

Kidnapping an Election

With gangs rampant in the streets, democracy in Haiti takes a backseat to chaos and insecurity

By KATHIE KLARREICH/PORT-AU-PRINCE

Time Magazine

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The poorest country in the western hemisphere has a booming fast-cash industry: kidnapping. Ralph Charles knows this firsthand. In November he was held for two days in the slum of Cité Soleil, a square mile crammed with 200,000 people and unmanageable crime outside Haiti's capital of Port-au-Prince. Charles, the owner of a soccer team, says his kidnapers never bothered with disguise. "I'm a big guy with a bad temper, but I kept my cool. They had guns bigger than me. They have lots of them," he says. The ring has hundreds of collaborators, including teenagers, and they get what they want. Charles shelled out several thousand dollars for freedom, but his was one of many payoffs. On the average day, 10 kidnappings occur; 20 on Christmas weekend alone. Security experts estimate that the criminals net \$100,000 a day. One of the country's most charismatic radio DJs was kidnapped last week. The ransom demand: \$2 million.

The crime wave coincides with Haiti's preparations for a crucial presidential election. Thirty-four men and one woman are vying for the hot seat, including two former Presidents, three former Prime Ministers, three former military officers, a guerrilla leader, two alleged drug traffickers and a sweatshop industrialist. Each wants to replace Alexandre Boniface, the interim President of Haiti, who assumed office after the forced February 2004 departure of President Jean-Bertrand Aristide, the controversial former priest who now lives with his wife and two daughters in South Africa amid allegations of stealing millions from Haiti's treasury and telephone company. (Aristide's lawyers deny the charges.) Aristide had been restored in 1994 after the intervention of 20,000 U.S. soldiers; his close associate René Préval, a former President who served between the two terms of Aristide, is the front runner in the current race. Washington continues to exert influence, if in a less militant way. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice visited Haiti last fall to nudge elections forward. They have been postponed at least four times, thanks to electoral incompetence, lack of security and the country's systemic chaos. There's no guarantee that the next scheduled vote will take place either.

Nearly 3.5 million people have signed up for the new voter-registration card, but it's unclear if they did so in order to vote or because the card is now required for all state transactions. The majority of the 40,000 pollworkers needed for election day have been recruited but not trained. And even though there are new measures to reduce fraud, including transparent ballot boxes and a new system to count and transmit results, the process may be undermined by inadequate surveillance, logistical trouble and bitter local political rivalries.

Two Haitian police officers are supposed to be stationed at each of some 800 polling stations, but no one is looking to the 6,000-man force to provide security for the elections or anything else. Most consider the police part of the problem. "The nice officers are the ones who torture without leaving blood," says a human-rights specialist who spent months gathering data. "High-ranking police officers' involvement in illegal activities has become institutionalized," says Haitian national police chief Mario

Andersol, who admits that he lacks the manpower, weapons and institutional credibility to provide the security his country desperately needs.

Everyone looks to the well-equipped 9,006-member United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti, led by Brazilian troops, as the guarantor of security. But the U.N. force, which was deployed in June 2004, is assigned to defend Haiti's constitution, not to take up arms against criminals. "When they leave, I will leave too," says Jean-Buteau Sévère, 34, who returned to his dicey Port-au-Prince neighborhood of Bel Air only after the Brazilians set up an outpost there. The gangs and private armies are likely to collude in controlling the streets--and thus the votes--in the walkup to the election. And unless that situation is eliminated, few experts believe any kind of humanitarian aid can be effectively dispensed, dooming the incoming government, regardless of who leads it.

Young writers the focus of novelist's work
Chauncey Mabe
South Florida Sun Sentinel
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"We help to connect Haiti's literary daughters with their heritage," says young-adult author Joanne Hyppolite. Along with a few leading women authors, Hyppolite is a member of Women Writers of Haitian Descent, a group founded in 2001 to encourage young Haitian-American writers.

WVOHD sponsors workshops, brings in authors for readings and conducts the annual Butterfly Award, which alternates between the short story one year and poetry the next.

Other members include Ketsi Theodore Pharel, Michele Jessica Fievre, Fabienne Josaphat, Irmine Milord, Liliane Nerette and Maude Heurtelou.

"The interesting thing is that we're from all different age groups," says Hyppolite, who moved to South Florida from Boston in 1992.

"I'm in my 30s, while Jessica and Fabienne are in their 20s and came to the United States specifically to go to college. Liliane, who is in her 60s, was fully raised in Haiti and is an expert on folklore. ... It's a diverse group, some writing in English, some in French, some in Creole."

All of the group's authors are published, several with multiple books to their credit. Heurtelou's novel *The Bonplezi Family: The Adventures of a Haitian Family in North America* was published by her husband's English-Creole company, Deerfield Beach-based Educavision. Some of the members are self-published, which, Hyppolite says, doesn't carry the stigma among the Haitian community that it does in mainstream American literature.

"The situation in Haiti is that you have to self-publish because there is no economy for commercial publishers," says Hyppolite, whose novels are published by Random House. "The infrastructure doesn't exist for that. While some of us are self-published, we are all established writers."

Distinguished novelist Edwidge Danticat, though not a member of the group, says role models are especially important "when you have a very young immigrant community." Haitian parents, Danticat says, still push children toward professions "that offer a more secure route for a decent life in this country."

And for good reason, she says: "On some level being an artist is a luxury, but it is also a necessity for the person doing it. And so it is a hard thing, a hard choice for a young person to make as a new immigrant.

"But here there is the perfect environment for an explosion of the literary arts. When I've visited schools, I've seen that excitement the children have when they are presented with a role model like Joanne or myself. There's something exciting about that."

South Florida is home to a lively literary culture from Haiti

By Chauncey Mabe

South Florida Sun Sentinel

January 1 2006

Max Pierre came to the United States, like many Haitians, illegally.

On the way home from a trip to the Bahamas, he left the plane during a Miami layover to see his mother, who had been in the United States for 16 years. It was 1990; he was a teenager with no papers, not even a tourist visa. Just getting into high school was a struggle.

Now, after graduating from Miami-Dade College, after working as a teacher and a travel agent, after writing two books of poetry in French, the language of his Haitian education, Pierre has produced his first book in English. Called *Soul Traveler*, it's a poetry collection.

"I write in English because I feel American," Pierre says.

Pierre is one of dozens, if not hundreds, of poets, novelists, playwrights, children's authors, bookstore owners, publishers and spoken-word artists who make up a lively literary community among about 245,000 Haitians thought to be living throughout Palm Beach, Broward and Miami-Dade counties.

The literary scene is centered in Little Haiti, the changing neighborhood just north of Miami's Design District, where celebrated novelist Edwidge Danticat makes her home, and where playwright Jan Mapou's modest *Libreri Mapou* bookstore is a locus of Haitian culture. But it extends much farther.

Children's author Joanne Hyppolite lives in Pembroke Pines, while spoken-word poet Prosper Sylvain, a member of the four-man performance troupe *The Maroons*, resides in Davie. Fequiere Vilsaint runs his small company, *Educavision*, in Deerfield Beach, publishing English-Creole textbooks, children's books, adult novels and nonfiction. In Delray Beach, the small *Haiti Kreol* bookstore serves the growing Haitian community in Palm Beach County.

"Literature is a unifying force in any diaspora culture," Danticat says. "We have Haitian literature in several languages now. French in Canada and Haiti, of course, and there is even a Haitian writer in Spain writing in Spanish. And you have this whole generation of young Haitian-Americans writing in English. The great thing is you don't have to feel excluded from Haitian culture to live here."

Indeed, says Sylvain, literature is one way Haitian-Americans hold on to their roots.

"When I was growing up, I was never taught about Haitian culture or literature," says Sylvain, who was born in New York to immigrant parents. "The closest we got was Langston Hughes and the Harlem Renaissance. But the literary movement in Haiti is old. Haitian literature has toppled governments and caused exiles and murders. If you happen to come to one of our poetry venues, you will learn about our history and our literature."

Yet, as Pierre demonstrates, it's also a way for immigrant writers to synthesize their Haitian literary tradition, a sort of mash-up of formal French literature and African oral storytelling, with the English influences they encounter in the United States.

Pierre, in fact, volunteered to teach English as a second language as a way to master his new tongue. "In French I can reach only a few readers," Pierre says. "My poetry is about love for a country and a people, and I want to share that love with my new countrymen."

Mentoring is common: Pierre, for example, received encouragement from Danticat and Mapou, as well as the great Haitian poet Felix Moriseau-Leroy, who lived out his last years exiled in Miami, where a street is named for him.

"Anyone who writes about Haiti knows about Edwidge and goes to Mapou's bookstore," Pierre says. "I started writing poetry when I was 12, but I doubt I would have ever had the chance to publish anything if I had not come here. The community here is so energized, I'm still getting to know everyone."

Danticat grew up in New York and moved to Little Haiti to be with her husband, who has a Haitian-American translation business in Miami. At 32, she is the most prominent Haitian writer in the world, with such acclaimed novels as *Krik? Krak!*, *The Dewbreaker* and *Breath, Eyes, Memory*.

She is, Hyppolite says, "the voice for the Haitian-American generation, with one foot here and one foot in Haiti." What Amy Tan was for Chinese-Americans, Danticat is for Haitian-Americans: the first to achieve critical and commercial literary success, showing the way to mainstream acceptance.

"One writer does not make a movement, but I think it will soon be our turn," says Hyppolite, author of the young adult novels *Ola Shakes It Up* and *Seth and Samona*.

Little Haiti's origins as a distinct immigrant community date to 1965, when the first Haitians arrived in what was previously known as "Lemon City," settling only a few houses apart: Claire Nasser, who worked for a mental health agency at Jackson Memorial Hospital, and Roland Jean Louis, a teacher and the first Haitian assistant principal in Dade County.

The first to document the history of Little Haiti is not a Haitian, but a Jewish American named David Brown. A community activist and former teacher, he includes the stories of Nasser and Louis in his as-yet-unpublished pamphlet, *The History of Little Haiti: Featuring Its Pioneer Settlers*. Brown operates Urban Tour Host, a company that provides tours to Little Haiti, Liberty City and black-Bahamian Coconut Grove, as well as more conventional tourist destinations such as South Beach and Little Havana.

"The literary community is very rich," says Brown, who frequently makes the Mapou bookstore a tour stop. "The Haitian culture stands out as unique, especially the literature. The Creole language also lends a flavor all its own, even in English, and the African tradition gives the literature a lot of folk tales and proverbs."

Jan Mapou moved to New York in 1971 after being released from the notorious Fort Dimanche. The regime of dictator Jean-Claude "Papa Doc" Duvalier had imprisoned him for the crime of advocating that Creole -- Haiti's blended language, with French and African roots -- be taught alongside French in the schools.

"Duvalier, like all tyrants, did not favor of the education of the masses," Mapou says. "People who are educated might start asking questions and want a free press, so they labeled us as communists."

Since 1984, Mapou has been director of the parking system at Miami International. "Miami felt just like home," he says. "You come to Little Haiti and hear the music, smell the foods of Haiti, feel the sun, talk in Creole. It was very nice."

But in 1984, boat people were coming in the thousands, Mapou said, and once they got here they were blamed, in part, for the AIDS epidemic. Young Haitians denied their roots and tried to pass as African-Americans. Mapou founded a new chapter of Sosyete Koukouy -- "Society of Fireflies," his Creole movement in Haiti -- to promote Haitian culture in Miami.

After several years of writing and producing plays, writing two books of poetry and a collection of short stories, Mapou opened Libreri Mapou in 1994. The store instantly became a center of Haitian culture. "Haitians wanted to stay in touch with their culture and literature, and they had nothing," he says. "It was a time when Haitians were accused of carrying the AIDS virus. With a label like that, people need the antidote of good books about Haiti."

Danticat, who says her friendships with Hyppolite, Mapou and other South Florida-based Haitians made her decision to move here easier, praises the bookstore's contribution.

"Mapou has helped create a sense of cultural community," says Danticat. "I had been to his store, and I was struck by the energy there. He very much had things happening, offering an example for young people. Others did that for me. I hope it conveys to younger people that if you achieve in American culture it doesn't mean you have to flee your own community."

Chauncey Mabe can be reached at cmabe@sun-sentinel.com or 954-356-4710.

**Haitians reflect on a dream
Independence Day will be bittersweet
By Alejandra Diaz
South Florida Sun Sentinel
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Today is a significant day for many reasons for Abner Genece.

It is New Year's Day. It is his native Haiti's Independence Day. And it marks the 50th anniversary of his arrival in the United States.

But Genece, a retired educator from Boynton Beach, does not plan to host a party or attend any lavish soiree. That's because uppermost in his mind, he said, is the concern that Haiti's future is bleak.

"[Independence] is a beautiful dream. In a country that had so much that has been ruined, it's destined in a way to failure," said Genece, 70. "Since 1804 and from there on, it's been in a constant battle to keep independence. Now it's a feeling of independence within independence."

The island nation gained independence from France in 1804. Haitian martyr Jean-Jacques Dessalines led a rebellion that defeated Napoleon Bonaparte's forces, and it became the first liberated black nation and the second oldest independent nation in the Western Hemisphere.

South Florida Haitians will in different ways honor those who fought to make that happen.

Some plan to attend a concert tonight at the James L. Knight Center in Miami. Concert organizer Farah Juste, of Fort Lauderdale, said musicians will be performing the songs of 12 artists who had a significant effect on Haitian culture.

"I am honoring 12 artists who died in poverty even though they had talent. The action I want to bring up is Haitian talent and culture, and it's one of the richest ways for Haitians to make money, but the culture has been neglected," said Juste, who has a day-care center in North Miami.

Others in the community may dress their children in new clothes, attend church and spend time with family and friends.

But many, like Genece, say their hearts and minds will be with those in Haiti.

"I'm proud to be Haitian but I've known better days personally when I was growing up and things have not improved. They are deteriorating too much for my taste," said private Creole teacher Roger Savain, 82, of Plantation.

Fort Lauderdale resident Stephanie Desir-Jean intends to savor the holiday's traditional pumpkin squash soup and see family members but expects the day to be bittersweet, she said, "because Haiti is

in such bad conditions right now." Her homeland is facing insecurity and a failing infrastructure, she said.

"People don't have stability, dignity, there is poverty and people can't read, so I don't know what significance this day [has] if there is no way for them to enjoy it," she said. "So it hasn't been good for me and it's painful to think about it."

Desir-Jean, who is president of the Haitian-American Democrats of Broward, said she is hoping for better days for her country. While others say they fear the worst may be yet to come, considering Haiti's upcoming elections.

The first presidential and legislative elections since a rebellion toppled President Jean-Bertrand Aristide in 2004 were scheduled for this month but have been postponed several times for logistical reasons.

"This year the celebration is surely low-key and a lot of people are hopeful and a bit worried because of the elections. People are a bit afraid, to say the least, of what may occur," said Jean Jabouin, of Sunrise, commentator on radio station WSRF, AM 1580, which will return to the airwaves this month. "Hopefully people will get to vote and democracy will reign again."

Margaret Armand is looking forward to sharing her culture and history with the next generation.

"It's important for every generation to understand the struggle and history of Haiti. I have a new granddaughter and she needs to know what happened in the past and see us how we see ourselves," said Armand, who left Haiti for New York, then moved to Plantation in 1979 to work as a psychotherapist. "The harm continues to be done but it's important for everyone to understand what is going on."

Wilson Gayo, chef at the Pines Café Restaurant, said he will do his part in paying tribute to his culture by making a butternut pumpkin squash soup today.

Gayo, 37, moved to the United States at age 9, but said he was on the island long enough to learn how to make the soup that is given to relatives and friends who visit throughout the day.

The orange-colored soup known as jomou is made by slicing the squash and boiling it to remove the skin, he said. The squash is then mashed, strained and boiled with carrots, meats and potatoes. Fresh ingredients are a must, said Gayo, who serves the soup with bread.

"Every household that you go to, you get the same soup," he said. "If you are my neighbor, I bring you the soup and you bring me the soup, too."

To him, the soup is a symbol of Haiti's struggle for peace. "Everybody [traditionally] stays home and just enjoys that day, thanking our founding fathers for giving us the opportunity for living freely without chains and shackles."

Our Community's Many Faces periodically spotlights one of the dozens of nationalities conducting South Florida celebrations of cultural and historic milestones.

If you go

WHAT: 18th annual Haitian Independence Day Concert with Farah Juste

WHEN: 7 p.m. today

WHERE: James L. Knight Center, inside the Hyatt Regency Hotel, 400 SE Second Ave., Miami

COST: \$24

INFORMATION: Visit www.farahjuste.com or call 305-944-4348

Haitians remember forgotten musicians
South Florida Haitians will honor their musical pioneers during a concert at the annual Independence Day celebrations.

BY JACQUELINE CHARLES

Miami Herald

January 1, 2006

Long before Wyclef fused hard-core Haitian beats with hip hop, or Grammy-nominated rockers Boukman Eksperyen blended Vodou, reggae and rock 'n' roll, one man set the stage by marrying Latin rhythms and African drums.

Still, Nemours Jean-Baptiste, the man behind Haiti's most well-known musical sound, konpa direk, died like so many other Haitian artists -- poor.

Such is the story of many of Haiti's musical pioneers, a dozen of whom will be honored during the annual Haitian Independence Day concert on New Year's Day at downtown Miami's James L. Knight Center.

For Haitians, the New Year's Day gathering marks the 202nd anniversary that former-slave-turned-revolutionary hero Jean-Jacques Dessalines declared Haiti free from French rule, making it the first free black nation.

Although true freedom continues to evade Haiti, this new year Haitians will momentarily set aside their political and class differences and pay tribute to the pioneers who helped put Haiti on the cultural map of the Caribbean.

"All of these artists have a message of solidarity," said Farah Juste, a local Haitian-American business owner and singer who has organized the New Year's Day Haitian Independence Day Concert for the past 17 years.

In the spirit of that message, Juste will team up with Carl Fombrun, a well-known radio and television personality in Miami's Haitian community. Together the two -- who don't always see eye-to-eye politically, but share a mutual love for Haitian culture -- will guide audience members through more than 50 years of the music that has weathered political storms and kept Haitians connected, no matter where they live.

PAYING HOMAGE

To keep the audience on its feet, Juste has assembled several contemporary Haitian performers who will pay homage to the artists by singing the songs that helped make them famous in Haiti, and in exile communities in Paris, Havana and Montreal. Among the performers: Kid Coupé who will pay tribute to his father, Coupé Cloué, a konpa singer whose rhythmic approach to the beat set him apart from his contemporaries. Roger Colas Jr. will pay homage to his father, Rogers Colas, one of Haiti's most romantic singers who died in a car accident on a Port-au-Prince road on his way home from a performance. His body was finally picked up hours later, but only after another musician -- Ansy

Derose, another honoree -- intervened. "We sing their songs, we go to their dances but Haitian artists don't get what they deserve," said Marc Lubin, a local songwriter and follower of Haitian music. "This is one of the good things Farah Juste is doing, to give them what they deserve even after they've died. They still live within their fans."

Emerante de Pradines Morse, a pioneer in the Haitian folklore movement in the 1940s and 1950s, said Haitians in the diaspora have always been a life line for long-struggling Haitian artists and it's good to see them still connected. Her own musical contributions will be briefly highlighted during the two-hour show.

"It's encouraging to see we are appreciated outside of Haiti," said de Pradines, who transported Haitian folklore out of the villages and onto the world stage, and into the Ivy League classrooms at U.S. universities where she lectured.

"It was such a struggle for you to get out at a certain point as an artist," said de Pradines, 84, who lives in Washington, D.C. "When I began, it was in the '40s, and I was very young then and as a folklorist, very daring. I thought if you didn't get it out of the villages, nobody would know about it."

De Pradines, a dancer as well as a singer, has passed her musical talent on to her son, Richard Morse. Morse runs the famed Hotel Oloffson in Port-au-Prince, and his Haitian rock band RAM will celebrate its 15-year anniversary on New Year's Eve in the hotel lobby.

Fombrun said that while two hours isn't enough to showcase all who have made a cultural difference in Haiti, the stories behind those who will be honored is the story of Haiti itself: trial and tribulation, friendship and rivalry.

TWO SOUNDS

It is also the story of music, regardless of the genre or country. The John Lennon and Paul McCartney of Haitian music, Nemours Jean-Baptiste and Webert Sicot, began their careers as band mates, but soon parted ways. They went on to develop similar styles of music, but it was Jean-Baptiste's konpa that outlived Sicot's cadence rampa.

Fifty years later, konpa, sometimes called the Haitian merengue, remains the most popular form of Haitian music, especially here in South Florida where weekly gatherings by local bands draw sold-out dancing crowds. Jean-Baptiste and Sicot, the two men who could not co-exist, ended up as friends, dying within months of each other in 1985.

"I was with them in the '70s when they came and played at a private party at my nephew's house," recalled Fombrun. Fombrun has known all of the honorees, with the exception of one: Eyma Achille, a pioneering songstress in the Haitian evangelical movement who currently lives in a South Florida nursing home.

"Haitian music has moved forward, but we never passed that glass ceiling and we are still stuck there," he said.

Seized officials freed in Haiti

BBC News

January 1, 2006

Two members of the Organization of American States (OAS) and one of their spouses kidnapped in Haiti have been freed, the group has said.

The employees and a Haitian woman were seized in the capital, Port-au-Prince, on Thursday afternoon.

All three had been treated well, the OAS said in a statement on its website.

The officials were working towards presidential elections, scheduled for 8 January, which are now thought to have been postponed for a fourth time.

An official announcement has not been made, but electoral workers say conditions for holding the vote have not been met.

Max Mathurin, chairman of the Provisional Electoral Council, told the Associated Press news agency that the council would meet with political leaders to explain the situation and discuss a new date for the vote.

Safe and secure

Haiti has been blighted by political and criminal violence since armed insurgents overthrew President Jean-Bertrand Aristide in 2004.

A UN peacekeeping force has been unable to restore complete order in the country.

"The Peruvian and Guatemalan members of the OAS team in charge of preparing for elections have been freed," an OAS source told the AFP news agency.

"The Haitian wife of one of them has also been released. They are safe and secure now," the source said.

The two OAS employees - a Guatemalan and a Peruvian - and the wife of one of them were abducted while driving on a road near the international airport on Thursday.

They were a short distance away from the Cite Soleil neighbourhood, where several kidnappings and shootings have taken place.

On Thursday, police said 20 people were arrested on suspicion of participating in kidnappings, and at least two hostages were freed in the operation.

A LEGACY OF NEGLECT

BY LETTA TAYLER

Newsday.com

January 1, 2006

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti - When Haitian slaves ousted French colonists and created the world's first black-ruled republic two centuries ago, they begged the United States to help reconstruct their nation decimated by war.

Washington's response was to slap Haiti with a punishing trade embargo that lasted six decades.

"Confine the pest to the island," declared President Thomas Jefferson, who feared the revolution on his country's doorstep would inspire a similar slave revolt in the American South.

The embargo is hardly the only reason Haiti, once the wealthiest colony in the Caribbean, is now the poorest and one of the most troubled nations in the hemisphere. But many political experts believe U.S. policy was key among several outside forces that pushed this country on a downward spiral.

"There's a direct connection between Haiti's current problems and the way it was isolated by the rest of the world, particularly the United States," said Douglas Egerton, a history professor at LeMoyne College in upstate Syracuse.

Not only did the 1806 embargo "consciously kill the Haitian economy," Egerton said, it "put an anchor on the democratic ship" by creating such hardship that Haitians lost faith in their new republic.

How Haiti stands

Today, Haiti is a place so poor that its most desperate citizens eat pancakes made of boullion-flavored clay and one in 10 children works as a domestic in conditions that human rights groups liken to slavery. It is a land so lawless that two-thirds of its 45 leaders have been violently ousted.

Nearly half its 8 million people are illiterate, half its children are malnourished and 70 percent of its workers have no steady jobs.

Infrastructure is ravaged, the once lush land is barren of trees and the rate of HIV/AIDS is the highest outside Africa.

"I can't imagine Hell is much worse," said Rexipse Clairismé, a single mother who lives in a Port-au-Prince slum built atop acres of industrial and human waste.

Clairismé's shack in Cité L'Eternel, French for Eternal City, is perched just feet from a river-sized canal of sewage that courses through the slum. Huge pigs slosh through the sewage, snuffling it up. When it rains, the river overflows, disgorging its contents and its wrenching stench into Clairismé's home.

A string of despots has pillaged this country, taking the lead from its former occupiers. But there wasn't much to plunder.

