

## **Challenges Loom For Preval in Haiti**

**While Expectations of Poor Are High, Task of Rebuilding Will Be 'Colossal'**

**By Manuel Roig-Franzia**

**Washington Post**

**Tuesday, February 21, 2006**

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti -- Saurel Beaujour, a sprightly man with dark brown eyes and a lightning-quick smile, runs an HIV help center here in the cramped urban core of the Western Hemisphere's worst national AIDS problem.

The antiretroviral drugs he orders often sit for months at port because the two government agencies that must check off on his shipments barely function or communicate with each other. The anti-discrimination laws he wants to push never get anywhere because political turmoil is always toppling the lawmakers he lobbies. The public service messages he tries to spread mostly go unheard because the people he is trying to reach are illiterate or have no electricity to run radios.

Beaujour, for all his indomitable passion, stands at the nexus of the Haitian predicament, a man maddeningly hampered by the problems and inadequacies of a nation ever teetering on the edge of becoming a failed state. This is the quagmire into which Rene Preval, the leader of a political party named after the Haitian Creole word for hope, will wade next month when he takes the oath of office as president.

"Preval's task is colossal," said Robert Fatton Jr., a Haitian-born University of Virginia professor and author of a 2002 book, "Haiti's Predatory Republic: The Unending Transition to Democracy."

"Everything has to be built," he said, speaking from his office in Charlottesville. "There are no institutions in Haiti. The challenge is really monumental."

Preval, whose plans are vague and whose ambitions are understated, will be forced to confront the problems of a nation with almost no functioning judicial system, corrupt and inept law enforcement, deep poverty and abominable public sanitation. Then there are the violent gangs that rule urban slums, the kidnapping rings and a flourishing drug and money-laundering trade.

There are also tens of thousands of children who do not attend school, hundreds of miles of unpaved or poorly maintained highways and a national budget kept afloat primarily by the largess of international aid groups and foreign countries.

Preval hopes to attract foreign investment to Haiti, but he acknowledges that it "will not happen tomorrow morning." He knows that the dangers in his country scare away well-heeled foreigners, who visit in a protective bubble of armed guards and chauffeurs and are warned by security consultants not to walk the streets alone or take public transportation.

"For businesses, the question is: Why would you go there?" Fatton said. "Infrastructure is nonexistent, and you don't have enough electricity."

Haiti is the Western Hemisphere's second-oldest democracy -- only the United States is older -- and it became the world's first black republic after a successful slave revolt in 1804. But its autonomy is limited, at best. Its politics and its day-to-day life are heavily dependent on outside forces -- to maintain order, pay bills and shape policy.

However, hundreds of millions of dollars in aid from the United States and other countries has yet to produce lasting results in a country where one-third of all children are malnourished, 80 percent of the population lives in poverty and foreign intervention is often greeted with skepticism.

"You touch Haiti and it produces warts," said Larry Birns, executive director of the Washington-based Council on Hemispheric Affairs.

Here in Port-au-Prince, where few local police officers are visible, U.N. tanks share the steep, clogged streets with belching pickup trucks and rusting cars brought to the country after failing emission tests in the United States. Blue-helmeted U.N. peacekeepers scan the cityscape from behind the barrels of automatic weapons. The U.N. forces, which have engaged in open warfare with gangs in the Cite Soleil slum, are unpopular and often accused by Haitians of provoking shootouts.

The peacekeeping forces' term here was recently extended to mid-August, and a high-ranking diplomat says it is likely they will stay at least two more years.

"The key," he said, "is when are Haitians able to handle law and order?"

But Preval is already staking out a contrary position. The U.N. Stabilization Mission in Haiti, he said in a recent interview, "is there with its tanks, and it cannot solve the problem."

Preval has been consulting with diplomats about ways to attack the gang problem in Cite Soleil and other parts of the country, where several ports are dominated by gang lords who make large profits as conduits for Colombian drugs headed to the United States. According to diplomats and experts, drug money is one of the major underpinnings of Haiti's troubled economy.

It will be a delicate mission for Preval to take on gangs, particularly those in Cite Soleil, where he benefited greatly from the support of gang leaders who held rallies in his behalf before the Feb. 7 election. Some observers say they believe an amnesty for previous crimes may be the only solution.

Even the election, which embodied hopes for stabilization two years after the upheaval that ousted President Jean-Bertrand Aristide, was a stuttering step forward. Fraud allegations spurred days of violent demonstrations. It took a compromise brokered by international diplomats -- a deal that sidestepped the requirement that one candidate get a majority of votes to avert a runoff -- to award the presidency to Preval and to stop the country from descending into anarchy. Preval was granted the majority he needed only after unmarked ballots, which had previously been counted, were thrown out.

"It's not the jump into elections that many Haitians and foreigners would have hoped for," a diplomat said. "But it's an advance toward it."

Now, everyone is waiting to see what Preval, 63, can do with his second presidency, five years after he left office with few accomplishments and retired to his remote country home. The pressure will be enormous, because the poor who form his political base expect him to change their lot, a goal he is unlikely to accomplish without riling Haiti's elite.

Preval is fond of comparing Haiti to a Coca-Cola bottle -- the narrow end is the elite, he says, who have all the power, and the wide bottom is the poor, who have none. The country is now standing on the narrow end, he often says, turning over a bottle and grinning as it falls.

At a downtown construction site recently, amid the corrugated metal shanties that serve as homes and shops, a Preval supporter named Pierre Joseph said, "There is no one else who can get us out of this situation."

Joseph, who makes \$24 a month operating heavy equipment, is, by Haitian standards, almost prosperous. His assistant makes \$7 a month.

Preval has been careful not to promise too much to people like Joseph, and those who are even poorer. In fact, he's campaigned on little more than pledges to build more schools, improve social services and create a functioning government.

"We're not going to promise the sky," said Jacques Edouard Alexis, a top campaign adviser who served as prime minister during Preval's first term.

But even the basics may be nearly impossible to deliver. In Port-au-Prince, a third of the people have no access to latrines and simply use open canals as toilets. The latrines that are in place often back up because of lack of maintenance, rendering them useless.

Given the challenges, it is a good move not to raise expectations too high, Fatton said. But Preval will have to show some results fast if he hopes to stabilize a populace fractured among more than 100 political parties.

"There is a small window of opportunity for Preval, but it's one that could close very quickly if the government is not perceived as a government of national reconciliation," Fatton said. "If things continue to be violent and you continue to have kidnappings, the honeymoon will be over soon."

Beaujour has no choice but to hope that this time, finally, Haiti will find equilibrium.

"Because there are no stable institutions, we cannot advocate because there is no one to advocate to," he said. "If there was a stable government, we, as an association, could put pressure on that government to increase spending."

His eyes shifted downward and he frowned. He has hoped this before.

**Exiled CEP Administrator to Address Haiti Democracy Project Seminar**

**Feb. 21, 2006**

**Haiti Democracy Project web page item #3469 (<http://www.haitipolicy.org>)**

Jacques Bernard was director-general, and by many accounts the only effective administrator at the Provisional Electoral Council. At an episode at the tabulation center in the industrial park, two of the commissioners, Pierre Duchemin and Patrick Fequiere, loudly upbraided Bernard for an hour in an attempt to intimidate him and curry favor for themselves with Preval. Then pro-Preval demonstrators invaded the Montana Hotel in search of electoral officials to attack and lynch, Bernard chief among them. With U.S. help, he was whisked to the United States as was Leon Manus five and a half years ago. The Haiti project was proud to present Manus at the Brookings Institution in 2000 in his first U.S. appearance after fleeing to exile. We are equally proud to present Bernard.

Watch this space for further announcements.

## **A country at boiling point**

**President Préval needs the backing of the world - and his opponents - to bring calm to Haiti**

**Duncan Campbell**

**Tuesday February 21, 2006**

**The Guardian, UK**

In his magisterial work *The Black Jacobins*, about the slave revolt in Haiti that led to the country's independence, CLR James concluded "that the new nation survived at all is for ever to its credit for if the Haitians thought that imperialism was finished with them, they were mistaken." Nearly 70 years after James wrote those words and more than 200 years after Haiti became independent, the nation has just - to its credit - survived an election process that sometimes seemed as if it might never end and might have, as the disputed results came in last week, plunged the country into fresh turmoil.

After four postponements of polling days and more than a week of counting votes, René Préval was declared the winner, with more than 50% of the ballots cast. He attracted more than four times as many votes as his closest rival in this 33-horse race, so no one can pretend he is not a worthy winner. But what now?

The first essential is for the international community - the US, the UN, the EU and those countries with most influence within Haiti - to recognise that Préval is the popular choice and to ensure that no attempts are made to undermine him from without or within, as happened with his predecessor and one-time ally Jean-Bertrand Aristide. One of Préval's notable past achievements - sadly unique in Haitian history - has been to complete his previous term of presidential office without being ousted, assassinated or tempted to cling on to power beyond his allotted time. His election is an indication of the desire of the Haitian people to have a leader who recognises that poverty and corruption are two of the country's most pressing problems and who will pass on power when he has served his term. And while everyone involved in the election would agree that neither its conclusion nor Préval's victory will solve Haiti's many problems, it is equally true that without the elections and the confirmation of his success, chaos beckoned.

Préval knows he has to use his mandate to bring calm to a country that has been near boiling point in the two years since Aristide - whose initial triumph on a leftwing platform was seen as such a threat by the US - was ousted for the second time. Préval's pleas last week to his supporters to eschew any violent protest are an indication that he is well aware of the current tinderbox nature of the country. His rivals in the election also have a duty to accept the decision with good grace and to advise their own more volatile supporters that they will achieve nothing by carrying on the violence. It is too early to tell whether this will happen; some are already trying to undermine his victory by claiming that it was a threat of violence from his supporters that prompted his confirmation as victor.

The second necessity is for an investigation of the electoral processes that led to such chaos. As Charles Arthur, director of the Haiti Support Group in Britain, puts it: "If the allegations of vote-rigging and fraud are not cleared up, how can anyone be sure that the results of the parliamentary elections that took place on the same day will be an accurate reflection of the electorate's intentions? If the legitimacy of the new parliament is in doubt, political instability will continue." This is a far from simple but essential task for both the UN peacekeeping force and Haitian election officials to carry out with transparency.

Third, Haiti now needs the assistance of the world in rebuilding itself and in encouraging its vast and talented diaspora to consider returning home. Many skilled Haitians across the world would love to return but will only do so if they believe a stable, honest government is in place. The Haitian economy and its potentially highly profitable tourist industry has collapsed as visitors and investors steer clear of what they thought was a hopelessly dangerous place. It is worth remembering that Haiti's colonial masters were breathtakingly sadistic. No lessons of compassion or decency were bequeathed to the country by the west.

Two candidates in the election, Guy Philippe, the former police chief who led the overthrow of Aristide in 2004, and Charlito Baker, the businessman who was the elite's main chance of success, had assured me they had a vast invisible support that would wipe out Préval's challenge; they won fewer than one vote in 10 between them. There could hardly be a clearer indication of what the Haitian people want. The task for Préval now is enormous and he needs the ungrudging support of the world and those of his opponents at home and abroad who profess to believe in democracy.

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**Former Haitian President Says He Intends to Return from Exile**  
**By VOA News**  
**21 February 2006**

Former Haitian President Jean-Bertrand Aristide says he hopes to return to Haiti as soon as possible, after nearly two years in exile in South Africa.

Mr. Aristide told South African television Tuesday, he is in talks with Haitian officials about his return, now that Haiti has elected a new president. Aristide left the country after a popular revolt in 2004 that brought down his presidency.

Haiti's new leader is former Aristide ally Rene Preval, who was declared the winner of this month's election after a controversial change in the way blank ballots were counted.

Earlier Tuesday, Haiti's chief elections official, Jacques Bernard, fled to the United States after receiving threats and finding his home ransacked.

**Aristide rules out returning to Haiti's politics**  
**China View**  
**Feb. 22, 2006**

JOHANNESBURG, Feb. 21 (Xinhuanet) -- Former Haitian president JeanBertrand Aristide living in exile in South Africa has ruled out returning to the politics of his country, the South African Broadcasting Corporation reported on Tuesday.

In an interview with the public broadcaster, Aristide said a date for his return to his country from South Africa would be announced as soon as the necessary consultations have taken place.

He said newly elected President Rene Preval would consult with the United Nations, other Caribbean states and South Africa about his return.

"I do believe I will be back as soon as possible and I will continue to invest in education," he said, according to the SAPA news agency..

"I don't have a precise date, as President (Thabo) Mbeki said the other day it has to be emerging from dialogue with President Preval, myself, the UN and other countries because all are puttingtheir hands together o keep peace in the country," Aristide said.

Preval is seen as a close ally of Aristide, who has been in South Africa as a guest of government since he was deposed in 2004.

Preval's win was widely seen as to open the door for Aristide to return to Haiti, as Aristide may feel safe about returning.

Preval, 63, was declared winner nine days after the February 7 elections and following five days of protests by his supporters over earlier partial results that showed he failed to win the majority needed to avert a second round.

Since arriving to a red-carpet welcome in May 2004, Aristide, together with his wife and two daughters has been living in a government-provided home in Pretoria.

Mbeki said on Sunday that the return of Aristide to Haiti wouldbe "determined largely" by President Rene Preval and Aristide himself. Enditem

**Aristide Says Would Return to Haiti**  
**The Associated Press**  
**Washington Post**  
**Tuesday, February 21, 2006**

PRETORIA, South Africa -- Ousted Haitian President Jean Bertrand Aristide said Tuesday that he was willing to return home after two years in exile.

