

## **HAITI NEWS ROUNDUP: FEBRUARY 8 -10, 2006**

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### **Preval Faces Demanding Agenda in Haiti**

**CBS News**

**AP**

**Feb. 10, 2006**

(AP) Haiti's likely next president, Rene Preval, faces a crowded and demanding agenda if he is to have a chance of resuscitating this Caribbean nation from dire poverty.

He must move quickly to stem gang violence causing manufacturers to close their doors, eliminating thousands of jobs in the Western Hemisphere's poorest nation. And he will have to negotiate with parliament \_ his party is expected to be weak \_ to name a Cabinet and prime minister and pass legislation.

Election workers on Friday tallied votes three days after a huge voter turnout almost overwhelmed poll workers. Preval, a former president who is highly popular among the poor, has 61.5 percent of 282,327 valid votes counted so far.

More than 1.75 million votes were cast, U.N. officials said. Haiti's electoral commission said there could be enough results tallied by late Saturday to draw more solid conclusions about the outcome.

A candidate running a distant third said he wants the electoral council to investigate reports of fraud, claiming some people voted several times. International observers have praised Tuesday's elections as free and fair.

If Preval wins, he will have to open negotiations with opposition parties in parliament with little support from his Lespwa Party, which means "hope" in Creole. The gang violence fueling job losses must be stopped, and he must assure the poor he will be effective.

"Everything in Haiti is broken and everything needs fixing," said Robert Maguire, director of the international affairs program at Trinity University in Washington. "One of the most immediate tasks is reconciliation and dialogue among Haitians."

Preval, an agronomist, has not announced any specific plans for addressing Haiti's problems, beyond pledging to improve security and create jobs \_ the same promises made by all the major candidates in the election.

Preval's tenure as president from 1996-2001 was less than stellar. His efforts at agrarian reform failed because poor people were not given enough land to live on. And human rights advocates accused him of interfering in the judicial system and of politicizing the police force.

Haiti has been without an elected leadership and has been descending into anarchy since President Jean-Bertrand Aristide was ousted in a bloody rebellion two years ago. The voter turnout showed Haitians long for stability.

Preval, a 63-year-old former Aristide protege, has refrained from declaring victory, but indicated he would have an unconventional style.

"Don't ask me to wear a tie," he told reporters Friday in his home village of Marmelade. He also recalled his youthful days as an anarchist.

"I still am," he quipped, adding that he is a nonviolent one who believes power should flow from government to the people.

Preval must help bring together Haiti's polarized society that is split between the few rich and the majority poor, experts say.

Preval already has strong support from Cite Soleil, the Port-au-Prince slum where U.N. peacekeepers have regularly traded fire with well-armed gang members. A gang leader who goes by the name Toutou said armed factions are willing to "put down our guns" if their opponents do the same.

"I think Preval is going to come in and help with health care, put more schools in the slum, bring treated water to drink and teams who can come in and clean the sewers," said Toutou, who describes himself as a social activist.

Preval's honeymoon period is apt to be short among those who live in the sprawling slums, where a lack of opportunity has steered young men into gangs that have battled U.N. peacekeepers and kidnapped hundreds of people for ransom.

"The window will probably not be open too long," Maguire said. "He will have to show some improvement in their lives. And he will need partnerships of Haitians with resources to do this."

Since wealthier Haitians have been among the kidnap victims, "it's in their interest ultimately to become proactive in trying to address the problems of Haiti's poor," Maguire said in a telephone interview.

Election returns indicated Preval might win a majority of the votes and avoid a March runoff. The early returns had Leslie Manigat, a former president, with 13 percent of the vote and businessman Charles Henri Baker with 6 percent.

Baker claimed there was fraud.

"We're starting to hear that people voted five times, 10 times, 20 times," Baker said. "This is a worry to us because we don't know if it happened at one center, 10 centers ... or all over the country."

Officials at Haiti's electoral office weren't immediately available for comment.

If Preval wins, it will be people like Baker \_ a wealthy garment factory owner \_ he must try to win over so Haiti charts a new course, Maguire said.

"Preval is going to have to be bringing people to the table and finding common ground to move forward," he said. "It is going to be quite a challenge."

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Associated Press writer Joseph B. Frazier in Marmelade contributed to this report.

**Aristide may return home**  
**Independent Online, South Africa**  
**February 10 2006**

Port-Au-Prince - A spokesperson for former Haitian president Rene Preval said unconfirmed early results showed him with a wide lead in the presidential race, even though results of ballot counts were still being ferried from remote polling places by plane, truck and mule.

The claim on Wednesday from Preval's team could not be verified. The first official results were not expected to be released until Thursday, said Jacques Bernard, Director-General of Haiti's Electoral Council. Final results could come out on Friday or Saturday, he said.

Tuesday's elections were the first since the government of Jean-Bertrand Aristide was ousted in a bloody revolt two years ago, and officials said collecting and tabulating the results would take several days. But some polling stations posted unconfirmed local results outside - and these showed strong early support for Preval.

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In Johannesburg, meanwhile, Peter Fabricius reports that the South African government is assessing whether this week's elections in Haiti will stabilise the country enough to allow Aristide to return home from his exile in South Africa. Aristide fled Haiti two years ago as violence swept the country. He settled in South Africa after a brief sojourn in the Central African Republic. Foreign Minister Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma said on Thursday that Aristide "is not here for life".

"The president of Haiti is a guest in our country and when he arrived in South Africa we said that he will be a guest of our country as long as it is necessary," the minister said.

"As far as we are concerned he is not here for life, as far as he is concerned he is not here for life.

"That is why it is important to see what happens after these elections, see how the new government is and the stability and so on. And see whether it is conducive to both himself and the government for him to go back."

Before Aristide returned, Haiti would have to be stable. He would need assurances that he would be safe and be a free citizen able to lead a normal life, the minister said. Results were still not in yesterday, although Aristide's former close ally, Preval, seemed to be winning. It is not clear whether a victory for Preval would pave the way for Aristide's return. The two are thought to have fallen out.

Aristide lives in Pretoria and teaches at the University of South Africa. Dlamini-Zuma also said that Angola had probably decided to postpone this year's elections.

She also explained why the African Union had declined to hand over its chair to the Sudan. She said the chair of the AU had to deal with peace and security problems on the continent, so it would have been inappropriate for a country that was party to a conflict to be chair. - Mercury Foreign Service and Sapa-AP

**Aristide to stay in SA for now**  
**News24, South Africa**  
**February 9, 2006**

Cape Town - Ousted Haitian president Jean-Bertrand Aristide's exile in South Africa might well continue despite Tuesday's elections in his country, Foreign Affairs Minister Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma said on Thursday.

Briefing the media at parliament, she said it was "problematic" that the largest political party in Haiti - Aristide's Lavalas Family Party - had not participated in the elections.

"It is a pity that Lavalas did not participate. Some of its leaders are in prison, in exile. But we will see what happens," she said.

South Africa would await the outcome of the presidential and parliamentary elections, expected on Friday, and would "see what the new government does".

Meanwhile, Aristide was a guest in South Africa and would remain so.

However, both the South African government and Aristide held that "he is not here for life".

Therefore, it was important to see what happened after the elections, and if the situation was conducive for him to return, he would do so.

Asked what "conducive" meant, Dlamini-Zuma said an assurance of his safety and his ability to lead a normal life in Haiti.

Aristide fled the Americas' poorest country in February 2004, after he was deposed in a bloody revolt, travelling first to the Central African Republic, and then to South Africa where he has lived in Pretoria as a guest of the government since.

According to media reports on Thursday, unconfirmed early results showed former Haitian president Rene Preval having a wide lead in the presidential race, even though results of ballot counts were still being ferried from remote polling places by plane, truck and mule.

The voting, guarded by a 9000-strong United Nations force, was fraught with early delays but largely free of the violence that had plagued the capital since Aristide fled, the reports said.

## **Haitians patiently await final election results**

**One candidate alleged fraud, but international observers cited no serious irregularities. René Préval held early lead.**

**By Danna Harman**

**The Christian Science Monitor**

**February 10, 2006 edition**

PORT-AU-PRINCE, HAITI – The streets remained empty Thursday, with shops closed, businesses boarded up, and schools locked: Haiti, as if holding its breath, waited patiently as the ballots continued to trickle in.

Final results from Tuesday's presidential election are expected over the weekend. At press time Thursday, partial returns show that René Préval had a comfortable lead over his 33 opponents - a finding that at least one of his rivals said was not acceptable.

With 9,000 UN troops and 5,000 Haitian police out in full force to maintain security, National Police Chief Mario Andersol warned of the possibility of violence, should candidates feel the vote wasn't going their way. Election day itself, despite massive disorganization, was generally peaceful - giving hope to many here that the entire exercise would be a success.

"We have gotten this far. Let's continue to be calm," begged Rosemond Pradel, secretary general of the Provisional Electoral Council (CEP).

The reason it has taken so long for the votes to be counted, explained Mr. Pradel, was that the ballots were still being ferried - by plane, truck, and even mule - from around the country to the vote tabulation center in Port-au-Prince, often over difficult terrain. Logistical and technical problems have beset Haiti's election, the first since President Jean-Bertrand Aristide was ousted two years ago.

Polling stations across Port-au-Prince - from the Cité Soleil slum to the upscale Petionville suburb - began posting results late Wednesday, most showing Préval with between 60 and 92 percent of the vote. Though Préval's support outside the capital is not as strong, his political adviser Bob Manuel told reporters he felt confident his candidate would win more than 50 percent of the votes nationwide, thus avoiding a run-off and becoming Haiti's next president.

Préval, an ally of Mr. Aristide, has remained secluded all week in his rural hometown of Marmelade and refused to comment on developments.

But candidate Charles Henri Baker, a wealthy businessman who, according to pre-election polling, is Préval's closest opponent, called the elections "a mess" Thursday and said his party was collecting evidence of fraud. "Even if you got ink on your finger, it was the kind that washed off on your pants when wet," he said. Pradel dismissed those claims, saying it was the same sort of ink used in all past Haitian elections.

"We have eyewitnesses to voters casting ballots up to eight times by going to different stations," Baker also charged in a phone interview. "This has to be looked into."

International election monitoring groups have said, however, that, despite minor irregularities, there was no credible evidence of widespread fraud. "Having been on the ground in Haiti observing the preparations and the elections, I would say it was a reasonably fair election," Knowlson Gift, Trinidad's Foreign Minister, told The Associated Press.

UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan, meanwhile, congratulated the Haitian people in a statement Wednesday in New York, saying he was pleased that, "compared to previous elections, [this one] ... was remarkably free from violence." The secretary-general appealed to all to respect the official results to be announced by the CEP and said it was "essential that all political and social actors come together in a spirit of national reconciliation and dialogue."

Baker, however, stressed there was "no way" he would consider partaking in a future Préval government. "[Préval's] morality and mine don't mix together. I am an honest person. I believe in the law. So I don't think we will be working together," said Baker, adding: "We will be in bad shape if he becomes president."

Even as the process of counting the votes and evaluating the election stretched on, and fears of future violence weighed down on Haiti, many here tried to begin discussing the next steps for the country.

"We have spent so long talking about ballots and IDs and polling stations - but what about the issues?" asked Maryse Kedar, a former minister under Préval, pointing at what many here have called a "substance-lite" election. "What are the new ideas that have come from this process? How are we going to fix Haiti?"

"We remain very divided," said Jean-Junior Joseph, a spokesman for interim Prime Minister Gérard Latortue, who stressed that he hopes the elections do not end up adding to that divide. "This country really needs reconciliation and dialogue. That should be our first priority."

- Ms. Harman is Latin America correspondent for the Monitor and USA Today.

## **Préval seen as man to rebuild Haiti**

**BY LETTA TAYLER**

**STAFF CORRESPONDENT**

**Newsday, NY**

**February 9, 2006**

MARMELADE, Haiti -- The remote, northern hometown of the man predicted to be Haiti's next president is an oasis in a country best known for chaos and despair. A new gazebo crowned with tropical flowers graces a tiny central square shaded by palm trees. The surrounding mountains are lush with bamboo, citrus and coffee groves worked by a farmers cooperative. A radio station and computer center keep young people busy.

René Préval made Marmelade his social laboratory when he ended his first term as Haiti's president in 2001. After moving into his late grandmother's small, whitewashed house here, he obtained foreign grants for an array of modest but critical improvements for the town, from a community center to a marching band.

He exudes quiet enthusiasm as he shows off the results.

"Do you like this furniture? It is a new design," Préval said as he gestured at a set of elegant bamboo chairs made by the farmers cooperative on the breezy, second-floor deck of the community center.

Préval, 63, says he hopes to rebuild Haiti with the same care he has used in Marmelade if he is declared the winner of Tuesday's 33-way presidential election. With many results being lugged down mountains by mules and counted by candlelight, the first official tallies aren't expected until at least today. But unconfirmed early figures suggest Préval is well ahead.

Restoring a country on the brink of political and economic collapse is an immeasurably tall order, particularly for a man who was once branded a puppet of former President Jean-Bertrand Aristide. Still, many political observers believe Préval may be one of the few Haitian politicians with a shot at planting democracy and stability in this volatile island nation, the Western Hemisphere's poorest.

"Haiti is so polarized that even under the best of circumstances it's hard to reach consensus," said Dan Erikson, a Caribbean expert with the Inter-American Dialogue think tank in Washington. "Préval may provide the only possible political center of gravity."

Préval says he is determined to bridge Haiti's social gap.

"The people of Cité Soleil are living in a ghetto and the bourgeoisie are living in another ghetto, barricaded in their houses with electric fences and afraid to walk the streets," Préval said in one of two recent interviews, referring to a notorious slum in the capital, Port-au-Prince. "It's time for a new beginning."

Préval speaks a mellifluous English he learned in the 1970s when he was an undocumented worker who made plastic Donald Ducks at a factory in Jamaica, Queens, and packed books at a Long Island

warehouse. He exudes an unassuming camaraderie that endears him to the desperately poor majority in this former slave colony. But he is also the son of a former agriculture minister and studied agronomy in Belgium.

#### His appeal among elites debated

Whether Haiti's small but powerful elite will find those credentials more palatable than they did during Préval's first term remains an open question, particularly in a country where presidents are toppled like bowling pins. Some ranking business and civic leaders say Préval may be little better than his mentor Aristide, a populist priest whom the poor loved and the bourgeoisie viewed as a tyrant.

Préval served as Aristide's prime minister for seven months in 1991 until the military toppled the government in a coup. After being restored to power three years later with the help of U.S. Marines, Aristide picked Préval as his successor in 1996. Voters returned Aristide to office when Préval's term ended in 2001. Then armed rebels forced Aristide from power two years ago, creating a political vacuum that pushed an already teetering Haiti further toward chaos.

"We must watch Mr. Préval closely to ensure he doesn't destroy the democratic process," said Andy Apaid, an influential Haitian factory owner who spearheaded street protests against Aristide. Apaid accused Préval of appearing to "rely on the armed thugs" whom Aristide had used as strongmen.

Many of those gang members have embraced Préval's candidacy, leading campaign rallies for him through the Port-au-Prince slums they rule. But Préval bristles at the notion that he is aligned with gangs and notes that unknown thugs made attacks on his campaign. "I am not with those people, I do not know them and they do not represent me," he said.

Still, Préval vowed to negotiate with gangs and to implement broad socioeconomic projects in the slums rather than routing the gangs exclusively by force. He pointed to the failure of 9,000 United Nations peacekeepers dispatched here after Aristide's ouster to quash gang activity in Cité Soleil.

Critics also describe Préval as the president who let his parliament dissolve and appointed a cabinet by decree to end a bitter political stalemate. Even a close adviser acknowledges that "sometimes he got between a C-minus and an F in politics."

#### Purported defender of democracy

But Préval adamantly insists he is a defender of democracy. His refusal to extend parliament's term was "upheld by the Constitution" and "constantly misunderstood," he said, bristling. He also noted he is the country's only democratically elected president to survive a full term and peacefully relinquish power to an elected successor.

Préval also cites the Constitution in saying he has no legal right to stop Aristide from returning from exile in South Africa. He refuses to comment further about Aristide, but his confidants say the two men have been estranged since the late 1990s, when Préval began seeking reforms Aristide opposed.

Despite such criticisms, many powerful businessmen have rallied behind Préval, who actively sought foreign investment in his first term and defied Aristide by privatizing state industries that had allegedly served as Aristide's slush fund. Supporters include Texas-based multimillionaire Dumarsais Simeus, who was booted off the list of presidential candidates in Tuesday's elections because he has dual nationality, and Pierre Leger, a perfume-oil magnate from the southwest Haitian port city of Les Cayes.

"I am with Préval 500 percent because Préval delivers," Leger said. "He will decentralize the economy and put it back on its feet."