By the time slaves routed the French colonists in 1804 - fending off the Spaniards and British in the process - the coffee and sugar plantations were razed, coffers were empty and professionals had fled. Left with the wreckage was a tiny group of black and mixed-race elites with no governing experience and a mass of illiterate former slaves.

Exacerbating the U.S. trade embargo, France forced Haiti to pay 90 million gold francs in reparations to slave and plantation owners, equal to \$21 billion today. It took Haiti nearly a century to pay it off.

Passed by and isolated

The two transforming movements of the 18th century, the Enlightenment and the Industrial Revolution, passed Haiti by. The country was further isolated by its language, Haitian Creole, a patois partly based on Norman French that is unintelligible to most Francophones. Creole remains the sole language of 90 percent of Haitians today.

During the 1980s, the AIDS scare killed Haiti's fledgling tourism industry as the outside world accused this country of spreading the epidemic. But health experts say it was tourists, mostly from the United States, Canada and France, who brought AIDS here.

In benevolent moments over the past century, Washington has lavished this country with attention, building desperately needed schools, hospitals and roads. But Washington also has propped up dictators and sent in the Marines three times.

Two interventions involved ex-President Jean-Bertrand Aristide, a former slum priest who has been ousted twice since becoming this country's first democratically elected leader in 1991. The controversial Aristide was reviled by the elite but worshiped by the poor.

Former President Bill Clinton sent in 20,000 Marines to return Aristide to power in 1994, three years after he was ousted in a coup.

But in the early 2000s, the United States led an international embargo of aid to Haiti as Aristide became mired in allegations of corruption. After Aristide fled in February 2004 aboard a U.S.-chartered jet as rebels marched to the capital of Port-au-Prince, he accused the United States of kidnapping him.

U.S. officials deny that allegation, saying they merely told Aristide that they couldn't guarantee his safety if he stayed. After Aristide boarded the jet, President George W. Bush sent in 3,000 Marines to keep order.

Following both interventions, the United States pulled out the troops and stopped the aid flow far too soon, critics say.

Torn down, not rebuilt

The Marines stayed 19 years after the United States invaded in 1915 to thwart possible German designs on the Panama Canal. But instead of nation building, the occupation became an exercise in subjugation, guerrilla warfare and racism.

After imposing martial law, the Marines created a Haitian gendarmerie that became a bulwark of later dictatorships, installed puppet leaders and dissolved the National Assembly so they could impose a new constitution allowing foreigners to buy Haitian property.

The all-white occupying force referred to Haitians as "nigs" and "coons" and used thousands of them as forced labor, sometimes roping them together so they couldn't flee. When a guerrilla resistance sprang up, U.S. troops executed rebels on the spot or threw them into a forced-labor camp where 5,500 inmates died in three years.

Despite that tortured history, many Haiti experts believe this country desperately needs outside help, particularly from the country that has played the greatest role here - the United States. "Expectations that Haiti will pull itself up by its bootstraps are unrealistic," said Jocelyn McCalla, executive director of the New York-based National Coalition for Haitian Rights. "Haiti has neither the will nor the straps."

HAITI NO LAW, NO ORDER
BY LETTA TAYLER
STAFF CORRESPONDENT
Newsday.com
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CITÉ SOLEIL, Haiti - The car had barely left the United Nations checkpoint when five gunmen leapt from an alley, surrounded the vehicle and forced it down a side road.

"Are they CIA?" one of the assailants barked at the Haitian driver, as he and his posse jabbed their assault rifles at the two Americans inside.

"Journalists!" the driver yelled back.

Leaning through the driver's window, the gunman scrutinized the Americans and decided they weren't worth kidnapping. Flashing a broad smile, he waved them through.

It was a typical welcome to Cité Soleil, one of the most destitute and dangerous neighborhoods in the hemisphere - a shooting gallery where loyalties shift by the block.

"No one controls Cité Soleil," said Sony Saint-Cyr, a shirtless young man in baggy low-rise shorts who lolled on a dusty street lined with bullet-pocked buildings. "It's everyone for himself."

As he spoke, youths sauntered by in twos or threes, M16s or Galils slung over their shoulders. A pickup truck packed with more young men screeched past, assault rifles thrust out open windows.

A waterfront warren of tin shacks and open sewage lines in the capital of Port-au-Prince, Cité Soleil means Sun City. The name is cruelly apt. With virtually no running water, electricity or trees to mitigate the tropical heat, its 300,000 residents live in a virtual furnace.

The heat is nothing compared to the violence and despair.

Bullets fly into classrooms as children study. The empty police station looks as if it were hit by a missile. With rare exceptions, even international relief agencies don't dare enter.

NO EASY PASSAGES

At least nine gangs and their subgroups operate in Cité Soleil's square mile. They bear names such as Soleil 17, Boston or Boisneuf, after the sectors they control. Safe passage must be renegotiated with every change of turf.

Along one desolate stretch of burned-out buildings, gunmen stopped a visitor's car and ordered the driver into a back alley, where they took his money. A boy watching the proceedings amused a friend

by firing an imaginary machine gun with the zeal of a teenager playing an extended air-guitar solo. His friend doubled over with laughter.

A few blocks later, the car had to run a gauntlet between a group of gunmen and four armored UN vehicles pointed toward them. Within seconds, one of the groups opened fire.

Only one structure approaches grandeur in Cité Soleil: a soaring monument to Emanuel "Dread" Wilmé, a gang leader shot dead by UN forces in July.

Thirty feet high and painted red and blue, the colors of the Haitian flag, the memorial is adorned with paintings of three men: the demure, bespectacled former President Jean-Bertrand Aristide, who was ousted during an armed revolt in February 2004; the Latin American revolutionary Che Guevara, complete with his trademark beret; and the dreadlocked Wilmé.

"Hero of the 21st century," a caption above Wilmé's likeness proclaims.

"Dread and Aristide, they were the only ones who did good things for the people here. Dread got us a road built. He created a market," said Saint-Cyr, 23, a father of three who lost his job as a port inspector when Aristide was overthrown. The interim government fired thousands of slum dwellers from public posts, saying they were no-show jobs to buy Aristide armed support.

Legitimate or not, the work is gone. Now, "it's with guns that people eat," said Saint-Cyr.

A disheveled woman with no gun sat on the dirt a few blocks away. "We're hungry," she said angrily, lifting her shirt and pounding her distended belly. "Feed our children."

ENTER, ROBIN HOOD?

Amaral Duclona, the chubby, baby-faced gang leader who replaced Wilmé, insisted he's a modern-day Robin Hood trying to do just that. "We're innocent people, looking after a population that the rich want to keep miserable," he declared during an interview with several other gang leaders in a cinderblock schoolhouse.

Wearing tight jeans, a tank top and a thick gold watch, Duclona, 26, looked more like a high-school student than the Al Capone of Haiti as he sat on a school bench. And he spoke as carefully and politely as a teacher's pet.

So did many of the other gang leaders - particularly Boston gang leader Evens Jean, a dapper 20-year-old with a sweet smile who is reputed to have decapitated a rival gang leader a few months back. One UN authority described Jean as a "psychopath."

Gang culture has spread to neighboring slums such as Fort Dimanche, where squatters have taken over a former prison compound infamous for torture under dictator François "Papa Doc" Duvalier. On a recent day in the prison courtyard, women were stirring bouillon and clay in plastic vats, then patting the mixture into cakes that they bake in the sun and sell as food. One of the women's young daughters stopped jump-roping over a sewage puddle to introduce herself.

"I'm a chimère!" she giggled, using a French word for a mythological, fire-breathing monster that in Haiti means an armed slum youth. "I'm a chimère too!" exclaimed a naked boy who couldn't have been older than 5. Soon, a dozen children were gathered round, hopping and clapping. "Chimère!" they chimed, smiling brightly. "Chimère! Chimère! Chimère!"

HAITI A PLACE OF FEAR AND HAVOC

BY LETTA TAYLER

Newsday.com

January 1, 2006

Convulsed by coups and terrorized by thugs for much of its history, Haiti is expected to hold presidential elections in the coming weeks in a tenuous but critical step toward democracy.

Underscoring the chaos, balloting was postponed three times last year and has been delayed at least a few weeks from the latest official date of Jan. 8.

The vote will be the first since President Jean-Bertrand Aristide was forced out by armed rebels in February 2004, spawning a political and human rights crisis of such magnitude that United Nations peacekeepers, like the U.S. Marines who preceded them, can barely keep order.

Starting today, Newsday begins a three-day series about the problems facing Haiti, one of the most troubled nations in the Western Hemisphere.

TODAY: Illegal armed groups pose the single greatest threat to bringing democracy, jobs and hope to Haiti.

TOMORROW: Rice production, once the backbone of the rural workforce, could be the key to jumpstarting Haiti's ravaged economy.

TUESDAY: Deforestation threatens to turn Haiti into a Caribbean desert; a quick exit by international donors could doom the country to anarchy.

Haiti: Chickens Come Home to Roost
by Brian Concannon Jr.
Counterpunch.org
Saturday, Dec. 31, 2005 at 9:59 AM
brian@ijdh.org 541-263-0029

Haiti's Judicial and Executive Branches are both getting what they deserve this holiday season- each other. After 22 months of close collaboration to trample Haiti's Constitution and democracy, they have now turned their destructive energies on each other.

Chickens Coming Home to Roost
December 30, 2006

Haiti's Judicial and Executive Branches are both getting what they deserve this holiday season- each other. After 22 months of close collaboration to trample Haiti's Constitution and democracy, they have now turned their destructive energies on each other. The Cour de Cassation (Supreme Court) outraged Interim Prime Minister Gerard Latortue on December 8 by decreeing that Dumarsais Simeus was wrongfully disqualified from the upcoming Presidential elections. Latortue retaliated the next day by firing five of the Cour's justices, replacing them with henchmen. The judiciary went on strike, which has shut down the justice system for four weeks.

It is a measure of how far Haiti has strayed from constitutional rule since the February 2004 coup d'etat that both sides in this dispute are wrong. The Cour de Cassation wrongly reinstated Simeus' illegal candidacy not once, but twice. Simeus cannot be President because the Constitution requires Presidential candidates to have lived in the country for the last five years, and to have never taken foreign citizenship. Mr. Simeus readily concedes in media interviews that he resides in Southlake Texas and has obtained U.S. citizenship. The Cour de Cassation could not go so far as to ignore the Constitution's plain prohibitions, but it came close. Instead of saying that the citizenship and residency bars do not apply, the Justices ruled that they had no evidence of Simeus' U.S. residency and citizenship- unlike the dozens of journalists who have asked him.

Prime Minister Latortue's objection to the Cour's decision is right, but he is the wrong man to make it. The same residency requirement applies to Presidents and Prime Ministers alike, and Mr. Latortue lived in Boca Raton Florida for years before being illegally installed as Prime Minister by the U.S. and Haitian elites in March 2004. The Constitution requires an interim government to hold elections within 90 days from taking office, but Latortue will have 700 days in office, at the very least.

Latortue's response to the Cour's decision is equally wrong. As in the U.S., justices in Haiti can only be removed through specific procedures, for duly established wrongdoing or permanent physical or mental incapacity. Latortue did not even give lip service to any of these procedures, he just fired the justices. Later his aides claimed that the justices were old and needed to be retired, but the Constitution does not recognize that claim.

The justice system's expressed outrage at the executive branch's interference was justified in principle, but disingenuous coming from a judiciary that had loyally backed Mr. Latortue's attacks on the rule of

law for almost two years. The courts have routinely freed convicted mass murderers who support the government, while holding government critics indefinitely on absolutely no evidence.

Fr. Gerard Jean-Juste, for example, was arrested without a warrant in October, 2004. When the government could produce no evidence against him, a courageous judge, Judge Fleury, ordered him released. The Minister of Justice then forced Judge Fleury off the bench, with the support of the Trial Court's Chief Judge, and without complaint from the Cour de Cassation's judges, or even ANAMAH, the Haitian judges' association.

Judge Fleury was replaced by another judge, Judge Peres, who was head of ANAMAH, and active in the anti-Lavalas opposition before the coup. Fr. Jean-Juste was re-arrested in July, again without a warrant. The case was given to Judge Peres, who has obediently held Fr. Gerry in prison for five months now despite a complete lack of evidence. This "pre-trial" detention may be a death sentence- Fr. Jean-Juste has just been diagnosed with leukemia. The kind of leukemia he likely has can be treated, but not in Haiti's prisons.

Amnesty International, the UN Human Rights Commission, 45 members of the U.S. Congress and human rights groups all over the world have criticized the injustice of Fr. Jean-Juste's persecution. Not one member of the Haitian judiciary has spoken against it, at least in public.

The Cour de Cassation itself led the charge in dismantling the Raboteau massacre case, the centerpiece of the fight to establish the rule of law under Haiti's elected governments. The case had been heralded as a landmark in the fight against impunity by the UN and human rights groups when the trial concluded in November 2000. Those convicted appealed at the time, which they had the right to do, but the Cour refused to rule on the case, which it had no right to do. The massacre victims smelled a rat as 2001 turned to 2002 and 2003, without any action- they feared that the court was dragging its feet, keeping the case technically open until it could be reversed by a government sympathetic to the convicts.

The foot-dragging was amply rewarded in March 2004, when Chief Justice Boniface Alexandre was named Interim President (although Prime Minister Latortue has all the power). The rat was pulled from the Justices' robes last summer, when they threw out the Raboteau trial on the grounds that the case was inappropriately sent to a jury. This decision was unjustified and outrageous- the justices themselves had approved sending the case to the jury in 1999, and the defendants never even objected. But no one in the judiciary complained.

There is no satisfaction in seeing Haiti's two remaining branches of government getting what they deserve, because the real burden of this dispute falls, as always on the poor. The judges and ministers may be truly outraged, but they are not spending their lives Haiti's prisons, under conditions that a U.S. court has likened to a slave ship. Almost everyone in jail in Haiti is poor- in a justice system where money talks, the well-off quickly walk. Ninety-five percent of them have never been convicted of a crime. Their hopes for justice were always slim, but with the courts shut down for four weeks, their hopes are now none.

All of this bodes poorly as elections in Haiti- currently scheduled for January 8, but certain to be postponed for the fifth time- approach. The electoral law gives the Cour de Cassation the last word on

most electoral disputes. The electoral preparations by the unconstitutional Provisional Electoral Council have so far been consistently mismanaged and biased in favor of Mr. Latortue's allies, so the actual voting will undoubtedly generate disputes. The disputes will go to a Court which had lost most of its credibility even before it became stacked with Latortue's henchmen. In its current state, the Court will have neither the ability nor willingness to curb the Interim Government's most blatant electoral abuses. That, in the end, may be the whole point.

Brian Concannon Jr. directs the Institute for Justice & Democracy in Haiti (IJDH),
<http://www.ijdh.org>.

www.counterpunch.com/concannon12302005.html

HAITI'Hillbilly' DJ kidnapped in Haiti

An American deejay known as the Haitian Hillbilly and a friend were kidnapped in Port-au-Prince for sky-high ransoms, the latest in a flurry of abductions sweeping Haiti

BY CARA BUCKLEY

Miami Herald

December 30, 2005

Alain Maximilien, the self-declared "Haitian Hillbilly" radio deejay who brought punk and country music to Haiti's airwaves, was kidnapped Wednesday night with a friend outside a Port-au-Prince apartment, his parents and friends said. They are the latest Americans to fall victim to Haiti's kidnapping epidemic, which has hit a record pace.

It was around 10:30 p.m. and Maximilien, 33, a U.S. citizen who spent half his childhood in Port-au-Prince, was dropping off his friend, whose full name could not be confirmed, in the upscale Petionville neighborhood when abductors snatched them both. The kidnappers phoned Alain's father, Leslie Maximilien, an hour later and demanded a \$2 million ransom for each kidnapped man. After tense stop-and-start negotiations Thursday, the kidnappers appeared set to accept considerably less, and Leslie Maximilien hoped to have his son back by midnight.

"He's white and an American, so he's a target," said Leslie Maximilien from the Port-au-Prince home he shares with his son. He hired a private negotiator to work toward his son's release, notified the U.S. embassy and was allowed to speak with Alain periodically Thursday. "He's under a tremendous amount of pressure," Leslie Maximilien said.

Alain Maximilien gained a modest degree of notoriety in Haiti after launching his radio show in Port-au-Prince early this year. Seeking to invigorate and diversify Haiti's musical palette, he played everything from Johnny Cash to the Clash to game show themes, all the while adopting the drawling, cocky persona of his alter ego, the "Haitian Hillbilly."

He and his friend's abductions come at a time when kidnapping rates have skyrocketed to unprecedented levels in the beleaguered Caribbean nation. According to the FBI, Haiti has replaced Colombia as the kidnapping capital of the hemisphere.

Wealthy Haitians and foreigners are most frequently targeted, and an estimated eight to 10 people are kidnapped in Port-au-Prince every day. Some 28 U.S. citizens were abducted between April and mid-December, according to the FBI. All 28 were reportedly returned unharmed, though three Americans were slain trying to resist evident kidnapping attempts.

Though Maximilien was comfortable in Port-au-Prince, having hop-scotched between Haiti and the United States all his life, he was on high alert in recent months as more of his acquaintances and friends were abducted for money.

Maximilien lives with his father in Port-au-Prince. His mother, Chris Maximilien, an emergency room nurse, lives in Kendall. Relatives flocked to her house Thursday to comfort her. "I don't know what to do," Chris Maximilien said Thursday.

According to his father and friends, Maximilien was especially ebullient Wednesday, having hosted a successful afternoon radio show. He had just driven his friend, a video producer from North Carolina whose name has not been confirmed, from a country club to his friend's apartment 10 minutes away when the kidnapping occurred.

"It should have been the safest drive that you could do in Haiti, so it's very scary in that sense," said a friend of Maximilien's, who lives in Port-au-Prince and feared disclosing his name.

The kidnappers likely targeted the North Carolina man because he was carrying a video camera, the friend suspected. The pair, like most of Port-au-Prince's kidnapping victims, are being held in the lawless slum of Cité Soleil.

Through his negotiator, Leslie Maximilien talked the kidnappers down to a ransom of \$20,000 by mid-Thursday. But then the kidnappers balked: Apparently two more gangs had gotten involved in the abductions, and each wanted a hefty cut. By Thursday afternoon, the demand had ballooned to \$35,000, still sizable but a fraction of the initial \$2 million.

Leslie Maximilien said the kidnappers have allowed him to speak with his son very briefly four or five times since Wednesday night.

As Thursday wore on, Alain Maximilien sounded increasingly drawn and concerned. The kidnappers were jittery because they felt the negotiations were going too slowly, he told his father, and they had begun to threaten him.

Leslie Maximilien told him not to worry. He'd get him back.

Key elections ahead around the world

By The Associated Press

USA Today

January 1, 2005

Iraqis are getting a lesson in the messiness of multiparty politics as they head into the new year trying to put together a broad-based government and take the steam from insurgents.

Politics are also on the agenda in Latin America, where several presidential elections will give populist candidates a chance to extend the recent string of victories by the left.

And elections in both Israel and the Palestinian territories could determine whether peace efforts get going again, or remain stalled.

Oil prices are still up, keeping central bankers worrying about inflation, while negotiations to further loosen global trade barriers are snarled in a dispute between poor and wealthy nations over farm subsidies.

International efforts continue to try to rein in the nuclear programs in Iran and North Korea, but atomic-armed rivals India and Pakistan are finding new ways to work together after South Asia's devastating earthquake. Aid groups fear the winter will be devastating for quake survivors.

The Associated Press asked some of its correspondents around the world to assess the prospects for 2006. Here are their reports:

ROBERT H. REID ON IRAQ

BAGHDAD — Iraq enters the new year with another chance to get it right.

If the Iraqis succeed, 2006 will mark the beginning of the end of the bloody U.S. military presence. But if they get it wrong, the year will be one of painful decisions for the United States — either "stay the course" or find a way out of an increasingly unpopular conflict.

On Dec. 15, millions of Iraqis, including disaffected Sunni Arabs, cast ballots for a new 275-member parliament to serve a full four-year term. Once the votes are counted and seats allocated, Iraqi political leaders must choose a new president, prime minister and Cabinet.

The final lineup will depend on how many seats each of the major tickets won in the December ballot. It's unlikely any single bloc will have enough seats to govern on its own. That means top parties must form a coalition.

Sunni Arabs are the backbone of the insurgency. A new governing coalition that includes Sunnis trusted by their community could erode the insurgents' base of support. Without that support, the insurgents cannot long survive.

But distrust among the Iraqi communities runs deep. Shiites and Kurds harbor bitter resentment for the oppression they suffered under Saddam Hussein's Sunni-dominated regime. Many Shiite leaders have little interest in allowing people associated with the former regime play any role in national life.

That distrust sabotaged efforts at reconciliation following the restoration of sovereignty on June 28, 2004, and the election of an interim legislature last January.

If past hatreds can be set aside this time, Iraq has a future as a stable democracy and American troops have a ticket home.

If not, then the new year will be one of bitterness, bloodshed and disappointment.

IAN JAMES ON LATIN AMERICA

CARACAS, Venezuela — The new year offers the Latin American left new chances to test its rising political strength.

Evo Morales' victory in the Bolivian presidential vote at the close of 2005 added one more leader to a growing list who criticize what they consider imperialist U.S. policies and pledge more spending to help the poor.

In Mexico, Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador, the populist former mayor of the capital, leads opinion polls while campaigning for the July vote on the slogan "for the good of all, first the poor."

Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez, an outspoken critic of Washington, enjoys solid support and is favored to win another six-year term next December to deepen his socialist revolution.

Brazilian leader Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva is expected to seek a second term in October, though polls suggest the former labor leader's popularity has suffered from a corruption scandal in his administration. Sao Paulo's centrist mayor, Jose Serra, is expected to be a tough challenger.

In Colombia, center-right President Alvaro Uribe offers a counter to the leftist trend. He commands strong support for his hard-line stand against leftist rebels and seems poised to win re-election in May.

Nicaragua's leftist Sandinista leader Daniel Ortega will attempt a comeback in November and could see his chances improve following infighting in President Enrique Bolanos' camp. Ortega, who left the presidency in 1990, has lost twice since.

Presidential contenders in Peru include nationalist Ollanta Humala and conservative Lourdes Flores. Supporters of ex-President Alberto Fujimori are trying to legalize his candidacy for the April vote even though he is jailed in Chile fighting extradition on human rights and corruption charges.

Costa Rica and Ecuador also will choose leaders.

STEVEN GUTKIN ON THE MIDDLE EAST

JERUSALEM — The electoral performance of Hamas militants and a powerful new Israeli party will be key factors determining whether 2006 brings significant progress toward ending the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Israel's withdrawal from the Gaza Strip and part of the West Bank in August raised hopes for a return to talks. But a strong showing by Hamas in municipal voting in the West Bank and Gaza — combined with a power struggle inside the ruling Fatah Party — is bolstering militants sworn to Israel's destruction.

A split between Fatah's young and old guards threatens to hurt the party in a crucial Palestinian parliamentary vote Jan. 25, though the two branches might team up to beat back Hamas.

Peacemaking also will be affected by the extent of Israelis' support for a new centrist party called Kadima — created by former hardline Prime Minister Ariel Sharon when he broke away from his right-wing Likud Party.

Kadima is the most popular party heading into March 25 national elections, and its leaders seem willing to talk peace.

Across the rest of the Middle East, the Bush administration's push for democracy will be a top issue — along with the threat of Islamic extremism.

The democratic push bore some fruit in 2005, with Egypt allowing some political opposition and freer parliamentary elections and Saudi Arabia holding its first-ever elections.

Lebanon's hopes for greater democracy and independence have been marred by assassinations many blame on Syria, including the February slaying of former Lebanese Prime Minister Rafik Hariri. The U.N. investigation into Hariri's death could result in greater pressure on Syria.

Iran seems unlikely to back off its increasingly belligerent position toward Israel and the West, and its nuclear program continues to cause alarm.

MATTHEW PENNINGTON ON ASIA

ISLAMABAD, Pakistan — Earthquake survivors in Kashmir face a fight for survival in the freezing Himalayas at the start of 2006, while the rest of Asia is on guard against a less acute but potentially catastrophic threat: bird flu.

Despite a huge international relief effort, aid workers fear a wave of winter deaths among the more than 3 million people left homeless by the Oct. 8 quake that killed more than 80,000 in the mountains of Pakistan and India.

Many Asians are worrying about another possible natural disaster from the spread of the deadly H5N1 strain of bird flu. The disease has already killed people in Vietnam, Indonesia, Thailand, Cambodia and China and forced mass slaughter of poultry amid fears of a global pandemic.