In an interview with South African television, Aristide stopped short of setting a date. He said he would decide on his return following consultations with Haitian President-elect Rene Preval, the South African government, the United Nations and other involved countries. Aristide has been a "guest" of the South African government since he was ousted in February 2004.

**Aristide hopes to return to Haiti 'soon'**  
**SABC, South Africa**  
**February 21, 2006**

Jean Bertrand Aristide, the former Haitian president, says he will return to his country once Rene Preval, the newly elected president, has made an assessment of the political situation there. The assessment will be done in consultation with the UN, South Africa, CariCom and the AU.

Twice voted into office, Aristide was removed by powers refusing to recognise him. Suspicion fell on the US, Britain, France and Canada. He was forced into exile three years ago and has lived in South Africa ever since.

Aristide says Preval is the president elect of the country and people have to support him. The former president says he will respect the will of the Haitian people because they never wanted to be betrayed, they voted for the return of democracy. Speaking on his role, Aristide says he believes he will go back soon as possible and will continue to invest in education.

**Election official 'flees Haiti'**  
**BBC News**  
**February 21, 2006**

Haiti's election chief has fled the country after coming under threat, officials say. Jacques Bernard, director-general of the electoral council, left on Sunday, a day after his farmhouse was burned down. He is thought to be in the US.

He had overseen the election which was held earlier this month following serious organisational problems.

Last week, the council declared Rene Preval president after a change in the way blank ballots were allocated.

It is still counting results from parliamentary elections held on the same day, 7 February.

'Afraid'

Mr Bernard had been under protection even before the attack on his farm, which lies north-west of the capital, Port-au-Prince.

Last week he reported receiving threats, Michel Brunache, chief of staff for interim President Boniface Alexandre, told the Associated Press news agency.

"He said he was afraid for himself and his family and said he wanted more security. I was shocked when I heard he had left," Mr Alexandre said.

Mr Preval's supporters staged daily street rallies after the vote, denouncing delays in releasing the results of the presidential poll.

Some of them accused the electoral council of manipulating the count to deny their candidate an outright victory - a claim Mr Bernard has denied.

Mr Bernard had also reportedly clashed bitterly with several members of the council, who accused him of trying to dominate the electoral body.

On Thursday, the council declared Mr Preval the winner with 51.15% of the vote, following a decision to divide more than 80,000 blank ballots among all 33 presidential candidates.

## **Vote-council leader may have fled Haiti**

**An electoral official in Haiti's chaotic elections reported being threatened and apparently left the country -- possibly for Miami.**

**BY STEVENSON JACOBS**

**Associated Press**

**Miami Herald**

**Feb. 21, 2006**

PORT-AU-PRINCE - The head of Haiti's electoral council fled the country after opponents threatened his life and burned down his farmhouse nearly two weeks after disputed elections, an official said Monday.

Jacques Bernard, appointed three months ago to bring order to a council that was plagued by organizational problems and infighting, left Sunday and may have traveled to Miami, said Michel Brunache, chief of staff for interim President Boniface Alexandre.

On Friday, Bernard had reported receiving threats and requested more security amid complaints about the vote count from the Feb. 7 elections, which returned former President René Préval to office, Brunache said.

"He said he was afraid for himself and his family and said he wanted more security," Brunache told The Associated Press. "I was shocked when I heard he had left."

The U.N. peacekeeping mission in Haiti said it didn't know Bernard's whereabouts.

Bernard had kept a low profile since the nine-member council declared Préval the president on Thursday, eight days after the long-awaited vote.

## **DECLARED VICTOR**

Préval, who received four times as many votes as his nearest rival, was declared the victor after the electoral council agreed to divide 85,000 blank ballots among the 33 candidates proportionally according to the votes they had received. That gave Préval the 51 percent he needed to avoid a runoff.

Thronges of Préval supporters flooded the streets after the polls, denouncing the delay in releasing the results and accusing Bernard of manipulating the vote count to deny Préval a first-round victory -- a charge Bernard has denied.

Wimhurst confirmed that Bernard's ranch in a town just northeast of the capital of Port-au-Prince was burned and looted over the weekend.

After the incident, Bernard went on local radio to denounce some council members who have accused him of withholding information and excluding them from important decisions.

Bernard's absence could throw the vote-counting for legislative elections into disarray. Logistical delays have already slowed the result tabulation, and electoral officials will likely have to postpone the scheduled March 19 runoff, officials say.

WAS 'PROFESSIONAL'

"If Mr. Bernard leaves Haiti, it will be catastrophic because he is the only man on the council who was professional," said Micha Gaillard, spokesman for the Fusion party. "Without him, we fear we could be in a situation where the legislative results will not be published."

Council member Patrick Fequiere criticized Bernard as a "megalomaniac" who abused the power of the council. "I believe that he had a political agenda," Fequiere said on Radio Vision 2000.

## **An uncertain course in Haiti**

**René Préval is the nation's new leader, but what that means is unclear - particularly since he hasn't spoken**

**BY LETTA TAYLER**

**STAFF CORRESPONDENT**

**South Florida Sun Sentinel**

**Posted February 21 2006**

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti -- For five tumultuous days last week, chaos gripped this tiny island nation as protests mounted over alleged fraud in presidential elections intended to usher in democracy. An 11th-hour deal brokered by foreign diplomats installed front-runner René Préval as president, ending the turmoil.

Only one thing was missing in the drama: a word from the leading actor. Other than a brief acknowledgment of victory to a local radio station, the agronomist and former president has not been heard from since he was declared the winner before dawn Thursday.

"No questions. I'll talk to you Wednesday," a smiling but firm Préval told reporters Friday outside his sister's house in a suburb of this capital city. Then he disappeared inside.

It was a remarkable performance in a country celebrated for theatrics, particularly given the sequence of events that led to his anointment.

With barely the flick of a finger, Préval appeared to prompt tens of thousands of his impoverished supporters to take to the streets starting Feb. 11 to ensure he was declared the winner of Feb. 7 presidential voting, and with another flick, make the protests stop.

His enigmatic response, and the role he seemed to play like a magician behind the curtain, have only increased questions about how he will lead Haiti when he takes office March 29.

Detractors said last week's marches and flaming roadblocks could presage a reversion to the mob rule used by leftist firebrand President Jean-Bertrand Aristide before armed rebels ousted him two years ago.

Leslie Manigat, a foreign affairs scholar who finished a distant second to Préval in the election, put it the most venomously.

"The dog must not return to its vomit," said Manigat, who has his own political baggage: He served briefly as president in 1988 in an election rigged by the military.

Distancing from Aristide

Préval, 63, who was president from 1996 to 2001, is a former Aristide protege, but he distanced himself after Aristide became mired in corruption scandals.

United Nations officials and diplomats from countries that poured millions of dollars into the election say Préval's actions since the vote suggest he is not a pawn of the divisive Aristide. Since Thursday, they note, Préval has been meeting with opposition leaders to discuss national reconciliation.

Another welcome sign, diplomats said, was Préval's ability to keep protests calm in a country notorious for political violence. A 9,300-member UN peacekeeping force has struggled to keep order in this nation of 8.3 million since Aristide's ouster.

"There is a regret that Haiti was not able to get completely away from the politics of the street, but a recognition that you also are seeing an evolution toward peaceful protests," outgoing U.S. ambassador Tim Carney said in an interview.

Préval's supporters began protesting after his lead slipped from nearly two-thirds in initial vote tallies to just under the 50 percent he needed to avoid a runoff. Haitian officials brought Préval to 51.1 percent by redistributing a suspiciously high number of blank votes.

In a nationally broadcast speech last Tuesday at the height of the week's protests, Préval urged demonstrators to remain peaceful. Yet he also showed his power. "Remove the barricades from the streets or we'll lose the fight," he urged. Within minutes, every barricade in Port-au-Prince came down.

"We do what the president says," said Junior Adolf, an unemployed Préval supporter, as he removed smoldering tires from a thoroughfare.

Keeping them happy

How long the masses will heed Préval's call if he can't swiftly reduce Haiti's 70 percent poverty and 75 percent unemployment rates is unclear.

"It's a double-edged sword," said Robert Fatton, a Haiti expert at the University of Virginia. "Préval has the capacity to prompt thousands upon thousands of people to take to the street. ... [But] if he loses control of that force, it can be used against him."

Particularly worrisome is a militant faction of Préval supporters including armed slum gangs that had served as Aristide's private militia. Hard-core Aristide supporters want Préval to let the former president return from exile in South Africa, a move opposed by the United States, France and Canada, all major donors to this cash-strapped nation.

One strand within Préval's base wants to "keep things in chaos, keep things up in the air, so that Aristide will be the only solution," Carney said.

In interviews with *Newsday* before the elections, Préval said Haiti's constitution allows any citizen to return, but made it clear he wasn't seeking Aristide's repatriation. He bristled at the notion of ties to gangs, saying: "I don't know those people."

He also proudly noted he is the only lawfully elected president in Haiti's history to peacefully transfer power to an elected successor.

Préval already is building confidence among foreign countries and investors with a platform that combines free-market economics with social and educational programs.

"We want this government to succeed," said U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice.

But political analysts wonder whether the world's traditionally fickle interest in Haiti will last.

"The international community knows how to organize elections," said Dan Erikson, a Caribbean expert with the Inter-American Dialogue, a Washington think tank. "But it's not good at sticking around to build functioning democratic institutions."

## **Tear down the electric fences, the African Columbus is coming**

**By CHARLES ONYANGO-OBBO**

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**The East African, Kenya**

**Feb. 21, 2006**

A fortnight ago, Haiti went to the polls. As usual, it wasn't well organised. There were delays, and now complaints that the election was rigged.

The elections opened to chaotic scenes, as people fought to get into polling stations. Some were trampled to death, and several injured. It was frightening to watch on TV.

But that was also what was exhilarating about it. Haiti is one of the world's longest-suffering countries. It became a French colony in 1697. Nearly 100 years later, the black slave population staged a revolution, leading to a war with France.

Haitian forces defeated the French soldiers sent by Napoleon in 1803. Some African guerrilla leaders who fought their way to power a few years ago, have claimed that their 'revolutions' were the first successful ones. That's because they have a lousy sense of history. If you think about it, the Haitians were the original African revolutionaries.

In 1804, Haiti became the first independent black-led republic in the modern world, and only the second independent state in the Americas. As it developed into a nation, it faced civil wars, political assassinations, territorial divisions and tyranny. In 200 years, it has had 35 coups. Today it's the poorest country in the western hemisphere.

It's an uncomfortable fact, but it needs to be faced. The poorest and most tormented people in the world are black - be they in Africa, Latin America, or the US. That has bred a stereotype of black people as lazy, incompetent, violent, and not wired for progress.

Wrong. Africans are as hungry for freedom and progress as any other peoples in the world. That's why the longest queues on Election Day are in Africa. Voters begin to line up at 4am, and by the time the polling stations open (late of course), it's not unusual for queues to be two kilometres long. Yet, for all this passion, an election is more likely to be stolen in Africa than anywhere else. And the thief also has a greater chance of getting away with it here. But they never give up. At the next election, they'll turn up again.

AFRICANS VOTE with their legs. The countries that will find greatness will be those where national leaderships are able to connect with what the legs of the Africans are saying. The legs that take so many of them to vote on polling day.

The international community too, will only make a difference the day they get the same message. Every year, thousands of Africans set out to cross the inhospitable Sahara Desert to Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, and Libya.

Hundreds perish. Those who make it then begin a perilous journey on overcrowded rickety boats to Spain, Italy, Turkey, and other European lands. By some reckonings, more of them end up at the bottom of the Mediterranean than set foot on Europe.

If they do and are caught, they are bundled back to Africa. Yet, if there are any Africans who should be embraced by Europe, it's these boat people. To begin with, it takes rare courage and determination to make that risky journey. That's why only a very tiny percentage of young Africans dare try. Most remain in the villages, leading desperate lives on barren land, or loitering in the towns.

Africa's boat people are the modern explorers. They are our answer to Christopher Columbus, Marco Polo and Vasco da Gama. The difference is that they are sailing in times when Europe has frontier police with dogs, and electric fences ringing off their shores. If a wire fence had confronted Christopher Columbus when he arrived in the New World, the history of the world would have been different.

Europe talks a lot about helping Africa. If it is serious, it should allow those who survive the sharks of the Mediterranean to come ashore.

**Haiti's new lease on life**  
**The Jamaica Gleaner**  
**Tuesday | February 21, 2006**

DESPITE INDICATIONS of administrative deficiencies, Haitians have managed to exercise their democratic rights in electing a government. We congratulate the Haitian people on their strength and their resolve to overcome the difficulties and to make a fundamental statement about how they see their future.

Mr René Préval, the president-elect, faces an immediate domestic challenge from the composition of the legislature. He will need on his side lawmakers who will be bold enough to implement the economic and social changes that he has promised for his reformed Haiti, the details of which he has promised to give in a few days.

However, with his Lespwa party having contested only two-thirds of the congressional and senate seats (many of which may have to be decided by runoff votes) Mr. Préval may need to recruit support from legislators who are opposed to him.

It is encouraging that the incoming president's first move has been to seek support - and consensus for the policies he intends to announce - from among some of the less successful contenders in the presidential race. In keeping with the erratic nature of Haitian politics, we are not surprised at the inconstancy of Leslie Manigat, a leading contender, who first agreed with the Electoral Council that Mr Préval should be made president, but who soon after attacked the move.