#### U.S. cautious on possible Préval rule

The administration of President George W. Bush, which hailed Aristide's departure in 2004, appears cautiously optimistic. "The United States can work with Préval," said U.S. Ambassador Tim Carney, who was the U.S. envoy here during Préval's first term.

Though sometimes vague on details, Préval speaks passionately of attracting foreign investment, restoring the agriculture sector, creating schools and hospitals, and reforming Haiti's police and justice system. His priorities include reviewing the cases of hundreds of Aristide supporters whom Haiti's interim government has jailed without charges.

Préval's personal history mirrors much of his homeland's political tumult. He was born in Port-au-Prince to a family that fled during François "Papa Doc" Duvalier's dictatorship in the 1960s. He moved to Queens in 1972 rather than take an agronomy job in Africa because he wanted to be closer to Haiti. But he was embarrassed to tell his father he worked menial jobs.

"I told him I worked on Wall Street, but I didn't say I was fetching coffee," he said.

Préval returned to Haiti in 1976. After the 1991 coup against Aristide, he took asylum for two years in the Mexican and French embassies in Port-au-Prince and then fled to the United States to join Aristide in exile. When Aristide was restored to power in 1994, Préval flew back with him.

The diminutive, bearded Préval is widely known as "Ti René" (Creole for Little René) in Haiti, where he is so popular among women that on election day, some sang jokes that equated electing him with sleeping with him.

Asked to name his greatest weakness, the twice-divorced Préval said in an almost serious tone, "I don't know what love means." He spoke as he sipped a scotch on the deck of the community center in Marmelade after campaigning had ended, wearing a T-shirt promoting awareness of AIDS, which is rampant in Haiti. The shirt's slogan read: "Have fun but protect yourself. I'm having all the fun with condoms."

#### The man to 'change Haiti'

But Préval also is loved for improving Haiti's destitute countryside during his presidency.

"The other politicians just want to rob us. But Préval wants to change Haiti," said Helène Daniel, 53, who waited hours on Tuesday in the town of Bon Repos, outside Port-au-Prince, to vote for Préval. "Since I was a girl, the bridge near our home was always broken. But as soon as Préval came in, he fixed it."

Daniel said it was no coincidence that Préval's name ended up first on election ballots. "To most of us," she said, "Préval is No. 1."

**Vote counting continues in Haiti, UN mission says**  
**UN News Centre**  
**10 February 2006**

With preliminary results in hand from five departments, the UN Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) said today that counting the votes cast in the presidential and legislative elections earlier this week was continuing in what the Security Council has called a fundamental step towards restoring democracy.

The Mission today reported that the number of violent incidents decreased markedly in the week that included the election day on Tuesday.

The situation remains peaceful, the Mission said, patrolling by peacekeepers continues.

According to Haiti's electoral calendar, the second round of elections, if needed, will be held on 19 March, the new President sworn in on 29 March and municipal and local elections will be held on 30 April.

Tuesday's election was the first nationwide exercise in voting since an insurgency forced elected President Jean-Bertrand Aristide into exile two years ago, as Haiti celebrated the 200th anniversary of its independence from France.

## **Préval's lead big for Haiti presidency**

**Feb. 10, 2006**

**REED LINDSAY**

**The Toronto STAR**

PORT-AU-PRINCE—The chief of a Canadian-led observation mission in Haiti yesterday praised this week's elections as the desperately poor nation's best ever, despite two months of delays and massive lines that kept people waiting hours to vote.

"These were better than anything they've done in Haiti in the past," said Jean-Pierre Kingsley, chairman of the International Mission for Monitoring Haitian Elections and Canada's chief electoral officer.

"The Haitian people have pronounced themselves freely and massively. They have put their hope in democracy and the electoral process allowed this to happen. They overcame the technical difficulties."

Kingsley discarded the possibility of fraud. "That word hasn't even been pronounced," said the Canadian, who recently observed elections in Iraq. "No one has accused anyone of anything. This is an incredibly good sign."

Last night, the first official partial count showed favourite René Préval had a significant lead.

The elections were delayed for months and marked by partisan battles among electoral council officials and by bickering among the electoral council, the Organization of American States and the United Nations.

Predictions of election-day violence and disaster never materialized, as Tuesday, Haitians stood outside polls in lines numbering in the thousands.

OAS Secretary General Jose Miguel Insulza estimated that two-thirds of all registered voters cast ballots.

In neighbourhoods close to Cité Soleil, where armed slum dwellers often clash with UN peacekeepers, polls opened more than three hours late. Protests erupted as angry voters denounced the decision to relocate their polls as a ploy to disenfranchise them.

Kingsley criticized the lack of privacy when voters were casting ballots and delays in opening polls, but said such missteps were not unusual given the difficulty of training 40,000 poll workers in "a day or two."

## **Will Haiti's Vote Bring a New Dawn?**

**A successful election signals a population desperate for change, but a familiar cast of politicians may stick to an old script**

**By KATHIE KLARREICH/PORT-AU-PRINCE**

**Time Magazine**

**Thursday, Feb. 09, 2006**

The winner of Haiti's presidential elections this week has yet to be announced, but the poll is being hailed as a success — a turnout of over 50%, the lack of organized violence and absence of widespread fraud signal a widespread commitment among Haitians to transform their political landscape. The turnout and orderly running of Haiti's most expensive (\$75 million) may have surprised a skeptical international community, but it was no surprise to the Haitian people. Since last September, they have seen the election postponed four times as a result of the incompetence of the electoral council and a bungling, ineffective interim government muscled in by the United States after the forced departure of Jean Bertrand Aristide two years ago. Although most of the 802 polling stations were ill prepared for the hundreds of thousands of people who began lining the streets before dawn, by the time the sun was overhead queues were moving steadily and voters were proudly displaying their thumbs, stained by markers upon their exit from the polling booth.

The most common refrain among voters was a call for change, even though the government has changed hands more than a dozen times since the fall of the Duvalier dictatorship 20 years ago — and has seen 35 coups since it declared independence in 1804. The only democratically elected president to have completed his term of office is René Garcia Préval, today's presidential frontrunner — initial results tabulated in and around the capital give him a 60% lead. For the last five years, the 63-year old agronomist has been astutely observing the political scene from the quiet of his rural hometown, Marmelade. His decision to run under a new political party signaled his independence from Aristide's Lavalas Family party and marked his autonomy from the man many had deemed his political twin. At the same time, Préval has profited from the support of Aristide partisans, many of whom are armed gang members that live in the poorest sections of the capital. Polls show Préval leading the field of 33 candidates, but if no candidate achieves a majority, the top two finishers will contest a runoff on March 19.

The challenge facing the winner will be to create a government acceptable not only his own supporters, but also those of the losers. That's the only way the election can mark the beginning of a political healing process.

"You can't govern in Haiti alone," added Mark Schneider of the International Crisis Group. "You need sufficient cooperation from the losers so that parliament can function and the government can deal with the fundamental problems that makes Haiti the last on every list of human security issues in the hemisphere." Literacy and employment are less than 50 percent and potable water is available to only 25 percent of Haiti's 8 plus million people. The annual income is \$390 per person, less than it was in 1995 allowing for inflation.

The level of polarization afflicting Haiti today makes national reconciliation a tall order. Some presidential candidates have already made it clear that should Préval win, they will not support him. Most aggressive is businessman Charles Henri Baker, running second in the opinion polls. Pointing to

his rival's 1996-2001 tenure, he said, "Nothing positive was done for the country under his leadership. I will watch him closely. If things go the democratic way, great, but if he is back to his own ways, we're the opposition." Another leading contender, 75-year old political science professor Leslie Manigat, says Haiti is at a turning point. "It needs someone who can build, create unity," he says, adding that Préval is not that man.

Rooting out the corruption that pervades every level of state administration is an equally important priority, because it has left the international donor community reluctant to deliver more than 10 percent, thus far, of its 2004 pledge of \$1.2 billion in development aid. Still, foreign governments say they'll support a new government that demonstrates a commitment to inclusiveness, transparency, and disarmament of the gangs that rule many urban areas.

The greatest problem facing any new leadership in Haiti may lie in convincing Haitians and their friends abroad that things are going to change for the better. "Each time there is a new government we say the same things, then support [for Haiti from abroad] appreciably drops," admits Elizabeth Spehar, who has been working with the Special Mission and Electoral Technical Assistance Program of the OAS in Haiti. "We dump money into elections, then get distracted so that every ten years there's another crisis. The election is the big mamou. It's the starting point, but if you just leave it at that you're doomed."

## **DOMINICAN REPUBLIC**

### **The dividing line**

**Tensions are rising along the border between Haiti and the Dominican Republic as the Dominican Republic cracks down on illegal immigration.**

**BY FRANCES ROBLES**

**Miami Herald**

**February 10, 2006**

DAJABON, Dominican Republic - Benette Pierre remembers precisely how she survived last month a tragic odyssey across the Haitian-Dominican border in a crammed, sealed truck: She closed her eyes and took short, quick breaths.

She doesn't know what happened to her husband. She did not see him among the 24 dead bodies tossed out of the truck and onto a Dominican roadside when smugglers of Haitian migrants realized the bulk of their cargo had suffocated to death.

"It was really bad. I couldn't breathe," she said. "When they stopped the truck and threw the dead people out, I jumped out. I think the truck continued with my . . . husband on it."

Pierre was one of the survivors of a tragedy that has rocked the Dominican Republic and strained the long-tenuous relations between the two nations. Human rights activists say it was the product of flawed immigration policies in a country that depends on migrant workers from its poorer neighbor, but prefers to shut the door on them.

As Dominicans see it, with some one million Haitians living in this nation of 8.8 million people, they are being forced to shoulder the consequences of a failed state in Haiti. There have been rising acts of mob violence against Haitians, triggered by random crimes and competition for jobs -- and some would say discrimination against their darker-skinned neighbors.

"These people need to understand what their territorial boundaries are," said Sonia Mateo Espinosa, governor of the border province of Dajabón. "We are going to defend our Dominicanness; that is above everything else and most important."

The Dominican government has carried out mass deportations and a crackdown along the 242-mile border, and the Supreme Court here recently ruled that the Dominican-born children of Haitian illegal migrants cannot be issued birth certificates. Legally, they do not exist and generally must leave school by eighth grade for lack of IDs, unless they buy fake ones.

And so a legacy of enmity between the two neighbors, which dates back to when Haiti ruled the Dominican Republic for 22 years after its liberation from Spain, shows no sign of letting up. When Dominican President Leonel Fernández visited Haiti in December, he was met with burning tires and flying rocks.

**CHRONIC POVERTY**

Dominicans along the border say that troubles worsened two years ago after the departure of Haitian President Jean-Bertrand Aristide. The chronic poverty that plagues Haiti, the poorest country in the hemisphere, spilled across the border as more people fled violence and a collapsed state. But the mass roundups and deportations of suspected illegal Haitian migrants have been going on for years, usually starting after the annual sugar harvest, a labor-intensive time that lures many Haitians across the border.

Haitians in the Dominican Republic "would just as soon be invisible because they live in fear of violence and deportation," said Antonio Pol Emil, who runs the Dominican-Haitian Cultural Center in Santo Domingo, the capital.

The latest round of tensions began in May, when the Dominican government deported at least 2,000 Haitians following the killing of a Dominican woman who was hacked to death in an apparent robbery attempt, allegedly by Haitians. The victim's neighbors in the tiny village of Hatillo Palma, about an hour's drive from Dajabón, attacked the town's Haitian farmworkers, burning their shacks and running them out of town.

"They set fire to whatever was useless to them and whatever was useful, they kept," said Carmelo Estiel, who after 13 years living in the Dominican Republic as a migrant worker was chased from his home. "Everyone had to leave. Anyone they encountered was going to wind up hacked to pieces." Two Haitians were found decapitated nearby a month later.

Estiel and a group of about 50 remaining men now live a short distance away from the murder scene, sleeping on the floor under a structure with a tin roof and no walls. They earn about \$5 a day and live on the land of a Dominican because they had nowhere else to go.

"We didn't want them here. . . . We held a meeting and came to a decision: They had to go." said Tomás Quiñones, one of the townspeople, who denied using violence against the Haitians.

## AGRICULTURE WORKERS

"This needs to be resolved on a national level," Quiñones added, enjoying an evening at Luna's Grocery Store, owned by the murder victim, Maritza Núñez. "The Dominican Republic needs Haitians. We can't just let our agriculture industry collapse."

Núñez's husband, Domingo Antonio Luna, the scars from the machete attack visible across his face, remained silent.

Dominican federal officials deny there have been mass deportations and say activists and the media exaggerate the repatriations. But they acknowledge trouble controlling the border, where drugs and guns are smuggled and corruption is rampant.

"The border is a weak point for us," Minister of Interior Franklin Almeyda told The Miami Herald. "We could have better control of that."

He blamed the United Nations for not doing a better job of pacifying Haiti after Aristide's ouster, but added that some of the problems would be resolved if Dominican employers would quit exploiting Haitian migrants and offer them the same salaries as Dominicans.

Almeyda defended denying birth certificates to the migrants' children, saying that was supported by the constitution. The constitution says anyone born in the Dominican Republic is entitled to Dominican citizenship, but the Supreme Court decided that does not apply to people who are "in transit." He pointed out that the U.S. citizenship given to the children of migrants can cause problems when authorities deport the parents and leave the kids behind.

"These are hard-working people," said public prosecutor Francisco Domínguez Brito. "But it brings all kinds of problems: health, education, public services. Imagine if 10,000 people landed right now in a park in Miami. What are you going to do with them?"

When a Dominican businessman was killed in December and mob violence followed, the government cracked down on illegal migration by replacing corrupt border agents who had been taking bribes to allow migrants to cross the border. But that only drove the migrants into the hands of smugglers. Pierre said she and her husband paid the equivalent of \$67 for the journey in which the 24 people ultimately died. What was a quick jaunt across a knee-high river now usually calls for a two-to-three-week walk through mountains to dodge the guards.

Carlos Louis, another of the Haitian farmworkers chased from his home after the Núñez murder last year, said it recently took him two weeks on foot. He encountered guards who robbed instead of arrested him.

"I am from a poor country," Louis said. "I am poor and just looking for a life."

## **BORDER COMMERCE**

**Village becomes a beehive of trade**

**One of the border points between the Dominican Republic and Haiti opens every Friday and Monday, to virtually anyone with something to sell or a need to buy.**

**BY FRANCES ROBLES**

**Miami Herald**

**February 10, 2006**

DAJABON, Dominican Republic - It's 5:30 a.m., and already Creole voices can be heard through the darkness, just above the sound of the swishing of the knee-high water that separates the Dominican Republic from Haiti.

As others wade through the river, one Haitian man waiting to import fighting cocks to Haiti has arrived at the Dominican side of the border 2 ½ hours before it opens. A customs worker is shaking him down for taxes.

"You don't want to pay?" customs employee José Torres shouted when Yoel Lluasa refused to shell out the \$3 he demanded. ``Let's see if I don't hit you with a stick, lock you up and seize your roosters! You're an animal!"

### **60,000 CROSSINGS**

In three more hours the little bridge that divides Haiti and the Dominican Republic will be chaos, a mad rush of merchants, shoppers on same-day visits and people whose real plan is to slip into the Dominican Republic for good. As it struggles to stem a tide of illegal immigration from Haiti, it grapples with a thorny reality: Twice a week, the border here opens for trade and absolutely anybody can pass with ease.

A Spanish soldier posted there with U.N. peacekeepers deployed in Haiti said he once counted up to 60,000 border-crossings from the Haitian town of Ouanaminthe in a single day.

"It must be the only place in the world with a border like that, where thousands of people rush by without anybody checking their papers," said attorney general Francisco Domínguez Brito. ``What border? I say we don't have one."

At 8 a.m. one recent morning, no one could find the key to the border gate. Thousands of Haitians pressed up against the gate as others tried slipping into the water, this time being stopped by Dominican soldiers.

The doors finally swung open a half-hour late, letting in thousands of Haitians carrying merchandise on their heads -- mostly new shoes and toys donated from other countries. Others charge by with empty wheelbarrows they'll need to carry their purchases.

**`MARKET OF ILLEGALS'**

Lluasa finally gets through with his roosters, without having paid the extra "fee" requested. Dominican soldiers grab the Haitian women, poking at their sacks to make sure they are not smuggling contraband: rice.

"This is a market of illegals," said Dajabón Gov. Sonia Mateo Espinosa. ``We allow them to come here and buy food. They are children of God, and we cannot deny them bread."

Mateo Espinosa runs down the ills: streets clogged with immigrants, people defecating and urinating in the streets. The international community promised to build a new market with toilets, she said, but Dajabón, a town of 14,500 people, has yet to see it.