Terrorism remains a serious problem across the continent.

A spate of devastating bombings during 2005 — including in India's capital, the Indonesian holiday island of Bali and impoverished Bangladesh — have deepened concerns about violent tactics of Islamic radicals.

Taliban and al-Qaeda fighters continue to threaten Afghanistan's new democracy, and there is no end in sight to the Islamic insurgency that has resurfaced in southern Thailand.

Sri Lanka, meanwhile, risks lurching back into civil war as ethnic Tamil rebels press demands for an ethnic homeland.

Yet out of adversity come hopes of peace.

The earthquake heralded unprecedented cooperation between nuclear rivals India and Pakistan and spurred hopes they can eventually resolve their bitter dispute over divided Kashmir.

Also, peace talks between the Philippine government and the separatist Moro Islamic Liberation Front are expected to enter their final stage, possibly heralding an end to one of Asia's most stubborn rebellions.

ALEXANDRA ZAVIS ON AFRICA

JOHANNESBURG, South Africa — Africa heads into 2006 with some of its wealthiest and least stable countries preparing for critical elections while others teeter on the edge of war.

The United Nations and African Union are battling to defuse a long-running border dispute between Ethiopia and Eritrea before it explodes again into bloodshed. Violence in Sudan's western Darfur region has escalated and spread into neighboring Chad.

Mineral rich Congo, still plagued by violence after its ruinous civil war, is struggling to register voters for a referendum intended to set the stage for its first elections in 45 years.

Ivory Coast, the world's top cocoa producer, takes another stab at elections after canceling this year's ballot despite objections from rebels who control half the country.

Angola, the continent's second largest oil producer, also is promising its first postwar poll but has no date. Uganda will hold the first multiparty election in President Yoweri Museveni's 19-year rule, with the main challenger running from jail.

Somalia is struggling to overcome divisions between the president and warlords-turned-Cabinet ministers who control the capital, Mogadishu. The split threatens the latest attempt to restore central government after 14 years of anarchy that have let suspected terror cells take root.

Liberia inaugurates Africa's first elected female president Jan. 16, but Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf faces huge challenges as she tries to turn the page on more than a decade of factional war.

Millions in southern Africa are looking at food shortages after four years of drought and an AIDS pandemic that is destroying the rural workforce. Among the worst hit is Zimbabwe, whose autocratic leader presided over disastrous land reform.

JOHN LEICESTER ON EUROPE

PARIS — The European Union hopes to move forward again after a year of paralyzing divisions.

EU nations, particularly heavyweights France and Britain, argued bitterly in 2005 over how the 25-nation bloc should spend its money and fund the integration of its 10 newest members, mostly poorer East European countries.

A budget deal reached by EU leaders in mid-December should allow the bloc to concentrate on other pressing issues, including how to revive European economies so they can compete with rising powers like China. But there are deep divisions over how to do that.

Other thorny questions are whether the EU can absorb more countries, including predominantly Muslim Turkey, and whether a proposed EU constitution can be revived after being rejected by French and Dutch voters.

President Bush could lose a key European ally when Italy holds elections, most likely in April. Italian Premier Silvio Berlusconi, who sent troops to Iraq over domestic opposition, faces a tough battle with center-left candidate Romano Prodi, a former EU president who opposed the Iraq war.

Before that vote, Italy hosts the Winter Olympics in Torino in February and is on guard against a terrorist attack.

Bulgaria, which like neighbor Romania is rushing to complete reforms so they can join the EU in 2007, holds a presidential election in the fall. President Georgi Parvanov is expected to seek a second five-year term.

The Balkan breakup that caused bloody wars in the 1990s still has effects. Serbia-Montenegro could cease to exist when pro-independence Montenegro holds a referendum on its status in April. Kosovo's ethnic Albanian majority is pushing to get independence in U.N.-sponsored talks, further shrinking Serbia. Bosnia elects a president and new parliament in the fall.

JUDITH INGRAM ON RUSSIA AND THE CIS

MOSCOW — Russia becomes chairman of the Group of Eight industrialized nations in 2006, cementing its place in the elite club of economic powerhouses after 15 years of informal probation over its economic troubles, corruption and democratic shortcomings.

Yet Moscow faces new questions over President Vladimir Putin's commitment to protecting basic freedoms. He will be watched closely in setting planned new rules governing non-governmental groups, which have complained of growing restrictions.

The fighting that erupted over a decade ago in Chechnya still bedevils Russia's Caucasus Mountains region, where poverty, unemployment and police brutality are fueling a simmering Islamic insurgency.

With oil prices still up, Russia's economic boom is likely to continue through 2006. Government coffers will swell and foreign debt will be retired, while Russians feel the effect of some \$4 billion in oil-funded social spending.

Russia can realistically expect to join the World Trade Organization in the spring, assuming Moscow can convince the U.S. it has a handle on a piracy problem second only to China's.

Ukraine faces critical parliamentary elections in March that could change the political landscape of the former Soviet republic, either cementing the gains of the Orange Revolution or severely crippling the pro-Western reformers who came to power in 2004.

Belarus will hold a presidential election that incumbent Alexander Lukashenko, dubbed Europe's last dictator, is expected to win by a landslide.

More unrest is expected in formerly Soviet Uzbekistan as President Islam Karimov's government presses his crackdown on dissent after a May uprising put down by troops who killed dozens of mostly unarmed protesters.

BEN FOX ON THE CARIBBEAN

SAN JUAN, P.R. — Haiti seeks to restore democracy by holding elections as 2006 opens, while the U.S. detention center at Guantanamo Bay enters the new year with fewer suspected terrorists in its cells — and a court battle looming over their military trials.

Haiti's election, scheduled for Jan. 8 after several postponements, features 35 candidates for president and hundreds for 129 legislative seats. The region's poorest country has struggled to organize the ballot to replace the interim government that followed the ouster of President Jean-Bertrand Aristide in February 2004.

The leading candidate for president is a one-time Aristide ally and former president, Rene Preval, who enjoys strong support in the slums of the capital where gangs regularly battle U.N. troops.

At the U.S. Navy base in Guantanamo, Cuba, the United States starts the year with some 500 prisoners — down from about 550 a year ago as the U.S. government returns detainees to their home countries.

The first military trials for the nine men charged so far have been delayed by the Supreme Court, which is expected to rule in 2006 on the legality of the military commissions created by President Bush.

In Cuba itself, 79-year-old President Fidel Castro is beginning his 47th year in power after laughing off reports he has Parkinson's disease.

His government is exerting more control over the island's socialist economy. But much of the Caribbean is moving toward more free trade — though not always willingly.

The 15-nation Caribbean Community launches its Single Market Economy, which will allow certain skilled workers to move more freely about the region. Bahamas opted out and Haiti is suspended from the organization because of its turmoil.

EDITH M. LEDERER ON THE UNITED NATIONS

UNITED NATIONS — After a year that exposed corruption and mismanagement in the U.N. oil-for-food program in Iraq, a tarnished United Nations will focus on key reforms in 2006.

But, behind the scenes, the top priority will be the choice of a successor to Secretary-General Kofi Annan.

For Annan, who shared the Nobel Peace Prize with the United Nations in 2001, his 10th and final year at the helm of the world body will provide a last opportunity to shape his legacy.

His reputation suffered a serious blow when investigators criticized him for tolerating corruption in the \$64 billion Iraq program and failing to properly investigate his son's employment by a company that won an oil-for-food contract.

At a year-end news conference, Annan said his priorities in 2006 will be fighting poverty and disease and promoting peace, security and U.N. reform.

As for the big global issues confronting the world, he pointed to terrorism, weapons of mass destruction and the Middle East including Iraq, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the Lebanon-Syria situation.

"We should also keep a very close eye" on Sudan's conflict-wracked Darfur region and on Congo, he said.

For the United States, Europe and Japan — which pay more than 80% of the U.N. budget — a top priority is adoption of management reforms to overhaul the cumbersome U.N. bureaucracy. A new budget provides operating money for about six months, and if reforms are not adopted by then the United Nations could face a financial crisis.

Member states will also be grappling with the divisive issue of creating a new Human Rights Council to replace the discredited Human Rights Commission.

Pre-election terror and repression in Haiti
San Francisco Bay Area Indymedia
by wsws (reposted)
Friday, Dec. 30, 2005

While the Bush administration and the US mass media focused enormous attention on the recent elections in Iraq—promoting them as supposed proof of Washington’s “democratizing” mission—preparations for another vote taking place in another invaded and occupied country just a few hundred miles off US shores are virtually ignored, and for good reason.

The country, Haiti, was invaded in February 2004 by US Marines, who completed the bloody work of US-backed ex-soldiers and death squad leaders of the former dictatorship in toppling Haiti’s popularly elected president, Jean Bertrand Aristide of the Fanmi Lavalas Party. To this day the country remains occupied by United Nations troops, sent largely by Latin American governments of countries such as Brazil, Argentina and Chile, currying favor with Washington by relieving Marine units badly needed to suppress the resistance in Iraq.

The elections, set for January 8—though it is widely expected they will be postponed yet again—are shaping up to be nothing but a cynical and tragic farce, carried out under the barrel of a gun.

The government installed as a result of the coup and occupation, headed by unelected Prime Minister Gérard Latortue, has reset the election date four times in the last five months, violating Haiti’s constitution, which requires the interim government to hold elections within 90 days (this period expired on June 1, 2004). In the meantime, Latortue has found time to prioritize the awarding of back pay to soldiers of the former military dictatorship that Aristide had disbanded in 1994.

This latest election schedule calls for a first round of presidential and legislative elections on January 8, runoff elections on February 15, and local elections on March 5, 2006.

The number of polling stations has been reduced from 12,000 to 600, leaving people in poor rural areas that had supported Aristide at a disadvantage in getting to the polls. The complicated electoral card process requires voters to listen carefully for announcements for card distribution on the radio and television, when many Haitians are so poor that they have no access to either. Registration alone took over five months, and cards must be distributed in about five weeks, a period that includes the Christmas holiday, Haiti’s independence day on January 1, and the beginning of Carnival season on January 8.

The war against civilisation
Common Sense
John Maxwell
The Jamaica Observer
Sunday, January 01, 2006

We cannot say we weren't warned.

On May 6, 2002, the United States denounced the International Criminal Court, telling the United Nations that it would no longer consider itself bound by the Treaty establishing the ICC - signed by President Clinton in the closing days of his administration.

John Maxwell

Clinton had reservations about the court, but he believed that the US could negotiate compromises which would still have left the Court an effective tribunal for the trial of crimes against humanity.

The Bush administration began almost as soon as it took office to rail against the idea of the court itself, and began to blackmail smaller countries into signing bilateral treaties to (hopefully) render the court without jurisdiction in those countries. The reason, according to various spokesmen for the US, was to protect the interest of American soldiers and diplomats from frivolous prosecution.

Mr Pierre Richard Prosper, a senior US diplomat said the May 6 letter to the UN 'neutralised' Mr Clinton's signature and

" . It frees us from some of the obligations that are incurred by signature. When you sign you have an obligation not to take actions that would defeat the object or purpose of the treaty," he said.

By unsigned the treaty, the US would no longer have to extradite people wanted by the court, he said.

"What we've learnt from the war on terror is that rather than creating an international mechanism to deal with these issues it is better to organise an international mandate that authorises states to use their unilateral tools to tackle the problems we have ."

Law Free Zones

Unfortunately for the US, the world has seen what these unilateral arrangements can mean, at Abu Ghraib and Guantanamo Bay, for example, and in the vast gulag archipelago for suspected terrorists now being operated round the world by the United States.

Bush. his administration has railed against the court

As one of Britain's most eminent judges, Lord Steyn, has said, the US has created a 'law-free zone' where it can commit any crime against anyone without fear of prosecution.

Or so Mr Bush's advisers believe.

Unless Mr Bush and his party seize power in the United States and remain in power for ever, prosecution and retribution are always in the offing, as the Chilean usurper/regicide Pinochet is now discovering.

One of the key loopholes the Americans believed they had discovered is that resiling from the ICC means that they do not have to extradite their own home-boy terrorists such as Luis Posada Carriles and his accomplice in murder, Orlando Bosch.

But the ICC renunciation was only the most significant act in a concerted US campaign to turn their backs not only on history but on civilisation itself.

It is now clear that the US Administration and its dwindling band of fanatics want to turn the world back to medieval systems of governance, Justice and knowledge.

Global Warming: The US has worked overtime, using bad science, PR spin doctors and the power of money to try to turn back the Kyoto protocol on climate change. It was sheer embarrassment which forced the US three weeks ago to agree to continue being a part of the negotiating process. The tactic here will be to talk out the decision-making process while the US continues to pollute the atmosphere and the seas and mankind's lungs and genes for as long as it is profitable.

Globalisation: The US is adamant that her merchants and usurers should be free to scrape as much in profit from the rest of the world as possible by arrangements such as the WTO and GATS (General Agreement on Trade in Services) which will allow the Walmartisation and McDonaldisation of the world, destroying local artisans and their craft and substituting the obviously superior American ersatz productions, spreading asthma, diabetes, deformity and unemployment everywhere, while discrete 'Free Zones' provide slave labour for the Cognitive Elite behind their electrified fences and shoot to kill policies.

While Jamaica and India must cough up the 'uttermost farthing' for pirated DVDs and software, Americans will legitimately patent such things as the Neem Tree, Basmati Rice and, eventually, Reggae music.

Genetics: The United States and a cadre of rogue scientists will continue to plunder the earth in search of desirable plants, for food and medicine, developed over centuries by peasants on the slopes of the Andes or the terraces of Assam. When they have found the most productive strains and patented them, they will then genetically alter them so that no further development and evolution is possible.

These seeds will have no progeny, except in the tissue culture labs of Monsanto and Dupont. At that point, selective starvation (aka Eugenics) will become possible, as the companies which have patented life protest that they have run out of material and farmers in Peru and Jamaica and Assam and Sri Lanka will not be able to buy planting material.

"We have a shortage" will be the claim.

And, since Mr Bush and his merry men do not believe in evolution, all will be for the best in the best possible of all (gated) worlds.

GATS: That desirable green space in front of the University of the West Indies chapel at Mona would be greatly enhanced by a small, efficient Walmart.

And American universities will demand subsidies ('national treatment') from Jamaica, if Jamaica were unwise enough to give any assistance to the poor and indigent Jamaican students attending the UWI. If

the children of the elite want to go to Harvard, the Jamaican government would have to pay their fees as well, as long as Harvard set up a drop shop in Jamaica.

Small Arms and Drugs: While the United States reserves the right to kill people with alcohol and tobacco, it has set its face firmly against ganja and cocaine, which unlike alcohol and tobacco are virulently dangerous substances, notwithstanding the fact that they kill far fewer people.

And citing the immutable laws of Adam Smith and Free Trade, the Americans will refuse to control the export of small arms to places like Jamaica for the very good reason that when Jamaicans kill each other it is a purely domestic problem

Oil: It is a curious fact that petroleum, which belongs by natural right to the United States, has been secreted by God under the land area and seas of various poor and often 'failing states'.

And when reckless and dangerous agitators like Hugo Chavez claim to be the rightful owners of the oil under their feet, they need to understand that their vain presumptions are entirely without fundamentalist justification and are in sacrilegious disrespect of the bottom line.

Assaulting Liberty and Civilisation

The US Justice Department has now instituted an official probe with a view to criminal charges against the person or persons who leaked the state secret that president Bush had contravened the laws and Constitution of the United States by illegally ordering his National Security Agency to spy on Americans.

A few Americans are agitated that this may mean some infringement of their civil liberties and may turn a few of them into unlawful combatants inhabiting some 'law-free zone' for the rest of their natural lives. Mr Bush has a divine right to break the law and exposing his crime is a crime.

I remember vividly what I was doing on the morning of September 11. My hair was standing on end before the planes struck the World Trade Centre. I was trolling the web and copied several stories about a new project called Echelon, a worldwide network of satellites and computers which had the capability to read or record the secrets of anyone, any company, any government, anywhere.

The European Union was about to protest about Echelon, the stories said. After 9/11 there has been a complete absence of stories about Echelon.

Case Study: The destruction of liberty can be choreographed, as Hitler and Stalin both knew. 'Obedience is good, Control better,' Stalin is reported to have said.

And when Hitler began to enslave his people he started with blacks (Yes! Blacks! the 'spawn' of the Senegalese and Jamaican troops of the First World War armies occupying Germany). He next attacked homosexuals, Gypsies and then the Jews; picking them off one by one, choosing the most friendless - as Niemoller said- to begin with.

Mr Alex van Trotsenberg of the World bank infamously described Somalia as 'almost a non-country'. Haiti is obviously a non-country, and Iraq cannot be far behind.

What has happened to these two countries may be instructive.

It was in Iraq, 8,000 years ago, we are told, that civilisation as we understand it, first developed.

After suffering defeat in the arranged Gulf War, the Iraqis were starved and bombed continuously for ten years, their land contaminated by depleted uranium, their children poisoned, the wombs of the women so corrupted by radioactivity that many produced monsters.

One American general said in 2002 there was nothing left to bomb in Iraq but the odd outhouse and a few unsuspecting shepherds, yet the US and British unleashed 'Shock and Awe' against these people, a barbarous attempt to cow them into surrender, to un-man them and convince them to greet the 'liberators' with flowers and kisses.

The reality was different.

"She was standing in the wrong place, so I shot her," said one 18-year-old American GI.

Iraq's historic places and museums were looted and vandalised. Mr Rumsfeld was unperturbed: "Stuff happens," he said. Unlike Reichsmarshal Herman Goering, he did not reach for his revolver on hearing the word 'Culture' - He probably did not understand it.

The Fight Against Slavery

Two hundred and one years after freeing themselves from slavery, the Haitians are once again engaged in the same struggle. The Haitians have been abandoned by their friends, their relatives and the world police, terrorised by the Americans, Canadians, Brazilians and French, and by the United Nations.

Their president and his family were kidnapped, transported out of his country as 'cargo' and finally found refuge in South Africa, one of the few places with the cojones to defy the United States in such matters.

The Haitian people are being raped, tortured, falsely imprisoned, brutalised and massacred by known and convicted criminals, one of whom is now running for President under elections sponsored by George Bush and Kofi Annan.

The lawful President is being denigrated, vilified and libelled for building more schools in five years than had been built in a century, for giving the children of Haiti their own radio station, for setting up a medical school open to poor students, for instituting a disaster preparedness network, for liberty and democracy.

And, what happened ten years ago when American-sponsored Generals first removed Aristide is happening again. Rape and murder are again instruments of policy under the supervision of the man who oversaw Aristide's kidnapping, former US Ambassador Foley.

Lynn Duff, an American journalist reports on a woman she met in Haiti:

"My daughter who is four years old was sleeping on a mat on the floor. They kicked her out of the way. My other daughter is nine years old. She was so scared she didn't even cry. The police took my

husband away because they said he was a chimère. [terrorist]They shackled him and beat him on his head. Then they took him out of the house.

". One policeman showed his identification card and said, "See what this is? It means that I can do with you whatever I want." But it was too dark for us to see the name on the card, even though we recognised it as a policeman's identification card.

". one police officer said to me, 'Don't worry, you'll enjoy it.' I think you can imagine what happened next. All of the police officers raped me, both in the natural place for having sex and also in the unnatural way, in my rear.

"The whole time my children were there watching. When the police officers finished with me, they went for my oldest girl, the one who is here with me today. They wanted to violate her as well but she is too small. One police officer put his fingers up inside of her and she bled.

Today we are here at the clinic to see the doctor because my daughter is in a lot of pain since the attack. She has pain in her body and pain in her heart."

Paul Farmer, an American professor of medicine and medical Anthropology has spent two decades in rural Haiti, teaching people to deal with HIV/AIDS. He has devoted his life to curing the world, starting in Haiti. At this moment he is in Rwanda, pursuing his mission.

I got an email from him last week. He said that he had examined the priest, Father Gerard Jean Juste in a prison in Port au Prince. Jean-Juste has committed no crime apart from being a pastor and leader of the Haitians. He had also decided to run for President.

He was arrested and held on no charge. Farmer examined him in prison and discovered that Father Gerry is suffering from cancer, probably leukemia

According to Farmer

" he is not only a prisoner of conscience, one of hundreds in Haiti, but a sick one who needs more than prayers and letters of support. He needs proper medical care and, probably, chemotherapy. It's hard enough, as we know from our own long experience in central Haiti, to deliver chemotherapy anywhere in the country, but it's simply not possible to do so in a Haitian prison.

It was the Haitians who first abolished slavery and first proclaimed the universal rights of man, the doctrine enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights 149 years later. If their very right to Liberty is now in question, can yours be far behind?

If civilisation itself is under attack in Iraq, where next?
If Liberty itself is smothered in Haiti, where does that leave you?

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Local man goes free from kidnappers in Haiti

Frank Eaton was held for three nights

Sunday, January 1, 2006

By Patrick Wilson

JOURNAL REPORTER

Frank Eaton, a Winston-Salem man who was kidnapped and held for ransom for three nights in Haiti was freed last night and is safe, his mother said in a telephone interview.

"We heard from Frank about an hour ago, and he had been released," his mother, Leigh Somerville McMillan, said just after 9 p.m. "I was really, really glad to hear his voice and to hear that he was safe and making plans to come home."

Eaton and a business partner, Alain Maximilien, 33, were abducted by gunmen on Wednesday in the Haitian capital of Port-au-Prince. It was unclear last night if Maximilien, a radio deejay who works in Port-au-Prince, was also freed.

They were among more than 25 Americans kidnapped for ransom in Haiti in the past year. The U.S. State Department issued a travel warning in November saying that Americans should not travel in Haiti, and if they do, they should be vigilant for looting, confrontations between armed gangs and kidnapping for ransom.

Details of Eaton's release were not available last night. McMillan declined to say whether a ransom was paid.

McMillan said that her son will try to fly home today. "Frank was in great shape, was very calm, cool and collected and just looking forward to getting home," she said.

Eaton is an independent video producer who has done documentary work in the United States. He studied film at the N.C. School of the Arts.

According to messages that he posted on his Web site, he was working with Maximilien shooting music videos in Haiti. Maximilien is known to his radio audience as the "Haitian Hillbilly," and his father is well-known in Port-au-Prince.

Maximilien's father, Leslie, told The Miami Herald that he had hired a private negotiator to discuss a ransom amount to secure his son's freedom. He told the Herald that the kidnappers wanted \$2 million at first, but dropped their demands to \$20,000 by mid-Thursday. However, the figure went up to \$35,000 after two more gangs became involved in the conspiracy.

FBI agents worked with Eaton's family as part of their investigation, but his case is one of many abductions for ransom that are under investigation, said Ken Lucas, a spokesman for the Charlotte office of the FBI.

As Haiti tries to schedule a controversial presidential election with numerous candidates, kidnappings are expected to continue.

Eaton is the second man from Winston-Salem to be kidnapped for ransom in Haiti in 2005. Wes Morgan, a businessman and missionary, and a friend were kidnapped for a full day in October and freed after making arrangements to pay a ransom to their captors.

Morgan had been on the phone with Eaton's family offering them any support that he could.

"I was certainly delighted to hear about his release," Morgan said.

Haiti election to be delayed again -officials

30 Dec 2005

Reuters

By Joseph Guylor Delva

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti, Dec 30 (Reuters) - Haiti's oft-delayed election will be postponed again, election officials said on Friday amid growing demands for the resignation of the troubled Caribbean nation's interim government.

Although Haiti's election council, charged with organizing the vote, has not yet made an official decision, five of the nine members told Reuters it was impossible to have credible presidential and legislative election on Jan. 8 as scheduled.

Election authorities were to meet with political parties and candidates later on Friday to hear recommendations about new dates and to discuss a detailed timetable for steps leading to an election.

"We have to face the hard reality that the elections cannot be held on January 8th and that the necessary corrections should be made to ensure the holding of a credible vote," Max Mathurin, head of the council, said in a telephone interview on Friday.

Haiti is grappling with a host of technical problems including the distribution of millions of voter identification cards and the hiring of thousands of poll workers as it tries to hold its first election since President Jean-Bertrand Aristide was pushed from office in February 2004.

An interim, U.S.-backed government headed by appointed Prime Minister Gerard Latortue was charged with holding an election to put Haiti's fragile democracy back on track. But the voting, originally set for November, has been delayed several times.

Mathurin and council members Rosemond Pradel, Jerson Richeme, Pierre-Richard Duchemin and Patrick Fequiere said the problems will not be resolved in time to hold the first round of balloting on Jan. 8.