Similarly, we dismiss the claims by Charles Henri Baker, a losing contender who represents the powerful monied elite, that Mr Préval won by fraud. We support the decision of the Electoral Council to resolve the situation through a most responsible solution.

It appears that the new president will have significant regional and international support. We are encouraged that the Caribbean Community will reconsider Haiti's readmission to the group. CARICOM had taken what we consider to be the principled position that a democratically elected government was the condition for ending Haiti's suspension.

It is also encouraging to the long-suffering people of Haiti that the international community has welcomed the result of the presidential election. Despite the prevarication by administrations such as the United States that have lingering concerns about the ideological position of a government led by Mr Préval, it is instructive that it is Brazil that has taken the early lead in organising international assistance for Haiti.

Haitians deserve a new lease on life. The elections should provide a break with the past. We hope that Haitians, and all who wish them well, will make the most of the opportunity.

**Haiti poses challenges for Caricom**  
**The Antigua Sun**  
**Tuesday February 21 2006**

The victory by Rene Préval in Haiti's presidential elections poses challenges for the member countries of the Caribbean Community and Common Market (Caricom).

After the former President Jean-Bertrand Aristide accused the United States of orchestrating his removal and forcing him into exile in February 2004, Caricom, as a group, declined to recognise the interim government of Gerard Latortue.

It was well known that the regional grouping was divided on how to treat Haiti. In the end, the view prevailed that the Latortue regime would not be recognised and Haiti would not be allowed access to the councils of Caricom.

Preval's election victory changes all that and Caricom Secretary-General Edwin Carrington is reported to have said: "We are ready to receive Haiti back into the institutions of the Caribbean Community."

But, he added, "We will now sit with Haiti to discuss the conditions of its re-entry into Caricom."

Importantly, Mr. Carrington drew attention to the Revised Treaty of Chaguaramas which includes provisions for the Caribbean Single Market (CSM) to which Haiti is not a signatory.

He said: "We now have to sit with Haiti on this and other issues, including how are they prepared to come on board with the Revised Treaty and what is the process of acceding to the various elements of the Single Market."

It is Haiti's accession to the CSM that poses the greatest challenge to Caricom.

Haiti with a population of 8.3 million is the poorest country in the Hemisphere. Its people are three million more than the rest of Caricom combined.

Both its economic and political conditions have caused many of its people to flee from its shores in search of a better life.

While the United States has been the main target of their refuge, the Dominican Republic and the Bahamas have also experienced the illegal entry of Haitians into their countries.

Recently, groups of Haitian refugees have turned up in Jamaica, Antigua and Dominica.

The election of Mr. Préval, by just over 51 per cent of the population, does not speak to a united country. Haiti continues to live on a political powder keg. And, the political manipulation of its desperate economic circumstances is the match that could ignite it any time.

In any event, Haiti is far way from the establishment of democratic institutions, and even farther away from the kind of widespread respect for them that would underpin their maintenance.

Consequently, Caricom's first duty of care to a member of its community is to welcome back into its fold the constitutionally elected government of Rene Préal in elections which have been endorsed by the Organisation of American States.

Having done so, Caricom should take the lead in the international community in raising the financial and other help that Haiti urgently needs if the unwelcome flight of its people to other countries is to stop.

This will call for a serious diplomatic effort, and may well require the creation of a special Caricom Task Force devoted to working with the Haitian government and international donor and financial community for at least two years to create the machinery for financing and managing projects in Haiti.

Among these should be health care, particularly HIV/AIDS, education and human resource development, infrastructural projects that would encourage foreign and local private sector investment, and, very importantly, the building of democratic institutions supported by legislation and enforcement machinery.

In this regard, Caricom might enlist the help of Canada in a joint effort to engage the US government at the earliest opportunity in the peaceful and progressive development of Haiti.

Reports from the Dominican Republic, Haiti's neighbour, reveal that some 800 US troops landed at a port city in the Dominican Republic, barely 80 miles from the Haitian border, last Thursday. Ostensibly, they are there for "New Horizons", a military exercise that is to extend for several months.

Nonetheless, the US government has congratulated Mr. Préal on his election and State Department spokesman, Tom Casey, said "We look forward to working with the new government to help the Haitian people build a better future for themselves."

Caricom should take the US government at its word, and act as an honest broker to unlock aid for Haiti that has already been approved from the US and other countries and agencies, and to develop a programme for additional aid.

Neither democracy nor development, including the flight of Haitians seeking refuge, will come unless generous assistance is forthcoming.

And, Caricom countries, however determined they may be, as they have said, "to end years of isolation and bring Haiti into the Caribbean family to which it belongs by geography, history and common ancestry," should require considerable advancement by Haiti in its economic and political conditions before it is encouraged to join the Caribbean Single Market.

After all, the Single Market goes well beyond a free trade arrangement between groups of countries; it is a deep form of integration that makes a single space of all the countries' markets and allows for the free movement of goods and services, the right of establishment by nationals of the participating countries and free movement of certain categories of workers.

The countries that enter such a Single Market, while conscious of the importance of “geography, history and ancestry,” must also be alert to the need to fulfil other obligations such as the provision of funding under the Regional Development Fund (RDF) for disadvantaged countries and sectors where Haiti would be amongst the neediest.

Also, it may be an opportune time for Cariocm countries to revisit the Revised Treaty of Chaguaramas to create principles of democracy, rights, and obligations to which every member state must adhere as a basis for entry, and for continued membership.

All Cariocm members, including Haiti, should sign it as a precondition for entering the CSM or remaining a member.

Cariocm countries must do all they can to improve conditions for Haiti as a member of the Caribbean community. And, Haiti must also play its part.

Sir Ronald Sanders is a former Caribbean diplo-mat, now a corporate executive who publishes widely on small states in the international commu-nity.

The above opinions are not necessarily those of the publisher, newspaper, its advertisers or employees. You may write to Sir Ronald Sanders c/o editor@antiguasun.com.

## **Washington Reluctantly Concedes Préval Is Haiti's President-Elect**

**By Richard Dufour and Keith Jones**

**21 February 2006**

**World Socialist Web**

The attempt of Haiti's traditional elite and elements in and around the Bush administration to prevent René Préval, the clear winner of the country's February 7 presidential election, from being proclaimed president-elect has failed.

Under conditions of profound political crisis—a popular upheaval against the attempt to rob Préval of his election victory, the exposure of massive electoral fraud, and the worried intervention of representatives of the US, other powers, and the UN and its Haiti-stabilization force—Haiti's election council voted early last Thursday morning, 8 to 1, to declare Préval elected.

“We had to do something,” said council member Patrick Féquiere. “We could have just told Préval he got 48.76 percent, but when he contests the results all of this mess is going to come out—the blank votes, the missing votes.”

The council's vote was preceded by several days of frantic consultations and negotiations involving Préval, Haiti's US-installed interim government, Washington and diplomats from France, Canada, the Organization of American States and the UN.

That the Bush administration was not easily reconciled to a Préval victory is underscored by an op-ed piece that appeared in last Thursday's Miami Herald by Robert Noriega. As US assistant secretary of state for the Western Hemisphere from 2003 to 2005, Noriega was one of the principal architects of the 2004 coup that deposed Haiti's last elected president Jean-Bertrand Aristide. Noriega, who was quite willing to use a rebellion by fascist-minded former Haitian army officers and leaders of the vigilante group FRAP to chase Aristide from power, argued in his Herald piece that “violent mobs” of Préval supporters appeared intent on denying Haiti legitimate government “by trying to convince those tallying the ballots that 49 percent is ‘good enough’.”

Diplomats from France and Canada, countries that worked hand-in-glove with the US in the campaign against Aristide, are said to have continued to insist, long after UN, Brazilian and Chilean diplomats had conceded that the official vote count was riven with irregularities, that Préval be forced to contest a second run-off presidential election.

Two factors explain the shift in the attitude of the imperialist powers.

First, fears of the mounting popular anger against the attempt to falsify the election result—an attempt which masses of poor Haitians rightly recognized to be a continuation of the 2004 coup. On Monday, Feb. 13, Port-au-Prince was paralyzed by mass protests, as Préval supporters, mainly shantytown dwellers and other working people, took to the streets. While this protest and smaller demonstrations on subsequent days were almost entirely peaceful, there was palpable concern among leaders of the interim government and the UN stabilization force of a popular eruption should it be officially announced that Préval would be forced to contest a second ballot, thus opening the door to further manipulations and provocations by Haiti's elite and their allies in Washington.

The second factor was the brazen character of the fraud. Initial results made public two days after the vote gave Préval, the one-time ally of deposed president Jean-Bertrand Aristide, 61 percent of the ballots cast. The following day the figure had shrunk to 50.2 percent. Vote-counting then ground to a halt with the electoral council providing no explanation for days. Poll stations in outlying areas of the country where Préval was said to enjoy a wide lead were ransacked and thousands of ballots marked down as “missing”. Under conditions where most people had walked or waited in line for hours to vote, the number of blank ballots was said to have reached the improbably high number of 85,000 or 4 per cent of all votes cast. Another 147,000 votes were discounted because they were deemed illegible. And one day after the UN had said that there was no evidence of large-scale electoral fraud, tens of thousand of valid votes were found in a Port-au-Prince garbage dump.

So flagrant and incontrovertible was the fraud—and so obvious was it that it had been perpetrated with the connivance of Haiti’s interim government and the election council—that the “flawed” Haitian elections were dangerously exposing the claims of the western powers that they had intervened in Haiti as guarantors of democracy, and by extension their claims to be acting as a force for liberty in Afghanistan, Iraq and elsewhere.

There is also every reason to believe that the Bush administration and its international allies extracted various pledges of “good conduct” from Préval, before giving their final approval to the election council declaring him elected. According to an unnamed western diplomat cited in the New York Times, Préval responded to demands that he guarantee that Aristide, who now lives in exile in South Africa, will be barred from returning to Haiti, with the reply, “The last time Mr. Aristide returned to Haiti, he came with 50,000 troops [a reference to the 1994 US military operation that returned Aristide to power in 1994]. I don’t think he’ll have access to that kind of force anymore.”

Haiti’s venal bourgeois elite and their allies in the US Republican Party abhor Préval only slightly less than his onetime mentor Aristide, and for the same reason: because they have become the focus of the hopes of Haiti’s impoverished masses for real social change, for an end to conditions in which a small wealthy elite wallows in luxury while the majority of Haitians struggle to live on less than \$2 per day.

Yet when he was Haiti’s president (from 1996 to 2001), Préval, even more cravenly than Aristide, bent before the demands of the IMF, privatizing state companies, laying off thousands of public employees and ending state subsidies on transportation and food. And during the just concluded election, he reiterated his support for the primacy of the market and defence of private property.

According to a report in Monday’s New York Times, at his victory party in a posh Port-au-Prince neighborhood last Friday night, Préval embraced two leaders of Aristide’s party, Fanmi Lavalas, “Then he called two men whose designer clothes and light complexions marked them as sons of the upper classes” and hugged them. “ ‘You see everyone ... I am going to reconcile Haiti’ .”

While Préval has said he will only make an official victory speech on Wednesday, it appears that as part of the deal under which he has been allowed to assume the mantle of president-elect the issue of who orchestrated the massive electoral fraud is to be dropped. Similarly, there will be no investigation into the events of January-February 2004, when the traditional elite, egged on by Washington, connived with ex-army and FRAP thugs to unseat the country’s elected president.

For their part, the political representatives of Haiti's traditional elite have responded to the official announcement that Préval won the presidency by suggesting that his victory was illegitimate and, therefore, that he has no rightful claim on the office. "We are not duped by this Machiavellian comedy of imposing a winner," said Leslie Manigat, who finished second in the presidential race with about 12 percent of the vote. He called Préval's victory "a coup d'état through ballots." Ominously, right-wing businessman, Bush administration favorite, and failed presidential candidate Charles Henri Baker said the election results "presages a somber future for democracy in Haiti."

The US, France and Canada, while acknowledging that Préval is the president-elect, are giving some support to the claims that Préval was named president as the result of a "political decision", not truly elected by a majority of Haitian voters.

This is preposterous. Préval and his supporters were the victims of a massive electoral fraud. If the election commission had to bend its rules—choosing to redistribute the inexplicably large number of unmarked ballots to the 33 candidates in proportion to their percentage of the rest of the vote and thereby raised Préval's vote percentage above 50 percent—it was because it was trying to "correct" for the numerous improprieties it had, at the very least, failed to prevent, including the theft of tens of thousands of valid votes.

Especially noteworthy in the attempt to use the fraud perpetrated against Préval and the masses who voted for him to ratchet up the pressure on the incoming president was a statement from the acting US ambassador to Haiti. Tim Carney told Associated Press that Préval's legitimacy could be called into question if he "doesn't perform," i.e., if he doesn't do Washington's bidding. "If he does perform," added Carney, "nobody will remember" how he came to power.

Apart from calling for Préval to reassert central government control over the shanty towns of Port-au-Prince, the main demand being made by figures in and around the Bush administration is that the new president should "share power" with the traditional elite and begin this process by naming a right-wing politician or prominent businessman as his prime minister.

In a February 17 editorial, the New York Times ignored the role that Haiti's US-installed interim government played in the attempt to deny Préval the mandate he had been given by the Haitian people and the evident support this attempt enjoyed in Washington, while voicing approval for the proclamation of Préval as president-elect as "the best available exit from a bad and worsening situation." Then, the voice of America's liberal establishment, echoed the Bush administration's call for Préval to reach out to his opponents—to those who for decades have, with the support and approval of Democratic and Republican administrations, safeguarded their privileges through bloody violence and by denying the Haitian people the most elementary democratic rights.