**Brazil in no rush to withdraw from Haiti**  
**MercoPress, Uruguay**  
**Feb. 10, 2006**

Brazil has no timetable to withdraw its troops under United Nations flag from Haiti said president Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva currently underlining he did not want a repeat of the Rwanda killings and chaos.

President Lula currently on an official visit to Algiers said he was satisfied with this week's elections in Haiti but "if the future government considers us necessary, we will continue to contribute". Brazil commands the 9.000 strong United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti, Minustah, which was sent to the Caribbean island following the ousting of president Jean Bertrand Aristide in 2004 in the midst of rampant armed violence and rioting.

This week Haiti celebrated its first elections, (organized by United Nations) since Aristide, currently exiled in South Africa was forced to leave the impoverished Caribbean island by US and French marines.

"Haiti has given evidence of confidence and political maturity because voting was not compulsory yet the turnout was 80% of the Electoral roll", said Lula. "Finally they've realized that democracy is the only chance to live in peace and with opportunity".

President Lula admitted that he had considered withdrawing Brazilian troops following the elections, -- and domestic demands--, but "I changed my mind when I saw what happened in countries with political instability when UN troops left".

"Before knowing what really happened in Rwanda in 1994, and I saw a documentary on all the killings and massacre that went on when peace keeping forces withdrew, I think Brazil can still contribute", highlighted Lula da Silva.

However, he cautioned that the elected government will have to consolidate instruments to ensure law and order plus democratic stability in Haiti.

"The electoral process is but the first step. They will have to build sturdy and solid institutions so Haiti can live in democracy and law and order can be restored".

"If the new government requests us, if the new government needs it, we will contribute. But if the elected government says the moment to leave has come, we will leave; our task will have been completed".

**China's telecom provider helps construct Haiti's communication facility**  
**People's Daily Online, Xinhua News, China**  
**Feb. 10, 2006**

China's leading telecom equipment provider ZTE, has begun work on a contract with Haiti's Haitel that it signed last year, Friday's China Securities Journal reported.

The first part of the 39-million-dollar contract is expected to be completed in June, while the second part will be finished this year, said Wang Rong, a ZTE manager.

ZTE has signed the 39-million US dollars agreement with Haitel, Haiti's largest mobile communication operator last July to provide a 500,000-line CDMA facilities for the country.

The two companies will also work together to service the facility.

Wang said due to a lack of infrastructure in Haiti, the investment costs are relatively high.

ZTE scored 40 billion yuan (about 5 billion U.S. dollars) in sales revenue in 2005. It is the only Chinese company that has an office in Haiti.

Source: Xinhua

## **America's Historic Debt to Haiti**

**By Robert Parry**

**Consortiumnews.com**

**February 10, 2006**

As Haiti intrudes again on the U.S. consciousness with a new round of troubled elections, Americans see a violent, backward, poverty-stricken country run by descendants of African slaves. There are feelings of condescension mixed with a touch of racism.

But what few Americans know is that they owe this Caribbean nation a profound historical debt. Indeed, perhaps no nation has done more for the United States than Haiti and been treated as badly in return.

If not for Haiti – which in the 1700s rivaled the American colonies as the most valuable European possession in the Western Hemisphere – the course of U.S. history would have been very different. It is possible that the United States might never have expanded much beyond the Appalachian Mountains.

What altered this early American history was the Haitian slave uprising against France near the end of the 18th Century. This second great anti-colonial revolution in the New World both alarmed and ultimately benefited the leaders of the newly born United States.

At the time, Haiti – then known as St. Domingue and covering the western third of the island of Hispaniola – ranked as perhaps the richest colony in the world. Its carefully cultivated plantations produced nearly one-half the world's coffee and sugar, and its profits helped build many of the grandest cities of France.

But the human price was unspeakably high. The French had devised a fiendishly cruel slave system that imported enslaved Africans for work in the fields with accounting procedures for their amortization. They were literally worked to death.

The American colonists may have rebelled against Great Britain over issues such as representation in Parliament and arbitrary actions by King George III. But the Haitians took up arms against a brutal system of slavery. One French method for executing troublesome slaves was to insert explosives into their rectums and detonate the bomb.

So, when revolution swept France in 1789, the Jacobins' cry of "liberty, equality and fraternity" resonated with special force in St. Domingue. African slaves demanded that the concepts of freedom be applied universally, but the plantation system continued, leading to violent slave uprisings.

Hundreds of white plantation owners were slain as the rebels overran the colony. A self-educated slave named Toussaint L'Ouverture emerged as the revolution's leader, demonstrating skills on the battlefield and in the complexities of politics.

Despite the brutality on both sides, the rebels – known as the "Black Jacobins" – gained the sympathy of the American Federalist Party and particularly Alexander Hamilton, a native of the Caribbean

himself. Hamilton, the first U.S. Treasury Secretary, helped L'Ouverture draft a constitution for the new nation.

## Conspiracies

But events in Paris and Washington conspired to undo the promise of Haiti's new freedom.

The chaos and excesses of the French Revolution led to the ascendance of Napoleon Bonaparte, a brilliant military commander possessed of legendary ambition. As he expanded his power across Europe, Napoleon also dreamed of rebuilding a French empire in the Americas.

In 1801, Thomas Jefferson – an owner of 180 slaves himself – became the third President of the United States. Jefferson, who was deeply troubled by the slaughter of plantation owners in St. Domingue, feared that the example of African slaves fighting for their liberties might spread northward.

“If something is not done, and soon done,” Jefferson wrote about the violence in St. Domingue in 1797, “we shall be the murderers of our own children.”

So, in 1801, the interests of Napoleon and Jefferson temporarily intersected. Napoleon was determined to restore French control of St. Domingue and Jefferson was eager to see the slave rebellion crushed.

Through secret diplomatic channels, Napoleon asked Jefferson if the United States would help a French army traveling by sea to St. Domingue. Jefferson replied that “nothing will be easier than to furnish your army and fleet with everything and reduce Toussaint [L'Ouverture] to starvation.”

But Napoleon had a secret second phase of his plan. Once a French army had subdued L'Ouverture and his slave army, Napoleon intended to move his forces to the North American mainland, basing a new French empire in New Orleans and settling the vast territory west of the Mississippi River.

In May 1801, Jefferson picked up the first inklings of Napoleon's other agenda. Alarmed at the prospect of a major European power controlling New Orleans and thus the mouth of the strategic Mississippi River, Jefferson backpedaled on his commitment to Napoleon, retreating to a posture of neutrality.

Still – terrified at the prospect of a successful republic organized by freed African slaves – Jefferson took no action to block Napoleon's thrust into the New World.

In 1802, a French expeditionary force achieved initial success against the slave army in St. Domingue, driving L'Ouverture's forces back into the mountains. But, as they retreated, the ex-slaves torched the cities and the plantations, destroying the colony's once-thriving economic infrastructure.

L'Ouverture, hoping to bring the war to an end, accepted Napoleon's promise of a negotiated settlement that would ban future slavery in the country. As part of the agreement, L'Ouverture turned himself in.

Napoleon, however, broke his word. Jealous of L'Ouverture, who was regarded by some admirers as a general with skills rivaling Napoleon's, the French dictator had L'Ouverture shipped in chains back to Europe where he died in prison.

### Foiled Plans

Infuriated by the betrayal, L'Ouverture's young generals resumed the war with a vengeance. In the months that followed, the French army – already decimated by disease – was overwhelmed by a fierce enemy fighting in familiar terrain and determined not to be put back into slavery.

Napoleon sent a second French army, but it too was destroyed. Though the famed general had conquered much of Europe, he lost 24,000 men, including some of his best troops, in St. Domingue before abandoning his campaign. The death toll among the ex-slaves was much higher, but they had prevailed, albeit over a devastated land.

In 1804, Jean-Jacques Dessalines, the radical slave leader who had replaced L'Ouverture, formally declared the nation's independence and returned it to its original Indian name, Haiti. A year later, apparently fearing a return of the French and a counterrevolution, Dessalines ordered the massacre of the remaining French whites on the island.

Though the Haitian resistance had blunted Napoleon's planned penetration of the American mainland, Jefferson reacted to the bloodshed by imposing a stiff economic embargo on the island nation. In 1806, Dessalines was brutally assassinated, touching off a cycle of political violence that would haunt Haiti for the next two centuries.

By 1803, a frustrated Napoleon – denied his foothold in the New World – agreed to sell New Orleans and the Louisiana territories to Jefferson. Ironically, the Louisiana Purchase, which opened the heart of the present United States to American settlement, had been made possible despite Jefferson's misguided collaboration with Napoleon.

“By their long and bitter struggle for independence, St. Domingue's blacks were instrumental in allowing the United States to more than double the size of its territory,” wrote Stanford University professor John Chester Miller in his book, *The Wolf by the Ears: Thomas Jefferson and Slavery*.

But, Miller observed, “the decisive contribution made by the black freedom fighters ... went almost unnoticed by the Jeffersonian administration.”

The loss of L'Ouverture's leadership dealt another blow to Haiti's prospects, according to Jefferson scholar Paul Finkelman of Virginia Polytechnic Institute.

“Had Toussaint lived, it's very likely that he would have remained in power long enough to put the nation on a firm footing, to establish an order of succession,” Finkelman told me in an interview. “The entire subsequent history of Haiti might have been different.”

### Jefferson's Blemish

For some scholars, Jefferson's vengeful policy toward Haiti – like his personal ownership of slaves – represented an ugly blemish on his legacy as a historic advocate of freedom.

Even in his final years, Jefferson remained obsessed with Haiti and its link to the issue of American slavery.

In the 1820s, the former President proposed a scheme for taking away the children born to black slaves in the United States and shipping them to Haiti. In that way, Jefferson posited that both slavery and America's black population would be phased out. Eventually, Haiti would be all black and the United States white.

Jefferson's deportation scheme never was taken very seriously and American slavery would continue for another four decades until it was ended by the Civil War. The official hostility of the United States toward Haiti extended almost as long, ending in 1862 when President Abraham Lincoln finally granted diplomatic recognition.

By then, however, Haiti's destructive patterns of political violence and economic chaos had been long established – continuing up to the present time. Personal and political connections between Haiti's light-skinned elite and power centers of Washington also have lasted through today.

Recent Republican administrations have been particularly hostile to the popular will of the impoverished Haitian masses. When leftist priest Jean-Bertrand Aristide was twice elected by overwhelming margins, he was ousted both times – first during the presidency of George H.W. Bush and again under President George W. Bush.

Washington's conventional wisdom on Haiti holds that the country is a hopeless basket case that would best be governed by business-oriented technocrats who would take their marching orders from the United States.

However, the Haitian people have other ideas, much as they did two centuries ago. Their continued support for the twice-ousted Aristide reflects a recognition that the Big Powers often don't have the interests of Third World countries at heart.

Also, unlike most Americans who have no idea about their historic debt to Haiti, many Haitians know this history quite well. The bitter memories of Jefferson and Napoleon still feed the distrust that Haitians of all classes feel toward the outside world.

“In Haiti, we became the first black independent country,” Aristide told me in an interview 15 years ago. “We understand, as we still understand, it wasn't easy for them – American, French and others – to accept our independence.”

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Robert Parry broke many of the Iran-Contra stories in the 1980s for the Associated Press and Newsweek. His latest book, *Secrecy & Privilege: Rise of the Bush Dynasty from Watergate to Iraq*,

can be ordered at [secrecyandprivilege.com](http://secrecyandprivilege.com). It's also available at [Amazon.com](http://Amazon.com), as is his 1999 book, *Lost History: Contras, Cocaine, the Press & 'Project Truth.'*

## **Norwich residents feel impact of Haiti elections**

**By DOROTHY SCHNEIDER**

**Norwich Bulletin**

**Feb. 10, 2006**

NORWICH -- After witnessing the Haitian elections firsthand this week, Norwich orthodontist Jeremiah Lowney Jr. said the sight was a "phenomenal" example of democracy.

The incomplete returns Thursday showed Rene Preval -- a popular former president and one-time protégé of ousted leader Jean-Bertrand Aristide -- has a commanding lead in Haiti's presidential elections, but no official results have been released yet.

Lowney, a Norwich orthodontist and president of the Haitian Health Foundation, returned Wednesday night from a 10-day trip to Haiti. He travels to Haiti several times a year to help run a health clinic his group established there, which treats about 400 people a day.

On Tuesday in Haiti, Lowney said he witnessed democracy at work.

"I walked by one polling place at the end of a soccer field and there had to have been at least 4,000 people waiting there signed up for that polling place," he said. "I never saw such signs in my life. There were T-shirts and banners all across the place."

Lowney didn't campaign himself, but said he garnered votes from about six friends who told him they wrote him in as a candidate.

But Lowney has a connection to the presidential front-runner because he treated Preval's daughter's teeth years ago.

"He's a great guy," Lowney said. "I think he'll be good. ... Although he's got a tough road ahead."

"I hope things go well for him. Certainly the place needs it," he added. "They need security and a good, strong prime minister."

Norwich resident Jean Thomas, 34, who left Haiti in 1998, said the country needs broad unity -- not just a new leader.

"If they're not together, if they don't have support ... if it's the same way it's going to be a problem again," he said.

The Associated Press contributed to this report.

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## **From Little Haiti to Brown and now - Congress?**

**Dufirstson Neree '96 could be the country's first Haitian-American congressman**

**Ashley Chung**

**Brown Daily Herald, Rhode Island**

**Media Credit: Bill Cooke/Miami Herald**

**February 10, 2006**

Dufirstson Neree '96 is the first Haitian-American candidate for Congress.

Dufirstson Neree '96 did not plan on a future in politics while he was at Brown. But today, he's breaking new ground as the first Haitian immigrant ever to run for Congress.

In the 10 years since he graduated, Neree has started two non-profit organizations, founded a credit union that serves his Haitian-American community in Miami and earned two graduate degrees along the way. His commitment to solving economic inequality has often focused on Little Haiti, the Miami neighborhood in which he grew up. But after fostering economic equality through non-profits and work in the private sector, Neree now seeks to effect change in his hometown from the floor of the House of Representatives.

His race against incumbent and member of the Congressional Black Caucus Rep. Kendrick Meek, D-Fla., is turning heads, but Neree said support for his candidacy has been forthcoming from both Little Haiti's citizens and his former Brown classmates.

While Brown may not have directly propelled him towards his congressional campaign, Neree credits his classmates and the "spirit" of Brown for inspiring him to pursue his dreams of changing the world for the better.

### **From Haiti to... Little Haiti**

Neree was born in Cap-Haitian, Haiti and immigrated to Florida at age five. Though his memories of Haiti are scarce, he does recall peaceful images of a good life - sitting on his grandmother's lap, walking along the beach and going to kindergarten wearing his bright yellow uniform shirt.

But in Miami, daily life was more complicated. In the 1980s, the diverse community of the city was extremely segregated among Haitians, African-Americans, Cuban-Americans and Caucasians. Neree witnessed his first public riot as an elementary school student.

"It was an intense environment," he said.

To earn money for his private high school tuition, Neree began working at Ben Photo Express 54, located in the center of Little Haiti, Miami's Haitian community. Young Neree would help Caribbean immigrants and farm-workers fill out paperwork, only to eventually realize that they could not even sign the application. Neree said he then realized why he, a 13-year-old boy, was filling out the forms for them.

Lessons and learning

An honors student and football star at Curley Notre Dame High School in Little Haiti, Neree was recruited for Brown's football team by Coach Bob Barton. As an economics concentrator at Brown, Neree said he thrived on the University's spirit of independent learning and his classmates' eagerness to effect change.

"Everyone wanted to do something for a better future, and there was the constant pull of positive energy," Neree said.

Neree said Brown's "spirit of changing the world" encouraged his own dream to alleviate poverty in the world after graduating from Brown. The dream was feasible in his mind, Neree added, because he felt every Brown student shared that kind of vision or hope for the future. "It was truly empowering," Neree said.

#### A bright idea

In his senior year, Neree began applying for service awards and fellowships that would allow him to work in public policy. In January 1995, he spotted a flyer for the Woodrow Wilson Fellowship. Seven months later, Neree was awarded the fellowship, which would finance his future graduate study in public policy and international affairs.

Only a few months later, Neree spotted an article in Brown Alumni Magazine about Mark Winston Griffith, a Brown alum who had founded the Central Brooklyn Federal Credit Union. Neree thought to create a credit union back in Little Haiti, where limited banking and economic disenfranchisement were hurting the community. Neree arranged a meeting with Griffith, who advised Neree to begin the project right away.

Neree turned to his favorite instructor, professor emeritus of engineering Barrett Hazeltine, for advice. Together, the two worked to create a business plan for Neree's credit union.