'A FARCE?'

Mathurin said the primary concern is to organize a credible election, rather than meet a deadline at any cost.

"If it is materially and technically impossible, as is the case today, to hold these elections on January 8th, do you think we should go ahead and organize a farce?" Mathurin said.

Mathurin said a new schedule would not be published on Friday. The new dates will probably be known within the coming week, election officials said.

More than three dozen political parties have called for the resignation of the government, accusing it of incompetence. Haiti's constitution requires the inauguration of a new president by Feb. 7, a deadline unlikely to be met.

"The interim government had two years to organize elections and they failed to do so," said Osner Fevry, a leading figure of the Political Parties' National Council, a group of 30 parties.

"Now, it is time for this government to step down so that a national unity government may be appointed with the mission to organize elections in 90 days," Fevry said.

Gerard Gourgue, the presidential candidate of the Patriotic Unity Movement, a coalition of six parties and several grass-roots organizations, called Latortue's government a symbol of failure.

"This government has been failing every mission it was given," Gourgue said. "The most important and fundamental one was to organize elections and they failed."

Political analysts say the repeated delays could cause voters to lose confidence in the electoral process.

Some 1.5 million voting cards, which are needed to cast a ballot, have been distributed but 2.5 million registered voters still do not have them. Most of the nearly 40,000 election workers, who will run polling stations, have not been trained, officials say.

Church to build orphanage in Haiti 14,000-square-foot home for 350 children is planned
BY NICK FERRARO
St. Paul Pioneer Press
December 31, 2005

"It's a heartbreaker," said Hayden, director of outreach at Five Oaks Community Church in Woodbury. "You think about them a lot and pray for them and want to do something to help."

On Monday, a group of volunteers from Five Oaks will do just that when they travel to Fedja to begin a mission trip that has been more than a year in the making. They will start work on a 14,000-square-foot orphanage that will provide dorm-style bedrooms, bathrooms, a kitchen and classrooms for more than 350 children. A church that seats 500 is also in the plans.

Hayden is among 19 volunteers who will leave Monday for Fedja, a remote village in a mountainous area north of Port-au-Prince. Three additional volunteers will leave for Haiti on Friday, and 11 more will follow on Jan. 11. Each group will stay about 10 days.

Through a partnership with Global Vision Citadelle Ministries (GVCM), Five Oaks has supported the staff of the small orphanage and supplied funds to feed the children since December 2004. The church previously sponsored missionary Yves Prophete, who started GVCM in 1999.

This past January, church officials began a capital campaign to raise money for a new gymnasium at the Woodbury church and agreed to set aside the first \$80,000 for the mission. In all, the church has raised more than \$110,000 for the new orphanage, part of which will be built with supplies donated by local businesses. The project has also benefited from partnership with the United Nations, which has done some site preparation work.

"There is an aspect of compassion in this ministry and the mission program itself," Hayden said. "In this area, there's a tremendous amount of poverty — I think 80 percent live in abject poverty — and there are a number of children who have parents who cannot take care of them or the parents aren't living anymore. Some have just been dropped off at the orphanage."

Five Oaks member Michial Mularoni, a self-employed Woodbury architect, designed the orphanage. He said the goal is to get phase one — about half the orphanage — constructed in a year, although the church is still \$50,000 short to complete the phase.

"I can't wait to get down there," said Mularoni, who has visited the area five times this year and also will leave Monday. "We want to have a roof up by the end of January."

Mularoni said the work already has provided some hope for the kids, "and that's at the root of the work."

The church also is working with Child Link International to establish an adoption process for Woodbury-area families.

Tom Moore, a physical education teacher at Lincoln Center Elementary in South St. Paul, is also leaving for Fedja on Monday.

"I'm intrigued about what we're going to run up against and looking forward to taking on the challenge and the work," said Moore of Woodbury. "We have soccer goals that were donated by a local business that we're going to put up. I'm really excited for the kids about that."

Hayden said the volunteers will visit the area at least two more times in 2006 and is not sure how many more trips they will have to make before the project is complete.

Working on the orphanage, to be named All God's Children, has benefited members of Five Oaks, he said.

"It's pulled the members together as a church family, as a community of faith," he said. "We're all Christians, and we're there looking at our brothers and sisters and saying, 'I can help.' "

Nick Ferraro can be reached at nferraro@pioneerpress.com or 651-228-5473.

fyi

To learn more about the Haiti mission, go to the Global Vision Citadelle Ministries Web site at <http://www.gvcm.org>.

Guest commentary: U.S. still undermining democracy for Haitian people

By MARK WEISBROT,

The Providence Journal

The Naples Daily News

December 31, 2005

WASHINGTON — History is repeating itself in Haiti, as democracy is being destroyed for the second time in the past 15 years.

Amazingly, the main difference seems to be that this time it is being done in broad daylight, with the support of the "international community" and the United Nations.

The first coup against Haiti's democratically elected government, in September 1991, was condemned even by the George H.W. Bush administration. This although the CIA had funded the leaders of the coup and — according to a founder of the death squads that murdered thousands of people during the 1991-94 military dictatorship — also sponsored the repression.

All this was covert, and the official position of the United States and most other countries was that the dictatorship was not legitimate.

But when in February 2004 Haiti's democratically elected president, Jean-Bertrand Aristide, was overthrown for the second time by remnants of that prior dictatorship — including convicted mass murderers and former death-squad leaders — this was considered a legitimate "regime change."

The Caribbean Community countries, showing great courage, objected strenuously, as did some members of the U.S. Congress. But these voices were not powerful enough to influence the course of events.

The fix was in: The U.S. Agency for International Development and the International Republican Institute (the international arm of the Republican Party) had spent tens of millions of dollars to organize an opposition — however small in numbers — and to make Haiti under Aristide ungovernable.

The whole scenario was strikingly similar to the series of events that led to the coup against Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez in April 2002. The same U.S. organizations were involved, and the opposition, as in Venezuela, controlled and used the major media as a tool for destabilization. And in both cases the coup leaders, joined by Washington, announced to the world that the elected president had "voluntarily resigned" — which later turned out to be false.

Washington had an added weapon against the Haitian government: Taking advantage of Haiti's desperate poverty and dependence on foreign aid, it stopped international aid to the government, from the summer of 2000 until the 2004 coup. As economist Jeffrey Sachs has pointed out, the World Bank also contributed to the destabilization effort by cutting off funding.

Now the coup government, headed by unelected Prime Minister Gerard Latortue, is trying to organize an election. But it is an election that would not be seen as legitimate in any country, even Iraq.

Everything is being arranged so that the country's largest political party, Fanmi Lavalas — which at any moment before the coup would have overwhelmingly swept national elections — cannot win. Many of the party's leaders are in jail, generally on trumped-up or nonexistent charges, including the constitutional prime minister, Yvon Neptune, and Father Gerard Jean-Juste, a Catholic priest and likely presidential candidate if he were not jailed. Jean-Juste has been declared a prisoner of conscience by Amnesty International. Other leaders are in hiding or in exile, since the murder of political opponents is common.

In one massacre in August, witnesses described Haitian police arriving at a soccer match and pointing out people in the crowd, who were then hacked to death by civilian accomplices with machetes. U.N. troops have also been implicated in some of the violence, into which the U.N. has promised an investigation.

The coup government, with an electoral commission that has no pretense of impartiality, is also set to disenfranchise a huge number of its opponents. There have been about 1/20th as many registration sites for this election as there were for previous elections, and it is mostly Fanmi Lavalas voters who have been excluded. According to party spokespeople, the party has not registered any candidates for president, and many of its voters will boycott the election unless their demands are met for the release of political prisoners and an end to the persecution.

The election has been postponed three times, most recently until Jan. 8.

Will the world accept this farce of an election? The Bush administration and its allies seem to be hoping that Haiti is just too poor and too black for anyone to care about whether democratic, constitutional, or even human rights are respected there. They have also cited the violence from both sides of the conflict, in order to disguise that most of that violence is directed at supporters of the ousted government, to prevent them from returning to power through a fair election.

But if this election goes forward without the release of political prisoners and the restoration of basic rights and security, it will not only be a tragedy for Haiti. It will also be a throwback to the days when the United States was able to destabilize, overthrow, and replace elected governments that it did not like. It will be a huge step backward for democracy in this hemisphere.

Mark Weisbrot, an economist, is co-director of the Center for Economic & Policy Research, in Washington (www.cepr.net). This column is being published in association with minutemanmedia.org, which originated it.

2 foreigners abducted as election hopes fade

A pair of foreign election workers and one of their wives were kidnapped amid increasing violence that has forced another delay of planned elections.

BY JOE MOZINGO

jmozingo@MiamiHerald.com

Miami Herald

December 31, 2005

Two officials with the Organization of American States working to prepare Haiti for elections have been kidnapped in Port-au-Prince, the OAS announced Friday, as violence surged around the capital and election officials conceded they would have to delay the vote for a fourth time.

The Haitian electoral council was meeting Friday afternoon to discuss new dates for the first of two rounds of national elections, meant to restore democracy to Haiti following the armed rebellion that ousted President Jean-Bertrand Aristide in February 2004.

Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice told the interim government in September that it must put a democratically elected government in the National Palace by a constitutional deadline of Feb. 7 in order to assure its political legitimacy.

But infighting and disorganization kept pushing the dates back, from October to November to the most recently set date of Jan. 8. Now at least one council member says Feb. 7 is not even realistic for the first round.

"I think we need two or three months at least," said Patrick Fequiere.

The U.S. Embassy in Haiti declined comment.

Meanwhile, a wave of shootings and kidnappings for ransom is showing just how precarious the situation is in Haiti. Two OAS officials working to set up technical equipment for the election -- and one of their spouses -- were kidnapped Thursday.

"The OAS is working at the highest level with Haitian authorities and international partners to secure the safe and timely release of the kidnapped individuals," according to an OAS press release. Two of the victims were from Peru and Guatemala. The nationality of the third is unknown.

LAWLESS SLUM

Just last week, a Jordanian soldier and a Canadian police officer, both members of the U.N. peacekeeping mission, were shot and killed in a lawless part of Port-au-Prince surrounding the Cité Soleil slum.

Peacekeepers have tried to seal the slum off, but checkpoints and shootouts with gangs -- fights that often wound and kill dozens of innocent bystanders -- have failed to curtail a rise in violent crime emanating from the area.

Kidnapping victims are often held there, including a Haitian-American deejay and a documentary filmmaker from North Carolina who were snatched Wednesday from a wealthy hillside suburb. As of Friday evening, their families were still negotiating for their release.

"At this point, the wave of kidnappings is not a purely criminal activity and I am convinced this is politically motivated," Mario Andresol, director of the Haitian National Police, told the Associated Press.

He did not elaborate, but many observers speculate that drug traffickers and various political groups are working to sow chaos to maintain a lawless environment.

ELECTION PROBLEMS

The election preparation has been dogged by problems and controversy from the start. OAS, which is responsible for the voter registration effort, had only distributed 1.4 million of 3.5 million vote cards by midweek, electoral officials said. At the same time, the group is trying to work out a problem in the registration database resulting in people being listed at wrong addresses.

Poll workers are yet to be hired or trained for the 804 polling centers around the country. Gérard Le Chevallier, the U.N.'s chief electoral advisor in Haiti, said the workers have been identified, but they won't be officially hired and put on the payroll until two weeks before the election. To do that, he said, the date must be set.

But Rosemond Pradel, secretary general of Haiti's Provisional Electoral Council, told the Associated Press that the new date might not be announced by the time the official date passes.

"In public, the date is still Jan. 8, but in private, everybody knows that this won't be the case, and that we probably won't even be able to announce a new date for the elections by then," he said.

**Two-timing in Haiti: more revelations about reporter fired after Flashpoints! story
Flashpoints! uncovers NED's campaign of disinformation.**

How far will this go?

Haiti Action Committee, CA

December 31, 2005

(Flashpoints! — Berkeley) This interview with NY Times Deputy Foreign Editor, Ethan Bonner, about Regine Alexandre was conducted soon after AP announced that they had severed ties with the freelancer because she is on the payroll of the National Endowment for Democracy. The AP story stated in part that "AP employees must avoid any behavior or activities that create a conflict of interest or compromise our ability to report the news fairly and accurately," said Mike Silverman, the news agency's managing editor."

Alexandre has also been a stringer for the New York Times.

The AP story continued "Alexandre, who freelances for other news organizations, reported only one story for the AP - on the Dec. 24 killing of a U.N. peacekeeper in Haiti — after beginning her association with the NED. She first began reporting for the AP in 2004. After another freelance journalist raised questions this week about Alexandre and the NED, she denied she was an employee of the organization. She said she had made trips into the Haitian countryside to establish links between the NED and Haitian non-governmental organizations and was reimbursed for her expenses. When told later that the NED confirmed her employment, she continued to maintain she did not work for the organization."

The NED said it was unaware when it hired Alexandre that she worked for the AP or any other media organization.

Today's Flashpoints! interview with New York Times:

Dennis Bernstein: Hello, Mr. Bonnar, how are you doing today?

Ethan Bonner — Deputy Foreign Editor, NY Times: I'm alright.

DB: You have any more information for me?

EB: No. I don't, I'm sorry. I see the AP story, though. Interesting.

DB: So, are you now investigating this further'

EB: I'm trying hard you know, I'm trying to reach Ginger Thompson. She's our key person on this, because she's the one who employed her. She's on vacation in Baltimore. We spoke today, she was going to Washington, she was trying to get the NED to speak to her, she was going to try to reach Ms. Alexandre, that's all I know. And when I saw this story, I tried to call her again and just got her voicemail and sent it to her by email. That's where I am.

DB: I see. And would you say that working with her again is on hold until you get to the bottom of this?

EB: Oh, sure. Yeah, that's for sure.

DB: So, you won't be using her until you know a lot more about this 'you don't have any idea'so, you still might use her'?

EB: No, well, you know, we're investigating ' you know how that is. I mean, you want to say something on your program?

DB: I would certainly like to have an understanding of where you're going to go with this story now, because I understand that this is now four or five days, and it's, you know'

EB: Well, it's three and a half, but I'm with ya. I mean, it's only been 24 hours since I started on it, right?

DB: Well, but Mr'what was his name'

EB: who knows, but anyway'

DB: 'told me'Mr. Eusnick'

EB: yeah, well, he should have gotten it to us earlier, what can I tell you? I mean, I can't give you an answer. If in fact the NED says that she works for them, or is on contract with them, then we will not be able to continue to employ her. You know, we do it on a per diem basis anyway, you understand, she's not on a contract, or' DB: I understand'

EB: 'but in any case, we do not want our'those who do journalism for us to be in the employ of government-sponsored organizations. You know, so'

DB: could you just complete that thought? And why is that? Because you believe'

EB: Because we believe that that would be a conflict of interest for that reporter.

DB: okay. Well, I will hope to hear from you in terms of when you have a final decision'

EB: believe me, when I have it, 'll let you know it. 'm not avoiding you; I just don't have the answer yet.

Subsequent to the above interview we received a phone call from New York Times Deputy Foreign Editor, Ethan Bonnar.

He stated that a spokesperson for the NED confirmed that, in fact, Regine Alexandre is an employee of the NED. Bonnar asserted that it is his understanding that she was not an NED employee at the same time she was a stringer for the NYT.

When asked if she was paid indirectly - through another agency - Bonnar replied, "...that is a deeper question..." that he would have to look into it further:

DB: Given that she lied, is that not a serious problem?

EB: This does kinda smell bad to us. We've been trying to reach Ms. Alexandre but we've been having a difficult time. Maybe she's in hiding.

Bonnar further stated that Regine Alexandre has been freelancing for the NYT for some time going back into the 1990's. Additionally, he suggested that she may have "fed into" stories filed by Lydia Polgreen and David Gonzales. Bonnar said that the NYT is not yet where the AP is in announcing that it is severing all ties, but he said that if the Times confirmed that Alexandre was in fact lying regarding her work with the NED, then they would not be able to work with her.

Earlier Response from AP:

Jack Stokes The Associated Press Corporate Communications

"Regine Alexandre, a freelance journalist for The Associated Press in Haiti, says that at no time has she been an employee of the National Endowment of Democracy. Alexandre, who is also a development consultant in Haiti, says that at the request of NED she did meet briefly with some Haitian nongovernment organizations to provide them with contact information for NED, and was reimbursed by NED for travel expenses. She says she was unaware that NED had any U.S. government links. The AP is continuing to look into the matter."

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Good, orderly elections are worth waiting for

BY ROGER F. NORIEGA

rnoriega@aei.org

The Miami Herald

December 29, 2005

The upcoming elections in Haiti will have a significant impact on U.S. security and the well-being of millions of long-suffering citizens of that desperately poor country. It is essential that the international community go the extra mile to ensure that all Haitians who want to choose candidates for president and parliament can do so in orderly balloting and relative tranquility. If that means postponing the electoral calendar yet again, so be it.

Haitians have come to expect very little from the international community when it comes to elections. In the mid-1990's, foreign observers characterized a series of national elections as "free, fair and fouled-up," but good enough for Haiti. A U.S. aid officer told me at the time that the mismanagement was a good thing, because it proved that the elections were authentically Haitian. Those statements reflected desperation to hold elections at any cost as part of a strategy of "restoring democracy" under President Jean-Bertrand Aristide.

Then, the only measure that the international community applied to whether the elections were adequate was whether they abetted Aristide's plan to consolidate all power under his personal control. Today, thanks to the hard work of an international team that genuinely cares about Haitians, elections can serve a higher interest, and so they should.

The stage for holding elections is much improved from the chaos and violence that Aristide sowed as a means of terrorizing his opponents. The Brazilian-led U.N. Mission (MINUSTAH) has asserted control over most of the country. Seven courageous U.N. peacekeepers have given their lives for this worthy cause, and the gangsters have been more or less contained in the slums of the capital.

International efforts to reactivate the economy have saved lives. But too few sustainable programs have taken root, with most economic actors waiting to see what comes from this latest bid for political stability.

After months of grappling with organizational challenges and postponements, Haiti's Provisional Electoral Council has set Jan. 8 as the date for presidential elections, with an expected runoff to be held on Feb. 15. Although the council recently hired a sound manager to help organize the balloting, too many logistical challenges remain unresolved to ensure orderly elections so soon after the holiday break. The council has barely begun a public-information campaign to tell Haitians when, where and how to vote. Only one million of 3.6 million voter-registration cards have been distributed; those without their cards do not know whether or where to cast their votes.

To be sure, Haitian voters will have a good number of decent candidates to choose from. A host of democrats -- who fought both Duvalier and Aristide -- are seeking the presidency. Former President Leslie Manigat is an honorable elder statesman seeking the post, as is Serge Gilles, former Port-au-Prince Mayor Evans Paul, business leader Charles Henry Baker and a half-dozen other democrats who have agreed to join forces to face Aristide's favorite in a second round.

Former President René Préval has been chosen by Aristide loyalists to reclaim the post he held under Aristide's tutelage from 1996 to 2001. Préval's solitary public campaign pledge is that Aristide should be allowed to return to Haiti -- which amounts to more of a threat than a promise. No doubt, the well-heeled drug smugglers who flourished during the Aristide years have a stake in the elections. In the meantime, honest Haitian democrats have scarcely any resources to stage a rally or run a media campaign.

As U.S. assistant secretary of state, I insisted that the elections be held in a timely manner to demonstrate to Haitians that the interim government did not intend to hold onto power beyond Feb. 7, 2006, when Aristide's term would have expired. That is already impossible under the current calendar. Moreover, the caretaker government has pledged not to undertake new initiatives after Feb. 7, and Provisional President Boniface Alexandre is a respected man with no designs on power.

The stakes are too high to rush into elections. There is still time for the combined team from the Organization of American States, the United Nations and Haitian electoral authorities to reassess the daunting challenges they are facing.

If a three- to four-week postponement gives Haitian democrats a better opportunity to wage a campaign, affords organizers more time to prepare for an orderly process and gives voters a chance to obtain their election credentials, then that is time well spent.

Frankly, we must all consider the calamity that will ensue if elections do not satisfy the will of the majority of the Haitian people who simply want to choose a government that will not abuse them. Roger F. Noriega, who served in the Bush administration from 2001 to 2005, is a director of the Miami law firm Tew Cardenas, LLP, and a visiting fellow at the American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research in Washington, D.C.

Haitian Elections Postponed a Fourth Time
Saturday December 31, 2005
By ALFRED de MONTESQUIOU
Associated Press Writer
The Guardian Unlimited

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti (AP) - Haiti's national elections, set for Jan. 8 and plagued by delays and disorganization, will be postponed for a fourth time, electoral officials said Friday.

Three Organization of American States election workers were kidnapped Thursday, police said, illustrating the lack of security surrounding the vote.

The presidential and legislative elections - the first since a rebellion ousted President Jean-Bertrand Aristide nearly two years ago - were to have been held in November, and have since been postponed three times.

Delays in distributing 3.5 million voter ID cards, disorganized voting centers and problems with the voter database were the main reasons for the latest postponement, Rosemond Pradel, secretary general of Haiti's Provisional Electoral Council, told The Associated Press.

There has been no official announcement about the postponement.

"In public, the date is still Jan. 8, but in private, everybody knows that this won't be the case, and that we probably won't even be able to announce a new date for the elections by then," Pradel said in a telephone interview.

Max Mathurin, chairman of the Provisional Electoral Council, said the council would meet with political leaders later Friday to explain the situation and consider a new date.

"My goal is to clarify the calendar," Mathurin told AP. He said he would hold elections "as soon as is realistically possible," but could not predict when that will be.

The United Nations and the Organization of American States - which are providing most of the logistics for the vote - declined to comment ahead of an official announcement by the electoral council.

There are 35 candidates for president and hundreds for 129 legislative seats in the elections, which are being funded by the international community. The winners will replace an interim government installed after Aristide's ouster in February 2004.

The three kidnapped OAS representatives - a Peruvian, a Guatemalan and a Haitian - were abducted as they drove near the volatile slum of Cite Soleil, said police Chief Mario Andresol. He said he did not know their names.

"I am convinced this is politically motivated," Andresol said in a telephone interview, without elaborating.

Thirty kidnappings were reported in Haiti in November, and 30 during the first week of December alone, according to police. The actual number is probably much higher because many families prefer to negotiate with kidnapers rather than notify police.

OAS officials abducted in Haiti
BBC News
December 30, 2005

Three members of the Organization of American States have been kidnapped in the Haitian capital, police have said.

The Haitian national and two foreigners were abducted in Port-au-Prince, a police official told the AFP agency.

They were working towards presidential elections, scheduled for 8 January but likely to be delayed due to lack of security and poor preparations.

Haiti has been blighted by political and criminal violence, despite the presence of a UN peacekeeping force.

The international force took charge in the country after armed insurgents overthrew President Jean-Bertrand Aristide in 2004.

The three employees - a Guatemalan, a Peruvian and the Haitian - were abducted while driving on a road near the international airport.

They were a short distance away from the Cite Soleil neighbourhood, where several kidnappings and shootings have taken place.

Continuing unrest

Officials in Haiti are widely expected to announce the postponement of elections scheduled for 8 January - the fourth such delay.

Electoral council official Pierre Richard Duchemin told the AFP news agency earlier this week: "We are not in a position to guarantee honest and credible elections can be held."

Haiti's interim leader Gerard Latortue has also urged officials to set a "more realistic" date for the vote.

Many of Haiti's electorate have yet to receive identification papers that will enable them to vote and the location of many polling stations has yet to be decided.

Meanwhile, violence has continued to rock the country, most of it linked to criminal and political rivalry between armed groups loyal to the exiled Mr Aristide or his successor.

A Canadian member of the UN's international peace-keeping force was shot dead in the street there last week.

On Thursday, police arrested 20 people suspected of taking part in kidnappings, in an operation which led to the release of two hostages.

OAS SECRETARY GENERAL STATEMENT ON THE KIDNAPPING OF OAS OFFICIALS IN HAITI

Dec. 30 2005

Press Release - Organization of American States

The Organization of American States yesterday learned that two officials working on behalf of the Organization in Haiti, along with the spouse of one of them, were kidnapped in this country. The officials are information technology specialists who were working to set up technical equipment in preparation for Haiti's upcoming presidential and parliamentary elections.

OAS Secretary General, José Miguel Insulza, expressed strong condemnation of the incident and concern for the families of the three persons who were kidnapped. The OAS is working at the highest level with Haitian authorities and international partners to secure the safe and timely release of the kidnapped individuals.