## **CARICOM urges Haitians to respect outcome of presidential elections**

**02-20-2006**

**by Gordon French**

**Caribbean Net News**

**Guyana Correspondent**

GEORGETOWN, Guyana: The Caribbean Community (CARICOM) has welcomed the news of the election of a new President of Haiti, Mr. René Preval after a review was undertaken of the vote count process in the face of troubling allegations of manipulation and other grave irregularities.

In a decisive statement issued Saturday by the CARICOM Secretariat here in Georgetown Guyana, the 15-member bloc said that the review of the vote count process has brought an end to the uncertainty surrounding the outcome of the Presidential elections.

"CARICOM is of the view that it is in the interest of all Haitians to respect the outcome of the Presidential elections, in keeping with the norms of the democratic process," the statement said.

The Community also called on all involved in the ongoing electoral process to do everything necessary to enhance and preserve its credibility.

"The preservation of the integrity of the electoral process is of paramount importance for the legitimacy of the government, the future stability of the country and the development of the Haitian society."

The regional bloc has not recognized Haiti as a member after the ouster of Former President Jean Bertrand Aristide, which plunged the country into political and economic turmoil but recently CARICOM heads have been touting Haiti's return to CARICOM.

CARICOM Heads of Government at their Seventeenth Inter-Sessional Meeting held in Trinidad and Tobago on 9-10 February, 2006, indicated the Community's willingness to welcome the return of Haiti to its Councils, on the basis of the electoral process having been certified as "free, fair and credible" by the groups monitoring the elections, including CARICOM's own Elections Observation Mission.

CARICOM is of the view that the voting which took place on February 7 benefited from a high level of popular participation and an absence of political violence. It was generally seen as being free.

For the process to be also fair and credible, however, there had to be transparency and rigour in the vote count to ensure that the results reflected the will of the electorate.

CARICOM has received an official communication from the Interim Prime Minister of Haiti informing of the election of Mr. Preval.

**Haiti poses challenges for CARICOM**  
**Caribbean Net News**  
**02-21-2006**  
**by Sir Ronald Sanders**

The victory by Rene Prével in Haiti's presidential elections poses challenges for the member countries of the Caribbean Community and Common Market (CARICOM).

After the former President Jean-Bertrand Aristide accused the United States of orchestrating his removal and forcing him into exile in February 2004, CARICOM, as a group, declined to recognise the interim government of Mr. Gerard Latortue.

It was well known that the regional grouping was divided on how to treat with Haiti. In the end, the view prevailed that the Latortue regime would not be recognised and Haiti would not be allowed access to the councils of CARICOM.

Preval's election victory changes all that and CARICOM Secretary-General Edwin Carrington is reported to have said: "We are ready to receive Haiti back into the institutions of the Caribbean Community." But, he added, "We will now sit with Haiti to discuss the conditions of its re-entry into CARICOM."

Importantly, Mr Carrington drew attention to the Revised Treaty of Chaguaramas which includes provisions for the Caribbean Single Market (CSM) to which Haiti is not a signatory.

He said: "We now have to sit with Haiti on this and other issues, including how are they prepared to come on board with the Revised Treaty and what is the process of acceding to the various elements of the Single Market."

It is Haiti's accession to the CSM that poses the greatest challenge to CARICOM. Haiti with a population of 8.3 million is the poorest country in the Hemisphere. Its people are 3 million more than the rest of CARICOM combined.

Both its economic and political conditions have caused many of its people to flee from its shores in search of a better life.

While the United States has been the main target of their refuge, the Dominican Republic and the Bahamas have also experienced the illegal entry of Haitians into their countries. Recently, groups of Haitian refugees have turned up in Jamaica, Antigua and Dominica.

The election of Mr Prével, by just over 51% of the population, does not speak to a united country. Haiti continues to live on a political powder keg. And, the political manipulation of its desperate economic circumstances is the match that could ignite it any time.

In any event, Haiti is a far way from the establishment of democratic institutions, and even farther away from the kind of widespread respect for them that would underpin their maintenance.

Consequently, CARICOM's first duty of care to a member of its community is to welcome back into its fold the constitutionally elected government of Rene Prével in elections which have been endorsed by the Organisation of American States.

Having done so, CARICOM should take the lead in the international community in raising the financial and other help that Haiti urgently needs if the unwelcome flight of its people to other countries is to stop.

This will call for a serious diplomatic effort, and may well require the creation of a special CARICOM Task Force devoted to working with the Haitian government and international donor and financial community for at least two years to create the machinery for financing and managing projects in Haiti.

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CARICOM countries must do all they can to improve conditions for Haiti as a member of the Caribbean community. And, Haiti must also play its part.

**Adopting a plan (and 2 children) to change the world**  
**The Arizona Republic**  
**Feb. 21, 2006**

Craig Juntunen's goal was to be wealthy enough to retire by age 40. And he was. And he did. But he got bored. So for a second career he decided to use his knowledge of business and life to help mold the lives of college athletes. And again, he did. But that also left him with too much time for golf and skiing. So for his third career he decided to change the world.

And he is.

"I got to the point where I could either spend more time on the golf course working on my short game or I could go to Haiti," he said. He chose the latter. advertisement

"Craig is unique," said Dirk Koetter, Arizona State University's head football coach, with whom Juntunen has worked for three years. "His personal success put him financially in a spot where he could do anything he wanted. And he chose to come and work with our program. And he did a great job, not only with the football players but with the staff, the coaches. He certainly had an influence on me. Now, he and Kathi (his wife) are moving on to something they feel even more strongly about, and they are really putting themselves on the line to accomplish it. There just aren't many people like them."

The Juntunens live in north Scottsdale. They are part of what Craig calls "the country club set." It's the life he dreamed about as a young quarterback for the University of Idaho and then for a time in the Canadian Football League. After his sports career ended, he founded a human-resources company that grew to a point that allowed him, in 1995, to sell it and retire.

"I was very focused on success," he said. "My goals for years involved making money and achieving a lifestyle. There was no time for kids or for little else. And I made it. I'm proud of what I accomplished. But I wanted more. Not in terms of money but in terms of personal satisfaction. Of doing something important."

He and Kathi formed a charitable foundation, and Craig went to work for ASU, counseling athletes as the football program's director of player development.

"It was a wonderful experience," he said. "I loved every minute of it. But in time Kathi and I began looking to do more. Specifically, we began looking into adoption."

The couple's research eventually led them to investigate the crisis of orphaned and abandoned children in the Third World, and that led them to Haiti, where more than a million children are without parents and thousands live on the streets.

"It seemed as if that was the worst spot for children in the world," he said. "So, we set out to learn about it. And then decided to adopt two children from there."

The couple also learned about A Child's Hope Foundation, which helps parents in nations like ours adopt children from places like Haiti. (The toll-free number for information on adopting, donating, volunteering, etc. is 1-866-217-5437.) Craig was so taken with the organization's work that he signed on as a member of its executive board, giving up his work with college athletes as well as any significant chance to improve his golf game.

"So, at the age of 51, I'm on this new adventure," he said. "Kathi and I will be adopting two children (younger than 5). Meantime, at the foundation our goal is to increase these adoptions to 10 a month and then to improve upon that. It's a small thing in a world that needs so much. But I can't think of anything more important."

It's not a small thing, of course, but the only real way to change the world. Those who know Juntunen have no doubt that he can do it. Becoming a first-time dad at 51, however, that will be a challenge.

**St. E nursing students prepare for Haiti trip**  
**Journal and Courier Online, West Lafayette, Indiana**  
**February 21, 2006**  
**By Jennifer Schaaf**

Not everyone's college tuition includes spring break in a warm sunny place, but for several St. Elizabeth School of Nursing students it does.

From March 3 to 10, eight nursing students will travel to Jacmel, Haiti, to conduct a two-day health clinic, said John Jezerski, director of the school of nursing.

"Over the course of those two days, students will help with the assessment of health conditions of somewhere around 600 people," he said.

Ashley Hiss, a nursing school senior, said she and her fellow students are ready for a number of health concerns including malnutrition, wound care, prenatal care and calcium deficiency.

The cost for each student's trip is included in their tuition, Jezerski said. Students will receive three academic credits for the trip.

Duane Sellers, who has been to Haiti several times on missions sponsored by St. Thomas Aquinas Catholic Church in West Lafayette, will serve as a guide. He said he tries to make the trip once or twice a year. The people draw him back.

"It's an experience most people find hard to pass up again," Sellers said.

To prepare for the trip students take a class called transcultural nursing, Jezerski said.

"It's a way for students to look at experiences of culture outside of the U.S.," he added.

All nursing students are required to take a course in transcultural nursing, but going to Haiti is optional.

Jonell Smith, a senior from New Richmond, said she opted to go because she plans on doing missionary work after she gets her degree.

"That'll be what I do on my vacation," she said.

Senior Maggie Lear said the classroom work teaches students what to expect once they get to Haiti.

"We read articles about the history, and learned about the language, Creole," Lear said.

According to the Central Intelligence Agency, Haiti is the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere. Life expectancy averages 52 years or 12 years less than the world average.

Hiss said the class also covered what will happen at the clinic.

"People are really dependent on us," she said. "These people have a different mindset on health care because they don't have the technology."

To prepare for the trip, students received a basic physical exam, shots for Hepatitis A and B, tetanus and malaria, and received anti-diarrheal pills, said Lindsey Rusk, one of the students.

"We also need to supply a high-DEET bug spray so that we don't get malaria from the mosquitoes," said Janae Spitznagle, a senior.

She said the only worry she had about the trip was the language barrier. Although Haiti has been wracked by violence, relative calm has existed following the election of a popular new leader, the Associated Press has reported.

"I know they wouldn't take us if it wasn't safe," Spitznagle said.

Sellers added there is always an element of risk when traveling to a Third World country such as Haiti.

"It's never 100 percent safe, but neither are some areas of Chicago or Washington, D.C.," he said. "I have been there over a dozen times and never felt like I was in personal danger, but I don't go into those areas that are prone to those things."

If Hiss has a concern, it's that not everyone who needs help will get it.

"The thing that gets me is that we are going to have to turn people away at the end," she said.

Students are seeking donations of supplies to take with them. There is still time to donate.

"Each student is responsible for collecting \$200 worth of donations," Spitznagle said. "We are accepting donations up until Feb. 24."

## **Aristide's Former Ally May Be Turning Away**

**Many Haitians voted for Rene Preval thinking he would bring back the ousted leader. But the president-elect is staking out a new independence.**

**By Carol J. Williams, Times Staff Writer**

**Los Angeles Times**

**Feb. 20, 2006**

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti — Robert Manuel doesn't say much, but his omnipresence at the side of President-elect Rene Preval speaks volumes about the next head of state's newfound independence.

Manuel was national security chief in the first years of Preval's 1996-2001 presidency but was forced to resign after a crackdown on drug traffickers netted some loyalists of Jean-Bertrand Aristide, who served as president before and after Preval. Manuel fled to Central America under threat of assassination, and the drug gangs pressed their point by killing the man expected to succeed him, Jean Lamy.

Preval was regarded by many analysts as an Aristide puppet during his term in office, and they viewed the pressure to replace Manuel as a humiliating act of interference. But now Aristide is the one living in exile, and in bringing Manuel back, Preval appears to be sending a message that Aristide shouldn't count on an invitation to return home any time soon.

Timothy Carney, acting U.S. charge d'affaires, was ambassador to Haiti during Preval's first term. He recalls the now 63-year-old agronomist as someone who prefers to surround himself with capable lieutenants rather than toadies.

"The popular view is that he was held down and held back by Aristide because Aristide couldn't brook any possible rival," Carney said. The Feb. 7 election "showed two things: First, that Preval is his own man, and second, it marked the reality of Aristide being a man of the past."

As the ballots were counted, the Provisional Electoral Council worked out a compromise to overcome problems with an inordinately high number of blank and invalid ballots, a redistribution that allowed Preval to garner more than 50% of the vote and avoid a runoff. Since then, the reclusive victor has been talking with friends and foes alike as he explores potential Cabinet appointments.

Among those with whom Preval has met were Haitian Chamber of Commerce President Reginald Boulos; peasant leader Jean Chavannes Jeune, who ran a distant fourth in the election; and activist Rene Monplaisir from the Cite Soleil slum of Port-au-Prince, the capital.

Tensions between Haiti's slum-dwelling masses, who supported Aristide and Preval, and the business elite frequently roil its politics. But representatives of diverse communities have spoken publicly of the need for the next government to include a broad spectrum of society.

Some in Haiti's small class of successful industrialists have already joined forces with Preval.

"He's going to be one of the best presidents of Haiti because he listens to people," said Pierre Leger, a producer of plant oils and employer of 27,000 farmers in the southern region of Les Cayes.

Others predict that the business community will collaborate with Preval, recognizing that to do otherwise would perpetuate the political paralysis and economic decline that have made Haiti the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere. Half the country of 8.5 million is illiterate; 70% or more are unemployed; and schools, roads and hospitals have fallen into ruins.

"When you have such a polarized society, elements of the private sector are very important," said Lionel Delatour, a founder of the Center for Free Enterprise and Democracy think tank. "Mr. Preval has some reaching out to do, but there is also an interest and a commitment on the part of the private sector to reach out to Mr. Preval."