"(Neree) was a very quick-thinking and dedicated person," Hazeltine said.

He added that his former student's political ambitions are not surprising. "He always had a great sense of responsibility, and he was genuinely concerned about people."

Before graduating, Neree received the Samuel Huntington Public Service Award and chose to defer his enrollment at Harvard University's John F. Kennedy School of Government to spend a year working in public policy.

After walking out of the Van Wickle Gates, Neree founded The Credit is Due Project, Inc., a non-profit organization that actively supported increased financial services, small businesses, youth leadership and home ownership in inner-city communities. Neree began gaining momentum behind his credit union idea.

#### Double degrees and public projects

With one non-profit under his belt, Neree began pursuing a Master's in Public Policy at the Kennedy School. Five years later, Neree had earned not only an M.P.P. but also a Master's in Business Administration from Harvard Business School.

During his first year at Harvard, Neree formed the Little Haiti Community Alliance - a coalition of various community-based organizations to encourage conversation within the Little Haiti community and fight against economic discrimination by federally insured banks.

In his third year at Harvard, with the combined efforts of his two non-profits -The Credit is Due Project, Inc. and the Little Haiti Community Alliance - Neree finally fulfilled his dream, establishing the Little Haiti-Edison Federal Credit Union.

But he didn't stop there. In 2001, Neree established Freedom Trust Company, LLC, an investment firm that promotes diversity in telecommunications and seeks to increase minority control and ownership of radio stations in media markets.

After graduating from Harvard, Neree started work with the Inter-American Development Bank, where he helped finance Latin American infrastructure.

#### Time for a Change

With three Ivy League degrees and the success of three non-profit organizations behind him, Neree said he could look back and see that he had certainly accomplished a lot. But while he knew that his efforts were helping his community, Neree said he still believed he could do more.

The 2004 bicentennial celebration of Haitian independence sparked Neree's interest in Haiti. As Haitian President Jean-Bertrand Aristide resigned after the February coup d'état, Neree understood how Americans might view Haiti simply as a third world country marked by suffering and insecurity. He said his first response was to question whether there was "anything that I could do."

Neree said he believed serving in the U.S. government - specifically as the representative for his home district, which at 30 percent has the highest concentration of Haitian-Americans in the country - would be the most effective way to create change.

The district's current rep-resentative, Kendrick Meek, is the son of Carrie Meek, the first black woman to represent Florida in Congress, who fought for refugee and minority rights in Miami. But Neree said his own research suggested that Little Haiti voters perceived Kendrick Meek as out-of-step with the community. Moreover, Neree said he disliked the fact that Meek was never really elected, but rather "inherited the position from his mother." Meek had never been challenged, Neree said, and consequently never had to articulate his own platform or visions for change. Neree said he decided it was, in fact, time for a change in Little Haiti.

In May of 2005, Neree declared his candidacy to represent the 17th Congressional District in the House of Representatives.

#### In the race

Nine months into the race, Neree said he is beginning to feel the pressure of the campaign. As the first Haitian immigrant ever to run for Congress, Neree said he feels he has to run his campaign the "right way."

"People are all watching closely because I'm the first of my kind trying to accomplish this objective," he said. "People all of a sudden associate me with being a champion for a group of people who haven't yet necessarily accepted me as a leader."

Neree also acknowledges, however, that the publicity he has garnered as the first Haitian congressional candidate is beneficial.

"I can stay focused because I can see that this isn't just for myself," Neree said. "If I succeed, I can help to elevate the status of a whole class of people."

So far, Neree said his campaign is going well. He began campaigning early and efficiently and said he tried to illustrate differences between himself and Meek. Through radio interviews and interaction with the people of the community, Neree said he is building a stronger connection with his voter base.

"Volunteers are showing up now saying, 'Hey, I heard you on the radio, and I was moved. I don't have a lot of experience, but I want to help,'" Neree said of his growing campaign team, featured on his campaign Web site GoNeree.com.

Brown alums are also offering their support. Neree's former classmate and close friend Tanya Jones '96 read about Neree's campaign in an article in the Miami Times.

"After reading the article, I was so proud of Dufirstson for his courage and his character ... and his understanding that the country needs new leadership - young leadership," Jones said.

She told other alums about Neree's candidacy and even e-mailed Neree to offer her help. Jones is now Neree's campaign chair. Other Brown alums are also helping with the campaign, and the local Brown club is arranging for Neree to speak at a meeting of Brown alums. Neree said he also hopes to hear from current students interested in joining his campaign team for the summer.

As election day, September 5, 2006, draws near, Neree said he is focused on his campaign.

"I want to make my mark on the district," Neree said.

If he does not succeed in this year's elections, Neree plans to continue his work with public service projects. But Neree did not dwell on the possibility of losing the race and said he is set on winning.

"First and foremost, I want to win for the people," Neree said.

**Haiti could return to CARICOM**  
**Friday, February 10, 2006**  
**Ross Sheil, Staff Reporter**  
**Jamaica Gleaner**

HAITI CAN return as a member of Caribbean Community (CARICOM) after its elections, says Prime Minister P.J. Patterson.

Mr. Patterson made the announce-ment during a press conference in Trinidad on Wednesday following his final chairing of the CARICOM Prime Ministerial Sub-Committee on External Negotiations, during which Haiti's readmission was discussed. The conference was telecast to journalists assembled at the Office of the Prime Minister's press centre in St. Andrew on Wednesday evening.

With the presence of CARICOM monitors, and other such organisations on the ground, including 9,000 United Nations troops, he said he was satisfied the elections were free and fair.

"Once the results are certified, I see no reason why Haiti should not be readmitted as an active member in CARICOM," he said.

CARICOM had suspended Haiti's membership, accusing the United States and France of helping oust then President Jean-Bertrand Aristide two years ago. Mr. Aristide is now living in exile in South Africa.

## **Preval Opponent in Haiti Alleges Fraud**

**Friday February 10, 2006**

**By MICHAEL NORTON**

**Associated Press**

**The Guardian Unlimited**

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti (AP) - Rene Preval held a commanding early lead in Haiti's presidential elections Friday, with a majority of the first votes counted going to the former protege of deposed President Jean-Bertrand Aristide.

Preval, a former president seen as a champion of the poor, had 61.5 percent of 282,327 valid votes counted. Former President Leslie Manigat had 13.4 percent and businessman Charles Henri Baker 6.1 percent, according to figures released Thursday by election officials.

The electoral council did not say what percentage of the total votes cast in Tuesday's election the figures represented. According to the United Nations, a majority of Haiti's 3.5 million eligible voters cast ballots.

Baker said he was asking the electoral council to investigate reports of fraud.

``We're starting to hear that people voted five times, 10 times, 20 times," Baker told The Associated Press. ``This is a worry to us because we don't know if it happened at one center, 10 centers ... or all over the country."

Baker said he didn't know whether the alleged fraud affected the overall outcome, but he said he was ``flabbergasted" that international observers have widely praised Tuesday's elections as free and fair.

Officials at Haiti's electoral office weren't immediately available for comment.

Election authorities said it might be Saturday before enough ballots are counted to draw conclusions about the race.

Manigat, however, said early returns tallied by his party members showed Preval could win a majority of votes, avoiding the need for a runoff.

Preval faces monumental tasks if he wins the presidency of this impoverished nation.

Most Haitians can't read or write, and subsist on about a dollar a day. A wave of kidnappings by heavily armed gangs has swept the capital. Amid the insecurity, assembly plants are closing, causing the losses of thousands of jobs. Donor nations are hesitant to contribute money because of a legacy of government corruption.

Preval's own tenure as president from 1996-2001 was less than stellar. His efforts at agrarian reform failed because landless peasants who received land couldn't live on the small amount they were given. He clashed with parliament over the legitimacy of the legislators who won contested elections. Human rights advocates accused him of interfering in the judicial system and of politicizing the police force.

But poor Haitians remember that Preval tried to help them. Even the smaller efforts are remembered by those whose plight was ignored by a series of governments and dictatorships.

“He built the big marketplace downtown. He fixed it so that the vendors could get out of the mud,” said Yves Valea, a 70-year-old street sweeper.

When he stepped down after serving out his five-year term - the only Haitian president to complete his term in office - Preval went to live in his grandmother's house in Marmelade, where he devoted himself to local development projects.

Preval stood for years in the shadow of Aristide, his dominating predecessor. Aristide, who referred to Preval as his “twin,” was ousted amid accusations he ordered gangsters to attack opponents and pocketed millions of dollars.

Preval made a point of saying in a recent interview that he has split with Aristide, who is in exile in South Africa.

“If I'm his 'twin,' we do not have the same mother,” Preval told the AP. Preval pointed out that nothing can legally prevent Aristide from returning to Haiti, but added that he may have to face a trial.

Preval would have a fresh start in relations with Washington, said Robert Fatton, a political science professor at the University of Virginia.

“When (Preval) was president, the U.S. did not necessarily think he was a bad man, but they considered he had his hands tied up by Aristide,” Fatton said. “The U.S. now believes Preval is his own man.”

## **Aristide a man of the past, says US ambassador to Haiti**

**February 10, 2006**

**by Patrick Moser**

**Caribbean Net News**

**AFP**

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti (AFP): The US ambassador to Haiti said Thursday this week's elections demonstrated that former president Jean Bertrand Aristide, who fled the country with US help two years ago, "is a man of the past."

Ambassador Tim Carney said that while some Haitians may pine for "the legend," voters made it clear on Tuesday there was no future role for Aristide in the Caribbean country.

"I think this election ... is going to demonstrate, as the secretary of state (Condoleezza Rice) said when she was here last fall, how Jean Bertrand Aristide is a man of the past," he told AFP.

Aristide resigned and fled Haiti aboard a US-organized plane on February 29, 2004 as the country descended into chaos and insurgents closed in on the capital. The White House blamed Aristide for the violence and urged him to step down.

As vote counting was under way Thursday, a former ally of Aristide, Rene Preval, 63, was seen as the frontrunner, with Leslie Manigat and Charles Henri Baker thought to be trailing behind.

Carney dismissed suggestions a possible Preval victory could affect US relations with Haiti.

"None of the frontrunners are problematic for the US government to deal with," he said, adding that he felt confident any of the leading candidates would cooperate with Washington in battling drug trafficking via Haiti.

He said that like other bilateral and multilateral donors, the United States was prepared to step up aid to Haiti, the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere.

He said the United States had disbursed 196 million dollars to Haiti last year, and budgeted 300 million dollars in aid this year.

But he insisted donors will keep a close eye on how the aid is used and insist on accountability and good governance.

He said voters themselves made it clear they had high expectations from the next government.

"The fact that so many people voted strikes me as a serious set of political implications for the new government, expectations for good governance that will have to be answered," he said.

Carney called Tuesday's election "satisfactory," highlighting long delays in opening polling centers, but also the high voter turnout.

"Most Haitians have told me this really was the best election they ever had," he said.

"I believe all of us observers, especially those who live in Haiti, have been a little surprised at the lack of criminal or electoral violence," said Carney.

**Hope for Haiti polls**  
**February 10, 2006**  
**By the Editor**  
**Cape Times, South Africa**

Haiti's presidential election has gone off reasonably well, despite some hitches. Three people were killed in violence and polling procedures in some districts left much to be desired.

But by Haiti's turbulent standards, the voting was relatively peaceful. The head of the Organisation of American States, Jose Miguel Insulza, has given the election a clean bill of health.

The result may not be known before the weekend, but that winner seems likely to be Rene Preval, an ally of deposed ex-president Jean-Baptiste Aristide. A Preval victory would be the best outcome - but hopes should not be set too high.

Haiti still remains the poorest country in the Western hemisphere. It will continue to bear a crippling burden of violence, corruption and a devastated environment. Profound social divisions will remain, between a small, wealthy, French-speaking business elite, and the great mass of the population. Allowing for inflation, average Haitians are poorer than they were in 1955. And the UN has described the human rights situation as "catastrophic".

Even so, the vote offers some important wider lessons, as the Bush administration pursues its self-appointed mission of bringing freedom and democracy to the Middle East and beyond.

One is that in countries with as skimpy a democratic tradition as Haiti, elections alone are no guarantee of political stability and economic betterment.

Another is that if you support free elections, then you cannot be choosy about the results.

The US may be disappointed by a victory for Preval, a protege of Aristide who in 2004 was forced into exile largely at Washington's insistence.

This time the White House has promised to work with whoever emerges victorious. It must be as good at its word.

- The Independent

## **Haiti's calm elections thrill prime minister**

**By Tania Valdemoro**

**Palm Beach Post**

**Friday, February 10, 2006**

Haitians voted in droves Tuesday during presidential and legislative elections amid little violence, a fact that elated Prime Minister Gerard Latortue.

Tapped as Haiti's interim leader, Latortue, a Boca Raton retiree, came under tremendous pressure to organize free and fair elections after an insurgency led by criminal gangs and former soldiers ousted President Jean Bertrand Aristide in March 2004.

Haitians go to polls

Underlying the election's relative calm is the political stability Latortue said he worked to create as head of a transitional government.

A newly elected government will assume power March 29, and Latortue will return to suburban Boca Raton in April.

Critics, however, say that under Latortue's watch, Haiti has plunged further into disarray, misery and division.

"His government has been a fiasco," said Jean Robert Lafortune, chairman of the Haitian American Grassroots Coalition in Miami. "Under his leadership, there has been more kidnappings, rapes and violence against civilians, as well as repression against the masses."

A Haitian history buff, Latortue said Wednesday during a phone interview that he believes "history with a capital H" ultimately will determine his legacy.

Still, the prime minister's assessment of his time in office clashes with the accounts of many people.

"Latortue was seen as being put in power by the United States, not by the people in general," said Robert Fatton Jr., a professor of political science at the University of Virginia.

The U.S. government, which backed the interim government, always has denied that it forced Aristide from power.

Foremost among his accomplishments, Latortue said, was stanching the violence that historically erupts after changes in Haitian political power.

"I helped my country avoid civil war," he said.

When he arrived in Haiti, Latortue promised to end the violence. Security has improved in most parts of the nation, according to the government, but civilians and human rights groups disagree.

Illegal armed groups and former military officers are using 170,000 small arms "to kidnap, sexually abuse and kill Haitians with absolute impunity," Amnesty International reported in July.

"There have been promises to disarm groups, but nothing has been done," Fatton said. "If anything, there are more weapons now than there were before."

David Wimhurst, a spokesman for the U.N. Stabilization Mission in Haiti, disagreed, saying limited progress had been made.

"I'd say it's very difficult to offer people with guns an alternative, like a career or long-term job prospect where the economy is pretty tattered," Wimhurst said. "It's a long-term program to disarm the civilian population."

The understaffed and poorly equipped Haitian National Police still cannot provide security, human rights groups say.

Amnesty International accuses the force of killing civilians and committing other human rights abuses.

A surge of recent kidnappings in the Cite Soleil slum and around other areas of Haiti's capital, Port-au-Prince, has unsettled people like Alexandra Fevril, a university student living in the city.

"They kidnap whatever person," Fevril said. "I take many precautions. There are certain barrios I must avoid because they are more dangerous than other barrios."

Good political governance, another accomplishment Latortue cited, is also in dispute.

"We have established the civil service," the prime minister said, noting he did not fire and replace government officials who had ties to Aristide's Lavalas Family Party.

The decision enraged Haitians opposed to Aristide.

Lavalas accused Latortue of persecuting its members while ignoring the actions of criminal gangs and other groups. It said Latortue jailed former Prime Minister Yvon Neptune and the Rev. Gerard Jean-Juste for political, not criminal, reasons.

Arrested in June 2004, Neptune later was indicted for masterminding a massacre in the town of St. Marc.

Jean-Juste was jailed in July on charges of murder and conspiracy against the state. A judge last month dropped the charges against him.

Under pressure, the interim government last month allowed the priest, who has leukemia, be treated in Miami.

Latortue replied that his government is not holding political prisoners.

He said Neptune was arrested on a judge's warrant. He said Jean-Juste was released because of his illness, not political pressure from Washington.

Lesly Jacques, a close friend of Latortue, called those cases "irregularities."

"When you arrest someone, you should go before a judge right away, but it didn't happen because the judicial system is not working," Jacques said. "Latortue has tried to change it, but you can't change something like that in two years."

One thing that did change is Haiti's finances, though the country continues to rank as the poorest in the Western Hemisphere. The interim government is collecting taxes while fighting corruption and contraband.

"We have more money to do work in public health and education now. We don't misuse money," Latortue said.

The interim government built more new roads in the past two years than in the past 10, he said. Electricity is available as long as 12 hours a day now, up from just two hours in 2004.

Still, Elirend Jean Charles, a professor in Port-au-Prince, complained that the price of beans, rice and corn has quadrupled since Aristide left.

