the IMF's support for Haiti. Two years ago at the donor's conference that established the Interim Cooperation Framework, we expressed confidence "that, with the help of the international community, Haiti can create the conditions over the next two years that would lead to the successful adoption of a program under the PRGF." Indeed, in the past two years the authorities made significant progress toward restoring macroeconomic stability under difficult circumstances, and we are about to conclude program discussions.

11. Looking forward, it will be essential that the authorities sustain macroeconomic stability based on fiscal discipline, stay the course of economic reform, and make further substantial progress in improving transparency and governance in the public sector. I am confident that vigorous pursuit of the reform agenda will help mobilize generous support of the international community, which will be necessary if Haiti is to create the conditions over the next few years that will lead to more stability and security, higher sustainable growth, and perceptibly higher living standards. Within the bounds of its mandate, the IMF is determined to do its utmost to help to make this happen.

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