Those holding the reins of industry have an interest in helping steer Haiti out of its traditional confrontation between rich and poor, Delatour said. But that legacy cannot be overcome and national reconciliation won't even be attempted if Preval succumbs to pressure from some elements of his constituency to let Aristide return from exile, he said.

"If he does try to bring Aristide back, Preval will not finish his presidency," Delatour predicted. "I think Mr. Preval is smart enough not to do that."

Preval's alliance with Monplaisir, a young Aristide loyalist with influence among the armed militants agitating for the ousted president's return, suggests the president-elect has been working to shift their focus to other objectives. Monplaisir has expressed in recent radio interviews the need for the new government to work with the business elite to create jobs and repair the country's ravaged infrastructure.

Diplomats say they have been clear that Aristide's return would be regarded as a destabilizing influence that would discourage aid donors as well as foreign investors.

Preval has "always given fishy answers when asked about Aristide, but up to a certain moment he couldn't say publicly what he told us," said the ambassador of a South American country, who spoke on condition of anonymity. "He was pointing out to us that most of his projects and initiatives were abandoned by Aristide" when Aristide succeeded him.

That was among the reasons Preval withdrew from political life after his term ended.

"Preval was humiliated by Aristide. He fired all of his advisors and stopped his reforms," a United Nations official observed, speculating that the president-elect has no real interest in bringing back a fiery populist who clamors for the spotlight.

Delatour said that Preval isn't obligated to allow Aristide to return, even if many Haitians voted for him with that expectation.

"A politician's first job is to get elected," he said.

Preval surrounded himself during his low-key campaign with foreign-educated advisors, many with ties to other political factions and the private sector. Analysts expect to help him build bridges among the communities that Aristide always sought to keep separate.

Even Preval's biggest doubters acknowledge that he should be given a chance to demonstrate what he can do as leader now that he's out of Aristide's shadow.

"He's already spent five years in power and didn't do very much. I really don't expect very much from him now, either. But I'm hoping to be very wrong," said Charles Henri Baker, a garment factory owner who finished third in the presidential race.

"Since he has been chosen to be president again, for my country's sake I hope Mr. Preval can show us another view of what he can do."

**Denville doctor's work in Haiti never done**  
**Since 1999, she has taken 10 trips to aid people of the island**  
**BY LAURA BRUNO**  
**DAILY RECORD, New Jersey**  
**February 20, 2006**

Dr. Judy Banks read about the hundreds of Haitian boat people attempting to reach Miami's shores in rickety boats -- only to be intercepted by the U.S. Coast Guard.

It was the late 1990s and the story was played out over and over again in the news. She felt called to do something and got her chance in the summer of 1999, during a conversation with a new patient.

Carol Hawthorne, a Chester Township resident and executive director of the nonprofit Dayspring Ministries, was explaining to Banks, an obstetrician, that she was getting plenty of exercise picking up her 5-year-old adopted son from Haiti.

Banks told Hawthorne how she wanted to visit Haiti.

"She said, 'I'm going in two weeks, are you interested in coming?'" Banks said.

Banks shipped out two weeks later on a mission to Haiti. That was in June of 1999 and it would be the first of 10 trips to Haiti for Banks.

"I always wanted to go on a medical mission," Banks said. "The opportunity presented itself and it seemed like the right thing to do."

A successful ob/gyn with a private practice in Florham Park for 20 years, Banks has since chosen to spend two weeks a year in Haiti as a volunteer for Dayspring.

Due to the escalation in violence on the island since the 2004 political rebellion, Banks and Dayspring have been unable to visit Haiti recently. They're hoping to return this year, if the election this month of President René Préval succeeds in restoring stability to the island.

Nonetheless, their work continues in Haiti, considered the poorest Western nation and one of the poorest in the world. When Hawthorne and Dayspring first began to work in Haiti in 1998, they adopted a local church, called the Light and Peace Mission, located a short distance from the capital of Port-au-Prince.

At that time, there was nothing more than a church serving roughly 400 members. Within the past seven years, Dayspring has opened a school for 85 children and pays for them to receive a daily hot lunch of rice, beans and chicken and supports a staff of four teachers. It has also staffed a free medical clinic with a doctor, opened a 20-child orphanage and created a food program of rice and beans for widows and senior citizens, Banks said. Twice a year, they also send a shipping container filled with clothing to the mission.

The nonprofit has managed to raise the funds for all the projects largely through word-of-mouth and the support of two Morris County churches, First Congregational Church in Chester and Calvary Baptist Church in Morristown.

Calvary Baptist became involved due to Banks, who is a parishioner.

"She is inspirational," said Rev. Monica Hooks, a Calvary minister. "Because of the kind of person she is, so many people wanted to help."

Calvary adopted one of the four schools that Dayspring now supports in Haiti. A total of 500 children are taught in these four schools and roughly half receive the daily hot lunch program.

"She has a lot of heart for the underdog," Hooks said. "She is no longer just a volunteer, she is an ambassador for these people."

Banks, who grew up in Morris Township, is well-known in Morris County, having graduated from Morristown High School in 1967. She attended the College of St. Elizabeth as an undergrad, then attended Meharry Medical College in Nashville, Tenn., before returning to New Jersey for her residency at the University of Medicine and Dentistry.

Banks, who now lives in Denville, not only became a regular volunteer for the mission trips to Haiti, but also agreed to be a Dayspring trustee.

"I want to encourage people to recognize there is tremendous need and suffering in the world," Banks said. "It can seem overwhelming, but people can do small things to touch the lives of these people and ease their suffering."

Dayspring is an all volunteer nonprofit, which is run out of Hawthorne's Chester home. Hawthorne and Banks barely knew each other before that first trip in 1999, but have since become good friends.

"She didn't know me, but there was no hesitation, she knew right away what she wanted to do," Hawthorne said.

Although Banks had imagined that she would use her medical expertise as an ob/gyn in her mission, it has not worked out that way, yet.

During each visit, which lasts about a week, they are able to offer three medical clinics. Typically one is held at the Light and Peace Mission, but they will also travel into the mountains for an overnight stay.

In the mountains, there is no running water, electricity or bathroom accommodations. They stay in people's homes, sleeping on floors or makeshift beds and they eat what the locals eat.

"The thing that impressed me," Banks said, "is that people are reaching out to connect with you in some way. It's hard, because you can only do what you can in that one day, you can not really give them what they hope for."

Before each trip, Banks has gathered medical supplies and samples with the help of colleagues and they are able to disperse some basic medications, such as acetaminophen and vitamins, and treat minor ailments. People often come to the clinics simply wanting their blood pressure taken, Banks said.

The main mission of the trips has been to assess their needs so when they return to New Jersey they can seek ways to address their deficiencies, Banks said.

Several different groups across Morris County also have helped Banks and Dayspring create a program for new mothers that provides them with cloth diapers, new baby clothes, toys and supplies.

"The people of Haiti get everyone's castoffs, but we give these mothers all new items. It's a symbol of a new life," Banks said.

**Washington meeting to discuss future aid for Haiti**  
**Alessandra Bastos and Aloisio Milani**  
**Agência Brasil**  
**February 20, 2006**

Brasília - On Wednesday, Brazil and Argentina will be in Washington with representatives of the United States, Haiti, France and the World Bank to discuss future international assistance for Haiti.

Brazilian Foreign Minister, Celso Amorim says he hopes the Washington meeting will speed up the flow of aid. The new government of Haiti, led by Rene Preval, will have the final word on assistance and cooperation programs.

Brazilian diplomats point out that various countries have had negative experiences with aid for Haiti in the past. Money has disappeared and there has been corruption. This time there are plans to implant better control mechanisms. The World Bank, the Interamerican Development Bank and the UN Development Program all report that they have projects for Haiti.

Brazil has a project for professional training through its Goias Industrial Apprentice program (Senai) in the city of Jacmel, south of the Haitian capital.

Translation: Allen Bennett

## **Stop interfering in nation's politics**

**BY IRA KURZBAN**

**ira@kkwtlaw.com**

**Miami Herald Opinion piece**

**February 20, 2006**

The election of René Préval as president of Haiti can be a turning point in our government's relationship to the Haitian people. Préval clearly has a preference to help Haiti's poor, and it was the poor who gave him an overwhelming electoral victory that was four times larger than his closest rival. In light of this preference for the poor, policymakers in Washington need to review our own policies, which too often reflectively supported Haiti's tiny elite in their effort to destabilize Haiti's popular democracy.

The current policies have led us to a dead end of continually trying to suppress popular democracy without raising the economic status of the poor. Although our short-term interests may be to stop Haitian migrants and drugs from entering the United States, our long-term interests must be to alter the economic conditions in a country that has the largest population and therefore the largest potential market of all the CARICOM countries.

With President Préval we can begin to engage in a new foreign policy that should include the following strategies:

- Stop interfering in the internal politics of Haiti. Who Préval picks as a prime minister and members of his cabinet should be his own affair and not a "litmus test" for anything. Our efforts to force a government of national reconciliation in Haiti is an affront to Haitian sovereignty as much as it would be for the Chinese government to tell a Republican president that he had to include Democrats, Libertarians, Socialists and others in his government to show unity.

Similarly, we should not hamper efforts to allow all Haitians to return from abroad who have been forced into exile or interfere in the reconstruction of Fanmi Lavalas or any other party the Haitian people support.

Also, no funds from either the Agency for International Development or the International Republican Institute should be expended to undermine Haiti's political parties or to create new political parties. These are matters best left to the Haitian people to decide.

- Work constructively with the Haitian government to provide assistance on a national level. For the past decade our assistance has been directed to nongovernmental organizations rather than to the Haitian government, and from 2000 to 2004 we had a total development-assistance embargo against the Haitian government. Préval's victory gives us an opportunity for a new beginning where we can work with the Haitian government on their terms, not ours. Haiti's massive health, infrastructure, environmental and educational problems can not be solved through nongovernmental organizations.

We must provide substantial direct assistance to the Haitian government and we must ensure that our assistance and that of other developed countries is not coupled with political demands. Micromanaging

Haiti's nascent democracy by strangling its government economically has been a dismal failure and it ignores our own history where democracy took decades to develop.

- Provide technical expertise and financial resources to transform agrarian life. The United States possesses the world's greatest expertise on eliminating agrarian and rural poverty. We have the most successful rural electrification program in the history of the world. We have highly advanced farming facilities and agricultural techniques that we could and should put at the disposal of the Haitian government. Such efforts would help Haiti move toward self-sufficiency in food production, and rural electrification would reverse the downward ecological spiral Haiti faces.

Additionally, the United States has great expertise in rural health programs. In a country where there is only one doctor for every 11,000 citizens and where most doctors are in urban areas, we have the capacity to develop healthcare programs where none exist.

Interfering in Haiti's political life and conditioning assistance on political benchmarks has failed Haiti and its poor. It is time that we begin a new, more gracious strategy, that provides assistance simply to reverse Haiti's massive poverty.

Ira Kurzban was the general counsel for Haiti for 13 years during the governments of René Préval and Jean-Bertrand Aristide.

**PM Spencer congratulates new Haitian president**  
**The Antigua Sun**  
**Monday February 20 2006**

Prime Minister Baldwin Spencer has congratulated the leader of the L'Espwa (The Hope) Party Rene Preval on his victory at the polls in Haiti.

Preval, a former ally of deposed President Jean Bertrand Aristide, was declared the winner of the presidential elections last Thursday, having won by an overwhelming majority of votes cast.

In his letter, Prime Minister Spencer said the 7 Feb., elections were a special opportunity to resolve the difficulties of the past and to put Haiti upon a new path that will lead to growth and development.

“While there are many challenges ahead, I am comforted by the personal qualities and experience that you bring to your office; and with the goodwill and support of the people of the Caribbean and the international community, the people of Haiti, who so overwhelmingly supported your vision of hope, can now be placed at the centre of all development efforts,” Prime Minister Spencer said.

The country's leader told the new Haitian president that he looks forward to working with him at the regional and bilateral levels in ensuring that the Haitian people have a bright future.

Prime Minister Spencer last Friday also joined his Caricom colleagues in issuing an official message calling the Haitian elections a wonderful moment and declaring that the French nation now has a democratic government, which could sit down with Caricom and discuss its re-entry into the regional grouping.

Caricom suspended Haiti's membership after the ousting of President Jean Bertrand Aristide two years ago.

**Restless Politics, Poverty Seen Dogging Haiti's New Leader**  
**Haider Rizvi,**  
**OneWorld US**  
**Mon Feb 20, 2006**

NEW YORK, Feb 20 (OneWorld) - Celebrations of Rene Preval's election as Haiti's new president could prove short-lived in the face of political restlessness and doubts about whether the international community will help heal poverty's open sores in the western hemisphere's poorest and most unequal society, analysts have warned.

Preval was declared the winner last Thursday after his supporters--mainly, Haiti's dispossessed--took to the streets amid allegations the interim administration had rigged the count to hold the populist former president to 48.7 percent of the vote with 90 percent of all ballots tallied--just short of the 50 percent minimum required to attain the presidency.

In the week ahead, Haiti's electoral council is expected to announce the results of a court-delayed count of votes in parliamentary elections held two weeks ago alongside the presidential contest.

Most of those races likely will not be settled without a second round of voting, analysts said. They cautioned against hopes for much-awaited democratic rule and political stability.

"Haiti's politics are not popular games," said Brian Concannon, director of U.S.-based rights advocates the Institute for Justice & Democracy in Haiti.