Latortue replied that his government cut a 40-percent inflation rate to 15 percent.

As for reconciling Haiti's divided society, Latortue said he has tried to bring people together, but the process is incomplete.

"In Haiti, people always criticize those in power," he said. "How could you solve the divisions in two years?"

Others said the interim government has not even tried to unify the country.

"Haiti needs to be healed and repaired," said Wimhurst, the U.N. spokesman. "This government never pursued that seriously. We would have liked to have seen that effort."

Haiti's next leader faces many of the same problems Latortue encountered.

"He needs to form a government that is acceptable to everyone. After that, there needs to be a new political order, an end of violence and new legitimate institutions, like a functioning police force," Fatton said.

The prime minister offered no advice to his successor. He said he is looking forward to retirement, though he would work to change the Haitian Constitution, which prevents those living outside the country from voting or running for political office.

"We have the most talented people in the Haitian diaspora," Latortue said.

Critics say it is ironic that Latortue would champion this cause now because he upheld a controversial decision to exclude Dumarsais Simeus, a Haitian businessman from Texas and U.S. citizen, from running for president.

Fatton offered a possible legacy for the prime minister: Haitian leaders have historically clung to power. Latortue will teach Haitians about political transition because he will exit as promised.

**Rice hails high turnout in Haiti's polls**  
**China View News**  
**February 10, 2006**

WASHINGTON -- U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice hailed on Thursday the high turnout in Haiti's general elections on Tuesday and called for respect to the final results of the vote.

"I congratulate the Haitian people for demonstrating their commitment to democracy by voting in large numbers on February 7," Rice said in a statement.

"Haitians can take great pride in the success of these elections," Rice said.

Haitian voters flocked to polling stations on Tuesday to participate in the long-awaited presidential and parliamentary elections. The elections, which had been postponed four times for security reasons, were observed by the U.N., the European Union, the United States' National Institute for Democracy and the International Organization of Francophones.

Haitians were to elect the president, 30 senators and 99 deputies in the elections. To win outright, a presidential candidate has to win more than 50 percent of the votes.

## **WYCLEF JEAN HOPES PREVAL WILL STABILISE HAITI**

**ContactMusic.com, UK**

**Feb. 10, 2006**

FUGEES rapper WYCLEF JEAN hopes presidential candidate RENE PREVAL will be elected into power in his native Haiti this week (begs06FEB06), bringing stability to the troubled Caribbean island.

After Tuesday's (07FEB06) election, the rapper and his fellow Haitians are waiting to hear who will lead the country.

Jean says, "Cite Soleil, Bel Air, that's where you have the majority of the problems of violence, Preval is probably the man who can deal with those problems better than anyone else."

Haiti's instability and violence, which rose in the 1980s, have turned the beautiful island from a tourist spot into one of the poorest nations in the Americas.

Jean is a regular visitor to Haiti and hopes his presence raises international awareness of the country's woes.

He explains, "I was the first to go inside of Bel Air (slum area). I preached and said violence was not the answer. (The gangs said), 'We stopped the violence, but now what do we do? We have no jobs.'

"I want to see the violence in Haiti stopped. Innocent people, innocent children are getting hurt and killed every day."

Despite Jean living in New York City since the age of nine, he proudly holds a Haitian passport and voted this week.

He says, "I have a Haitian passport and I voted. I think it was really important to vote. We have to put a government in there to have stability. We need someone in there to provide stability."

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**Haitian Vote Count Continues With Preval in Lead**  
**By VOA News**  
**10 February 2006**

Early results from Haiti's presidential election indicate front-runner candidate Rene Preval has a commanding lead, and may be able to avoid a run-off election.

Officials say Preval, a former president, has won about 61 percent of the votes counted from Tuesday's election. Another former president, Leslie Manigat, is a distant second with 13 percent. If the trend continues, Preval would have a clear majority of votes and avoid a run-off election next month.

Vote counting is said to be proceeding slowly as ballots trickle in to the capital, Port-au-Prince, by helicopter, truck and mule.

Brazil's President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva says Brazilian peacekeeping forces will remain in Haiti until a new government is formed and can maintain security. Brazil is the leader of the U.N. stabilization force in Haiti.

## **Haitian Vote Count Continues; Preval Takes Early Lead**

**By Amelia Shaw**

**Port-au-Prince**

**VOA News**

**10 February 2006**

In Haiti, front-running candidate Rene Preval has taken an early lead as election workers continue to count ballots from the national elections on Tuesday. Millions of Haitians turned out for the balloting, which is the first since former president Jean Bertrand Aristide was forced into exile following a violent uprising two years ago.

Ballots keep trickling in to the capital, transported from the rural areas by helicopter, truck and mules.

Preliminary figures give the front-runner candidate Rene Preval an early lead in the race for president. A 63-year old agronomist and former president, Preval is one of the few Haitian leaders who served out his term without being overthrown. Seen as a close ally of former president Aristide, Preval gained widespread support among Haiti's poor.

If Preval gets fifty-percent of the vote, he will win the presidency in the first round. So far, only 25 percent of the votes have been counted. Final results are not expected until Friday at the earliest.

Around the capital, Port-au-Prince, election monitors praised the patience and resiliency of Haitian voters. Jean-Pierre Kingsly is Director General of the International Mission for the Evaluation of Elections.

Mr. Kingsly said that many polling stations opened hours late due to lack of materials, causing confusion and long lines for Haitian voters. He said these problems would have to be resolved for the next round of parliamentary elections, on March 19. He praised the high turnout of voters, and said the Haitian people are on the right path to democratic development.

Mark Schneider, Senior Vice President of the International Crisis Group praised Tuesday's elections as a critical step in forming a legitimate government, but will need continued support from the international community. He said that while electing a president is important, the true test for democracy will be whether the country succeeds in building up its democratic institutions, and accepting with its opposition parties. "However visionary, however dedicated, forceful is the single leader. Haiti only works if the rest of the government works together. And if there is a common agreement on some basic agenda of change in this country to build the institutions," he said.

The future of the country, Mr. Schneider says, depends on the ability of different political, social and business sectors to work together, and to compromise.

## **Candidate of Haiti's Poor Leads in Early Tally With 61% of Vote**

**By GINGER THOMPSON**

**New York Times**

**February 10, 2006**

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti, Feb. 9 — Unofficial electoral results that had been carried in by mules, trucks and helicopters from polling centers across the country appeared to give an early lead to René Préval, a former president who has captured the support of this country's desperately poor masses.

The Provisional Electoral Council announced Thursday night that Mr. Préval had won 61 percent of the 15 percent of the votes tabulated, including 67 percent of votes counted so far in the department that includes Port-au-Prince.

While several of his opponents quietly began to move toward conceding, others cautioned that it was still too early to declare a winner, and the political hostilities that have kept this country near the brink of anarchy lingered in the air.

Heavily armed gang members who control some of the slums that are Mr. Préval's political strongholds have threatened violence if he is not declared the winner with more than 50 percent of the votes, thereby avoiding a runoff election. It was also from the slums that Mr. Préval's mentor, the former president, Jean-Bertrand Aristide, drew his political strength.

A spokesman for Charles-Henry Baker, a wealthy factory owner considered the candidate of the tiny elite, said his campaign has begun preparing charges of fraud to try to stop Mr. Préval from winning power.

As Haiti, a country of 8.5 million people, braced for final results, which are not expected until this weekend, it was not easy to tell whether the nation was on the verge of its first real steps out of anarchy, or set to plunge into another cycle of political upheaval.

Ending the political fighting between the rich and the poor must be the first of a long list of priorities for its next president. And the question looming over Mr. Préval is whether a man whose previous term as president was overshadowed by Mr. Aristide, a polarizing political leader, is up to the task.

"Préval has to turn history upside down in Haiti," said Mark Schneider, of the International Crisis Group. "For decades, if not centuries, Haitian politics have been ruled by a take-no-prisoners mentality. The determination of the Haitian people to use the ballot to change their history became evident after the record turn-out Tuesday. And if the early reports of a first round win turn out to be accurate, I would hope that René Préval knows that he cannot govern alone."

In an interview last month at his sister's house in Port-au-Prince, and then another this week in Marmelade, his father's hometown, Mr. Préval said his priority would be to provide relief to the two-thirds of the population living in extreme poverty. His plans included what he described as a "universal public school program," and at least one free meal a day for poor children.

Mr. Préval, a former bakery owner, also said he would investigate the cases of hundreds of prisoners who claim they are being held for political purposes, and would negotiate with gangs, rather than only using force against them, to end violence and lawlessness in slums like Cité Soleil.

"What do you prefer?" he asked. "An amnesty, or for people to keep dying?"

Mr. Préval said he would recruit Haitian professionals overseas to help rebuild the government, and hinted that he had offered a job in his administration to a former presidential candidate, Dumarsais Siméus, a Haitian-born business magnate who was forced out of the race because he is an American citizen.

A chief objective of Mr. Préval's government, one of his advisers said, would be to attract more investment from the United States. In the last decade, the adviser said, United States investment in Haiti was less than \$10 million, the amount invested in a single year in the neighboring Dominican Republic.

But Mr. Préval also suggested that he would reach out to his opponents among the middle and upper classes, saying he would appoint a prime minister from the political party that wins control of the Parliament, which is highly unlikely to be his own.

"People know that I don't like to speak of myself," said Mr. Préval, 63. "But I think the first thing that people appreciate about me is that Préval has not stolen. Préval is not an assassin. Préval respects freedom. Préval is frank and honest.

"He says what he can and cannot do, and he doesn't make promises he cannot keep."

After graduating from college in Belgium, he lived in New York. "I always told my father I worked on Wall Street," Mr. Préval said of those years. "But I never told him I was a messenger. I used to think how my father would kill me if he saw me sweeping floors and making coffee."

By 1990, Mr. Préval had returned to Haiti and had opened a bakery that supplied bread to an orphanage run by Mr. Aristide, who was then a priest. When Mr. Aristide rose to power as Haiti's first elected president, he appointed Mr. Préval prime minister.

Haitians called the men the Twins, which are believed to have an eternal bond and magical powers, according to voodoo beliefs. And after Mr. Aristide was overthrown by a military coup, Mr. Préval went with him into exile.

When Mr. Aristide was restored to power in 1994, Mr. Préval returned with him. And with Mr. Aristide's blessing a year later, Mr. Préval was elected president.

He was credited with supporting important human rights investigations that led to trials and convictions against high-ranking police and military officers involved in political assassinations.

But his government was crippled by a Parliament dominated by his opponents and meddling by his old ally, Mr. Aristide. And critics said his greatest single achievement was becoming the only president, in

a country roiled by a long history of military coups, to finish a full term in office and peacefully turn over power.

Political observers said Mr. Préval, who served as president from 1996 to 2000, was not able to keep many promises during his last term in office.

The slight, unassuming, plain-talking agronomist had never been a high achiever before he stumbled into political power in the shadows of the extremely charismatic Mr. Aristide. And until now he had essentially stayed there.

His successor was Mr. Aristide. By then, aides to Mr. Préval said, relations between the two had been severely strained, and Mr. Préval retired to his father's hometown, near the north coast.

Then two years ago, another armed uprising, along with pressure by the United States, forced Mr. Aristide from power and pushed Haiti, the hemisphere's poorest country, close to collapse.

Political observers have said Mr. Préval was sought out by the United States and governments leading the United Nations Stabilization Mission struggling to restore order.

"I think Préval wants to show he's his own man, that he can leave his own legacy, and solve some of this country's worst problems," said Mr. Schneider, of the International Crisis Group. "Hopefully his opposition will recognize they don't have an option, and Haiti doesn't have an option but to cooperate."

**Préval dominates results, may win presidency again** René Préval was winning 61% of the vote in preliminary results of Haiti's presidential election. Final results are expected Saturday.

By JOE MOZINGO

Miami Herald

Feb. 10, 2006

PORT-AU-PRINCE - Former President René Préval held a wide lead in the first official results from Haiti's presidential elections, electoral officials said Thursday.

The results came from only 15 percent of the nation's 9,000 or so polling stations set up for the balloting Tuesday -- the first since President Jean-Bertrand Aristide fled the country in February 2004 as political opposition paralyzed his government and an armed insurgency swept the country.

Of the more than 283,000 votes tallied by 6 p.m., Préval had received nearly 175,000, or over 61 percent of the vote, according to the first official returns announced by the electoral council. If this percentage holds, the 63-year-old agronomist would handily win his second five-year term for president without the need for a run-off.

#### DECIDING FACTOR

But most of the votes tabulated so far came from the western areas that include Port-au-Prince, where Préval seems to have much more consistent support than in other parts of the country. The west contains 41 percent of Haiti's electorate. Given that, the deciding factor in whether Préval wins outright or must face the second-place finisher in a March 19 run-off will depend on how he does in the rest of the country.

In the Central Plateau, for example, Charles Henri Baker, an apparel manufacturer and leader of the business elite that opposed Aristide, garnered some 3,318 votes to Préval's 3,057, in the partial tallies. In a rural region of impoverished peasants, Baker's showing might be surprising, given that Préval has long been known for his advocacy of peasant issues. But the leader of the local peasant organization, Chavannes Jean-Baptiste, had a falling out with Aristide and Préval, and aligned his movement with Baker. Baker's showing elsewhere appears to trail Préval, as well as Leslie Manigat, who served as president for four months before he was ousted by a military coup.

Préval's support in Port-au-Prince is indisputable. At polling stations checked by The Miami Herald he was receiving upwards of 70 percent of the vote. Aristide was seen as a champion for the urban poor, and although Préval's relationship with Aristide has been distant, the vast disaffected populace in the slums sees him as the only way out of relentless destitution.

As of Thursday, all of the country's ballots finally had been counted at their polling stations, with the votes recorded on tally sheets, which were delivered to the electoral headquarters of each of Haiti's 10 departments. From there they go to the tabulation center in Port-au-Prince, where they are doing the final count. Electoral officials began to post the partial results as they came in Thursday night on their website, [www.cep-ht.org](http://www.cep-ht.org).

SATURDAY

But they cautioned repeatedly that these results were preliminary and the final tally would probably not be known until Saturday.

Diplomats and observers continued to praise the Haitian people on Thursday for their apparent high turnout on Election Day, at a time many feared the nation was spiraling towards failed-state status. "Haitians can take great pride in the success of these elections," said Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice in a press statement. She urged Haiti's citizens and political parties to respect the results.

## **Ex-president Preval takes lead in Haitian election**

**Fri Feb 10, 2006**

**By Joseph Guylor Delva and Jim Loney**

**Reuters**

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti - Former President Rene Preval appeared headed for an outright victory in Haiti's first election since Jean-Bertrand Aristide was ousted two years ago, according to rivals and initial vote counts.

Preval, who led the impoverished Caribbean nation from 1996 to 2001, did not claim victory but sounded like a winner after election officials said the one-time Aristide protege was leading with 61 percent after about 283,000 votes had been counted. Haiti has 3.5 million registered voters.

The first official results touched off a carnival-like celebration in the main square of Marmelade, Preval's hometown in the northern mountains. People cheered, danced and chanted "Preval is the one!"

"I am happy that I measure up to the weight of the expectations of the people," he said. "There is a lot of poverty. We will have to work hard."

If the initial results hold up, Preval would have the simple majority he needs to win the presidency outright, avoiding a second-round vote on March 19.

Another former president, Leslie Manigat, trailed in second place with 13.4 percent, while industrialist Charles Baker, the main candidate of the wealthy elite which opposed Aristide, had 6.1 percent.

International observers praised the high turnout in a ballot that could set a new test for U.S. foreign policy, but criticised election officials for late poll openings and irregularities during Tuesday's election.

Many of the poorest Haitians, from the slums where both Aristide and Preval found their strongest support, said they were sure their candidate had won, and some of his rivals also conceded that he had a clear lead.

"If Preval won, he won," said Turneb Delpe, another of the 33 presidential candidates.

**'OUR PRESIDENT IS RENE PREVAL'**

The United States pressured Aristide to leave after an armed revolt in 2004, accusing him of using thugs to enforce his rule. Now, after a chaotic but mostly peaceful vote in the destitute and unstable Caribbean nation, Washington may have to deal with his one-time ally, and another potential champion of the poor.

"We the Haitian people know who we voted for. I can tell you now our president is Rene Preval," said Port-au-Prince resident Marc-Joel Saint-Fleur, 36. "We are just asking the authorities to admit he is the one we elected."

Preval, 63, was president between the two terms of Aristide, a firebrand former Roman Catholic priest accused of despotism and corruption before he was pushed from office by an armed revolt in 2004.

The leader of that rebellion, Guy Philippe, ran for president but had won only 1,839 votes as of late Thursday night, less than 1 percent of those counted.