Secretary General Insulza mandated Assistant Secretary General, Ambassador Albert R. Ramdin, to coordinate efforts in this regard and to maintain constant contact with the Haitian authorities and the OAS Special Mission in Haiti.

The Organization of American States calls on all sectors of Haitian society to reject this and other acts of violence and to assist local authorities and the international community in their efforts to restore peace and security to Haiti.

AP ends relationship with Haiti freelancer

AP Newswire

The San Jose Mercury News

December 30, 2005

Associated Press

SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico - The Associated Press has terminated its relationship with a freelance reporter in Haiti after learning she was working for a U.S. government-sponsored organization. The National Endowment for Democracy confirmed Regine Alexandre began working for the organization in October as a "part-time facilitator" between the NED and Haitian groups.

The NED describes itself as a private, nonprofit organization that aims to strengthen democratic institutions around the world, but receives funding from the U.S. Congress.

"AP employees must avoid any behavior or activities that create a conflict of interest or compromise our ability to report the news fairly and accurately," said Mike Silverman, the news agency's managing editor.

Alexandre, who freelances for other news organizations, reported only one story for the AP - on the Dec. 24 killing of a U.N. peacekeeper in Haiti - after beginning her association with the NED. She first began reporting for the AP in 2004.

After another freelance journalist raised questions this week about Alexandre and the NED, she denied she was an employee of the organization. She said she had made trips into the Haitian countryside to establish links between the NED and Haitian non-governmental organizations and was reimbursed for her expenses.

When told later that the NED confirmed her employment, she continued to maintain she did not work for the organization.

The NED said it was unaware when it hired Alexandre that she worked for the AP or any other media organization.

**Denial in Haiti:
AP reporter RÉGINE is wearing two hats
by Anthony Fenton and Dennis Bernstein
Haiti Action
December 30, 2005**

Has the Associated Press and the New York Times gone to bed with the National Endowment for Democracy?

ORIGINAL ARTICLE UPDATED: 12/30/05 12:30 PM PST

(Flashpoints! - Berkeley) A by-lined freelancer for the Associated Press, who is also a stringer for the New York Times in Haiti, is moonlighting as a consultant for the US Government funded National Endowment for Democracy, according to an official at the NED, and several of the agency's grantees.

NED is funded annually by grants from the US Congress and State Department, with a 2006 global budget of \$80 million, an increase of \$20 million from 2005. For years the group has played a controversial role-with lopsided funding of elections in foreign countries-in promoting pro-US candidates and policies friendly to US interests. Most recently, the NED has been accused of attempting to destabilize the Venezuelan government.

Regine Alexandre, whose name appears as an AP by-line at least a dozen times starting in May of 2004, and appears as a contributor to two NY Times stories, is a part of an NED "experiment" to place a representative on the ground in countries where the NED has funded groups.

"This is almost like an experiment for us," said Fabiola Cordova, a Haiti program officer with the NED in Washington D.C. on December 6th. "The NED usually doesn't have a field presence and most of the work from our side takes place here in D.C. Then once the grants are approved it's really very much on the grantees' leadership and initiative to implement their programs."

Cordova said the NED tries to monitor the programs from DC and to provide some financial oversight, but "a lot of the organizations in Haiti really need a lot of hand-holding, so we hired this person to be part-time NED staff on the ground, and she's helped us, well, both identify new grantees and to respond to any specific questions they're going to have on the ground."

Cordova said the relationship between NED and Alexandre has worked out well. "I think it has been very helpful, and over time as they get more used to having her there, they will use her more effectively too. It works out well for us," said the NED program officer, "because we don't need a full time person. Like I said, it's an experiment, NED has never had like a field presence like this before, but we really wanted to expand our Haiti program so we thought it was really necessary to do this."

Cordova said that Alexandre "was already in Haiti doing some other freelance work" and the NED hired her part time where she "works as a consultant." As a follow up, NED's Haiti program officer forwarded in a December 6, 2005 eMail the direct contacts for Regine Alexandre including her phone and eMail address. "Nice talking to you today," wrote Cordova, "As promised, attached is the

information on our Haiti grantees, and the contact information on our part-time field rep in Haiti. Her name is Regine Alexandre. I will drop her an e-mail and to let her know you might be in touch."

In recent years, NED funding for Haiti has skyrocketed from \$0 in 2003, before the forced departure of elected President John Bertrand Aristide, to \$149,300 in 2004 to its current level of \$541,045 in 2005 (8 grantees). NED spending in Haiti is at its highest level since 1990, the year Aristide was first elected.

Alexandre denies working for the NED, but said she has met with several NED grantees and was considering working for NED but then decided not to. "All I can tell you," she said in a phone interview from Port-au-Prince on December 27th, "I met with NED, I was going to work for them, and I didn't know much about NED and I decided not to work for them. I remember meeting with two, maybe three of the grantees and that's it, but I do not work for NED."

In response to queries to AP about Alexandre's links to NED, Jack Stokes of the Associated Press, Corporate Communications, replied that "Regine Alexandre, a freelance reporter for AP, says that at no time has she been an employee of the National Endowment of Democracy. Alexandre, who is also a development consultant in Haiti, says that at the request of NED she did meet briefly with some Haitian non-government organizations to provide them with contact information for NED, and was reimbursed by NED for travel expenses. She says she was unaware that NED had any U.S. government links. The AP is continuing to look into the matter," the Stokes statement concluded.

For their part, the New York Times has been avoiding comment for days. After dozens of calls to several offices at the Times, we were told that they were still looking into it, and that their reporter in Haiti, Ginger Thompson, who used Alexandre as a stringer, had no information about whether Alexandre was working with the State Department. When I pointed out we were talking about the NED, and not the State Department directly, the deputy Foreign Desk Editor for the Times, Ethan Bonner, said the Times will look into the matter further and get back to us. Mr. Bonner acknowledged that it could present a "conflict of interest," depending on the situation, but he had no idea whether this particular case would be a problem, or whether the Times would be utilizing Regine Alexandre again or not.

In a follow up interview on 12/30/2005, Times Deputy Foreign Editor, Ethan Bonner, stated that Thompson had caught up with Alexandre for a brief cell phone conversation and Alexandre assured her, as in the case of AP, she received expenses for travel, which included air-fare to Washington D.C. for a job interview with the NED, but then turned it down. Bonner said that the NY Times believed that Alexander was not working or consulting with the NED when she was reporting for the paper. He said in her interview with Thomson that Alexandre denied being an employee for the NED, but the line went dead before Thompson could follow up as to whether Alexandre was on the NED payroll, either directly or as a consultant or being paid by NED grantees with NED monies.

"Conflict of interest" would be to put it mildly. "The NED was created in the highest echelons of the US national security state," writes William Robinson in *Promoting Polyarchy: Globalization, US Intervention and Hegemony*. "It is organically integrated into the overall execution of US national security and foreign policy. In structure, organization, and operation, it is closer to clandestine and

national security organs such as the CIA than to apolitical or humanitarian endowments, as the name would suggest."

Other groups that have worked with Alexandre include RANCODHA, a Haiti-based group, also working around the elections. RANCODHA was the recipient of a \$41,220 grant from the NED, according to documents obtained from the NED. Gadin Jean-Pierre, a spokesperson for the group, said in an interview from Haiti on December 27th that Alexandre has been in regular touch with the group, as a representative of the NED. "She's keeping in touch with us, and we keep her informed about our activities that we are doing now with the project. I have had a meeting with her already, and she keeps in touch with us."

In a second interview, Jean-Pierre again confirmed Alexandre's work for the NED. "NED is the organization funding our program...We get funding from NED and we are working in close collaboration with Regine Alexandre. She will meet tomorrow with us, at 9:00; we have the evaluation of the program of the last module we have done. She will be with us tomorrow (Thursday, December 29th)."

Hans Tippenhauer, director of Fondation Espoir (Hope Foundation), the recipient of a \$132,970 NED grant, also confirmed that Regine Alexandre was working for the NED, and acted as a "contact officer" between his organization and NED. In an interview from Haiti Tippenhauer said "Yes, she is a contact person" for Fondation Espoir, and added that "the reality is our last program was approved before she was in charge, so now she is just a contact officer for us, but we are working directly with, I mean we had previous engagements with NED in Washington..."

Maryse Balthazar is the coordinator of the Association of Haitian Women Journalists or AMIFEH. The group received a \$16,815 NED grant for 2005. Balthazar said she last met with Regine Alexandre on December 8th. She says that she first started working with Alexandre in September 2005. Part of AMIFEH's work is to train Haitian journalists how to cover elections. "Yes," she said in an interview on 12/29/2005, "I work with Alexandre." Balthazar said the last meeting she had with Alexandre was "before the Session of the North department," on December 8th, and that she had commenced working with her in September of 2005

Slain UN peacekeeper receives military honours
The Jamaica Gleaner
Saturday | December 31, 2005

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti (AP):

A JORDANIAN officer who was killed while serving as a U.N. peacekeeper in Haiti was revered as a martyr yesterday as he received military honours at a service in the capital.

Capt. Youssef Algader was shot in the head Dec. 24 while patrolling a main road on the outskirts of the highly volatile Cite Soleil slum. The body of Algader, who was 31, married and had three children, was to be flown back to his village of Zarqua in Jordan on Friday.

"I pray for Allah the almighty to greet our martyr in paradise," said Col. Mohammed Sabayleh, who commands the 1st Battalion in Cite Soleil, where Algader served.

Algader's casket, draped in a blue U.N. flag, was then turned toward the holy Muslim city of Mecca.

At the brief ceremony, a fellow Jordanian officer said Algader was distributing food to civilians an hour before shooting broke out in Cite Soleil. A battalion of 1,500 Jordanian peacekeepers in armoured vehicles has pledged to reclaim the slum from heavily armed gangs.

IMMHE: Delay of Election Dates in Haiti
December 30, 2005
CCN Matthews

PORT AU PRINCE, HAITI - The International Mission for Monitoring Haitian Elections (IMMHE) has been in Haiti since last August with a team of long-term observers in all regions of the country. The Chair of the IMMHE steering committee, Jean Pierre Kingsley, in Haiti for the last two days, has met many of the principal actors involved in the electoral process and wishes to inform the people of Haiti of the findings of the Mission to date. The main findings also reflect those of the Vice Chairman of the steering committee, Mr. Danville Walker, who has also visited Haiti recently.

Mr. Jacques Bernard, appointed executive director of the CEP slightly more than two months ago, has demonstrated clear leadership in gathering the support of the primary actors, both national and international, in the management of the electoral process.

Both the Organization of American States (OAS) and the United Nations Mission for the Stabilization of Haiti (MINUSTAH) have joined their efforts to those of the CEP to ensure progress on the different milestones required to achieve successful elections. Notably, Mr. Bernard holds daily meetings with the CEP and the main international actors to assess the state of electoral preparations.

Based on the information that was provided, 1,400,000 national Identification Cards have been distributed to electors, leaving some 2 million to be picked up. The OAS has recently deployed additional efforts to increase the rate of distribution by adding 840 persons to the 1,900 already at work in some 400 distribution centers. These cards are necessary for electors to know where to vote.

While the overwhelming majority of some 800 voting centers were identified in accordance with security criteria, a small number require change. Any modifications to the voting centers will need to be reflected in the cards to be distributed. It is late in the process to consider major changes in this area. In addition, the list of electors must also be made public so that electors may request changes that are required.

At this time, 97% of the electoral staff - some 38,000 persons - has been recruited; they will be trained taking into account the date of the election. Electoral supplies have already been prepared and ballots printed.

In our view, it is necessary to delay the first round of the Presidential and legislative elections scheduled for January 8, 2006. A new date must be set in light of the tasks required to achieve credible elections.

A minimum delay of three to four weeks is necessary for the first round, and the second round should also be delayed, taking into account the time required to deal with complaints and the Carnival period. Moreover, a detailed timeline highlighting the activities, dates and responsibilities must be established with the agreement of all actors.

At this stage of the electoral process, the priority is for citizens to go and pick up their cards. All of the principal actors, the transitional government, the political parties, the CEP, the OAS, MINUSTAH, the media and Haitian civil society must focus on convincing citizens to do just that: go and pick up their cards.

Thus it will be possible to achieve credible elections that are honest, transparent and therefore accepted as such by the people of Haiti as well as the international community.

Scrapping of elections imminent, Haiti on the verge of another crisis
Electoral crisis could become a political crisis as anti-government protests increase
The Dominican Today
December 30, 2005

PORT-AU-PRINCE.- The Haitian authorities will announce this Friday a new postponement of the presidential and legislative elections, revealing Haiti's difficulties in finding stability two years after president Jean Bertrand Aristide's ouster.

Last week, Provisory Electoral Council (CEP) president Max Mathurin had requested an extension of a few days to evaluate the January 8 elections' technical feasibility.

Since then, the declarations from Haitian leaders leave no doubts of the new delay, the fourth this year.

"It is more and more probable that the elections will not be able to take place in the announced dates," member of the CEP told the press. "We cannot guarantee honest and credible elections," said Pierre Richard Duchemin, in charge of the CEP's electoral registry.

The elections, initially programmed for November 13, were successively postponed for November 20, December 27 and January 8.

Close to one week before the first electoral balloting, under United Nations supervision, the authorities were unable to distribute the 3.5 million new biometric identity cards to the electorate, made in Mexico, which would have allowed them to vote.

For their part, provisory president Boniface Alexandre and prime minister Gérard Latortue have stated their desire for the Council can establish "a more realistic" calendar, without specifying a new date. Whereas the commercial attaché of the United States in Haiti, Timothy Carney, called on the CEP "to take their time before presenting another calendar", recognizing that the complex electoral process was "in a country that has known fatal upheavals in the political, social and economic plane."

This electoral crisis could become a political crisis at a time when anti-government protests increase.

Some political parties that participate in the electoral contest threaten to take the Electoral Council to court for what they consider serious damages due to the numerous delays, and protest against "the foreign influence in the electoral process." Others demand the Government's resignation as a "sanction" for the electoral crisis.

A group of 20 parties, members of the National Council of Political Parties, demanded the ouster of Gérard Latortue and the formation of a national coalition government in charge of organizing the elections 90 days after taking office.

Migration to U.S. soared in '05

The number of migrants heading to the United States from Cuba and the Dominican Republic was unusually high in 2005. Experts say both the economy and political policies fueled the upsurge.

BY OSCAR CORRAL

ocorral@MiamiHerald.com

Miami Herald

December 30, 2005

The constant blackouts, the dismal economy, the messages of false hope from Fidel Castro. It was all too much for Estrella Fresnillo, a well-known Cuban journalist.

Fresnillo left Cuba behind this year to come to the United States, joining a growing wave of immigrants from across the Caribbean taking to the seas -- or sneaking through U.S. land borders -- in search of a new life.

This year, the Coast Guard interdicted almost twice as many Cubans at sea than last year -- more than any year since 1994, when a rafter crisis of 37,000 prompted the United States and Cuba to strike up a rare dialogue to implement a controversial new immigration policy.

The Coast Guard also intercepted almost four times as many Dominicans at sea but caught fewer Haitians trying to reach Florida this year than in 2004. Interdictions of Haitians last year set a record for the past 10 years.

Although Fresnillo did not enter by sea, she is part of another fast-growing group of Cuban migrants who entered the United States illegally by land. Fresnillo crossed from Canada to Buffalo, N.Y., in September.

As many as 7,610 Cubans entered the United States through its southern border in the fiscal year that ended Sept. 30, according to U.S. Customs and Border Protection.

The Coast Guard interdicted 2,866 Cubans at sea in 2005, up from 1,499 in 2004. Many more also made it to shore in South Florida than last year. Border Patrol spokesman Steve McDonald said 2,530 Cubans were detained in South Florida in 2005, up from 955 the year before.

"The situation in Cuba is worse than ever," Fresnillo said. "I've never seen so many blackouts, and the hurricanes coming through were horrible. I am part of a generation of people that is disillusioned." The U.S. State Department said several factors have contributed to the uptick in migrants. Aside from widespread blackouts, the Cuban government is taking a much bigger bite -- up to 18 percent -- of every dollar sent by relatives. And new U.S. rules imposed in 2004 restrict the amount of remittances U.S. relatives can legally send to their families to \$100 a month.

"The crackdown on dissidents is also a major factor," said a State Department official who asked not to be named. "This year, the Cubans were promised more than in the past, especially with [Fidel Castro]

saying they are coming out of their special period. But the average Cuban looks around and realizes it's just not getting any better."

U.S.-Cuba immigration policy took center stage this year after several high-profile incidents involving clashes between the Coast Guard and Cuban migrants at sea. In one incident, a go-fast boat smuggling Cubans capsized following a chase by a Coast Guard vessel, and a 6-year-old boy drowned.

"From what we've seen and heard here, the latest trend in migrant smuggling from Cuba is the go-fast boat," said Coast Guard Lt. Cmdr. Chris O'Neil. "For those that go the route of migrant smuggling, they leave themselves at the mercy of smugglers who don't have an interest in their safety. They are interested in the cash."

After the 1994 crisis, the United States implemented the controversial "wet-foot, dry-foot" policy, which generally allows Cubans who make it to U.S. shores to stay in the country but mostly guarantees repatriation to Cuba for those interdicted at sea.

In a report earlier this year, the State Department accused Cuba's government of refusing to comply with the 1995 migration accords, which were designed to prevent another exodus. The report said Cuba's government doesn't try to stop migrants on vessels while they are still in Cuban territorial waters, and it refuses to issue exit permits to many citizens who receive U.S. travel documents allowed by the accords.

U.S. Rep. Lincoln Díaz-Balart said the 1995 accords should be "abrogated. It's fundamentally flawed and immoral. . . . I would eliminate the migration accords. But I haven't been able to convince President Bush of that."

Cubans aren't the only ones taking to the seas in a growing tide. The number of Dominicans interdicted by the Coast Guard has grown more than fivefold from about 801 in 2002 to 4,388 in 2005.

Eduardo Sanchez, a representative of President Leonel Fernandez's Dominican Liberation Party, blamed, in part, a global economy for the exodus. He also said the higher number could mean the Coast Guard has stepped up its efforts to intercept Dominicans -- most of them heading for Puerto Rico.

"Although the economy is growing, the distribution of that wealth is much slower," Sanchez said. "The poorer people, who risk themselves to come to the U.S., always have an incentive."

Despite the turmoil in Haiti, the number of Haitian migrants interdicted by the Coast Guard in 2005 -- 1,828 -- is less than last year's 3,078. Most of them are taken back to Haiti.

Activists in Miami's Haitian community warn that the lower number should not be interpreted to mean that conditions in Haiti are improving.

"Things have never been worse than they are now in Haiti -- the violence, the misery, the poverty. It has been called a failed state," said Steven Forester, policy advocate for Haitian Women of Miami. "It is simply wrong that anybody should be returned to Haiti at this point."

Conditions also seem to be getting worse in Cuba, according to Cubans who left this year.

"Popular rebellion and discontent have increased in the last two years, and at the same time government repression is increasing," said dissident Manuel Vasquez Portal, who left Cuba with a visa in June. "Life for us in Cuba had become impossible."

Jordanian officer killed in Haiti
ALFRED de MONTESQUIOU
The Associated Press
ABC News
December 30, 2005

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti Dec 30, 2005 — A Jordanian officer who was killed while serving as a U.N. peacekeeper in Haiti was revered as a martyr on Friday as he received military honors at a service in the capital.

Capt. Youssef Algader was shot in the head Dec. 24 while patrolling a main road on the outskirts of the highly volatile Cite Soleil slum. The body of Algader, who was 31, married and had three children, was to be flown back to his village of Zarqua in Jordan on Friday.

"I pray for Allah the almighty to greet our martyr in paradise," said Col. Mohammed Sabayleh, who commands the 1st Battalion in Cite Soleil, where Algader served.

Algader's casket, draped in a blue U.N. flag, was then turned toward the holy Muslim city of Mecca.

At the brief ceremony, a fellow Jordanian officer said Algader was distributing food to civilians an hour before shooting broke out in Cite Soleil. A battalion of 1,500 Jordanian peacekeepers in armored vehicles has pledged to reclaim the slum from heavily armed gangs.

In a speech, U.N. special envoy to Haiti Juan Gabriel Valdes paid tribute to Algader and his fellow peacekeepers.

"I wish to insist on our deep respect and gratitude for the work of the Jordanian peacekeepers in Haiti," Valdes said.

Algader is the second Jordanian peacekeeper to be killed in or near Cite Soleil in recent months, and the seventh peacekeeper killed in action in Haiti.

The 9,000 strong U.N. mission came to stabilize Haiti in June 2004, shortly after the ouster of former president Jean Bernard Aristide, and ahead of national elections due next January.

The Bloc and Liberals align on Haiti policy

Dec. 29, 2005

YVES ENGLER

The Toronto Star

Canadian involvement in Haiti has made for some strange bedfellows. Among the many puzzling aspects of our country's recent role in the hemisphere's poorest country is that the Bloc Québécois is a passionate defender of the Liberal government's questionable conduct.

And supposedly "left-wing" groups based in Quebec share a political analysis with U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice.

While the Bloc asks questions about CIA "torture" planes landing in Canada, the separatist party criticizes the NDP for using the word "removal" to describe what happened on Feb. 29, 2004 to Haiti's elected President Jean-Bertrand Aristide.

In a recent meeting of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade, Bloc MP Pierre Paquette insisted the NDP's Alexa McDonough use the word "departure" instead.

This is also the position of Minister of Foreign Affairs Pierre Pettigrew and U.S. President George W. Bush.

Removal is the word preferred by Haiti's neighbours in the Caribbean community (Caricom) and the African Union. Both organizations have called for inquiries into Aristide's ouster and have refused to recognize the interim government.

A Bloc MP who met with members of the Montreal Haiti Action Committee refused to see the irony of agreeing with the Bush administration on Haiti; Rice went out of her way recently in Ottawa to praise Canada's role on the island nation.

Willing to condemn the U.S. war in Iraq, the Bloc remains silent on Canadian "aid" that for three years went almost exclusively to NGOs opposed to the Haitian government and now flows to groups who ignore the human rights disaster that has resulted from the overthrow of the president and thousands of other elected officials.

Neither the Bloc nor the Conservatives have asked the government why the deputy minister of "justice" for the first 15 months of the interim government, Philippe Vixamar, was on CIDA's payroll for four years until July 2005.

How bad are the current human rights and social conditions in Haiti?

On Aug. 20, machete-wielding men, protected by Haitian National Police, chopped to death as many as 50 spectators in a crowd of 5,000 at a soccer game paid for by USAID in a poor Port au Prince neighbourhood.

After UN "peacekeepers" attacked a "gang" leader in a Port au Prince slum, Ali Besnaci, head of Doctors Without Borders in Haiti, said: "We received 27 people wounded by gunshots on July 6. Three quarters were children and women."

Reuters and Associated Press have reported numerous police killings of unarmed protesters over the past 18 months. On June 28, UN Undersecretary-General for Peacekeeping, Jean-Marie Guehenno, described the situation in Cap Haitien, the country's second largest city, as worse than that in Sudan's devastated Darfur region.

More recently, Thierry Faggart, director of the human rights section for the UN mission in Haiti, admitted that the post-coup human rights situation is "catastrophic."

Yet Canadian-funded NGOs working in Haiti (largely based in Quebec) who criticized the Aristide government and called for his removal remain curiously silent on the abysmal record of the interim government.

Officials from the Quebec Federation of Labour blocked a resolution originating in English-Canada union locals criticizing Canada's role in Haiti at the Canadian Labour Congress's annual convention in June.

Even Quebec-based Alternatives, a "progressive" news organization that receives CIDA funding for work in Haiti, effectively supports the Liberal government despite growing grassroots opposition to Canada's shameful role in Haiti.

Why are the Bloc and Quebec "left" organizations siding with what has been described as "Canadian imperialism" in Haiti?

Could it be the numerous Quebec-based companies that do business there? Or the diaspora that sent many members of the Haitian elite to Montreal? Or the fact that the Aristide government promoted the Creole language at the expense of French?

One can only hope that this is not an example of an "oppressed people" ignoring their complicity in a 21st-century version of colonialism.

Yves Engler is co-author (with Anthony Fenton) of *Canada in Haiti — Waging War on the Poor Majority*. The article is an excerpt from the introduction to the forthcoming French translation of the book.

Election Campaigning Grips Haiti
by Lourdes Garcia-Navarro
NPR
December 29, 2005

A Haitian man stands in front of campaign posters supporting candidate Charles Henri Baker in Ganthier, Haiti.