"Those who have lost the election are already crying foul." he added, referring to the negotiations that led to Preval's declared victory in the Feb. 7 election.

Preval's nearest rival, Leslie Manigat, won 12 percent of the vote.

The deal struck by Preval's Lespwa (Hope) Party and the interim authorities allowed the electoral council to distribute blank ballots to all the candidates according to the proportion of their counted votes. That took Preval beyond 50 percent.

Since the agreement was not based on election rules, however, it has the potential to cast doubts upon the president-elect's legitimacy, analysts said. Preval is due to be sworn in next month.

"The deal that ended the election crisis in Haiti provides leverage for those seeking to de-legitimize Preval's presidency," said Concannon, a veteran Haiti-watcher and former prosecutor of crimes committed during the 1991-94 military regime, which had forced democratically-elected President Jean-Bertrand Aristide to flee the country.

Aristide returned in 1996, completed his term, and stepped down because the constitution did not permit consecutive terms. Preval, an ally who had served as prime minister, succeeded Aristide, who subsequently won re-election in 2000 in a vote that most other parties had boycotted.

The political situation deteriorated, eventually leading to the deployment in Haiti of thousands of United Nations peacekeepers who have been dogged by allegations of partiality and whose continued presence has led some observers to wonder if the world body is more likely to help or hinder Haiti's long-term prospects.

Aristide, whom former colonial powers France and the United States had condemned as a despot, fled Haiti a second time on the morning of Feb. 29, 2004 on board a U.S.-dispatched airplane to the Central African Republic, whence he eventually went into exile in South Africa.

Aristide filed suit against the U.S. and French governments in April 2004 and has said that U.S. soldiers kidnapped him at gunpoint. The administration of President George W. Bush has denied the charge.

Soon after Aristide's ouster, a U.S.-backed interim administration was installed and the UN peacekeepers were brought in.

Human rights groups often have accused the UN troops of taking sides with the interim administration and have held them responsible for the killings of innocent civilians during shootouts in the slums of Port-au-Prince, Haiti's capital, with militant youths believed to support Aristide.

The UN has indirectly acknowledged civilian deaths but is said to have turned a deaf ear to rights watchdogs' calls for a thorough investigation of shooting incidents involving peacekeepers and the Haitian police.

Last week, the UN Security Council authorized the 9,000-strong peacekeeping force to remain in Haiti until Aug. 15.

Some analysts suggest that while the troops might be necessary to maintain law and order, hopes for peace will remain illusive unless the international community takes steps to ensure some improvement in Haitians' standard of living.

"The UN is going to stay in Haiti for a long time," said Dan Erikson, a Caribbean expert at the Washington, D.C.-based think tank Inter-American Dialogue. "It should be much more involved in improving healthcare and education than peacekeeping."

Concannon, a former UN human rights expert, took a similar view but also seemed doubtful of whether the United Nations was ready to demonstrate its neutrality in a country where it is perceived as having killed political dissidents and having permitted local police to make illegal arrests.

The situation may improve somewhat with the change of administration in Port-au-Prince, he said, but the deal that resulted in Preval's victory also may have hemmed him in.

In Concannon's view, the voting crisis has succeeded in forcing Preval's energies and attention away from the economic and social development policies that he was elected to implement.

Additionally, Manigat, who placed a distant second in the presidential race, has denounced the deal by saying that the interim government and election monitors caved in to threats of violence from Preval's supporters.

Describing this as an opening for a "manufactured political crisis," Concannon said he thinks that sooner or later, a growing chorus from Haiti's elite and the international community will join Manigat.

**Haiti's Chance**  
**Washington Post**  
**Sunday, February 19, 2006**

HAITI'S LONG-AWAITED election got off to an inspiring start this month, as hundreds of thousands of people rose early and walked, sometimes for hours, to get to the polls. About 2.2 million voted, an astonishing turnout in a country of 8 million that has been devastated by political conflict, environmental catastrophe, drug trafficking and the hemisphere's worst poverty. But then, as so often in Haiti's recent history, the post-election turmoil began. As an electoral commission dallied over the vote count, the commanding lead of former president Rene Preval, an opponent of the interim government, began to shrink. When tens of thousands of blank ballots threatened to force a runoff election, his supporters took to the streets. Fortunately, a crisis was averted by that rarest of Haitian events, political compromise: On Thursday morning Mr. Preval was declared the election's winner after some crude but fair adjustments. The result is a small but precious opportunity to put a failed state back on its feet.

It would be nice to say that Haiti's perennial combatants -- the business and middle-class elite, and populists rooted in the vast urban slums -- managed to forge this peaceful solution. In fact most of the credit goes to international actors, led by the Brazilian and Chilean leaders of the United Nations mission in Haiti, who pressured Haitian officials to concede Mr. Preval the victory he seemed to have won. Haiti's deep divide remains: Mr. Preval's two leading opponents, who won 11 and 8 percent of the recorded vote to his 51, refused to admit defeat.

Mr. Preval could make a start at overcoming the country's polarization by reaching out to the opposition in forming his cabinet, and perhaps in his choice of a prime minister. He must also keep his distance from exiled former president Jean-Bertrand Aristide, his former mentor, whose return to the country would probably trigger another rebellion of the sort that forced his departure two years ago. Like Mr. Aristide, Mr. Preval seems to have some influence with the gangs that control large parts of the capital, Port-au-Prince; his first priority should be to work with U.N. peacekeepers to pacify them, and attack those who live by kidnapping and drug trafficking.

Haiti's chance at success will depend on much more than the prudence of the new president, however. Foreign donors have pledged \$1 billion to Haiti, but so far only half of that is committed on the ground. The mandate of the U.N. peacekeeping force has been extended for six months, but it still needs to be strengthened and to be committed more aggressively by its commanders to restoring order. Last but not least, the United States needs to overcome its own polarization over Haiti -- which pits diehard supporters of Mr. Aristide against equally single-minded opponents. While aggressively promoting democracy and dispatching troops around the world, President Bush has minimized American commitments to a country just 600 miles from Florida. He has a chance now, too, to do more.

## **'Belgian Option' Helped Avert Crisis in Haiti**

**The solution for the blank-ballot issue sprang from closed-door talks between interim government officials and foreign diplomats.**

**By Carol J. Williams**

**Los Angeles Times**

**February 19, 2006**

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti — When word leaked out in the powder-keg streets of Port-au-Prince that former President Rene Preval's lead was shrinking, his supporters took to the hills. By the thousands, they stormed up to the hilltop Hotel Montana, where they believed the overseers of the Haitian presidential vote were holed up, clambering over the luxury compound's gates and overwhelming its meager defenses.

But electoral council officials hadn't shown up at the Montana that Monday. Neither had those administering the vote tabulation at the Sonapi industrial park near the airport. Although workers hired to input voting data had made it to the industrial park, they had been sent home for their safety.

It had been nearly a week since 2.2 million voters crushed into overwhelmed polling places Feb. 7 in Haiti's first elections in six years. Initial returns had given Preval 61%, but further counting had whittled that lead to just over 50%, and the percentage kept going lower. Suspicious that their votes were being stolen, Preval's supporters were spoiling for a confrontation.

The top United Nations diplomat in Haiti, Juan Gabriel Valdes, summoned peacekeeping commanders and officials of Haiti's interim government to an emergency meeting early Monday afternoon at the operational compound of the U.N. mission, which is known by its French acronym, MINUSTAH.

A decision was made to send a helicopter to Preval's remote hometown, Marmalade, to bring the man at the center of the spiraling unrest to the capital to calm his supporters. When Preval disembarked the U.N. helicopter, he said only that he had come to try to save the election.

Preval's camp was crying foul, pointing to the large number of blank ballots — nearly 5% of the total — as suspect. Haitians hadn't walked for miles and stood in unruly lines for hours to cast ballots for none of the 33 presidential choices, his aides argued. They wanted the blank ballots removed from the count or redistributed proportionate to each contender's vote share, either of which would boost Preval's percentage above the simple majority needed for victory.

Meanwhile, diplomats from the United States, Canada, France, Brazil, Chile, the United Nations and the Organization of American States gathered at the National Palace to meet with interim President Boniface Alexandre.

"We felt what was needed was a big brainstorming. We thought we should try to find a way to smooth things over," said Brazil's ambassador to Haiti, Paulo Cordeiro de Andrade Pinto, whose nation commands MINUSTAH forces and contributes the largest contingent.

"There was a Latin American perception that the way the blank votes were handled here is completely different from the way they are considered in any other country," Cordeiro said.

As tension mounted, political analysts blamed exiled President Jean-Bertrand Aristide for orchestrating the unrest and raising the specter of violence — a tactic remembered from his two truncated presidencies.

Preval emerged Tuesday morning to say he had not summoned the crowds to the streets and did not have the power to recall them. But in an address carried live on nationwide radio, he urged his supporters to keep up their demands for a fair vote count but to do so "peacefully, intelligently and with respect for private property."

Immediately, the roadblocks were lifted and Preval's supporters turned to festive marches to press their demands that he be declared the presidential victor.

Tuesday night, another political bombshell exploded. The Telemax TV station, privately owned and seen as a pro-Aristide bastion, carried footage of thousands of marked ballots and election material dumped atop a sodden trash heap. The roadblocks reemerged. The vote-counting remained suspended.

The interim government announced an investigation, but by midday Wednesday, the volatile city crackled anger.

Officials of the Provisional Electoral Council, a nine-member body named before Aristide's February 2004 departure and composed mostly of his political opponents, locked themselves into a suburban villa at 11 a.m. to hash over compromise proposals.

Preval's opponents, noting that he lacked a clear majority, wanted a second round of voting to be held March 19. But Preval refused to submit to a runoff, warning of chaos as his supporters were certain that only fraud could have deprived him of a first-round win.

"They thrashed through the different proposals and eventually settled on a formula for handling blank votes that is applied in Belgium," said David Wimhurst, a MINUSTAH spokesman who said the council's decision was made behind closed doors and solely by its members. "We were out of it, completely out of it." Others involved in suggesting solutions concede that foreign diplomats were instrumental in pointing out options.

The Belgian Option, as the compromise has come to be known, met the technical requirement of the Haitian election decree that unmarked ballots be counted, Cordeiro said. Along with Chilean Ambassador Marcel Young, he convinced counterparts from the United States, France and Canada that insistence on a runoff risked an explosion of violence.

In their respective capitals, U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and Brazilian Foreign Affairs Minister Celso Amorim.

"The deal cut was under the lead of Brazil and Chile. Washington and Paris reluctantly accepted it," said a source involved in the palace brainstorming. Contending that the United States has handed off responsibility for Haiti to South American allies, he said that "when you outsource an issue, you can't dictate how to run things."

Several sources privy to the three-day diplomatic scurry say the fate of Aristide didn't enter into the equation, that despite consensus that the exiled populist's return would be destabilizing, they never tried to trade declaration of a Preval victory for his promise to keep his predecessor out of the country.

One observer described the U.S. role as "pretty silent" amid more active roles by the South American diplomats whose countries contribute the bulk of MINUSTAH's forces. Cordeiro confirmed that with more than 1,200 Brazilian troops in Haiti, his government felt a responsibility to search for "creative solutions" in the face of the mounting threat of violence.

Timothy M. Carney, former U.S. ambassador and acting charge d'affaires, said he did not know whether the subject of Aristide came up during the council's deliberations because neither he nor the other diplomats spoke with the Haitian officials during their 14 hours of discussions, which ran until early Thursday.

"But there has never been any doubt about the U.S. position on Aristide's return since Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice was here last autumn and said he was a man of the past," Carney said.

The council's 3 a.m. announcement that the blank vote redistribution had pushed Preval over the victory threshold inspired joyous celebrations throughout the country. But the 63-year-old president-elect's challengers denounced the declaration as illegal.

"We are not duped by this Machiavellian comedy of imposing a winner," said Leslie F. Manigat, the 75-year-old former president who finished a distant second to Preval and would have been his challenger in a runoff. He accused "foreign forces" of compelling election officials to break their own regulations.

But as congratulations poured in from around the world, Preval's election became a *fait accompli*.

At the U.N., Secretary-General Kofi Annan hailed the council's compromise as "a reasonable way to attempt to resolve a conflict, an impasse that could have led to conflict and violence."

Rice, in Washington, said the administration looked forward to working with the new government and expressed hope for a new beginning for a country long in the grip of dictatorship and corruption.

Preval retreated to his sister's home in the upscale Peguyville neighborhood and has yet to address his supporters.

**Haiti's fragmented politics**  
**Edited by Richard Lapper**  
**Financial Times**  
**February 19 2006 21:08**

The process that led to the election last week of René Prével, Haiti's new president, last week was complicated enough. But politics in the western hemisphere's poorest and most socially divided country are not going to get simpler any time soon. After the extended delays in the count, the electoral council will announce results of parliamentary elections – held simultaneously with the presidential contest two weeks ago – towards the end of this week. Fragmented politics in which local factors play an important element and complicated electoral rules mean most of the contests for 99 lower house and 30 senate seats will be decided after a second round, theoretically scheduled to take place on 19 March. So it is anyone's guess how the new legislature will look. Mr Prével's Lespwa party was contesting only 19 senate and 58 lower house positions. All this means that building a political consensus to take Haiti forward in critical areas like the economy, security and the reform of the courts will be more important than ever. The good thing is that Mr Prével has already been making overtures to the leaders of other parties. It is also helpful that the president-elect is a milder and less strident personality than his former colleague ex-President Jean-Bertrand Aristide

## **Aristide may go home - Mbeki**

**19/02/2006**

**News24, South Africa**

Johannesburg - President Thabo Mbeki said on Sunday that former Haitian president Jean-Bertrand Aristide may be able to return home after consultation with Haiti's new president.