Preval has distanced himself from Aristide but has not ruled out allowing him to return from exile in South Africa. South Africa said it would evaluate conditions after the election to see whether it was safe for Aristide to return.

Johan Van Hecke, head of a European Union observer group, said the election suffered from considerable shortcomings, but the enthusiastic turnout should be praised.

"Overall, the administration of the process could have been of a higher standard," he told reporters, and urged authorities to improve their performance. Some polling stations opened hours late and some people had difficulty voting.

While a Preval victory was unlikely to please Washington, Harvard University Haiti analyst Robert Rotberg said the United States had essentially washed its hands of Haiti.

"The U.S. is a very distracted key player," he said. "If Iraq and Afghanistan weren't the big things on the block maybe the U.S. would focus on Haiti a bit more but it's not going to do so if there's no mass boat migration out of Haiti."

(Additional reporting by Oliver Ellrodt in Marmelade and Gordon Bell in Cape Town.)

**Early returns in Haiti favor Préval**  
**Former president needs a majority to avoid a run-off**  
**By Susan Milligan**  
**Boston Globe**  
**February 10, 2006**

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti -- René Préval, who led this impoverished Caribbean nation in the late 1990s, has an early lead in his bid to return to the presidential palace, according to preliminary results of Tuesday's national elections.

With the votes still being counted, Préval was ahead in at least four of the country's 10 voting districts and had captured nearly two-thirds of the vote in the Port-au-Prince area, election officials said last night. Final tallies from the race, as well as from elections for a new national legislature, were not expected until today or tomorrow.

Préval, an agronomist and a leader in the movement to oust the hated former dictator Jean-Claude "Baby Doc" Duvalier in 1986, hopes to win an outright majority among 35 presidential candidates and avoid a March 19 runoff.

Préval has ties to Jean-Bertrand Aristide, the populist, democratically elected president who fled into exile in 2004 after armed thugs pledged to push him out violently unless he left office. Some hard-core Aristide supporters in Haiti's slums dream that Préval would bring him back from exile in South Africa.

But even many of Aristide's most fervent supporters say they have moved on, and want to start a new political chapter in Haiti's history with Préval, who built roads and schools when he served as president from 1996-2001.

In Port-au-Prince's decrepit Forte Dimanche neighborhood, posters of Préval and his party, Lespwa ("Hope"), are the only decoration on many of the shacks, and local residents said the area voted overwhelmingly for the former leader. Less than one year ago, residents there had insisted in interviews that they wanted Aristide to return to power, and spray-painted slogans extolling him on the neighborhood's walls.

Resident Emanuel Virgil, 28, said of Préval: "He can change our lives. He can change this country. I voted for Préval only because of the man."

"We voted for [Préval] and for him only," added Arcelie Orelie, 45. "It has nothing to do with Aristide."

The Bush administration was not a supporter of Aristide's regime, and did not protect him when he was hounded from office two years ago.

But Timothy Carney, the acting US ambassador to Haiti, said he was not concerned about Préval's former alliance with Aristide and dismissed speculation that Préval would bring Aristide back to Haiti.

"Aristide is as much a man of the past as Jean-Claude 'Baby Doc' Duvalier is," Carney said in an interview. "I believe the electorate has absolutely understood that."

International election observers, meanwhile, yesterday criticized Haiti's nascent election board for its handling of the national election on Tuesday, citing confusion, nonsecret ballots, and long delays that led to some violence in the nation's first democratic vote in years.

"Our mission wants to congratulate the Haitian people, who by voting en masse managed to quiet the skeptics and show a real will for democracy," said Johan Van Hecke, chief of the European Union election monitoring mission. But "the technical difficulties" in the voting "are a great worry to me," he said.

Van Hecke said the monitors found that many polling stations opened late, leading some Haitians in the poorest neighborhood of the capital, Port-au-Prince, to leave the polls in disgust. Illiterate voters in this poorly-educated nation were not given assistance in voting, and the voting centers were set up in a way that allowed people to see how others were casting their ballots.

A separate Canadian team of observers came to similar conclusions, although the chief of the mission, Jean-Pierre Kingsley, was more muted in his criticism.

The findings confirm the complaints this week of many Haitians, who wondered how an election that cost \$62 million to prepare in the Western Hemisphere's poorest nation could include so many mishaps.

The Haitian election authority "has not managed to put together the organizational structure that was needed to have a good election," Van Hecke said, adding that Haiti needed to fix the glitches before holding a run-off next month if it proves necessary.

Jacques Bernard, head of the Haitian election commission, noted that chaos on the morning of Election Day -- which resulted in four deaths and some injuries -- had subsided by midday.

"Yes, there were problems, but during the day we solved a lot of those problems," he said.

## **Former Haitian president has early vote lead**

**By Michael Norton**

**The Associated Press**

**The Seattle Times**

**Friday, Feb. 10, 2006**

René Préval was Haiti's president 1996-2001.

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti — René Préval took a strong lead Thursday in Haiti's presidential election with the release of the first partial official returns giving him a majority of the votes counted so far.

Préval, a former president seen as a champion of the poor, won 61.5 percent of 282,327 valid votes counted, Haiti's electoral council said. It refused to say what percentage of the total votes cast these figures represented. According to the United Nations, a majority of Haiti's 3.5 million eligible voters cast ballots.

The council said of the next two highest vote getters, Leslie Manigat had 13.4 percent and Charles Henri Baker had 6.1 percent.

The announcement reinforced comments made by a campaign official before the release of these partial results that Préval had won almost 68 percent of the votes counted so far by representatives of Préval's party.

Préval is a former protégé and one-time ally of ousted President Jean-Bertrand Aristide. Préval was characteristically low-key as reports of election returns landed at his headquarters in Port-au-Prince, the capital.

Manigat early Thursday said early returns tallied by his party members showed Préval has surged ahead.

"There is a tiny chance that we will have a second round, but I fear Préval has made a clean sweep of the votes," Manigat said.

Standing on the porch of his family home in Marmelade, a rural northern town, Préval said he was marking time and catching up on sleep until official results are out. Election authorities said that might not be until late today or Saturday.

"My work is over," Préval said. "I'm waiting. It's boring."

His campaigning is over unless he fails to win a majority and must go to a second-round election in March against the other top vote-getter. But Préval faces monumental tasks if he wins the presidency of this impoverished nation.

Most Haitians can't read or write, and subsist on about a dollar a day. A wave of kidnappings by heavily armed gangs has swept the capital. Amid the insecurity, assembly plants are closing, causing

the losses of thousands of jobs. Donor nations are hesitant to contribute money because of a legacy of government corruption.

Préval's own tenure as president from 1996-2001 was less than stellar. His efforts at agrarian reform failed because landless peasants who received land couldn't live on the small amount they were given. He clashed with parliament over the legitimacy of the legislators who won contested elections. Human-rights advocates accused him of interfering in the judicial system and of politicizing the police force.

But poor Haitians remember Préval tried to help them. Even the smaller efforts are remembered by those whose plight was ignored by a series of governments and dictatorships.

Préval stood for years in the shadow of Aristide, his dominating predecessor. Aristide, who referred to Préval as his "twin," was ousted amid accusations he ordered gangsters to attack opponents and pocketed millions of dollars.

Préval made a point of saying in a recent interview that he has split with Aristide, who is in exile in South Africa.

"If I'm his 'twin,' we do not have the same mother," Préval told The Associated Press.

Préval pointed out that nothing can legally prevent Aristide from returning to Haiti but added that he may have to face a trial.

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## **Skull aboard flight from Haiti likely used in Vodou**

**BY JERRY BERRIOS**

**Miami Herald**

**February 10, 2006**

The Broward Medical Examiner said this afternoon that he believes a human skull brought into Fort Lauderdale-Hollywood International Airport Thursday had been used in some kind of Vodou ritual.

The skull is that of a black man who was in his 40's or younger, Dr. Joshua Perper said. It arrived in a cotton bag labeled for wild rice, carried by Myrlene Severe, aboard a Lynx Air International flight from Cap-Haitien, Haiti, according to Zachary Mann, spokesman for U.S. Customs and Border Protection. An agency officer detected the unusual object in the woman's luggage during a routine security check, and was turned over to the medical examiner's office for further testing.

"We do see human body parts come in, but typically they're used for research purposes," Mann said. Perper said it was the first skull he has seen in his 12 years in Broward County that had been used in Vodou.

Severe, of Miramar, was arrested and charged with smuggling a human head into the country, according to Miami Herald television news partner CBS-4. A federal magistrate set bond of \$100,000. Court documents indicate that Severe obtained the package from a man in Haiti to ward off evil spirits, CBS-4 said.

A witness who appeared to know Severe told TV reporters that the woman had the skull because of her interest in science.

The investigation is being jointly handled by Customs and Border Protection, Immigration and Customs Enforcement, and the Department of Health and Human Services, as well as the Broward County Medical Examiner's Office.

Severe, 30, is being held in the Broward County Jail.

## **Gang leader offers peace in Haiti's troubled slum**

**10 Feb 2006**

**Reuters**

**By Joseph Guyler Delva**

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti, Feb 10 (Reuters) - The gangs that control Haiti's largest and most violent slum will give up their weapons and stop fighting a "totalitarian" government if Rene Preval becomes president, a top gang leader said.

Augudson Nicolas, known as General Toutou, said the gangs would hand over their guns to a Preval government in a public ceremony, bringing peace to the teeming Cite Soleil slum where U.N. peacekeepers have been involved in near-daily gunfights with heavily armed street toughs in recent months.

Early election returns had Preval leading with 61 percent of the vote in Tuesday's election. If the result holds, he would have the majority he needs to avoid a March 19 runoff.

"We are not interested in using weapons any more. The elections have taken place. We are going to have a legitimate government," Nicolas, considered one of the most influential leaders of the gangs, told Reuters in an interview on Thursday in Cite Soleil, a teeming warren of shanties thought to be home to more than 300,000 people.

Haiti's disparate armed groups have offered to disarm but failed to carry through in the past, but the United Nations mission in Haiti -- about 9,000 soldiers and civilian police -- welcomed Nicolas' proposal.

"The whole issue is about getting the guns out of Cite Soleil," U.N. spokesman David Wimhurst said. "It would be great if they moved in that direction."

Taming Cite Soleil, beset by gunfire and kidnappings, is seen as essential to ending violence that has plagued Haiti since an armed revolt ousted Jean-Bertrand Aristide, the last elected president and a hero to many of the poor, in 2004.

### **CONTROLLING VIOLENCE**

A feared explosion of bloodshed around Tuesday's presidential vote failed to materialize. Police and U.N. officials believe the gangs called a cease-fire to allow a peaceful vote, knowing Preval, a former Aristide protege, had a good chance to win in the poorest country in the Americas.

Haitian business and civic leaders have criticized U.N. peacekeepers for failing to control the violence in the sprawling slum. Industrialist Charles Baker, a presidential candidate in third place in early returns, has called for the use of "overwhelming force" against the gangs.

But Preval has said he does not believe military force is the solution in Cite Soleil. Instead, he says his government would spend on schools and infrastructure.

Nicolas, 29, said the gang warfare in Cite Soleil has been a political battle against interim Prime Minister Gerard Latortue's "illegal" U.S.-backed government, appointed when Aristide was driven into exile.

"I was fighting a totalitarian government. Now it's over," said Nicolas, a slightly built man with neat sideburns who wore jeans, a blue shirt and a red cap.

Nicolas has been accused by police of murder and other crimes, including complicity in the slaying of journalist Jacques Roche last July. He has denied involvement in Roche's death.

The Cite Soleil gangs, he said, armed themselves for protection against Haitian police who he said killed children, women and the elderly in the slums.

"The de facto government (of Latortue) and its allies the bourgeoisie waged war against the poor population because they support Aristide," he said.

"The police and U.N. troops won't be allowed to come and shoot at us any more. With Preval that will end," he said.

**Prospects for Change in Haiti and Improving Hemispheric Security in the Americas**  
**by Marco Vicenzino**  
**Foreign Policy Association**  
**February 10, 2006**

Haiti's first election since the ouster of former President Jean-Bertrand Aristide two years ago provides an historic opportunity to firmly re-invigorate efforts on the long road to normalization and stability. However, lawlessness and corruption continue to impede economic development and political reform in the Western Hemisphere's poorest nation.

What are the real chances of success in Haiti after the elections?

In the absence of strong leadership and greater international involvement, success will be limited. The international community must not only remain engaged in a long-term commitment, but devote greater resources to the effort, particularly in the security realm. Failure by international forces to disarm militias upon entering Haiti two years ago, due primarily to fear of fatalities, has significantly exacerbated and contributed to the current lawlessness. Strengthening the current UN peacekeeping effort, currently under the leadership of Brazil and Chile, is essential to restoring order, particularly in the capital, Port-au-Prince. With an improved security environment, ordinary Haitians must assume greater responsibility for real change and end the vicious cycle of political violence and endemic corruption that has plagued Haiti since its independence from France in 1804.

Disarmament of the gangs and militias remains essential to stopping the widespread turmoil and vital to the process of national transformation. Although many militias may have originated for political reasons, many now primarily operate as criminal gangs, surviving on illicit activities ranging from extortion to drug-trafficking, particularly in light of Haiti's strategic geographic location in the drug-routes from South to North America.

Creating a new army remains vital to Haiti's long-term stability. The Haitian army was disbanded by former president Aristide upon his restoration to power by the U.S. troops in 1994. It was replaced by an inefficient, poorly-equipped and poorly-trained police force of 5,000, which simply dissolved as the rag-tag rebel forces advanced upon the capital two years ago. A new security force must be well-equipped and well-trained, not only in tactics, but in respecting the rule of law and the democratic institutions. This will not occur overnight, but the process must begin now.

Incentives are a key element which should include an energetic and pro-active amnesty program and membership in a new army (barring prior serious criminal activity) and an effective plan of submitting weapons in exchange for cash. There must be a sufficient timeframe for compliance and severe penalties and vigorous measures for noncompliance, including forced disarmament and prosecution.

With its currently overwhelming commitments overseas, it is unrealistic to expect greater U.S. involvement in another long-term engagement with an uncertain outcome. The mindset in Washington is that after committing 20,000 US troops to restore Mr. Aristide to power in 1994 and investing more than \$1bn in aid, the U.S. has very little to show for it today. In addition, with anti-U.S. sentiment in the region, a U.S. troop presence could prove counter-productive to the long-term operation and relations with regional neighbors.

Establishing a truth and reconciliation commission, similar to South Africa's, remains essential for Haitians to come to terms with their past and end the vicious cycle of political violence which has plagued Haiti since its independence. Of 42 heads of state, 29 have been either assassinated or overthrown.

A broad-based coalition government of national unity representing all segments of society must emerge from the elections. It must include an indispensable partnership of credible grass-roots representatives of civil society groups and independent, non-party technocrats from within Haiti and its overseas diaspora to guarantee skillful administration of government. Forging such an alliance based on cooperation and accountability can ensure long-term stability.

The international community must continue to maintain critical economic assistance. However, such aid must be increasingly accompanied by greater transparency. Every dollar must be accounted for. Aimlessly signing checks will solve nothing and contribute to the usual pervasive fraud. Imposing strict standards will ensure the efficient allocation of aid and reassure ordinary Haitians that they are the beneficiaries and not corrupt officials. Over time this may nurture a greater sense of fairness, civic duty, responsibility and trust in authority, not fear. Ultimately, international efforts will fail unless Haitians, both the political elite and ordinary citizens, assume greater responsibility for their own future.

## IMPROVING HEMISPHERIC SECURITY IN THE AMERICAS

Criticism and disillusion with the UN system and other international and multilateral organizations often stems from incidents involving alleged corruption, bureaucratic incompetence and institutional inefficiency, and create the image that nothing ever gets accomplished. The reality is that the failures, of which there are many, regularly make the headlines, but the successes rarely do.

One of the most underutilized, least appreciated and largely underestimated elements of the UN Charter remains Chapter 8, which addresses regional organizations. In the final report by UN Secretary-General Annan's 16-member High Level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change (published on December 2, 2004) reference is made to introducing creative ways of utilizing regional organizations. However, greater devolution of responsibilities to these entities may increase the UN's efficiency and facilitate problem-solving. Although interdependence in an increasingly globalized world is a reality, many issues remain regional and are best resolved locally. While the UN can play an important supervisory role, much should be left to the regional organizations.

The presence of troops from throughout Africa under the leadership of the African Union to address the humanitarian crisis in Darfur may provide some interesting insight into how regional organizations can better operate. Although the contingent may have a limited short-term impact, the concept is still in its nascent stage and can be considered a generational investment that may yield long-term dividends in contributing to regional stability and international security.