Haitian Political Jingles
Charles Henri Baker

Partial lyric: "Charles Henri Baker decided that Haiti must change; Real Haitians, we should all walk with him"

Marc Bazin

Partial lyric: "There's only one rendez-vous, it's the rendez-vous by the table; We die for the table, we'll be imprisoned for the table; We go into exile for the table, we'll vote for the table"

Guy Philippe

Partial lyric: "We are mobilized, we are going to elections; We are going to vote for Guy Philippe, we'll never forget what he did!"

Rene Preval

Partial lyric: "Tell me who built more roads? Preval!; Who built more schools? Ti Rene!; And national production? Preval!; All Haitians, let's relax, put it down so we can rest!"

Morning Edition, December 29, 2005 · There are 35 presidential candidates and 44 parties running in Haiti's first elections since former President Jean-Bertrand Aristide's ouster last year.

Among the contenders for the country's top post are a former president, a rebel leader and a former prime minister.

The campaigning season has gotten under way, with posters, political rallies and candidate jingles flooding the streets and the airwaves.

In a country where more than 50 percent of the people are illiterate, election jingles are one of the most powerful campaign tools.

Each party has a symbol and a ballot number, and they figure prominently in the songs.

Former President Aristide still looms large in Haiti and candidates seem to be either running against him or as a stand-in for him. Aristide -- a democratically elected leader -- was forced out of office in February 2004.

Since then, an interim government backed by United Nations peacekeeping forces has been in charge of the country.

Jordanian peacekeeper shot dead in Haiti

by Clarens Renois

Caribbean Net News

Thursday, December 29, 2005

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti (AFP): A Jordanian soldier with the UN force in Haiti has been shot dead, a source close to the Jordanian contingent said Sunday, amid growing fears that the country's elections will have to be delayed again.

The soldier was shot in the head while on patrol Saturday in the huge Cite Soleil shantytown in the Haitian capital, the source said.

There has been renewed violence in Port-au-Prince ahead of the first round of presidential and legislative elections due to be held on January 8.

The elections will be the first since Jean Bertrand Aristide quit as president and fled the country following a popular uprising in February 2004.

Voting has already been postponed three times and election officials are due to announce this week whether the January 8 date will be kept because of delays in finding polling stations and sending out voting cards.

Seven members with the UN peacekeeping mission in Haiti have been killed since the force was deployed in June 2004 in the chaos that followed Aristide's departure. A Canadian policeman in the force was killed last Monday.

The Jordanian soldier was identified as Yusef Mubarak. Jordan has 1,500 troops in the UN force of almost 7,500 soldiers and 2,000 police.

Other major contributors include Brazil, Argentina, Chile, Sri Lanka and the Philippines.

UN patrols face virtually daily attacks and harassment in the Cite Soleil district of 300,000 people, which is controlled by armed gangs and is known as an Aristide bastion. About half of the Jordanian force is deployed in Cite Soleil.

The Canadian police officer, Mark Bourque, was killed as he drove near the shantytown.

Bourque was part of a group of 25 police sent by Canada in October to reinforce the UN Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) ahead of the election.

"We're there to help Haitians. We hope elections will be held January 8," Foreign Minister Pierre Pettigrew said. "This tragedy deeply affected us, but we continue to work with the United Nations," he added.

With the international community closely watching events in Haiti, the president of the Provisional Electoral Council, Max Mathurin, is to announce this week whether a new delay will be sought for the elections.

He met the leaders of political parties on Friday and said there would be a new meeting Wednesday after "a technical evaluation".

The vote was originally planned for November 13 but organisational delays have forced three postponements. "This week will be decisive," said Mathurin.

The United Nations has made the holding of fair elections a priority in its efforts to help the poorest nation in the western hemisphere.

Juan Gabriel Valdes, the UN special envoy for Haiti, last week highlighted the United Nations' determination to impose security for the elections.

"MINUSTAH has taken every necessary measure as part of its mandate in increasing human resources and material for the election," he said Thursday during a visit by US Undersecretary of State Nicholas Burns.

"We think this is an extremely important time in the history of Haiti," Burns said.

RP sending more peacekeeping troops to Haiti, Liberia
The Sun Star, Manila, Philippines
December 29, 2005

MANILA -- President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo has approved deploying fresh batches of more than 300 peacekeeping troops to Haiti and Liberia, both struggling to recover from civil strife, the military said Thursday.

A 165-strong military contingent bound for Liberia and 155 soldiers destined for Haiti were to start leaving Friday to replace Filipino peacekeepers earlier deployed to the beleaguered countries, the military said in a statement.

They will have a six-month tour of duty, during which their expenses would be shouldered by the United Nations.

Despite the killing of a Filipino peacekeeper in Haiti in April, the Philippines has continued to provide assistance to the Caribbean nation as part of a commitment to help the United Nations provide humanitarian help there, it said.

Police and an 8,860-strong UN peacekeeping force have pledged to restore security, which evaporated after the February 2004 rebellion that toppled President Jean-Bertrand Aristide.

Widespread kidnappings have been a key concern as Jan. 8 presidential and parliamentary elections approach.

In Liberia, some 15,000 UN peacekeepers are helping keep the calm following presidential elections last November that raised hopes the West African nation would move past a war that killed 200,000 people.(AP)

Dominican Republic to create new force to monitor Haiti border

AP

The Jamaica Observer

Thursday, December 29, 2005

SANTO DOMINGO (AP) - The Dominican Republic will create a military force to monitor the border shared with Haiti, after months of heightened tensions between the two neighbours.

Army, Navy and Air Force soldiers will form a unit to guard the 391-kilometre (243-mile) border, Sigfrido Pared Perez, head of the Dominican armed forces, said Tuesday. They'll begin work in January or February.

"The specialised unit will have as its mission to patrol all areas that are contiguous with the neighbouring country," Pared told The Associated Press.

About 1,000 Dominican soldiers were currently patrolling the border area. Pared said they haven't decided whether they will use troops already on border patrol to form the new force, or bring in additional soldiers.

About 1 million Haitians, many of them illegal immigrants, live in the Dominican Republic, home to 8.8 million people.

The Dominican Republic has relied on Haitian labour for decades to cut sugar cane, harvest coffee beans and to work in construction.

Tensions have recently grown between the two nations, which share the Caribbean island of Hispaniola.

In mid-December, student protesters angry over the treatment of Haitian migrants in the Dominican Republic, disrupted a one-day visit to Haiti's capital of Port-au-Prince by Dominican President Leonel Fernandez.

Earlier this month, Dominican villagers burned about 20 shacks occupied by Haitian migrants in reprisal for their alleged involvement in the killing of a businessman.

In May, the Dominican government deported at least 2,000 Haitians after the killing of a Dominican woman. No one was arrested for the murder, but Dominicans went on a retaliatory rampage, beheading two Haitians.

Haiti Telecom Kickbacks Tarnish Aristide
by Lucy Komisar,
Special to CorpWatch.org
December 29th, 2005

Two U.S. lawsuits charge that former Haitian President Jean-Bertrand Aristide and his associates accepted hundreds of thousands of dollars in kickbacks from politically connected U.S. telecom companies. "Plus ça change," one might say in Haiti. The more the leadership in this corruption riddled country changes, the more things stay the same.

President Aristide's sudden departure from Haiti in 2004 is stalked by controversy. His defenders say he was a champion of the poor hustled out of the country by a Bush administration fearful of his radical populism. His critics charge that he was a corrupt and cynical demagogue building power by appealing to the poor and repressing opposition.

Lawsuits filed this Fall challenge the former priest's image of political purity and raise claims that both he and U.S. corporate executives scammed illegal profits off the hemisphere's poorest population. In one suit, a fired executive charged his former employer, the U.S. telecom IDT (Newark, NJ), with corruption, defamation, and intimidation under the New Jersey anti-racketeering law. In the second, the government of Haiti contends that IDT, Fusion (New York, NY) and several other North American telecoms violated the federal RICO anti-racketeering statute. Both suits allege that Aristide, now in exile in South Africa, and his associates, took kickbacks.

The story that the suits reveal is emblematic of the business relationship between a powerful rich country and a tiny impoverished nation linked by technology – and corruption. It starts out ironically: with a Western policy, designed to protect U.S. companies from price competition, which acts to give poor countries a break.

International phone calls access the routing systems of both the caller's country and the recipient's. The phone company where the call originates routinely pays a per-minute charge or "termination fee" for accessing the overseas system. The goal of this arrangement is to level the playing field in situations where most of the calling goes in one direction. There are, for example, far more Haitians in America who can afford to call family in their native land than there are Haitians in Haiti who have the money to dial America. Without the 23 cents termination fee, only the U.S. company would be paid and the Haitian phone service would not be reimbursed for maintaining its infrastructure.

The U.S. established a system of fixed fees – the international settlements policy (ISP) – in the 1980s, based on a practice dating to the 1930s, to strengthen the bargaining position of American telecoms against foreign carriers. In spite of the rhetoric of free-market competition, the U.S. didn't want foreign phone companies making deals that forced U.S. companies to compete against each other. The Federal Communications Commission fixed the per-minute rates and required all U.S. companies to pay it. Companies had to inform the FCC and competitors if they negotiated lower rates.

The lawsuits charge that some U.S. firms cut secret deals to pay Haiti cut-rate per-minute fees while kicking back hundreds of thousands of dollars to Aristide and his associates. Instead of providing the

Haitian phone company with money to build up infrastructure and services, the deals helped corrupt officials to loot the system.

Bipartisan Friends in High Places

IDT corporate governance gets failing marks from The Corporate Library and Institutional Shareholder Services, which rate companies for institutional investors. The board that flunked the governance test includes highly connected Washington insiders from both parties.

IDT'S Republican Buddies (+1 Dem)

CEO James Courter, was a Republican New Jersey congressman from 1979 to 1991.

Vice President Dick Cheney is a friend of Courter's, and when Net2Phone, an IDT internet phone company, went public in 1999, he arranged for Cheney to buy 1,000 initial shares. According to David Cay Johnston in the New York Times, Cheney paid \$15,000 for the shares and sold them the same day for \$26,574, a neat profit of 77.2 percent.

Prominent Republicans on IDT's board of directors include:

Jeane J. Kirkpatrick, former ambassador to the United Nations;

Jack F. Kemp, former New York congressman and Republican vice presidential hopeful;

James S. Gilmore III, former governor of Virginia; and

Rudy Boschwitz, former senator from Minnesota.

Pete Wilson, former governor of California, is on the board of the IDT Entertainment subsidiary.

William F. Weld, former Massachusetts governor who plans to run for governor of New York, was a director of the IDT board and chair of its governance committee until he resigned this fall.

Slade Gorton, former Republican Senator from Washington, replaced him.

Leon E. Panetta, the lone IDT Democrat, a former congressman who was chief of staff in the Clinton administration, is on the board of the IDT Telecom unit.

Fusion Telecommunications' Political Connections

Past and present board members include:

Marvin Rosen, former finance chair of the Democratic National Committee;

Joseph P. Kennedy II, Massachusetts Congressman;

Thomas "Mack" McLarty III, Clinton special envoy to Latin America.

John Sununu, chief of staff for former President George H.W. Bush, joined the advisory board after Kennedy and McLarty resigned.

Aristide's supporters are loath to believe that the charismatic former priest may have betrayed Haiti's desperate poor who saw him as their savior throughout tumultuous years of alternating hope and despair. Elected president for a five-year term from 1991 to 1996, Aristide was almost immediately forced into exile by a military coup. Three years later, a U.S.-led force, acting under a U.N. resolution, invaded Haiti to restore him to the presidency. When Aristide's first term ended in February 1996, he was constitutionally barred from succeeding himself. His close associate, former Prime Minister René Préval, served as president until Aristide was returned to office in February 2001. Citing evidence of fraud, the Organization of American States' electoral observation mission declined to certify the elections.

In February 2004, Aristide either resigned (the U.S. version) or was kidnapped (his story) and flown by the U.S. to South Africa.

Phone Home

Haiti's phone system had become a contentious issue between the U.S., which demanded that it be privatized, and Aristide, who wanted it to remain government-owned. In the late 1990s, the Clinton administration cut off \$500 million in promised loans and aid amidst charges by members of Congress that Aristide's government was rife with corruption.

According to the lawsuits filed in Miami and Newark federal courts, the political corruption was a two-way street running between politically connected North American companies and Aristide's government. Haiti's Telecom sector is estimated at 400 million minutes a year, valued at \$48 million. During the governments dominated by Aristide (1994-2004), Teleco (Télécommunications d'Haïti), the Haiti national telephone company, made agreements with foreign telephone companies, including IDT, Fusion Telecommunications, Skyytel (Montreal), Cinergy (Miami) and IPIP/Terra (Miami), granting them rights to connect to Haiti phone lines.

The suit by the Haitian government says that payments to Teleco were diverted or kicked back to Aristide's group through companies and bank accounts in the offshore Turks and Caicos Islands and the British Virgin Islands. A key company was Mont Salem in the Turks and Caicos. The offshore companies were described as "agents" or "consultants" for Teleco. These Caribbean tax havens are known for setting up shell companies and bank accounts that guarantee secrecy to the owners, who routinely use them to hide and launder the money of corruption, fraud, tax evasion, drug trafficking, and other crimes.

Details about the IDT charges are laid out in the case filed by D. Michael Jewett, who was IDT's associate regional vice president for the Caribbean in 2003. That year, Jewett says, the company vice-president told him that IDT agreed to pay kickbacks to Aristide's Turks and Caicos bank account in return for a favorable phone deal in Haiti. Instead of the FCC-mandated 23 cents a minute for calls

originating in America, Teleco was willing to accept only 9 cents a minute--with 3 cents kicked back to Aristide, Jewett said.

Jewett's Tale

IDT fired Jewett in November 2003, within a week after IDT got back its signed contracts from Teleco and Mont Salem. He fought for and won unemployment benefits, then hired a lawyer. He filed suits for wrongful dismissal in federal court in Newark in May 2004 and October 2005. He claims he was fired because he opposed the deal.

Jewett's version of events goes like this: The initial Teleco proposal called for IDT to deposit funds in a U.S. bank account. But fearing that it might pay and get no agreement, IDT decided to negotiate directly with Aristide. In August 2003, IDT executive vice president for International Business Development Jack Lerer met with Aristide in Haiti. A month later Lerer told Jewett the plan: IDT would deposit money in a Turks and Caicos account that Aristide had set up under the name Mont Salem. In September 2003 the deal was sealed: Teleco would receive 6 cents and Mont Salem would keep 3. Teleco's records were falsified to show Mont Salem as the carrier, not IDT.

Aristide's Miami lawyer, Ira Kurzban, refused Corpwatch's request for comment on the telecoms cases.

Lawyers for the Haiti government say they know from Teleco billing statements that Mont Salem was paying Teleco 6 cents a minute for the minutes it was billing to IDT. They know from pleadings and a judicial order in the Jewett case that the rate in the IDT-Mont Salem agreement was 9 cents a minute. Putting the records together, the Haitian government lawsuit asserts that in one six-month period in 2004, IDT paid \$302,588 in kickbacks to the Aristide group.

The U.S. Department of Justice, the United States Attorney in Newark, NJ, and the Securities and Exchange Commission have initiated investigations into the charges against IDT.

Offshore Adventures

One of the strongest links to Aristide is Mont Salem. Its Turks and Caicos incorporation papers show registration in June 2000 with capital of \$5,000 – not much for a real company. Its registered agent was Timothy O'Sullivan of Miller, Simons and O'Sullivan, Turks and Caicos. The owner of shares was "M & S Nominees Ltd," (Miller and Simmons), listed at the same Turks and Caicos address. It fits the model of a classic offshore shell company designed to receive and launder money, rather than that of a real firm.

Where did the money go? Asked who the real Mont Salem owners are, Adrian Corr --lawyer for Miller, Simons and O'Sullivan in the Turks and Caicos--confirmed that "You can have nominee [strawman] directors," but declined to say if Mont Salem's listed owners were fakes. "I don't know. You put me on the spot," said Corr. "I don't want to answer any questions about this. I have lawyers retained; It's better you speak with them. It's [former New Jersey] Governor Byrne's law firm." His

attorney Kerrie Heslin at Carella, Byrne, Bain, Gilfillan, Cecchi, Stewart & Olstein in Newark did not respond to numerous requests for comment.

Neither did Mont Salem's lawyer, Michael Weinstein, at Podvey, Meanor, Catenacci, Hildner, Coccoziello & Chattman, also in Newark.

IDT's CEO James Courter and the company's attorney in the Jewett case, Leslie Lajewski (Grotta, Glassman & Hoffman in Roseland, NJ), also declined to return phone calls and emails seeking comment.

The Federal court in Newark court dismissed the RICO claim on grounds of “standing” but accepted the whistleblower cause of action as well as Jewett’s claims of defamation and intentional infliction of emotional distress. The case will soon proceed to discovery, where his lawyer will be able to demand internal IDT records.

Meanwhile, more details are available from the president of Skyytel, a Montreal company which, according to the Haiti lawsuit, got a similar kickback deal. While denying payment of kickbacks, Colin Povall does acknowledge that Skyytel's 2003 agreement with Teleco provided for payment of 9 cents a minute to Mont Salem as Teleco's agent. Again, the Haitian telecom would reap only 6 cents a minute.

The Lawsuit

The Haitian government-Teleco lawsuit filed was in Miami Nov. 2, 2005, under the U.S. RICO (Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations) statute. The defendants are:

Former President Jean-Bertrand Aristide. He lives in Pretoria, South Africa.

Faubert Gustave, minister of the Economy and Finance 2201-4. He lives in Sarasota, FL

Rodnée Deschineau, general manager of the government-owned Banque Populaire Haïtienne from 2001-4. He lives in Dorchester, Mass.

Lesly Lavelanet, the brother-in-law of Aristide's wife, Mildred Trouillot Aristide. He controlled several companies, including Digitek SA and Global Spectrum SA. He lives in Coral Springs, FL.

Fred Beliard, who lives in Cooper City, FL.

Alphone Inevil, Director of Planning at Teleco from 1997 to 2002, then Director General to 2004. He lives in Lakeland, FL.

Jean Rene Duperval, Director for International Affairs for Teleco from 2003 to 2004. He lives in Miramar, FL.

Adrian Corr, an attorney with the law firm of Miller, Simons and O'Sullivan in the Turks and Caicos Islands.

"Mont Salem approached us," he explained. "We never met anybody in Haiti. Fred Beliard is the only one I met. He was dealing with some powerful people." Beliard, a Haitian, is accused in the lawsuit of participating in the kickback scheme. Povall said, "Adrian Corr, we only heard about him when it came to sign the contract; his name was on the contract." One of Skyytel's advisors is Ronald Beliard, who runs a telecom consulting company in Quebec and is related to Fred Beliard.

The Haiti lawsuit says that Skyytel paid Mont Salem \$872,371 in kickbacks.

Another player in the alleged scheme is Fusion Telecommunications, a U.S. firm that the Haitian government lawsuit says made a suspect deal through a shell company. Run by former high-level Clinton administration officials, Fusion, according to the suit, made payments to Teleco via CW Holdings, a company with a bank account in Florida. Lawyers for Haiti do not know where CW Holdings is registered; they could not locate it in either Haiti or Florida.

Fusion, through its representative, Howard Rubenstein Public Relations in New York, acknowledged to Corpwatch that in mid-2001, "Fusion was instructed to make payments that it owed to Teleco to the account of CW Holdings in Bank Atlantic in Florida. In invoices that Fusion received from Teleco, Teleco accounted for Fusion's payments to CW Holdings as payments made to Teleco. Fusion made payments to CW Holdings for three months until Teleco instructed Fusion to make all future payments directly to Teleco." The amount, according to the PR firm was "less than \$1 million a month."

Fusion did not respond to queries about where CW Holdings was registered or the cost of the minutes it paid to that intermediary or to Teleco.

Up to the Courts

As the lawsuits make their way through various courts, Aristide, in exile in South Africa, is silent on the topic. His Miami lawyer, Ira Kurzban, was emailed Corpwatch's references to Aristide's alleged telecom kickbacks, but he declined to comment on them. In a statement issued after the Haiti lawsuit was filed, he declared it a "political investigation" by the current Haiti government, and noted that no one has been able to find "the money that the president supposedly took." He said that "there is none" and that "there are no Swiss bank accounts." None of the suits refer to Swiss accounts. His statement did not mention or refute the charges of telecom kickbacks or Aristide's receipt of them through a Turks and Caicos shell company.

If it turns out that an American company paid cut-rate fees for minutes, it violated U.S. Federal Communication Commission rules. If it paid kickbacks, it also violated the U.S. Foreign Corrupt Practices Act, which bans payment of bribes or kickbacks to get foreign contracts. It will be left to the Justice Department to file charges.

Meanwhile, in November 2004, to help U.S. companies negotiate better deals, ISP rules were ended in routes where U.S. carriers get termination rates at or below levels set by the FCC. For lower income countries such as Haiti, the benchmark is 23 cents, the old standard which, for Haiti, is no longer a

guaranteed minimum. Jacki Ponti, the spokesperson for the FCC, refused, or was unable, to provide information about the current U.S.-Haiti rates.

Lucy Komisar is a New York journalist writing a book on the international impact of the offshore bank and corporate secrecy system.

Poor Haitian Village Boy Turned Success Guru & CEO in America Says Throw Away The New Year Resolutions...They Don't Work

Web Wire

Acorn Publicity

12/29/2005

Have you ever wondered why people abandon their New Year resolutions within the first three months of the year? A once sickly and diseased child in a tiny Haitian village turned CEO in America explains why you should never make them and what to do instead.

This man can tell you from experience how to get what you want. Here's why: Rene Godefroy was once a poor boy in a tiny village in Haiti who entered the United States at age 21 by dangerously hanging between the rear tires of a tractor-trailer. Godefroy taught himself English and learned to read from fast-food restaurant menus.

Today, Godefroy is a CEO and one of the top motivational speakers in the country, sought after by such Fortune 500 companies as Coca-Cola, AT&T, and Charles Schwab. The City of Smyrna, Georgia even dedicated an entire day to him.

"New Year resolutions don't often work because they create too much pressure on us. They foster a short time perspective and lack of patience. When there's tension and stress, our first tendency is to go back to where we feel comfortable." Says Godefroy

As the author of an award-winning book *Kick Your Excuses Goodbye*

<http://www.kickyourexcuses.com>, Godefroy offers the following advice to help you get whatever you want in 2006:

1. Set life goals and do something everyday that will move you closer to your goals.
2. Believe and be still. Do not rush the process. Don't try to change your entire life in the first two months of the year. That will create stress and frustrate you.
3. Trick your subconscious mind by changing the word resolution to commitment.
4. Never make a decision to change course at the end of the year. You don't want to join anyone's parade. Have your own.
5. Decide to focus on one thing regardless of what others think or say. Don't be distracted by friends, the internet, television, and disguised urgencies.
6. Quit telling others and yourself your excuses. Do what you can now.
7. Create a mastermind group with like-minded individuals to help keep each other more accountable to your expected results.

These tips are directly related to the success Godefroy is enjoying in America. He is proof that it's time for everyone to start kicking their excuses goodbye.

Contact Information:

Carla Kennedy

Publicist

Acorn Publicity

770-438-1373

pub@acornpublicity.com

Former Mountie killed in Haiti laid to rest
Wednesday, December 28, 2005
Canadian Press
The Globe and Mail

Quebec — Hundreds of mourners, including Gov.-Gen. Michäelle Jean, paid their final respects to a retired Mountie who died while on a mission to train Haitian police.

Mark Bourque, 57, is being remembered as a spiritual man who found the best in everyone, and believed deeply in public service.

A large contingent of RCMP, Quebec provincial police and representatives of other law enforcement agencies attended his funeral, at Basilique Notre-Dame de Quebec, the provincial capital's main church.

Ms. Jean met briefly with Mr. Bourque's family after the service, which was also attended by RCMP Commissioner Giuliano Zaccardelli.

Ms. Jean had met Bourque in October before his group left for Haiti and she discussed the mission with him at length.

Mr. Bourque, who concentrated on organized crime investigations when he was with the RCMP, was killed Dec. 20 in an ambush in a Port-au-Prince slum.

Kidnappings plague residents across Haiti

ALFRED de MONTESQUIOU

AP wire

San Jose Mercury News

December 26, 2005

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti - Quesnel Durosier walked out of a bank with \$3,500 tucked into his sock, buoyed by thoughts of his upcoming wedding. Seconds later, a car cut him off, gunmen sprang out and shoved him into the car along with a woman passer-by. What followed was a nightmare of torture and death threats for these latest victims of a wave of attacks that has made impoverished Haiti the kidnapping capital of the Americas.