Aristide has been living in exile in South Africa since 2004 when he fled an uprising over charges of rights abuses and corruption.

Mbeki said there was no reason why the former Roman Catholic priest should not go back to Haiti after an election this month, which was won by Aristide ally Rene Preval.

"I would imagine from everything that I've seen and heard President Preval himself wouldn't want to oppose President Aristide's return to Haiti," Mbeki said on SABC radio.

"But I think it will be determined largely by an assessment by Rene Preval, by President Aristide as to the timing of it so that it doesn't produce unnecessary problems."

After his ouster, South Africa insisted that Aristide was Haiti's rightful leader and said he had been toppled by the United States and France.

Aristide, who remains popular in Haiti's poor slums, has been silent for most of his stay in South African and not commented on his possible return after the elections.

**Mbeki Says Ousted Haitian President May Be Able to Go Home**  
**By VOA News**  
**19 February 2006**

South Africa's President Thabo Mbeki says former Haitian President Jean-Bertrand Aristide may be able to return home.

Mr. Aristide has lived in exile in South Africa since fleeing a 2004 uprising in Haiti.

But Mr. Mbeki told South African radio Sunday he sees no reason why Haiti's newly-elected president Rene Preval would oppose Mr. Aristide returning home.

He said he thinks a determination will come after the two men consult about the timing of such a move, so that, in his words, it does not create unnecessary problems.

President-elect Preval and Mr. Aristide were once political allies but broke over the corruption scandal that helped to bring down Mr. Aristide's presidency.

Some information for this report was provided by Reuters.

**Mbeki hails Haiti poll**  
**18/02/2006**  
**News24, South Africa**

Pretoria - President Thabo Mbeki on Saturday hailed the victory of Rene Preval in the Haitian presidential elections, saying it was "an expression of the democratic will of the people of Haiti."

"We extend our warmest congratulations to Rene Preval as the President-designate of Haiti, as well as to all the contestants in the election," Mbeki said in a statement.

The comments were significant because ousted Haitian President Jean-Bertrand Aristide is in exile in South Africa, and until now South Africa has regarded him as the legitimate leader. Mbeki indicated that South Africa would now throw its weight behind the new government, even though it has publicly regretted that Aristide's party did not take part in the elections.

Aristide himself has stayed silent on the outcome of the elections. The two men hold similar views about ending the subjugation of Haiti's poor black majority by a lighter skinned elite. Aristide nurtured Preval's career, but the two men have subsequently fallen out and it was unclear whether Preval would want Aristide to return.

Aristide's spokesperson said on Friday that Aristide was still the "elected constitutional president of Haiti."

No reference to Aristide

Mbeki's statement pointedly made no reference to Aristide, who was ousted in February 2004, has been staying in a government guesthouse in Pretoria.

"We express the conviction that the new leadership of Haiti will seize this opportunity to work with all segments of Haitian society in building national unity, reconciliation, justice, peace and stability as a basis for sustainable development in their country," Mbeki said.

He said South Africa commended efforts by the United Nations and the Caribbean Community "in helping to create a climate conducive for the people of Haiti to exercise their democratic rights without fear or favour, despite difficult challenges and obstacles."

"South Africa is of the firm view that the outcome of the elections is indeed an expression of the democratic will of the people of Haiti.

Mbeki called on the international community to continue aiding impoverished Haiti.

## **Haiti Cautiously Moves Forward**

**Rene Preval is declared the victor after protesting electoral fraud. His first test is handling the tension on the streets.**

**By KATHIE KLARREICH**

**Time Magazine**

**Saturday, Feb. 18, 2006**

It may not be the ideal solution, but at least the one announced by Haiti's Provisional Electoral Council (CEP) Thursday reflects the clear presidential choice of the Haitian people: Rene Garcia Preval was just below the 50 percent mark needed to avoid a runoff when the vote was halted Tuesday - after Preval had threatened a legal battle over charges of massive fraud, citing tens of thousands of ineligible and blank ballots. His point was underscored later on Tuesday when supporters discovered thousands of apparently legitimate ballot papers and electoral material containing votes for Preval that had been tossed in a dump just outside the capital.

Preval met the CEP on Wednesday, and negotiated a technical solution: The total total number of blank votes would be divided among the 33 candidates on the basis of the percentage of the counted vote accrued by each. That formula pushed Mr. Preval - who even by the CEP's count had won more than four times the number of votes of his nearest rival - over the 50 percent mark, and prompted a massive celebration by hundreds of thousands of supporters who had taken to the streets in protest to defend their vote.

Although the international community quickly embraced the solution - the Organization of American States called it a "significant step towards building the country's future on democracy" - foreign diplomats were also quick to point out that this was a Haitian solution to a Haitian crisis. "We weren't part of the agreement," UN spokesman David Wimhurst said. "But we support it and are ready to move forward to the second round [of voting] for senators and deputies."

But the March 19 legislative vote may face many of the same organizational and logistical problems that plagued the presidential poll, and there has been little inclination in Haiti's political class to delve too deeply into just how the country's most expensive elections ever could have been conducted with such lax oversight. Preval has intimated that he has proof of the fraud, which can be traced to polling station workers. Those 36,000 positions were prized by members of the various political parties, and Preval may not want to open the lid on that pot, particularly now that the vast majority of presidential candidates have recognized his victory. Those close to Preval say that the evidence may surface later, but for now they will simply remain vigilant. "What else can you do? There aren't any other options," said one of the president-elect's advisers.

Not necessarily, said Robert Maguire, a professor at Trinity University, who has been following Haitian politics for more than two decades. "At some point Haiti has to start enforcing a regime of a rule of law. Where it starts, I don't know but the sooner the better." And that's where Preval may have a chance to distinguish himself. An important Haitian judicial landmark occurred during Preval's first presidency, with the unprecedented conviction of 15 members of the military and former paramilitaries for a 1994 massacre of more than 20 people. And his response to the crowds this week has been significantly more statesmanlike than that of his predecessor Jean Bertrand Aristide. In 1990, shortly after Aristide was elected but before he took office his supporters had blocked an attempted coup

d'etat, but then went on a rampage, burning buildings and attacking anti-Aristide leaders. Aristide's response was not to tell his supporters to go home; instead he said he was just the president-elect and had no authority. Preval, on the other hand, asked the crowds this week to be vigilant but respectful. One hopes that's a sign of what's to come

## **Haiti's President-Elect Faces Numerous Challenges**

**By Amelia Shaw**

**Port-au-Prince**

**VOA News**

**18 February 2006**

After days of turmoil and protests, the interim government of Haiti declared Rene Preval president on Thursday. Preval receives 51 percent of the votes, the simple majority he needed to win. As Amelia Shaw reports from Port-au-Prince although its political impasse resolved, the country is looking ahead to challenges that the president-elect faces as leader of the poorest country in the hemisphere.

The week opened with massive protests in Port-au-Prince, and ended with celebrations as frontrunner candidate Rene Preval was declared the winner of a highly contested presidential race.

Mr. Preval's victory was decided over a matter of vote counting. After hours of negotiation, and support from the international community, election officials created a plan to eliminate some 85,000 blank votes, which gave Mr. Preval a high enough percentage of votes to avoid the second round.

Jose Miguel Insulza, Secretary General of the Organization of American States, was in Haiti to give support to the interim government. He says discounting blank votes is normal procedure in Latin American countries.

"Every country that has a second round has a system of leaving out the blank votes," he said.

Jose Miguel Insulza, left, speaks as U.N. special envoy for Haiti, Juan Gabriel Valdez listens. Insulza says that holding the elections was important for helping get Haiti back on its feet after two years of interim government rule. The United States and the U.N. Security Council have also welcomed Mr. Preval's election, urging the new government to promote political dialogue and national reconciliation.

Now that Mr Preval is in office, analysts say he has many challenges ahead. The country has suffered serious security problems at the hands of armed gangs who control the slums and proclaim loyalty to former president Jean Bertrand Aristide. Mr. Preval has vowed to fight the wave of kidnappings and crime by cracking down on the gangs.

Experts in Haiti's affairs say it may be difficult for Mr. Preval to get out from under the shadow of his predecessor. Many of the people who voted for Mr. Preval are the desperately poor masses in the slums who see him as a close ally to Aristide. Not only will they be expecting him to alleviate poverty and provide jobs, but they will also be expecting a speedy return home from exile for Aristide. But the U.S. government has hinted that Aristide should remain in South Africa.

Another challenge will be working in collaboration with members of the opposition. Mr. Preval's party doesn't have enough congressional candidates to win parliament, and it is likely that the prime minister will come from the opposition. Under the Haitian constitution, the prime minister holds more power than the president.

U.N. special envoy to Haiti, Juan Gabriel Valdez says promoting dialogue and national reconciliation are crucial to creating an effective government.

Gabriel said it is important to have a strong parliament that is capable of cooperating with the government, that is respected by the government, that has a democratic opposition that works with the government and is respected by the government.

Since his win, Mr. Preval has kept a low profile and has not addressed the public. But he did meet on Friday with political leaders from other parties, including fourth place candidate Chavannes Jeunes.

Meanwhile, second and third place candidates, Leslie Manigat and Charles Baker, have both condemned the deal that made Mr. Preval president.

**Preval has meeting to ease tensions**  
**Chicago Tribune**  
**February 18, 2006**

PORT-AU-PRINCE, HAITI -- The president-elect met privately Friday with political leaders to try and smooth the tensions that followed his turbulent victory.

But Haiti, and much of the world, waited to hear Rene Preval's plans to form a new government and address violence and poverty--as well as his stance on his former mentor, Jean-Bertrand Aristide, who was ousted as president in 2004.

Preval, whose inauguration is March 29, postponed a news conference until Wednesday.

## **Triumphant Préval faces tough task**

**After a narrow victory in a tumultuous election, René Préval will retake the reins in a country far worse off than when he last held the presidency.**

**Miami Herald**

**Saturday, February 18, 2006**

PORT-AU-PRINCE - (AP) -- President-elect René Préval, the man of the hour after his turbulent election victory, appeared before reporters and cameras outside his sister's home Friday -- but would only say he will make a statement next week.

"Wednesday at 11, Wednesday at 11," said Préval, speaking in Spanish, French, Creole and English to reporters on the lawn of the house, in his only response to questions at the photo opportunity. "Thank you very much."

Préval has remained mostly shuttered inside the house, taking calls from world leaders, since electoral and government officials declared him the election winner in a move that eased the threat of rioting by his mostly poor supporters.

His victory in a bitter election marred by fraud charges had Haitians dancing and singing in the streets, many calling on the soft-spoken former agronomist to bring security and jobs to the impoverished Caribbean nation.

"We have won, we thank God and the population," Préval told the Haitian Press Agency in the only other public statement he's made since his victory. "We will now fight for Parliament." Préval, who led Haiti from 1996 to 2001, became the coup-prone nation's first elected president ever to finish his term when he left office five years ago. This time around, he inherits a nation in worse shape. Heavily armed street gangs wage daily gunfights with U.N. peacekeepers, and seething mistrust and tension divide the rich and poor.

Expectations are running high among Haitians, although they've learned not to put all their faith in politicians. Some exultant Préval supporters waved ripped tree branches -- a Vodou gesture to sweep away bad spirits.

Préval had remained a hair short of an outright majority after more than 90 percent of the vote was tabulated. Haitian officials then decided to divide the 85,000 blank ballots cast among the candidates in proportion to the percentage they had already achieved -- giving Préval just over 51 percent, said Michel Brunache, chief of Cabinet for interim President Boniface Alexandre.

**Caribbean group to re-admit Haiti**  
**BBC News**  
**Saturday February 18, 2006**

Rene Preval's victory has been widely welcomed

The Caribbean regional grouping, Caricom, says it is ready to re-admit Haiti following the presidential election there earlier this month.

The group's secretary-general, Edwin Carrington, said Haiti now had a democratic government which could sit down with Caricom and discuss re-entry.

Mr Carrington described the elections as a "wonderful moment".

Caricom suspended Haiti's membership after the ousting of President Jean-Bertrand Aristide two years ago.

On Thursday Rene Preval, a former ally of Mr Aristide, was declared the winner of the presidential election.

The move came after the election board changed its method of counting, giving him an outright majority.

The announcement ended more than a week of uncertainty and violent protests.

Mr Preval's victory has been welcomed by the international community.

Next week, Brazil will host a meeting to discuss how to speed up donations to Haiti, the poorest country in the Americas.

**Haiti's elections showcased a population desperate to vote, and a winner many believe is honest.**  
**Houston Chronicle Editorial**  
**February 18, 2006**

The United States has often held Haiti to lower standards. After the ouster of dictator Jean-Claude "Baby Doc" Duvalier, the U.S. government cheerfully did business with several of his bloodthirsty successors. Today, while any Cuban who touches American soil gains asylum, most Haitians who flee here are sent back if caught. But when it comes to the presidential elections that took place Feb. 7, and the cliffhanger dispute about its outcome, a different standard of success is justified.