Considering a stronger security role for the Organization of American States (OAS), the regional forum for the Americas, is a controversial issue commonly avoided and sidelined due to historical reasons, principally for concerns of its potential for the violation of national sovereignty.

Either formally within this forum or informally outside the forum, discussion is needed on the possible creation of a hemispheric rapid-reaction paramilitary force, a gendarmerie, of less than 10,000 members to provide humanitarian assistance during and immediately after natural and non-natural disasters, principally in cases of prevailing lawlessness and the breakdown of civil order.

The force should have a limited scope to restoring order, providing rescue and relief services and facilitating the transition to the reconstruction phase. Its use should be based on unanimity among member-states and its missions should be prepared and supplied for three to six month deployments. Close cooperation and coordination with the United Nations throughout any operation is crucial. A training center staffed with representatives and experts from member-states would be essential to maintaining efficiency through ensuring the use of common tactics and guaranteeing interoperability.

However, geopolitical realities and sensitivities may often undermine and complicate regional problem-solving efforts. Resorting to alternative security arrangements at the sub-regional levels may potentially circumvent and reduce these difficulties. Therefore, should disagreement prevent progress on the issue at the OAS, individual OAS member-states should take the initiative and discuss the development of this capability at the sub-regional level.

Marco Vicenzino is the founder and Executive Director of the Global Strategy Project. He served as Deputy Executive Director of the International Institute for Strategic Studies-US (IISS-US) in Washington, DC, and is an international attorney. He is a graduate of Oxford University and Georgetown University Law Center and has taught International Law at the School of International Service of American University. He can be contacted at [msv@globalsp.org](mailto:msv@globalsp.org)

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**Rivals concede to ex-president**  
**Times Online, UK**  
**February 10, 2006**

René Préval, the former President of Haiti, took an early lead as results from Tuesday's elections were counted and several of his opponents conceded last night that he appeared to be heading for an easy victory.

Results based on 15 per cent of the votes counted showed that Mr Préval had 61 per cent, followed by Leslie Manigat on 13 per cent. The industrialist Charles Henri Baker was in third place, with 7 per cent.

"We are cautious, we are waiting for results, but it is clear according to reports from a lot of places that Préval has a comfortable gap," Mr Manigat said.

Mr Préval needs more than 50 per cent to avoid a run-off on March 19. Officials said that substantial returns in the first election since Jean-Bertrand Aristide was ousted two years ago were not likely until tonight or tomorrow.

Many of the poorest Haitians, among whom Mr Préval had his strongest support, said they were sure that he had won.

**Haiti election gets mixed report card**  
**09 Feb 2006**  
**Reuters AlertNet**

(Adds report from international observer team, details)  
By Jim Loney

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti, Feb 9 (Reuters) - International observers on Thursday gave Haitian voters high marks for patience and determination in Tuesday's election but criticized election officials for late poll openings and irregularities.

Voting for a new president and legislature two years after an armed revolt sent Jean-Bertrand Aristide into exile, Haitians turned out in large numbers and swamped unprepared polling stations, resulting in chaos during the first few hours of balloting, but little of the violence that had been feared.

Two observer teams, representing the European Union and a group of eight countries in the Americas, lauded Haitian voters for persevering in the face of problems at the polls.

The report card from the European Union observers was preliminary and would be followed at the end of the election by a fuller analysis.

The Haitian people have clearly and freely expressed their desire to build a future of democracy," said Jean-Pierre Kingsley, chairman of the International Mission for Monitoring Haitian Elections.

Both missions said voters lacked privacy at polling stations. Flimsy cardboard screens were set up on tables or in some cases, on floors with voters crouching behind them to write on their ballots.

Haiti's Provisional Electoral Council "did not possess sufficient administrative and organizational capacity for the conduct of elections," said Johan Van Hecke, head of the EU mission.

Van Hecke, a member of the European Parliament, told reporters that "overall, the administration of the process could have been of a higher standard," and urged authorities to improve their performance by a second round vote on March 19.

It was unclear on Thursday whether a second round, held if no candidate obtains more than 50 percent of votes, would be necessary.

Early indications suggested ex-president Rene Preval, a one-time Aristide ally, might have won a majority needed to avoid a run-off. The election was Haiti's first since Aristide was driven from power in 2004 by a rebellion of armed gangs and former soldiers, and under U.S. and French pressure to quit.

Kingsley, whose group represents Canada, the United States, Brazil, Chile, Mexico, Panama, the Dominican Republic and Jamaica, said the late openings and other polling problems may have caused some voters to give up and go home, but "I think that that impact was most probably minimal."

The group had more than 120 observers who visited 280 of Haiti's 800 polling centers.

Violence was rampant in Haiti during the run-up to the election. Kidnappings were virtually a daily occurrence and many candidates avoided the Cite Soleil slum in the capital, the scene of gun battles between U.N. peacekeepers and gangs.

The EU team noted the campaign was "limited in nature" but said it was held "in an atmosphere that was largely peaceful and in which freedoms of expression, assembly and association were largely respected."

Hecke said EU observers witnessed no major problems with vote counting.

**As calm returns, DR troops are pulled from Haiti's border**  
**Military chief: all's normal in border region**  
**The Dominican Today**  
**Feb. 9, 2006**

SANTO DOMINGO.- The minister of the Armed Forces announced that the additional soldiers and aircraft units in the border have already begun to pull out, after being sent there earlier this week as a preventive measure to face contingencies from Tuesday's elections in Haiti.

Admiral Sigfrido Pared Perez said that the decision was taken because of the normality observed in the border region after the elections.

"In fact already was to the units areas begun transferring to Santo Domingo because of the fact that there is no longer a need of additional personnel for the reasons that there is no longer any type of alteration in the border," Pared said.

He said he was happy for the manner in which the election process in the neighboring country transpired, which he described as without inconveniences.

The troops were transferred to the border region several days ago to use in case of an emergency, such as a missive exodus of Haitians.

**Haitian-Dominican market to be removed from Dajabon**  
**The Dominican Today**  
**Feb. 9, 2006**

Santo Domingo.— Armed Forces minister Sigfrido Pared Perez confirmed that the bi-national market that regularly takes place at the border in Dajabon will be moved to the town of Juana Méndez, in Haiti.

According to Pared, the talks held with the City government of Ouanaminthe revealed the need of having greater control of the Haitians who cross the border and enter the Dominican territory.

The commercial exchange is held every Monday and Friday and represents the main economic source of the area.

Among the products of greater demand there are different types of food, specially bananas, chayote and eggs.

**Regional bloc could welcome Haiti again**  
**From Miami Herald Wire Services**  
**Feb. 9, 2006**

PORT OF SPAIN - Caribbean leaders will consider whether Haiti should be reinstated into a regional bloc now that the Western Hemisphere's poorest nation has held its long-delayed elections. The Caribbean Community, or Caricom, had refused to recognize Haiti's interim government after former President Jean-Bertrand Aristide was ousted in February 2004. Haiti's membership was suspended after Caribbean leaders accused the U.S. and France of being accomplices in Aristide's removal.

## **Lula says Brazilian troops will remain in Haiti**

**By Vitor Abdala**

**Agência Brasil**

**Feb. 9, 2006**

Algiers - At a press conference yesterday during his visit to Algeria, president Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva declared that he did not intend to remove the Brazilian troops in the UN Stabilization Mission in Haiti until the new government there was more solid. "The only way there will be peace and democracy in Haiti is with solid institutions," he said.

Lula then went on to say that there was no date for a withdrawal of the Brazilian mission. He said it would occur only when there was stability in Haiti or the Haitian government requested the withdrawal. Lula admitted that in the past he was in favor of leaving Haiti right after the elections [the elections took place on Tuesday], but that now he could see that was not possible. He mentioned seeing a documentary on the Ruanda massacre in 1994 [probably the film "Shake Hands with the Devil"] and said he was impressed by what happened after peace mission troops left that country.

Translation: Allen Bennett

## **Préval way ahead, may have won outright**

**With results from Haiti's presidential election trickling in, it was clear that former President René Préval was ahead, but it wasn't clear whether he would face a runoff.**

**By JACQUELINE CHARLES TRENTON DANIEL AND JOE MOZINGO**

**Miami Herald**

**Feb. 9, 2006**

PORT-AU-PRINCE - Ballot by ballot, the tallying of votes from Haiti's critical election proceeded slowly Wednesday amid signs that René Préval would finish a strong first in the presidential race. It was not clear whether the former president and one-time supporter of ousted President Jean-Bertrand Aristide would earn the 50 percent he needs to avoid a runoff March 19 against the second-place finisher.

But a Miami Herald look at several individual polling centers -- which post results on their outside walls -- in the capital and the port cities of Gonaves and St. Marc suggested Préval might win outright. By 6 p.m. Wednesday, only 3 percent of the vote had been officially tabulated, and only 20 percent of the tally sheets from each of about 800 polling centers across Haiti's mountainous terrain had arrived at electoral headquarters in Port-au-Prince.

"We're asking everybody to be patient and wait a couple of days," said Jacques Bernard, director general of the national electoral council. "By Saturday, we will know, more or less, if we'll have a president elected in the first round."

Disorganization on Tuesday resulted in long lines and polls closing well after dark, with many voters casting their ballots by candlelight. Then the counting of votes at each polling station took much longer than anticipated, so the transport of those tally reports -- by mule, truck convoy and U.N. helicopter -- was in turn delayed.

At the Lycée Alexandre Petión in the capital's Bel Air neighborhood, it was noon on Wednesday by the time bleary-eyed poll workers handed bags of results to U.N. peacekeepers to take to the tabulation center.

But at more than 200 other polling centers, the votes had not even been picked up for transport to the headquarters.

## **HIGH TURNOUT**

Turnout for the first election since the populist Aristide fled the country in 2004 under pressure from an armed insurrection appeared to be unexpectedly high in a country where many until recent weeks were dubious that the balloting would be fair. Bernard estimated it at "more than 50 percent."

The elections had been postponed four times because of logistical problems, while violence, which tapered off in the last two weeks, threatened the process.

The candidacy of Préval -- a 63-year-old agronomist and former bakery owner -- energized much of the poor majority that once saw the populist Aristide as their champion and shook a political and business elite that helped drive him from power.

Préval was the front-runner in the polls, and a look at the results in four large polling centers in Port-au-Prince and three more in Gonaves and St. Marc suggested he was far ahead of the pack of 32 candidates.

Of the 6,163 votes counted at several voting centers in Port-au-Prince -- in the middle-class suburb of Petionville, the poorer neighborhoods of Lalue and Bel Air and one that served the strongly pro-Aristide slum of Cité Soleil -- 4,718 went to Préval.

In Petionville -- where conservative candidates Charles Henri Baker, 50, a garment factory owner, and Leslie Manigat, a former president, were expected to receive strong support -- Préval received about 70 percent of the votes at the polling stations checked.

Manigat, 75, came in a clear second in the stations checked across the metropolitan area.

### OUTLYING PROVINCES

One Haitian electoral official cautioned, however, that early results showed Préval had not garnered as much support in outlying provinces, where the majority of Haiti's 8.1 million people live. Indeed in Gonaves, Préval's lead was not as pronounced. At the Lycée Bicentenaire, he was beat out by a local candidate who is the leader of the main Protestant-based party, receiving only 30 percent of 1,314 votes viewed by The Miami Herald.

In the Gonaves slum of Raboteau, where gang members launched the rebellion that ultimately helped push Aristide out of power, Préval obtained 34 percent of 1,265 votes -- the highest percentage among the presidential candidates.

In the small farming community of La Croix Perisse in the Artibonite Valley, Préval received 58 percent of 1,108 votes counted, with several other candidates dividing the remainder.

And in St. Marc, Préval only got 32 percent, with Manigat getting 50 percent of 834 votes.

No reliable exit polls or quick counts were conducted.

A spokesman for Préval, Bob Manuel, told The Associated Press that the campaign's analysis had the former president receiving 67 percent of the total vote.

But Baker, one of Aristide's most vocal critics, said his information suggested there would be a second round, but it was not clear who would wind up in second -- he or Manigat. "We are patient," Baker said.

## **Few recent elections have been truly free**

**The majority of recent Haitian elections have been marked by fraud and manipulation.**

**BY DON BOHNING**

**Special to The Miami Herald**

**Feb. 8, 2006**

A look at the 15 Haitian elections since World War II shows that only two were not determined by fraud, manipulation or some other form of chicanery or was accompanied by such chaos that the results were discredited.

A third, the 1995 presidential election of René Préval -- the front-runner in Tuesday's balloting -- came close but was plagued by low voter turnout and claims of irregularities.

Here's a summary of some of the more significant recent elections or referendums:

- Oct. 8, 1950 -- Haiti's first direct presidential election is won by Col. Paul Magloire, chief of the military junta that toppled the previous president.
- April 30, 1961 -- President Francois "Papa Doc" Duvalier calls parliamentary elections, puts his name at the bottom of the ballot and declares himself the winner of a new six-year term with an official tally of 1,320,748 votes in favor and none against.
- Jan. 31, 1971 -- Duvalier calls a referendum to ratify his son, Jean-Claude, as his successor. The official vote is 2,391,916 in favor and none against.
- March 29, 1987 -- In the first vote since the toppling of the Duvalier family dictatorship the previous year, voters overwhelmingly approve a new Haitian constitution in a vote free of violence and irregularities.
- Nov. 29, 1987 -- The first presidential elections of the post-Duvalier era are canceled amid a bloodbath aided by the military rulers who succeeded Jean-Claude Duvalier. Gunmen and machete-wielding goons kill more than 30 people, 14 of them at a polling station.
- Jan. 17, 1988 -- Leslie Manigat, a prominent political scientist exiled under the Duvaliers, is elected president in voting run by military coup leaders. While the election was not openly fraudulent, four leading candidates boycott the election and both its credibility and outcome are widely questioned.
- Dec. 16, 1990 -- Jean-Bertrand Aristide wins the presidency with more than 67 percent of the vote in what is widely accepted as the first truly democratic election in nearly 200 years of Haitian independence.
- Dec. 17, 1995 -- Préval, prime minister under Aristide, wins the presidency with 88 percent of the vote among a field of 14. This comes close to being a reasonably free and fair election.
- May 21, 2000 -- In the most controversial vote since the Duvalier era, Aristide's Lavalas Family claims to have won 18 of 19 Senate seats. The head of the Organization of American States's observer mission calls the announced results neither "accurate nor fair." Three members of the Haitian electoral commission resign in protest, including its chief, Leon Manus, who flees into exile. The three are replaced by Aristide partisans.
- Nov. 26, 2000 -- In Haiti's most recent vote, Aristide wins another five-year presidential term in an election boycotted by all opposition parties because of the manipulated May parliamentary elections. The ballot lists six other candidates, all unknown. Officially, the turnout hits 60.5 percent and Aristide wins 91.1 percent of the votes cast. Less partisan estimates put voter turnout at 5-15 percent

**Fernandez hopes Haiti's elections bring stability**  
**The Dominican Today**  
**Feb. 8, 2006**

SANTO DOMINGO.- President Leonel Fernandez said yesterday that if Haiti obtains its stability through democratic elections that were held yesterday in that nation, it would be a positive impact for his country, because peace is the first factor a nation requires to reach production until reaching economic growth, as well as to create jobs.

Fernandez, referring to the elections in the neighboring country, said that that climate also would contribute to creating social peace that must exist jointly with political stability.

The Head of State said that he hopes that the elections occur peacefully to allow a massive participation of the population and could be the start of an institutional strengthening and an impulse to that nation's economic and social development.

"We wish that the Haitian people according to their best desires choose whom will lead the destinies of their country for the next four years. So we wish that they transpire peacefully, in harmony and that is the start of that great impulse towards democracy and development that the Haitian people demand and require," he said.

He added that in Dominican Republic the elections are seen with the hope that it represents the start of Haiti's recovery, because if it reaches stability and security, many Haitians will not have cross the border to remain illegally.

**Haiti's elections "a true revolution," DR's ambassador says**  
**The Dominican Today**  
**Feb. 8, 2006**

SANTO DOMINGO.- "Nobody is more concerned than us that Haiti overcomes the crisis," affirmed DR's ambassador in Haiti Jose Serulle, in a report datelined Port-au-Prince today by the news site Clave Digital, in which he described the elections held there yesterday as "a true revolution."

Serulle said that Haiti's political and economic stabilization is fundamental for Dominican Republic and praised the Haitian people for their behavior during the elections.

"I think that this process has been a great revolution for the Haitian nation itself," he said in reference to the work to organize the elections and the census of the more than 3 million voters who registered.

The diplomat said that the electoral process will influence the Dominican-Haitians relations, because in the measure in which the Haitian crisis worsened, its influence in his country was negative.