Everyone is a target - schoolchildren, foreign aid workers and pedestrians in the upscale and heavily guarded Petionville district of the capital, where Durosier and the unidentified woman were snatched. Tourists are not targeted, but only because they are virtually nonexistent.

Police and an 8,860-strong U.N. peacekeeping force have pledged to restore security, which evaporated after the February 2004 rebellion that toppled President Jean-Bertrand Aristide. But kidnappings have skyrocketed, and as Jan. 8 presidential and parliamentary elections approach, stemming the kidnappings is an "absolute priority," said Damian Onses-Cardona, the U.N. spokesman in Haiti.

The peacekeepers have been trying for months to penetrate the vast Cite Soleil slum, where gangs stash many of their hostages. A Canadian peacekeeper was shot dead near Cite Soleil in an apparent kidnap attempt five days before Christmas.

Thirty kidnappings were reported in Haiti in November, and 30 during the first week of December alone, said police spokesman Frantz Lerebours. The actual number is probably much higher because many families prefer to negotiate with kidnapers rather than notify police.

Recent victims include 14 schoolchildren abducted on their school bus in December, and Emmanuel Cantave, a prominent leader of Aristide's Lavalas Family party. Another was Phillip Snyder, an American missionary shot in an ambush and seized along with a Haitian boy he was taking to Michigan for eye surgery. All were eventually released after ransoms were paid.

Eight to 10 people are abducted every day in this Caribbean nation of 8 million, more than any other country in the Americas, said Judy Orihuela, an FBI spokeswoman in Miami. That surpasses even Colombia, which for years has had the world's highest kidnapping rate.

Since April, 28 U.S. citizens have been reported kidnapped in Haiti, Orihuela said.

"In the last year or so, it's just exploded down there," Dick Hildreth, a security consultant, said in a telephone interview from his office at Corporate Risk International in Fairfax, Va. The company advises its clients to hire bodyguards while visiting Haiti, or avoid it altogether.

A South Korean factory manager was recently kidnapped, held in Cite Soleil and released for \$10,000. Some freed victims have said that what they heard while being held captive suggest the kidnappings may be connected, at least loosely, to the election and to U.N. efforts to gain control of Cite Soleil, where 200,000 people live in squalor. It is a stronghold of armed gangs, allegedly close to Aristide, which are threatening to disrupt the elections.

Michael Lucius, chief of the Haitian Judiciary Police, said he doubts politics are involved. "This is purely criminal activity. Gangs are raising cash to spend during the holiday season," he said. All Durosier knows is that his abductors wanted money.

Forced to crouch in his seat and choking from a plastic bag placed over his head, he was brought to a house outside Port-au-Prince and tied to a chair. The kidnappers quickly found his wedding savings. Durosier could hear the woman scream in another room as the kidnappers poured hot water onto her to make her say who could pay her ransom. The two hostages never got a chance to talk to each other, and the woman's identity and fate remain unknown.

Durosier, a journalist for the newspaper Le Matin and an occasional AP contributor, said that after a few hours of questioning and threats, his abductors appeared satisfied with the cash they had stolen from him, and released him in the countryside.

"I still wonder what happened to the woman I was held with," Durosier

Jordanian peacekeeper killed in Haiti
The Toronto Star
Dec. 25, 2005

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti (AP-CP) — A United Nations peacekeeper in Haiti was shot to death while on patrol in a slum that has seen almost daily violence since the ouster of President Jean-Bertrand Aristide, a UN military spokesman said Sunday.

The Jordanian soldier was on patrol in Cite Soleil when he was shot in the head and killed on Saturday, according to Lt.-Col. Fernando da Cunha Mattos, UN military spokesman.

A Canadian retired RCMP officer was shot and killed in Cite Soleil last week. Mark Bourque, 57, from Stoneham, Que., was in Haiti with 23 other Canadian police experts as part of a team assembled by a non-profit agency to help train the Haitian National Police during the elections.

UN authorities declined to release further details, including the soldier's name, which was being withheld pending notification of his family.

Cite Soleil, where gun battles between peacekeepers and gangs take place almost daily, remains the most insecure place in Haiti ahead of national elections scheduled for Jan. 8. Observers fear the gangs could disrupt the elections.

Haitian police do not enter the slum, which a battalion of 1,500 Jordanian peacekeepers in armoured vehicles has pledged to reclaim from the gangs.

Some 7,600 UN peacekeepers arrived in Haiti in June 2004 to stabilize the country after Aristide's Feb. 29, 2004, ouster.

Seven peacekeepers have died in action since June 2004, according to the UN.

Constitution loses in Haiti election fight: analysts

Tue Dec 27, 2005

Reuters

By Jim Loney

MIAMI - Haiti's constitution is being violated by both the U.S.-backed interim government and by the candidacy of a Haitian American millionaire running strongly in the polls in a long delayed election, analysts say.

"The government has not been paying much attention to the constitution," said Brian Concannon, a U.S. lawyer who worked in Haiti and helped prosecute military leaders accused of a peasant massacre.

The first round of voting in the troubled Caribbean nation is scheduled for January 8 with a run-off, if needed, on February 15. But elections officials have said another delay seems likely.

Dumarsais Simeus, the Haiti-born founder of a Texas food company, has been running second to former President Rene Preval, but the Provisional Electoral Council, which organizes elections, has twice said Simeus cannot run because he is an American citizen.

Haiti's 1987 constitution, a point of pride when it was written in an impoverished nation struggling to recover from decades of dictatorship, requires presidential candidates to be Haitian citizens. It also says citizenship is lost by "naturalization in a foreign country."

Yet Haiti's Supreme Court has twice ruled that Simeus should be put on the ballot.

On December 9, the day after the Supreme Court's latest ruling on Simeus, Prime Minister Gerard Latortue fired five high court justices. Latortue was chosen by a council of elders after elected President Jean-Bertrand Aristide was forced into exile 22 months ago.

"It's a little ironic that he (Latortue) is saying Simeus isn't legitimate. To be a prime minister or president you should have to have five years residency (in Haiti)," said Concannon. Latortue lived in Florida before taking office.

Asked about the controversy, Simeus said tersely in a recent interview: "I don't want to debate the constitution. The Supreme Court reviewed the case."

"I have Haitian nationality of origin. My grandparents and parents were descendants of slaves. This Haitian nationality cannot be lost," he added, describing Latortue's interim government as one of "total anarchy, total lawlessness, total dictatorship."

Haiti Candidates' Faces Familiar but Not Comforting

The 35 contenders in the first presidential vote since Aristide's exile include former leaders, a rebel tough guy and an accused killer.

By Carol J. Williams, Times Staff Writer

Los Angeles Times

December 26, 2005

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti — A cocky guerrilla chief, an accused assassin, a sweatshop industrialist and several stalking-horses for presidents previously deposed are among the candidates vying to become head of state in this most troubled of Western nations.

With 35 presidential contenders approved for the Jan. 8 vote, Haiti's first election since President Jean-Bertrand Aristide fled into African exile nearly two years ago offers a rogues' gallery of the notorious and controversial but few new faces because of four high-profile exclusions.

Two wealthy businessmen, Texas food-service tycoon Dumarsais Simeus and Florida investment banker Samir Mourra, recently returned from exile. They were deemed ineligible because they hold U.S. citizenship, and the Haitian Constitution prohibits a president of dual nationality. Evans Nicolas won't be able to run under the banner of exiled dictator Jean-Claude "Baby Doc" Duvalier because of a registration technicality. Defrocked priest and vocal Aristide ally Gerard Jean-Juste was nixed because he's been jailed since June for his alleged involvement in a journalist's slaying.

With the leadership slate crowded and the contest wide open, the election offers a cornucopia of choices that span the political spectrum, from socialists to populists to advocates of iron-fisted law and order. Among them:

Rene Preval

The man who kept the presidential seat warm during the five years separating Aristide's two terms is widely thought to be the leading contender despite making no public appearances since the campaign began in October. "I intend to campaign while lying on my back," he told a journalist in declining an interview.

Preval, 62, has been keeping a low profile, probably to avoid the question most supporters ask: Would he allow Aristide to return to the country? Although Aristide is ineligible to run for president again, having served two terms, he could wield influence over the masses through a proxy, as he did during Preval's 1996-2001 tenure.

A veritable recluse at his remote bamboo plantation in recent years, Preval and other disenchanted defectors from Aristide's Lavalas Party have reorganized within the Lespwa movement, which has candidates competing in all 129 legislative and 140 local races.

"He's going to speak about Aristide when the right moment arrives," explained Steven Benoit, Preval's brother-in-law and a candidate for the lower house of parliament, the Chamber of Deputies.

Benoit says Preval can serve as a unifying force by attracting Aristide's constituency, the moneyed elite and Haitians who want the comfort of a familiar face and "a corrected version of Lavalas" dedicated to improving education, healthcare, employment and security.

During the inaugural Nov. 3 march supporting Preval, however, crowds from the slums chanted for Aristide's return and became unruly. Police broke up the rally.

Leslie Manigat

Another former president, the 75-year-old Manigat makes a virtue of the mere 4 1/2 months he spent in office in 1988. His was one of the numerous short-lived leaderships between Baby Doc's 1986 departure for French exile and Aristide's landslide election about four years later.

"We are the only party out of power throughout all these disasters," argues the courtly ex-president, who spent the Duvalier years in exile, much of it in U.S. and European academic circles. He remained in Haiti, though, through most of Aristide's tenure to nurture a center-right opposition through his Assembly of Democratic National Progressives.

Manigat believes his countrymen see him as the candidate best positioned to break with the unrelenting tumult, exploitation and corruption that have beset Haitians since their slave ancestors ousted French colonial rulers 201 years ago.

"It's true that Preval has a strong position in the minds of traditionalists," he said. "But people who feel that things can't go on in this way anymore feel we have to do something new."

The veteran political scientist observed that Preval may become a victim of his own popularity, noting that Haitian candidates tend to form alliances against the strongest rather than along ideological lines.

Guy Philippe

The brash, young man who led the armed rebellion of February 2004 makes no apologies for the uprising that drove Aristide into exile, instigated gang warfare in the slums and unleashed such widespread insecurity that the U.N. had to send troops.

"George Washington was a rebel. Charles de Gaulle was a rebel. I am a rebel, and I am proud of what I've done," the 37-year-old former Cap-Haitien police chief said. "You can't save a country without breaking the law sometimes. People have a natural right to fight against tyranny, and Aristide was a tyrant."

Philippe was initially a devout Aristide backer when the president was seen as the voice of hope among the millions of desperate poor, long exploited by a few hundred elite families who controlled more than 90% of the economy.

"I fought Aristide not because I hated him but because I loved him too much, and he betrayed us," said the warrior with the boyish face, an American wife and two young children.

Philippe says his relative youth works in his favor and that his rebellious activities demonstrate his determination to end poverty and corruption. "All the leaders of Latin America who changed the course of their countries were between 25 and 40," he contended, noting that 74% of Haitians are under 40.

His plans for the country involve immediately reinstating the army Aristide disbanded in 1995 and cleaning out the corrupt and politicized police forces. Then he would seek to boost Haitian agriculture by limiting rice and other imported commodities that he argues have devastated the national food market.

Marc Louis Bazin

Known as "the Chameleon" for his service in every government since Baby Doc was in power, the 73-year-old Bazin can boast the broadest range of government experience. He was finance minister to Duvalier, prime minister under the military junta that ousted Aristide in 1991 and held two Cabinet posts during Aristide's second term.

"I have the capacity to align myself for the public good," Bazin said. "For me, it's a plus. No experience I've had has tarnished my image."

In his presidential run, Bazin has taken up the mantle of Lavalas, the movement from which he was recently estranged.

"We feel some responsibility to address the frustration of the masses," he said from his hillside headquarters in the fashionable Pacot neighborhood.

A long-standing member of the foreign-educated elite, Bazin has campaigned for land reform and better distribution of wealth among Haiti's citizens.

"You can't have 4,000 people in this country earning 50% of the national income. We have to get them to understand there is no future in this," he said of the small elite that controls the levers of production.

Bazin made it clear in an interview that he would regard Aristide's return from exile as potentially destabilizing and that Lavalas must "turn the page" and reinvent itself without its charismatic founder. But, like Preval, he has sidestepped the issue on the campaign trail.

Charles Henri Baker

Running under the slogan of "Order-Discipline-Work," the 50-year-old businessman has broken with the industrial elite's centuries-old practice of staying away from the political front lines.

A poster boy for the hated bourgeoisie during Aristide's era, Baker has amassed significant support among the impoverished masses by building on an alliance between the business community and the main farmers union forged ahead of last year's rebellion. Once a tobacco plantation owner, Baker has been trumpeting that experience 20 years ago to galvanize support in the countryside.

In the capital, Port-au-Prince, the heavy security at his campaign headquarters speaks to the emotions his candidacy evokes among Aristide's militant supporters, who see him as exploiting his 400 apparel assembly workers, most of whom receive the minimum wage of \$1.64 a day. Ten-foot walls topped with coils of barbed wire encircle the new building donated by a well-heeled supporter. Armed sentries man the iron gates, on guard against enemies and vandals.

He said his visibility in the opposition to Aristide "gives me a little bit of credibility" with those who recognized that the ousted leader was corrupt and deceptive.

Asked about his association with the elite, Baker, the only white candidate in the presidential race, said he was proud of his place in Haitian society.

"We have to let the people of Haiti know that rich people are needed by the poor for them to get richer," he said, espousing the trickle-down theory of free enterprise.

Dany Toussaint

A former army major who became Aristide's bodyguard during his first exile and returned with him in 1994, Toussaint made his money selling uniforms, weapons and ammunition to security companies and his dubious reputation by possibly being involved in the unsolved 2000 killing of crusading journalist Jean Dominique.

Aristide loyalists on trial in the United States for drug trafficking have called Toussaint "the assassin," but the candidate contends that he was actually the target.

Toussaint, 48, has honed his candidacy around a promise to restore law and order, warning Haitians that security will trump human rights as long as lawlessness continues. If elected, he said, he would impose a 9 p.m. curfew to keep minors off the streets so adults could go out without fear of being ambushed by youth gangs. He would also have police arrest drivers who block the city's perpetual snarl of traffic.

"If we don't restore order, the international community can give Haiti any amount of money and it won't make a difference," he said, noting that the slum gangs agitating for Aristide's return have reinvigorated themselves with proceeds from ransom kidnappings that bring in an estimated \$100,000 a day.

Although most serious candidates have been fundraising among the 800,000 Haitian emigres in New York and South Florida, Toussaint's campaign has been limited. He remains barred from entering the United States because of accusations in the Dominique killing.

The Sorrow of Haiti
Written by Stephen Lendman
Upside Down World
Wednesday, 28 December 2005

On February 28, 2004, in the middle of the night, the US again invaded Haiti. It abducted and forcibly removed democratically elected President Jean-Bertrand Aristide by its staged coup d'etat and flew him against his will to the Central African Republic. Aristide today remains in exile in South Africa but vows to return. The Haitian people demand he be allowed back and restored as their rightful and legal president.

With the US already stretched beyond its capacity in Iraq, Afghanistan and elsewhere and currently condemned worldwide for flouting international law, inviolable Geneva Conventions it's a signatory to, and our own sacred Bill of Rights, why now Haiti. The country is very small [about 3 times the size of Los Angeles], has a population of about 7.5 million and is the poorest country in the Americas. Why did the US intervene with so much else on its plate? Think back to the Monroe Doctrine in 1823 when the US asserted its exclusive right to dominate the Americas. Now update to the present and a reinterpretation of that Doctrine has arrogantly expanded to cover the entire planet - and outer space. Think of it, the US will tolerate no rival and has now staked its claim [an exclusive franchise] to dominate all other nations and the oceans and the heavens. In an inversion or perversion of Woody Guthrie's great song for the people - "This Land Is Your Land" - a fitting anthem for US arrogance might be "This Earth is My Earth ... this earth [and the outer space above it] was made and now belongs to the USA." That includes Haiti, and sadly for its people that tiny, poor country lies much too close to the US. The lament and aphorism of Mexican dictator [from 1876 - 1910] Porfirio Diaz who said....."Poor Mexico, so far from God, so close to the US" is also true for Haiti and all other countries in the region as well.

The February, 2004 US invasion was only its latest incursion into that poor and defenseless country. The US did it before in 1915, stayed for 19 years, and caused extreme human suffering and death to the Haitian people. It also did it in 1994, stayed for 5 years, reinstated an overwhelmingly democratically elected President, and then made it impossible for him to govern effectively and be able to serve the interests of the Haitian people, especially after the 2000 parliamentary election which was contested over a handful of parliamentary seats. After the opposition cried foul, the Inter-American Development Bank froze desperately needed loans [already approved] which were never reinstated for the rest of Aristide's tenure. The IDB also forced the Haitian government to commit to the onerous burden of repaying and servicing past "odious" debt. The debt burden was so great that in 2003 Haiti was forced to send 90% of its foreign reserves to Washington to pay it.

Now the US government and its military again are setting and directing policy using the fraudulent fig leaf of a so-called UN "peacekeeper" contingent. Who can know how long we'll now maintain control this time [through a proxy UN force, direct US occupation or just a subservient puppet government] or how much more misery and death we'll inflict on the benighted and long-suffering Haitian people. Clearly on that February, 2004 night the US again flouted international law with another illegal invasion and subversion of the rights of a sovereign state and its democratically elected president to serve its own roguish imperial interests - a shameless act but sadly hardly new for a nation that's done it repeatedly throughout its history.

It first began when the early settlers took native Indian land through force or chicanery and murdered many millions in the process. As the colonies grew, expansion spread west and south and by the 1840s became a policy called "Manifest Destiny" [first used by Jackson Democrats] to promote and justify a strategy and practice of ruthless predatory expansion to include all territory south of Canada, coast to coast, as well as the annexation of Texas and conquest and seizure of half of Mexico. In the Guadalupe-Hidalgo peace treaty with Mexico in 1848, the US "graciously" allowed Mexico to keep half its country [although some US officials wanted it all] - the southern half with the majority Mexican population the US did not want as US citizens, fearing they would pollute the white Christian ethnic North American stock [sound a little like a 19th century Nazi Aryan philosophy of racial purity and superiority?]

Presidents William McKinley and Theodore Roosevelt continued US imperial adventures and expansion annexing Cuba, Puerto Rico, Hawaii, Wake Island, Guam, and American Samoa after the war with Spain. The Canal Zone was taken a few years later, and after many more years of savage and bloody war, killing somewhere between 1/4 to 1/2 million or more [shades of Vietnam and Iraq], the Philippines finally succumbed and became a US colony. The imperial tradition continued throughout the 20th century, especially after WW II when the US was the only powerful nation left unscathed from the ravages of that brutal war. It took full advantage creating and exploiting the myth of "communist barbarians" at our gates [a post WW II version of Reagan's later "war on international terrorism" in the 80s and Bush's "war on terrorism" today - all of them shams to scare the public to allow those in charge the ability to do as they please in "defense" of the nation]. After the Soviet Union collapsed, we desperately needed a new threat but had no problem finding many - Manuel Noriega in Panama, Saddam in Iraq, the North Koreans, Columbian drug lords, Fidel, the Iranian Ayatollahs, Hugo Chavez and anyone else we choose, the only qualification being a head of state unwilling to serve US interests. Jean-Bertrand Aristide tried and failed to do it both ways - to follow US dictates as well as serve his own people as best he could including raising Haiti's appallingly low minimum wage, disbanding its notoriously brutal military and having the courage to sue France for reimbursement for that country's 19th century imposed indemnity Aristide now estimated to be \$21 billion adjusted for inflation and with 5% compound interest. All that and more was intolerable for the US, so he had to go. Before discussing events and conditions in Haiti today after the coup, let's go back to the beginning to examine the plight of the Haitian people from the time the Spanish first arrived in 1492.

Few people in all human history have suffered as much as the people of Haiti. From the arrival of Columbus to the present, the Haitian people have been victims of enslavement, genocidal slaughter [including death from smallpox and other western diseases the local inhabitants had no resistance to], and later brutal exploitation and predation. The indigenous Arawak, or Taino, population suffered near total extinction [from as many as 8 million in 1492 to only 200 50 years later], astonishing even when compared probably to the greatest overall genocide ever that occurred in all the Americas where, according to historian Ward Churchill, the indigenous population of perhaps 100 million was reduced by 97 - 98%. After the Spanish moved to the eastern two thirds of the island, now known as the Dominican Republic, in the early 1600s, the French colonized the western third [Haiti] and repopulated it with black African slaves.

The French Revolution in 1789 changed everything and inspired the Haitian people, who considered themselves French, to demand their own freedom. Led by Toussaint L'Ouverture and others they

staged their own Haitian Revolution from 1791 - 1803, defeated the French, and established the first free and independent black republic anywhere on January 1, 1804. Throughout the 1800s the new nation went through intermittent periods of brief enlightened rule and considerable oppression and turmoil. The French eventually regained influence and control over the country's leadership and affairs and forced the independent nation to pay tribute to France for their freedom and independence, an amount equal to billions in today's dollars. It was an impossible burden.

From inception the US never recognized Haiti and embargoed and harassed the new nation for its first 6 decades fearing its freed slaves might inspire a similar revolt here in the south. But the US intended to exercise its influence and dominance in the hemisphere and did so with the Monroe Doctrine in 1823 when it stated that the Americas were no longer open to European colonization and that the US would not interfere in European affairs. Beginning in 1915, the US invaded and occupied Haiti using as a pretext the incredible claim that the Germans [during WW I] sought to occupy the country. The US occupation lasted 19 years until 1934 during which time it ravaged Haitian society and institutions and committed war crimes and crimes against humanity against the defenseless people. The US military routinely committed atrocities, the most infamous being in 1929 when the Marines slaughtered 264 protesting peasants in the town of Les Cayes. "Corvee [or forced] labor" [de facto slavery] was also employed and enforced brutally, and for the first time, the US military [just like today in Yugoslavia, Iraq, Afghanistan and elsewhere] tested its new weapons including aerial bombing years before the Nazis did it infamously against the Spanish Republican government in Guernica in support of the eventual fascist dictator, General Franco.

When the first US occupation finally ended, the war crimes against the Haitian people continued under a US trained proxy army which became the Armed Forces of Haiti. Conditions got progressively worse, especially under the "Papa Doc" and then "Baby Doc" Duvalier regimes from 1957 - 1986. "Papa Doc" established a personal and repressive paramilitary group, the Ton Ton Machoute, to intimidate and terrorize the Haitian people. When the people finally overthrew the "Baby Doc" dictatorship in 1986, a series of provisional governments ruled until 1990 when Haitians in an election judged fair and free elected Jean-Bertrand Aristide president with 67% of the vote, an unexpected shock to the US. Aristide took office in February, 1991, but his time in office was cut short by a September coup involving the still intact and active Ton Ton Machoute and supported by the US. For the next 3 years the military ruled and exercised a renewed reign of terror against the Haitian people using paramilitary death squads as a favored technique. The principle terror group was called FRAPH, led by Toto Constant, an admitted CIA agent who took his orders from Washington. Constant now lives in New York, safe from prosecution for his crimes, but apparently also is involved now with the new puppet government and its savagery against the people. During this time Aristide lived in exile in the US.

The Clinton administration finally struck a deal with Aristide in 1994, and used a vote by the UN Security Council it engineered to send a UN [largely US] international contingent to Haiti ending military dominance and restoring constitutional rule. One month later President Aristide and other elected officials returned to Haiti. The "peacekeeper" contingent entered and remained in Haiti until 1999 not to restore democracy but to insure political and economic continuity as dictated by IMF instituted neo-liberal structural adjustment policies of privatizations, debt servicing and cuts in vital domestic social programs. The US struck deal allowed Aristide to return to nominal power as long as the policies of the ousted military junta remained essentially unchanged. As mentioned earlier, Aristide

tried to do it both ways and failed [by US standards]. He demobilized the army, pursued human rights violators, respected human rights and freedoms and tried to raise the disgracefully low minimum wage. In short, he governed like a "democrat."

When the full and true story of Jean-Bertrand Aristide is finally told, it will portray a noble and humble man who gave of himself honorably to serve the interests of all the people of Haiti. His only failure was his inability to overcome the brutal and corrupt power of the US and its determination to see him fail. And that determination never diminished even though, hard as it was to do, his government complied with its obligation to service its debt with its external creditors in hopes of being granted new loans by the World Bank, IMF and Inter-American Development Bank to do so. This new and earlier funding [intermittently frozen and then cut off completely after the 2000 election] led to a spiraling of Haiti's overall debt and debt servicing obligation forcing the country to cut back its already insufficient attention to basic social services for the people in desperate need of them. Haiti is the poorest country in the Western hemisphere and in 2000 had a shocking estimated unemployment rate of between 60 - 80%. Today with the extreme level of violence and turmoil it may be even higher, and the country is a total economic and social disaster. I'll return to events today shortly.