What might have been called a tainted outcome in, say, Luxembourg, was for tens of thousands of Haitians just cause for jubilation. After winner Rene Preval got 61 percent early in the vote count, his votes plunged to 48 percent — just below the majority — near the end. Eighty-five thousand ballots were found in a trash dump. Enraged Haitian voters massed in Port-au-Prince, but foreign diplomats and Haitian government officials brokered a confirmation of Preval's win. In a firm democracy this mandate would seem fragile. In Haiti, that the candidate of the majority is declared the winner can be fairly called success.

Winner Rene Preval already served as president from 1996-2001. His regime was undistinguished — except that it was the first time in two centuries a democratically elected Haitian president served out his term.

Equally impressive in a country plagued by despots, Preval gave up power when his one term was over. Preval's re-election certainly offers opportunities for failure. But he is widely considered to be honest, unideological and averse to violence. In Haiti, this is notable.

To vote for their new president, more than 1.5 million Haitians waited hours for ballots ferried in by mule and helicopter. In a country where 80 percent lack formal income, this turnout was a vote for justice without bloodshed — again, a measure of success.

But the obstacles the new president faces are stunning. Preval was once politically inseparable from Jean-Bertrand Aristide, the populist priest who became president twice but both times was driven from office. Aristide, now in South Africa and not speaking to Preval, has nevertheless become the new president's main challenge. If Aristide — or a regime perceived to be like his — returns, the elite will sabotage Preval and Haiti's economic dying will go on.

Preval has said his duty is simply to the lives of Haiti's poor. To achieve his goal he has to control several forms of internal warfare. He'll have to stop the gangs and kidnapers that terrorize even the penniless. He'll have to convince the moneyed elite and the vast majority of poor that they have common interests. Only then can he start to woo back the employers, donors and investors who have fled Haiti in waves.

Aristide, for the good of his country, must stay away. But Haiti's talented, well-trained expatriates (1.25 million in America alone) should seek ways to return. Haiti's poor, who in the 1990s wanted a crippling embargo to be tightened to expel a dictator, this month served the country well with their

peaceful vote. The United States, meanwhile, should try to raise the bar for Haitian success. It can do so with respectful foreign policy and consistent, wisely chosen aid.

**Harper offers congratulations to new Haitian president**  
**Fri, 17 Feb 2006**  
**CBC News**

Haiti's new president-elect has started rounds of meetings to try and build a parliamentary coalition, but says he won't speak to the Haitian people until next week.

On Friday, Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper spoke with Préval and congratulated him on his victory.

"On behalf of all Canadians, I offered our support for democracy, reconstruction and reconciliation in Haiti," Harper said in a statement. "President-designate René Préval and I also discussed development challenges facing Haiti and I assured him that Canada is there for the long run."

Préval, who held the presidency from 1996 to 2001, met with reporters on Friday, but refused to answer questions. He would only say that he will make a statement on Feb. 22.

The former agronomist was declared the winner of the Haitian presidential election on Thursday, more than a week after Haitians voted. The unexplained delay led to violent demonstrations and charges of fraud by Préval supporters.

The UN Security Council said in a statement on Friday it look[s] forward to working with the new government to "help Haitians build a better future for their country."

But the problems facing Preval are enormous. The country is the poorest in the Western hemisphere and it is plagued by violence and armed gangs. There were an estimated 2,000 kidnappings in the past year and the United Nations has 9,000 peacekeepers in the country to try and restore order.

**American: Haiti Leader Must 'Perform'**  
**Herald News Daily, South Dakota**  
**18 February, 2006**  
By STEVENSON JACOBS

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti - Opponents of Haiti's president-elect could use the country's disputed election result to try and weaken his government "if he doesn't perform," the top American diplomat in Haiti said Saturday.

The move gave Preval the 51 percent of the vote he needed for outright victory, drawing angry complaints from his two nearest rivals, neither of who polled close to Preval's numbers in the Feb. 7 vote.

"If he doesn't perform, yes it weakens him," Carney said during an interview with The Associated Press at his residence. "If he does perform, nobody will remember it."

If Preval had fallen short of a majority, he would have faced a March runoff against the second-place finisher, Leslie Manigat.

Baker said Friday that declaring Preval the winner without a runoff "presages a somber future for democracy in Haiti."

Haitians, meanwhile, waited to hear how Preval plans to deal with violence, poverty and his stance on his former ally, Jean-Bertrand Aristide, who is living in exile in South Africa after being ousted as president by a violent rebellion two years ago.

Preval has not said whether he would allow Aristide to return, a move Carney acknowledged some of Preval's supporters may expect.

Maryse Narcisse, Aristide's spokeswoman, declined to say whether Aristide and Preval were in contact.

"I think the elections confirmed that Aristide is a man of the past, unlikely to have any role in Haiti's future," he said.

**Conference at Dominican to focus on Haiti**  
**By SUZAN CLARKE**  
**February 19, 2006**  
**THE JOURNAL NEWS, New York**

What: Community forum on Haiti

When: 8:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. March 27

Where: Hennessy Center, Dominican College, 470 Western Highway, Blauvelt

Information: The event is aimed at service providers, community leaders, law enforcement and educators. Call the Social Work Department at Dominican College at 845-359-7800.

Lack of knowledge about Haiti's society, politics and economy — and especially of the United States' role in that nation's state of affairs — contributes to a narrow view of Haitian immigrants who live in this country, advocates say.

To promote deeper awareness and understanding, a coalition of advocacy groups will next month host a conference titled "Towards a Deeper Understanding of The Haitian Experience."

Presented by the Social Work program of Dominican College, in collaboration with the Rockland Immigration Coalition, the Haitian-American Cultural and Social Organization and Konbit Neg Lakay, the half-day forum will aim to show people — primarily service providers, educators, law enforcement representatives and community leaders — why Haiti is facing its current crisis.

The hope is that the information will help providers respond more sensitively to Haitians in need, said Rose Leandre, executive director of HACSO, a Spring Valley community service agency that primarily serves Haitians.

"We hope that providers understand some of the issues (of) immigrants who go to them, to better serve them, because I think sometimes we have this impression of immigrants in the United States," she said. "You have people who are very successful people in Haiti. You have lawyers, you have doctors, people with careers, but unfortunately, they can't really stay in Haiti, and they come here with nothing, and I think a lot of times we treat them like nothing."

The session could not have been more timely, as Haitians around the world are reacting to Thursday's decision declaring René Préval as Haiti's president. Préval's immediate victory had been in doubt, and the announcement came after a week of tension following the national election Feb. 7.

Emilia White, a Haitian native who lives in Spring Valley, reacted to the decision by urging respect for the rule of law and the electoral process.

"I hope that whoever is unhappy respects the president, the elected president, and lets the president get his full term, and that's the only way were really going to have democracy, if we respect the law," she

said. "So I hope the people for Préval or against Préval respect the voters' wishes and let the man carry his term. I hope it comes out OK."

**The Globe and Mail, Canada**  
**Letter to the Editor**  
**Victory in Haiti**  
**JEAN-PIERRE KINGSLEY**

chair, International Mission for Monitoring Haitian Elections

Re Marked Ballots Found At Haitian Dump (Feb. 16):

The International Mission for Monitoring Haitian Elections (IMMHE) stands by its Feb. 9 declaration regarding the Feb. 7 vote. That statement clearly referred to the events on election day, when the vote was carried out with no violence or intimidation, and no accusations of fraud. Therefore, the Canadian government and the international community were justified in commending the election. Our positive comments were echoed by other international monitors.

The deteriorating situation that then ensued in the country resulted in the temporary suspension of our post-election monitoring. We have since resumed our observation.

It is important to recognize that the IMMHE's role is to observe the election, not to involve itself in its delivery. The IMMHE will continue to monitor the vote tabulation and the handling of complaints. Once our observations are complete, we will issue a public report.

## **US confident Haiti's new president will wage war on drugs**

**Sat Feb 18, 2006**

**AFP**

PORT-AU-PRINCE - The United States has expressed confidence the new president of Haiti will step up the fight against drugs in the Caribbean nation, which is a major transshipment route for cocaine.

"There is a lot of focus on counter-drug efforts on the part of Rene Preval," said Tim Carney, the US ambassador in Haiti, told AFP Friday, one day after Preval was declared elected.

"Clearly that's an important aspect of his program," Carney said.

The US State Department says about eight tonnes of cocaine smuggled into the United States from South America is shipped through Haiti, an impoverished Caribbean nation that has a long history of turmoil and corruption.

Cocaine arrives by boats or small aircraft and is shipped on to the United States by sea or air, or by land through the Dominican Republic, which shares the island of Hispaniola with Haiti.

"There are two aspects to the drug trade in Haiti," said Carney. "There is the amount that goes into the United States, and the harmful factor the money generated by the drug trade has in Haiti, by providing funds for corruption of police, politicians and custom officers."

"Washington will look with favor on President Preval's ideas to enhance anti-drug efforts," said Carney.

He would not go into details of the strategies the new government would deploy to combat illegal drug trafficking, but Washington has made it clear that strengthening law enforcement capacity in Haiti is a key priority.

The Haitian police force was decimated in February 2004 by a rebellion that, together with popular unrest and diplomatic pressure, forced out president Jean Bertrand Aristide.

Aristide has been accused of links to the drug trade, as has Guy Philippe, the rebel leader who helped bring him down and whose February 7 bid for the presidency left him close to the bottom of the list of 32 candidates, with about two percent of the votes.

Haiti's interim government filed a lawsuit in Miami last year, accusing Aristide of drug trafficking and embezzlement.

Also last year, the ex-president's security chief Oriel Jean was sentenced by a US court in Miami to three years in prison for laundering drug trafficking money, and several other former government officials are serving time in the United States after being convicted on similar charges.

Since the fall of Aristide, Washington has participated in efforts to rebuild Haiti's understaffed and ill-equipped police force.

There are only about 5,000 national police officers in this country of 8.5 million, assisted by a UN force whose strength was boosted to 9,500 for the February 7 election.

Haitian police seldom, if ever, venture in the most violent shantytowns of the capital, which are largely ruled by armed gangs officials say are tied to the drug and weapons smuggling trade.

Even UN troops rarely penetrate the narrow backstreets of Cite Soleil, the capital's most notorious slum.

The Haitian police "has little real capacity to investigate or respond to crimes, patrol, keep public order in Port-au-Prince slums, or even communicate with one another," the State Department said in a report last year.

## **President-elect Preval gets third shot at shaping Haiti's destiny**

**AP**

**Jamaica Observer**

**Sunday, February 19, 2006**

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti (AP) - As Haiti's new president, Rene Preval faces the mammoth task of moving his country out of chaos, crime and crushing poverty, but he's got at least one thing going for him: all the challenges are familiar.

PREVAL... we will not be able to do everything right away

A shy, soft-spoken former agronomist, Preval led Haiti from 1996 to 2001, a period of relative calm between the two presidential terms of Jean-Bertrand Aristide, who was twice ousted by rebellious mobs. Preval is the only democratically elected Haitian president to finish the five-year term.

"We will not be able to do everything right away," Preval told The Associated Press in his northern village of Marmelade on the eve of the election. "But we are determined to do our best and raise the standard of living for the people of Haiti."

Preval, 63, was declared the winner about 1:30 am Thursday, staving off a potential crisis after days of protests by his supporters who alleged fraud and manipulation. With nearly all the votes from the February 7 election counted and thousands of blank ballots subtracted from the total, Preval had 51.15 per cent, enough to avoid a runoff.

Studying in Belgium as a young man, Preval returned to Haiti in the 1970s and became active in the movement to oust the Duvalier dictatorship.

After the fall of Jean-Claude 'Baby Doc' Duvalier in 1986, he became a close ally of Jean-Bertrand Aristide, a liberation theologian hugely popular among the poor.

Preval was named prime minister after Aristide, who referred to Preval as his "twin", was elected president in 1990.

Preval followed Aristide into exile when the army overthrew him in a September 1991 coup and returned after a US invasion restored Aristide to power three years later.

Preval's election in 1996 marked Haiti's first peaceful transition from one democratically elected president to another since Haiti won independence in 1804.

Many felt that Preval served as a placeholder president from 1996 to 2001 for his more dynamic mentor.

When he first became president in 1996, Preval vowed to turn Haiti into "a vast construction site" and "re-establish the authority of the state."

He now acknowledges that he largely failed. But he said he struggled against corruption and had some modest accomplishments, such as successfully privatising the state-run flour mill and cement factory. "We didn't steal and we didn't violate human rights," he told AP before the February 7 vote.

After his first presidency, Preval, who has two daughters, went to live in his grandmother's house in the north-central town of Marmelade, where he devoted himself to local development projects before Aristide was ousted again in 2004.

Preval insists he has emerged from the shadow of the ousted president. This time, he notably did not run on the ticket of Aristide's Lavalas Family party. His party is called Lespwa, Haitian Creole for "hope".

... Facts about Haitian president-elect Rene Preval

Name: Rene Preval

Age: 63. Born January 17, 1943.

Hometown: Port-au-Prince, but considers Marmelade, in the rural north, his hometown.

Education: agronomist, studied in Belgium.

Experience: Haitian prime minister, February-September 1991; fled into exile when President Jean-Bertrand Aristide was ousted in a coup in 1991 and returned with him in 1994; served as director of Haiti's Economic and Social Assistance Fund, which promoted small development projects in the countryside; served full term as president 1996-2001; then worked on development projects in rural Haiti.

Family: divorced; two daughters.

Platform: Preval's party, known as Lespwa, has pledged to restore security and help rebuild the shattered infrastructure and economy of a country where unemployment runs about 80 percent.

Quote: "We will not be able to do everything right away, but we are determined to do our best and raise the standard of living for the people of Haiti."