In 1995, a pro-Aristide multi-party coalition called the Lavalas Political Organization took power with an overwhelming majority in parliamentary elections. In 1996, with Aristide unable by Haitian law to succeed himself, Rene Preval, an Aristide ally and Prime Minister in 1991 won the presidential election with 88% of the vote, again shocking the US. After several years of political gridlock, Aristide was reelected President with 92% of the vote [representing the Lavalas Family Party which he formed in 1996] in November 2000 and took office in February 2001. Opponents immediately claimed the election process was unfair because of the calculation of percentages for the runoff election in 7 senate races. This was a minor technical matter not affecting the balance of power and finally resolved a year later when the 7 senators resigned. The opposition also claimed Lavalas failed to end corruption and was unable to improve the Haitian economy. After several years of US instigated and supported opposition turmoil, late 2003 scheduled elections couldn't be held, and Aristide refused demands to step down. That fateful choice turned out to be the beginning of the end of the Aristide presidency and the Lavalas party.

Serious anti-Aristide protests began in January 2004 including violent clashes in Port-au-Prince. In February, an armed insurrection erupted in Gonaives that a local group may have instigated. A militant gang, calling itself the National Revolutionary Front for the Liberation of Haiti, then used this opportunity to join the uprising. The Revolutionary Front was a paramilitary army which was formed, heavily armed, trained and funded by the US in the neighboring Dominican Republic. The so-called "National Endowment for Democracy" had been funding the civilian opposition and may have also aided the paramilitaries. In addition, the CIA, based on its 50 year history of fomenting insurrections and coups, may have been heavily involved as well. The rebel gang included former members of the hated and feared FRAPH. It was led by Guy Philippe, a former police chief involved in the 1991 coup ousting President Aristide, and FRAPH and former Ton Ton Macoute member Jodel Chamblain, guilty of years of terrorism against the Haitian people. Emmanuel "Toto" Constant, also guilty of years of terrorizing the Haitian people, may also have been involved. President Aristide had disbanded the Haitian army after replacing the military dictatorship in 1991 and only had local lightly armed police facing a superior force it was no match for. The rebels swept across the country, first taking control of

Gonaives, then Cap-Haitien [Haiti's second largest city] and finally Port-au-Prince right after the US instigated coup with President Aristide already in the Central African Republic.

As a proxy force for the US, the rebels were serving the US goal of again making Haiti a US colony [like Puerto Rico], supplying wage slave or serfdom labor, enriching the local business interests and US corporations, and run by a puppet regime now and henceforth behind the false facade of a nominal democratically elected government. In addition to its total of over 700 known military bases worldwide today in 38 countries and a military presence in at least 153 countries, the US also is attempting to militarize the Caribbean and South American regions to control Haiti and its Central American neighbors and to intimidate and put political pressure on Venezuela, Cuba and any other Central or South American country that might elect a less than subservient leader. What's happening in the South American Andean region under "Plan Columbia" [to be pressured even more with a new base in Paraguay that has angered its neighbor, Brazil] is what's planned for Haiti, Central America and elsewhere in the region. As in Iraq and Afghanistan, the US in Haiti plans a permanent military presence in the region to assure its imperial goals succeed, and presently is minimizing its interest and presence behind the fig leaf of so-called UN "peacekeepers" from other countries.

In Haiti today, "peacekeeping" is Orwellian language concealing a brutal reign of terror against the Haitian people, the Lavalas party and all its members and all others seen as potential threats to US policy. The Haitian people today, just like the people in Iraq, face daily cold-blooded murder, torture, rape and sexual abuse, hunger, a complete breakdown and absence of all essential social services as well as brutal crackdowns and conditions of utter depravity, all served up by the so-called "peacekeepers" [from countries including Brazil, Canada, France, the US -behind the scenes but very much in charge - and others]. Lavalas party leaders and members not already murdered or imprisoned are currently in hiding and are being hunted down. Puppet US installed acting "president" Gerard Latortue [brought in from Florida to assume his role] jailed at first without charge Lavalas Prime Minister Yvon Neptune [he has now been charged] and Father Gerard Jean-Juste, both seen as threats to US interests because of their service to and overwhelming support by the Haitian people. They remain there under cruel and brutal conditions, and without intervention by or strong demand and pressure from the world community will probably die there. Months ago Yvon Neptune underwent a hunger strike and several times was reported to be near death. This writer does not know more about his condition today, but apparently he is still alive and still in prison.

Examples of what's happening daily are assaults and cold-blooded murder carried out against alleged Lavalas supporters by the Haitian National Police {PNH}, FRAPH thugs and UN "peacekeepers." Multiple attacks have been carried out in Cite Soleil, Bel Air, Solino and elsewhere where innocent Haitians have been shot and killed. Frequent street protests against the puppet government have been broken up violently, and known Lavalas supporters and officials are tracked down and when found either murdered or imprisoned without charge and without recourse to legal or other help. Perhaps the most blatant example of brutal violence against innocent Haitians took place on August 21, 2005 in a soccer field in Gran Ravin-Martissant in front of 5000 soccer fans. As many as 50 Haitians were massacred by the PNH and red-shirted killers. When a shot was fired, people panicked and ran and were either shot or hacked to death with machetes. Although there was a UN post across the street, no UN "peacekeepers" were there to protect the victims.

In addition to all the violence and abuses detailed above, Haitian men, women and children are victims of human trafficking for purposes of sexual exploitation [of women and children for forced prostitution], forced labor [de facto slavery], debt bondage and chattel slavery. UNICEF estimates as many as 300,000 Haitian children are affected plus many thousands of women. Many additional thousands of men also have been and still are being forcibly taken to the Dominican Republic and other countries to work as "sugar slaves." Modern-day slavery is a major problem for Haitians today and also for many poor in other developing countries where the masses of impoverished people are easily exploitable while their governments {including in Haiti} do nothing to stop it. As many as 30 million people worldwide are thought to be affected.

Sometime this fall the US plans to hold supposedly "democratic" elections to be run by Haiti's Provisional Electoral Council {CEP}. The process is hopelessly fraudulent and flawed, and precise information on all that's happening is unclear. What is known is that voter eligibility roles are being "electorally cleansed" of all "political dissidents" [meaning Lavalas/Aristide members and supporters], and no anti-government activity is being allowed in the streets. Any occurring is being put down violently. Also, the number of polling stations have been reduced from 12,000 in earlier elections all across the country to 800 this time, eliminating those in rural areas where most of the poor are. In addition, the puppet government designated "political dissidents" have been prohibited from running for office [again with the obvious meaning]. Furthermore, expected voter registration totals at election time range from about 7% of pre-"electorally cleansed" eligible voters to about 50% of eligible voters post "cleansing." This will be another example of what economist and media and social critic Edward Herman calls a "Demonstration Election." Professor Herman wrote a book in the 1980s documenting sham elections in Nicaragua and other countries, controlled and "rigged" by the US to be sure their "acceptable" candidate won. The process has been repeated many times, most recently in Afghanistan, Palestine, Iraq and soon in Haiti. Many people here in the US believe, as do I, that this country also is guilty of staging "demonstration elections" as seen in 2000 when Democratic candidate Gore won Florida and was elected President, but 5 US Supreme Court Justices refused to allow a total state recount to prove it, effectively annulling the Florida and true electoral college vote to chose their candidate, Republican Bush, as president. The process repeated again in 2004 in Ohio and elsewhere, this time with "rigged" electronic voting machines the main, but not only culprit, again selecting Republican Bush. The fall, 2005 election in Haiti is even more out of line as only those candidates known to be subservient to US imperial interests are allowed on the ballot. The Haitian people want none of it and it remains to be seen how many of those left unpurged from the rolls will actually turn out and vote. So much for democracy, but it certainly will be portrayed that way.

Long before the 2004 coup deposing President Aristide, the US corporate media began a process of demonizing him, unjustly accusing him of corruption, conducting a fraudulent election and other crimes and abuse. Just as it always does before, during and after all US incursions against other countries, the dominant corporate media unquestioningly backed the US position, even with no credible evidence to support it. Instead of investigating and reporting the facts honestly as good journalists should, the media giants all lined up as dutiful and complicit flacks and acted as mere transmissions agents of state propaganda. As a result, the public was told and believes lies and has no idea what's really happening or why. Today the major media reports almost nothing about Haiti, and the public is unaware that the daily horror happening throughout Iraq is also happening in Haiti. Haiti has become a black hole, out of sight and out of mind, with little hope of relief. The US public knows nothing, and the world community, except for the CARICOM nations in the region, doesn't care or act

responsibly. As a result, the long-suffering Haitian people pay a dear price. But these courageous people have endured for over 500 years, and if their past and present strength is prologue, they will never give up until they are free at last from any colonial master.

Steve Lendman can be reached at lendmanstephen@sbcglobal.net

The UN's disconnect with the poor in Haiti
Haiti Information Project (HIP)
December 25, 2005

HIP - Haiti — The assassination of Emmanuel "Dread" Wilme and four of his armed followers on July 6, 2005 marked a turning point in community relations between UN forces and residents of the Haitian seaside slum of Cite Soleil. In addition to killing the five young men in a hail of bullets, UN forces also took a heavy toll on the community. At least 12 unarmed civilians were confirmed killed by UN forces and dozens more wounded. It is a day the community will not soon forget and they are determined the UN shall never forget either.

Here is an excerpt from a Haiti Information Project (HIP) report filed July 12, 2005:

"Port au Prince, Haiti (HIP) - In the early morning hours of July 6, more than 350 UN troops stormed the seaside shantytown of Cite Soleil in a military operation with the stated purpose of halting violence in Haiti. The successful goal of the mission was to assassinate a 31 year-old man and his lieutenants that Haiti's rightwing media and reactionary business community had labeled a bandit and armed of supporter of ousted president Jean-Bertrand Aristide. According to residents, Emmanuel 'Dread' Wilmer and four others were felled in a hail of gunfire that came from all directions including a circling helicopter. According to the Associated Press, a military spokesman for the UN peacekeeping mission in Haiti, Colonel Eloufi Boulbars stated, 'Armed bandits who had tried to resist were either killed or wounded.'

"On July 6 in Cite Soleil, a weeping Fredi Romelus, recounted how UN troops lobbed a red smoke grenade into his house and then opened fire killing his wife and two children. "They surrounded our house this morning and I ran thinking my wife and the children were behind me. They couldn't get out and the blan [UN] fired into the house." Exclusive video footage from a HIP reporter captured the interview as well as the images of the three victims. Lying in blood on the floor of the modest home were Mr. Romelus's wife, 22 year-old Sonia Romelus who was killed by the same bullet that passed through the body of her 1 year-old infant son Nelson. She was apparently holding the child as the UN opened fire. Next to them was her four year-old son Stanley Romelus who was killed by a single shot to the head.

"Officially, the UN has responded that they only opened fire after being fired upon and have discounted non-combatant casualties. The HIP video shows 31 year-old Leonce Chery moments after a headshot ripped through his jaw. Chery was clearly unarmed as he lay bleeding to death in a pool of his own blood. In fact, the majority of the victims shown on the video were unarmed falling prey to a single shot to the head."

Adding insult to death and injury, UN Special Envoy Juan Gabriel Valdes has dismissed the incident as "propaganda and lies" despite a call by the UN for an official investigation. But the real problem doesn't just lie with career diplomats like Valdes, many of who are prone to pathologically believe their own media spin, it also lies with the heart of the objectives of the UN mission in Haiti itself.

While the UN believes it is returning democratic rule to Haiti, the majority of the inhabitants of neighborhoods like Cite Soleil view them as invaders imposing the will of Haiti's wealthy elite. The

reason for this is that the ultimate justification for removing Aristide, that he had lost the support of his people, simply was not true. He had lost the support of Haiti's economic elite long ago. He had lost the support of the United States Agency for International Development and Canadian International Development Agency's funded opposition some time ago. He had even lost the support of the so-called student movement, which by all recent accounts was never really led by students nor a viable social movement. Aristide had lost the support of the non-governmental sector that also helped to forge and fund these opposition movements to his government but he never really lost the support and admiration of his people. Aristide's people, and the main base of his support, were always from the most disenfranchised and marginalized sectors of Haitian society, who are not PR savvy, and traditionally have always suffered the most throughout Haitian history. These are the residents of neighborhoods like Cite Soleil, Bel Air, Solino, Martissant and others who have taken the brunt of human rights violations committed by Haitian police and finally armed incursions to rid them of "bandits" by UN forces.

This disconnect, between the reality in the poor neighborhoods of Haiti and the UN's justifications for further military actions, is clearly seen in the case of Dread Wilme. How much propaganda has the elite-controlled Haitian media meted out to destroy the character and reputation of the man? How much has the UN itself invested in portraying him as the ultimate example of a criminal and bandit who must be eliminated for Haiti to make the next transition to democracy? How many soccer games, how much loud rap music and groceries has been offered by Wyclef's organization in Cite Soleil towards improving the image of this great undertaking? Lots and lots, and still more everyday, is the answer to each of these questions.

Despite this tremendous effort to change the views of residents towards the memory of Wilme, and by proxy Aristide, what has it yielded? If you walk down to the entrance of one of Cite Soleil's main streets, Bwa Neuf, you will see the results. The residents of Cite Soleil have built a huge metal archway bearing Wilme's image to commemorate him as a hero of resistance to what they call the coup of February 29, 2004, the coup that ousted Aristide a second time. They have renamed the street Dread Wilme Boulevard.

Where does this ultimately leave the UN when it has exhausted every psychological warfare option, every offer of humanitarian assistance that has so far failed to change the hearts and minds of the poor in Haiti? The very answer to that question also lies with memory of Emmanuel "Dread" Wilme.

Addendum:

A recent poll by the National Organization for the Advancement of Haitians and the The Democracy Group based in Canada concluded that 51% of the respondents supported the return of president Jean-Bertrand Aristide to Haiti.

Exports grow 18.5%; Haiti is DR's second partner
The Dominican Today
December 27, 2005

Santo Domingo.- Haiti is again the second destination for Dominican exports surpassed only by the United States.

Last year, the second commercial partner of the country was Puerto Rico.

A report from the Center for Exports and Investments (CEI-RD) indicates that in the period January-October 2005 rose to US\$860.7 million, 18.5% more than the same period during 2004. Of this amount, the United States bought US\$292.1 million and Haiti, US\$95.6 million.

From favelas in São Paulo to poor neighborhoods in Haiti: Brazil's military asserts control

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December 25, 2005

HIP - Haiti — Last Friday, nearly a dozen reporters embedded with Brazilian troops of the United Nations mission in the poor neighborhood of Pele, witnessed troops handing out gift buckets emblazoned with the phrase "Vote to bring life to your country." Wearing blue baseball caps bearing the UN emblem, several of the reporters were barred from leaving the official area of the aid distribution center and instead were provided with the opportunity to photograph Brazilian soldiers playing soccer with young boys and posing with local residents from the neighborhood. One journalist who asked to not be identified stated, "Just as I was trying to leave the area a Brazilian soldier physically pulled me back and said I could not leave. We had just heard loud gunfire coming from Route Nationale 1 in the general vicinity of Cite Soleil. I was anxious to see what was really going on behind the scene."

Heavily armed soldiers of the Brazilian military, which leads the UN military mission to Haiti known as MINUSTAH, had earlier taken over a building in Pele belonging to an accused drug dealer with alleged ties to presidential candidate Guy Philippe. The troops were seen reinforcing the facility with sand bags and equipment as a military unit on the ground led a group of black-hooded residents through the neighborhood on a mission to identify and target suspected "bandits" for arrest. Twelve residents, ten men and two women, were reportedly arrested based on the accusations of the hooded informants and were taken away to an undisclosed UN facility. Several residents reacted with shock and anger at the site of the black-hooded informants, a new tactic apparently being used by the UN forces to pacify poor neighborhoods in the capital. "This is really scary because we don't know who these hooded accusers are. We don't even know if they are really from our area. I just saw them arrest a man I have known for years and who is not involved with anything violent. Where are they taking him?" asked one angry woman who refused to give her name.

The neighborhood of Pele borders the teeming seaside slum of Cite Soleil that has been a launching site for massive demonstrations demanding the return of ousted president Jean-Bertrand Aristide. Demonstrations have also demanded an end to political persecution against Aristide's Lavalas party and the release of their leaders held behind bars and deemed to be political prisoners. On July 6, about 350 UN troops led by a Jordanian contingent under the command of the Brazilians, entered Cite Soleil on a mission to kill a suspected gang leader and Aristide supporter Emmanuel "Dread" Wilme along with four of his lieutenants. When the smoke cleared not only did the five men lie dead from a hail of bullets but also so did at least 12 unarmed residents including women and children. Exclusive video footage of the incident seen by independent journalists is said to provide enough evidence to conclude that UN forces deliberately targeted unarmed civilians in the deadly raid. Although the UN promised an investigation into the July 6 incident, nothing has been said since except the well-known denials of UN Special Envoy Juan Gabriel Valdes who continues to dismiss any criticism of the UN mission as "propaganda and lies."

On November 27, Cite Soleil came under heavy fire again from Brazilian forces in a military operation against suspected bandits (a code word, according to residents, borrowed from Haiti's wealthy elite to

describe Lavalas supporters in poor neighborhoods of the capital). At least seven people were wounded by automatic gunfire in an incident described by Canadian journalist Isabel MacDonald, "Suddenly, we saw four UN APCs--also manned by Brazilians--drive slowly up along the largest road in the vicinity. MINUSTAH bullets were suddenly whizzing by our heads. In the street alley we were in, people frantically flew in all directions, ducking into doorways, hiding behind ledges of the long concrete walls lining the alleyway. I took cover with a half dozen residents hiding behind a ledge of the wall that jutted out about six inches. The MINUSTAH APCs continued to fire rounds in our direction for about ten minutes."

As the embedded reporters were treated to photo opportunities of happy smiling residents receiving aid buckets in Pele last Friday, heavy gunfire broke out from Brazilian forces on Route Nationale 1, a main highway that separates Pele from Cite Soleil. "No one fired at them. They just started shooting for no reason and several people were injured," stated a bystander who witnessed the incident. 27 year-old Fritzner Montinard was later interviewed in St. Catherine's hospital in Cite Soleil where he lay immobilized by automatic gunfire that strafed both of his legs. "I was walking down the street. It was quiet and I saw the blue helmets but everything seemed calm. Suddenly they opened fire and I was shot in both legs. I didn't hear any gunfire before that and still don't know what caused them to shot at us like that" stated Mr. Montinard from his hospital bed.

Amnesty International (AI) recently accused Brazilian security forces of human rights violations for tactics they use in the poor neighborhoods of Rio de Janeiro and Saõ Paolo known as favelas. According to the AI report issued December 2, 2005 and entitled, Brazil: 'They come in Shooting': Policing socially excluded communities, "The violence was highlighted by an incident in March, in which 29 people were shot dead by a "death squad" -- believed to consist of members of Rio de Janeiro's military police force -- in the Baixada Fluminense District of the city; it was the worst massacre in the city's history, but not a new or isolated phenomenon." It appears that the phenomenon has spread beyond the borders of Brazil as it's military command assumes primary leadership for the UN mission to stabilize Haiti ahead of the on-again off-again elections primarily backed and funded by the U.S. and Canada.

Presidential hopefuls have drug ties, sources in Haiti, U.S. claim Some candidates for president of Haiti have ties to drug traffickers, according to Haitian and U.S. officials.

By **JOE MOZINGO**

Miami Herald

December 23, 2005

PORT-AU-PRINCE - At least three candidates in Haiti's upcoming elections have links to a cocaine-trafficking industry that wants to ensure the next government is weak and corruptible, a half-dozen Haitian and U.S. officials say.

Two of Haiti's best-financed presidential candidates -- Guy Philippe and Dany Toussaint -- have long been linked to cocaine trafficking by U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration officials.

And a Senate candidate who's a nephew of interim Prime Minister Gérard Latortue has close links to a gang that controls drug smuggling in the port of Gonaives, according to the Haitian and U.S. officials. Haiti, where the average person struggles on less than \$1 a day, is a pass-through point for about 8 percent of the Colombian cocaine detected heading to U.S. streets, according to U.S. State Department narcotics reports.

Despite the presence of 8,000 U.N. peacekeepers deployed after the rebellion that ousted President Jean-Bertrand Aristide last year, the arrival of cocaine "is essentially unimpeded," said the State Department's 2005 International Narcotics Control Strategy Report.

Analysts fear that traffickers are quietly working to subvert any return to an elected democracy, either by backing candidates they can control or sowing chaos on the streets to delay the balloting.

"At this point the entire transition is at risk," said Mark Schneider, of the International Crisis Group, a nonprofit that analyzes conflict around the world. "Drug traffickers don't want a functioning, effective government with a functioning, effective police force and customs."

"They have their hooks in the police, they have their hooks in parts of the transitional government," he added.

SUSPICIONS

U.S. prosecutors in Miami have gone after 10 of the biggest traffickers and corrupt officials of the Aristide years. But there are plenty of suspicions about officials of the current interim government. Diplomats and counter-drug agents have expressed particular concerns about Youri Latortue -- the security chief for his uncle, the prime minister, and a Senate candidate for the Gonaives region, a major drug-smuggling area.

The U.S. Embassy warned the prime minister in private in March of 2004 that his nephew was linked to illegal activities and should not be part of the government, according to one top U.S. official familiar with the issue, who requested anonymity because he's not authorized to discuss the issue. At that time, Washington refused the nephew a U.S. visa.

`MR. 30 PERCENT'

The French newspaper Le Figaro last year reported the nephew's nickname was "Mr. 30 Percent" for the commissions he allegedly demands on government contracts.

The prime minister publicly defended his nephew, saying he trusted him and, in a nation that has seen 32 coups in 200 years, he wanted the nephew to stay on as his chief of security and intelligence.

U.N. Civilian Police are concerned that Youri Latortue is trying to take control of the diplomatic lounge at the Port-au-Prince international airport, one way that drug traffickers have traditionally bypassed official scrutiny while entering and leaving Haiti, one top U.N. official told The Miami Herald.

And there are credible reports that Youri has close ties to a gang of armed thugs in Gonaives that controls the drug trafficking through the seaport, the official added.

Youri Latortue, meanwhile, has struck a political alliance with Guy Philippe, one of the leaders of the rebellion that ousted Aristide and now a candidate for the presidency. The two apparently knew each other when they served in the Haitian police.

DISPUTES ACCUSATION

The DEA suspected Philippe was involved in drug trafficking when he was police chief in the northern port of Cap-Haïtien, Haiti's second biggest city. U.S. drug agents once tried to recruit Philippe as an informant, but he turned them down, saying that the traffickers paid him more, two top U.S. officials told The Miami Herald.

Philippe has vehemently denied such allegations. "Where is the evidence?" he asked, in an interview with The Miami Herald last year.

But he has acknowledged that one of his rebellion's financial supporters was a Canadian-Haitian businessman named Jean-Claude Louis-Jean -- who has been linked to the drug trade by the International Crisis Group. Haitian police arrested Louis-Jean in September 2004, though it is unclear what the charges are against him.

Philippe vigorously defended his friend in an interview at the time with Radio Métropole.

"The judicial authorities will have to say why they arrested him and of what they accuse him," he said. "I just hope that they will not say that there are rumors that he is involved in drug dealing, as they always do."

When Aristide fled, Philippe put down his weapons and formed a political party. He is among 35 presidential candidates on the ballot for the election tentatively scheduled for Jan. 8. A CID-Gallup poll in November showed him a distant third, with 4 percent, behind former President René Prével with 32 percent and Leslie Manigat with 5 percent.

CRITICAL ISSUE

Rebuilding the corrupt police force has been the perhaps most critical priority for the U.S. State Department and the U.N. peacekeeping mission here. The newly-appointed police chief, Mario Andresol, has estimated in media interviews that at least 25 percent of his force is corrupt.

U.N. officials say they fear that some of the officers may be more loyal to Dany Toussaint, a senator and chief of police under Aristide who broke with the president in 2003 and is now running for president.

Long labeled by U.S. officials as a suspected trafficker, and now the owner of a security business, Toussaint got 2 percent support in the CID-Gallup poll, behind nine other candidates.

Toussaint has denied the drug allegations and brushed off the claim that he controls some police officers.