"All progress that Haiti has or that it can experience means an improvement in the Dominican-Haitians relations and it also means a greater progress in our trade relations and our cultural relations, as well as the possibility of undertaking, with a legitimate government, properly established and democratically elected, cross-border projects and for the entire island," added Serulle.

Haiti - Elections : "How the international community can best help ?"

Wednesday 8 February 2006

By Charles Arthur

AlterPresse

London--- In a new briefing paper entitled, "Hope against the odds - What elections promise for Haiti", the British development organisation, Christian Aid, has made a number of recommendations on how the international community can best help Haiti move forward.

With regard to the election process that began yesterday (February 7, 2006) with the first round voting for the Presidency and the Parliament, Christian Aid says the international community, including the United Kingdom (UK), must be alert to the destabilising tactics of certain political groups who stand to lose from the election results. The report states, "The will of the Haitian people expressed at the (forthcoming) polls must be respected".

In the longer term, Christian Aid says, "the international community must support a process of genuine popular participation in Haiti that not only develops consensus around agreed national development priorities such as education, health and judicial reform, but also focuses on how to end the exclusion of ordinary Haitians from power."

With regard to insecurity and the role of the MINUSTAH, Christian Aid states that when the peacekeeping mission's new mandate is discussed at the UN security council later in February, the UK must use its influence as a permanent council member and a powerful voice in the European Union (EU) to ensure that it:

- focuses less on military action, which has failed to root out the gangs and has led to civilian deaths, and resists the pressure to increase its use of force arbitrarily;

- concentrates more on restoring law and order by supporting, strengthening and training the Haitian police force. To this end, MINUSTAH will need a large increase in UN civilian police;

- improves coordination with the Haitian National Police force (HNP), and develops a joint strategy with the HNP to tackle armed criminals;

- does its utmost to ensure the protection of civilians in the face of armed hostilities;

- engages in greater dialogue with Haitian organisations with a track record on human rights issues; and

- starts discussing, as an urgent matter, an exit strategy with the new government in order to prepare for its withdrawal.

As well as reforming the MINUSTAH, Christian Aid urges the international community to support other longer-term processes that will help provide greater security for the Haitian people. "These should include tackling impunity, reforming the police and judicial sector, including training on

international human rights standards, and supporting sustained programmes to provide livelihoods and improve both urban and rural living and working conditions."

When the new government is elected, Christian Aid believes that proper regulation of the arms currently in circulation must be a priority for this government.

Christian Aid, on the basis of consultations with Haitian partner organisations that it has supported through crisis after crisis over the years, is also calling for the cancellation of Haiti's debts to international financing bodies, and for poor Haitians to have a greater say in determining aid priorities so that their needs are met.

In the context of the lack of communication and consultation with local representative bodies during the drafting of the interim cooperation framework - a short and medium term economic strategy drawn up in mid-2004 - Christian Aid calls on the UK to use its influence within the EU and the international financial institutions to ensure that a broad range of Haitian civil society organisations are consulted on, and can influence the use and allocation of aid committed to Haiti. "This would ensure the funds provided will benefit Haiti's poor."

The briefing paper also recommends that "the new government be allowed to hold a proper consultation process with a broad range of civil society groups regarding the use of US\$1.3 billion committed by donors in 2004, and be allowed to alter previous agreements such as the interim cooperation framework if necessary."

Finally, Christian Aid says, "Greater attention must be paid by donors to longer-term poverty reduction measures, particularly widening access to education, support for the rural economy, including environmental protection, and sustainable job creation."

## **Silent Streets**

### **Haiti takes a break from the violence and votes**

**By BEN EHRENREICH**

**LA Weekly**

**Wednesday, February 8, 2006**

PORT AU PRINCE — In the week before Haiti's first election in six years, the capital was eerily calm. The violence that had racked the city for months suddenly ebbed. Parts of town that had for months been off-limits to outsiders were briefly safe. Caravans of pickup trucks blaring campaign slogans jammed the streets. Posters covered almost every wall in the city, displaying the names and images of the 33 men and one woman vying for the presidency as well as 129 parliament seats. The most popular among them was René García Préval, who has inherited the affection of Haiti's poor — a formidable force in the most impoverished country in the hemisphere — from deposed President Jean-Bertrand Aristide, toppled two years ago by a U.S.-supported coup. Préval served as president from 1996 to 2001 and holds the distinction of being the only elected president in Haitian history to finish a full term.

Préval's gray-bearded image shares the walls with a bizarre and varied cast, including the smoothly handsome Guy Philippe, who led the 2004 putsch that overthrew Aristide (more than 1,000 are estimated to have died in the months that followed); the wealthy industrialist Charles Henry Baker; Hubert de Ronceray, who served as a minister under Jean-Claude Duvalier; Franck Romain, the former head of Duvalier's presidential guard, who is widely held responsible for a massacre of voters in the aborted 1988 election; Leslie Manigat, who served as a military-installed president for a few brief months thereafter; Marc Bazin, a onetime World Bank official who served as prime minister after the 1991 coup that ended Aristide's first presidency; and Dany Toussaint, a former police chief who has been fingered by the DEA as a major drug smuggler.

The week's placidity was unexpected. From November to January, more than 100 gunshot victims were admitted each month to the trauma center at St. Joseph's Hospital, one of two hospitals in the capital run by Doctors Without Borders. But in the week and a half before the election, a spokesman for the organization said, "We haven't seen a single one.

"We like that," he added. "But we're not sure it's peace that's descended on the city."

Kidnappings, which had been endemic for months, ceased entirely. Gang leaders in Cité Soleil — a miserably poor neighborhood of a quarter-million and the site of repeated gun battles between U.N. troops and residents loyal to Aristide — had reportedly called a truce, imposing an election-week moratorium on kidnappings and bloodshed. "The violence has to be ended," said gang leader Ti Blanc on Sunday at a Préval rally in the bullet-scarred Boston neighborhood of Cité Soleil. "That's done with. We all have to sit down together."

Just months ago, large segments of the population remained cynical about the elections. The vote was canceled and postponed four times. Hundreds of activists in Aristide's Fanmi Lavalas party remain jailed without trial, and police have repeatedly opened fire on pro-Lavalas demonstrations. No polling places were to be located within the boundaries of Cité Soleil. In some sections of the countryside,

peasants would have to travel as much as 50 kilometers — on foot or by mule — to cast their votes. But the climate changed. “Now there is a will to vote that is palpable,” said former Aristide Defense Minister Patrick Elie, who months before had dismissed the process as irreparably corrupt. “This is one reason why I am anguished,” Elie confided. “If this will to vote is frustrated, I really don’t know what might happen.”

Despite it all, the vote went off with extraordinary calm. By late Tuesday, the only reported death directly attributable to the election was a casualty of enthusiasm: an elderly man asphyxiated when the crowd around him tried to push their way into a polling station. All around the city, Haitians poured from their homes. Lines began forming before the sun had risen. Asked what they hoped for from the elections, most answered unanimously: change. They wanted less violence. They wanted jobs in a country where 76 percent of the population lives on less than \$2 a day, food in a country where nearly half the population suffers from malnourishment, education in a country where half the population is illiterate, electricity in a country that falls into obscurity every evening at dusk.

On the outskirts of Cité Soleil, voters were more concise: They wanted Préval. At a polling place at the edge of SONAPI industrial park, the line of voters stretched nearly a quarter-mile, and doubled back the same distance. The polls were scheduled to open at 6 a.m., but were still shuttered two hours later. “I’m going to vote,” a young man who identified himself only as Wisler enthused. “Nobody’s going to stop me, whether it’s at 8 or 10 o’clock at night, I don’t care. There’s no other choice. The majority, who can’t eat, who have nowhere to sleep, who can’t pay the fees to go to school, we’re going to vote for Préval.”

A man with a scarred face and a huge smile who introduced himself as Wilbur stood stuck in the crush at the gates to the polls. He grabbed at a branch of bougainvillea, one of the few plants in sight in this dusty, trash-strewn part of town, and fingered its delicate flowers. “This is Préval,” Wilbur said, and grinned.

Not far away, in a barren stretch of Cité Militaire, at least 1,000 would-be voters who’d been turned away at the polls took to the streets, singing Préval’s name, dancing and running. They waved branches in the air and held their voting cards high above their heads, racing past masked squads of policemen in black uniforms and past blue-helmeted U.N. peacekeepers pointing their rifles warily from atop their armored cars. “Yo pa fe eleksyon!” yelled an old woman, jumping in rage (“They’re not doing the election!”). If the people’s will did not prevail, a young man hollered, “Haiti will burn! All of Haiti will burn!”

Just a few hours later, all was tranquil. The polls opened and the crowds dispersed. The police sat lazily on the curbs, their guns at their sides. Vendors sold fried plantains and plastic bags of water to people still waiting to vote. Those who had already voted filed out, their thumbs marked with purple ink.

They would have to be patient for a few days longer, it turned out. By midday Wednesday, local election results had been posted on polling-station doors. Préval took 93 percent of the vote at one location on the edge of Cité Soleil, and 70 percent in the affluent suburb of Petionville. But Jacques Bernard, the executive director of the Provisional Electoral Council, was unwilling to project a winner

at a press conference Wednesday evening, promising only that “interesting statistics” would be released by Saturday afternoon. “I believe that this election will be a faithful representation of the will of the Haitian people,” he said. One can only hope.

## **Bahamians Urged To Invest In Haiti**

**By Candia Dames**

**The Bahama Journal**

**February 9, 2006**

There is a "tremendous" opportunity for Bahamian businesspeople to invest in Haiti, which hopes to have a stable government in place within days, Bahamian Ambassador to Haiti Dr. Eugene Newry said yesterday.

"There is a tremendous economic opportunity for Bahamians to use Haitians to do business in Haiti to bring the dollars back to The Bahamas, just like Americans do it now in The Bahamas," said Dr. Newry, who faced irate callers on the Love 97 talk show "Issues of The Day" with Mike Smith.

"Many businesses in The Bahamas are not owned by Bahamians, but they are run by Bahamians and the dollars go right back to wherever [the business owners] came from. That is the same thing we need to start."

He said globalization will take a hold of Haiti as the country stabilises and urged Bahamians to go to Haiti "and grab the pie first".

"The government cannot protect you from globalization – can't, impossible," the ambassador said.

Dr. Newry said it would shock many Bahamians to know that there are already many foreign business people investing in Haiti.

"The reality is that Bahamians have to start looking at the world in economic terms," the ambassador added. "Whether you like it or not, if our Bahamian young businesspeople and not so young people don't understand that Haiti is a gold mine for Bahamians, then they're not very bright."

Dr. Newry suggested that Bahamians could get contracts to carry out infrastructure upgrades in Haiti, which is trying to heal a society fractured by many years of instability.

"They can use the Haitians who are here legally to do that," he said, adding that an organised and legal approach to this kind of labour would be beneficial to both The Bahamas and Haiti as Bahamian businesspeople could send Haitian immigrants back to Haiti to work for them.

Dr. Newry said the significance of elections in Haiti a day earlier is that with a stable government in place, the Government of The Bahamas would be able to establish labour and migration accords with Haiti.

"I've been saying this from day one, we've already had the experience," he said, "we don't have to reinvent the wheel. We need to go back to a contractual arrangement between Haiti and The Bahamas. Even the most anti-Haitian-Bahamian should like that."

Dr. Newry said the fact is that The Bahamas does need more labour.

He added, "This is a way of controlling who comes in and then morally, it's a way so that when you throw the others out, nobody can jump up and down because you've giving people a chance to come through the normal door."

Dr. Newry insisted that the average Haitian in The Bahamas – legal or illegal – is not here for political reasons.

He said it was nonsense to suggest that Haitians were in the country to "overrun" The Bahamas.

"There are some Haitians, many of them are here illegally, but to suggest that there's some organised nationhood, really intrigues me," said Dr. Newry, who added that "just by the force of nature" The Bahamas will have to regularise Haitians who deserve to be.

"But don't just regularise them on the basis of your Christian brotherhood, [do it] on the basis of economic need."

Dr. Newry also said, "If you don't bring in the economics, you would miss the whole point of what I'm saying...you would notice that more and more persons who are Bahamians are now beginning to be given permission by the Central Bank [to invest] overseas."

But his point was lost on callers who failed to support the idea of any kind of labour agreement with Haiti.

Dr. Newry said he found it "sad" that they did not have an open-mind about his suggestion.

"They are actually talking suicidal stuff," he said of the callers. "They're not seeing their economic interest in what I'm saying."

Dr. Newry stressed that he does not support Haitians – or anyone for that matter – living in The Bahamas illegally.

But, he said, "We also have to be realistic. If you took suddenly every illegal worker out of The Bahamas, you'd have some serious economic problems."

**Progress in Haiti**  
**Thursday, February 9, 2006**  
**Letter to the Editor**  
**Washington Post**

The Jan. 24 editorial "Security for Haiti" included unfair and unfounded remarks about the work of the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti.

Despite the structural difficulties it faces, the Brazilian-led force has been doing an internationally acclaimed job in carrying out its mandate. Far from being a failure, it has paved the way for substantial improvements in Haiti's political, economic and social environments and has averted the chaos that threatened to overrun the nation.

Contrary to what the editorial said, the mission has shown professionalism in balancing the use of force with the need to avoid antagonizing the population. It has pacified some problem areas, such as the Bel Air slum in Port-au-Prince, and is concentrating on containing and reducing violent armed groups. Thanks to the efforts of the U.N. Stabilization Mission and the Organization of American States, 90 percent of Haitians were registered to vote in this week's presidential election.

The editorial did not mention an important dimension of the Haitian issue, which is the shortfall in the flow of economic aid from major donor countries. Only a small part of the aid promised to Haiti in two international meetings has reached the country. Brazil and its partners are pressing for an acceleration of this economic aid. Brazil, as Foreign Minister Celso Amorim has stressed, is committed to Haiti on a lasting and sustained basis.

**ROBERTO ABDENUR**  
Ambassador  
Embassy of Brazil  
Washington

## **Preval Likely Will Win Haitian Election**

**Thursday February 9, 2006**

**By MICHAEL NORTON**

**Associated Press Writer**

**The Guardian UK**

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti (AP) - Rene Preval, a former president seen as a champion of Haiti's poor, appeared headed Thursday to a first-round election victory, even before official results were announced.

Preval, a former protege and one-time ally of ousted President Jean-Bertrand Aristide, was characteristically low key as reports of election returns landed at his party headquarters in Port-au-Prince. A campaign official said Preval had won almost 68 percent of the 359,000 votes counted so far.

Leslie Manigat, believed to be Preval's strongest rival in the field of nearly three dozen candidates, said early returns showed Preval has surged ahead.

``There is a tiny chance that we will have a second round, but I fear Preval has made a clean sweep of the votes," Manigat said.

Standing on the porch of his family home in Marmelade, a rural northern town, Preval said he was marking time and catching up on sleep until official results are made public. Election officials said that might not be until late Friday or Saturday.

``My work is over," Preval told The Associated Press. ``I'm waiting. It's boring."

His campaigning is ended unless he fails to win a majority and must go to a second-round election in March against the other top vote-getter. But Preval faces monumental tasks if he wins the presidency of this impoverished nation.

Most Haitians can't read or write, and subsist on about a dollar a day. A wave of kidnappings by armed gangs has swept the capital. Amid the insecurity, assembly plants are closing, causing the losses of thousands of jobs. Donor nations are hesitant to contribute because of a legacy of government corruption.

Preval's own tenure as president from 1996-2001 was less than stellar. His efforts at agrarian reform failed because poor people who received land couldn't live on the small amount they were given. He clashed with parliament over the legitimacy of legislators who won contested elections. Human rights advocates accused him of interfering in the judicial system and of politicizing the police force.

But poor Haitians remember that Preval tried to help them. Even the smaller efforts are remembered by those whose plight was ignored by a series of governments and dictatorships.

``He built the big marketplace downtown. He fixed it so that the vendors could get out of the mud," said Yves Valea, a 70-year-old street sweeper.

In Cite Soleil, a slum ruled by gangs that have grown stronger since a rebellion ousted Aristide two years ago, a dozen jobless youths stood idle outside decrepit storefronts plastered with Preval campaign posters. Some of the young men shouted: "Long live Preval!"

Israel Privil, a 40-year-old shoe repairman standing nearby, proudly pointed to his ink-stained thumb, proof he voted Tuesday.

"I voted for Preval because I was without hope," he said. "When Preval was in power, there were agricultural jobs and more programs for the peasants. We hope that if he becomes president he'll continue that work."

Preval pictures himself as a reluctant candidate.

When he stepped down as president after five years - the only Haitian president to complete his term in office - Preval went to live in his grandmother's house in Marmelade, where he devoted himself to local development projects. He said he decided to run for the presidency after 1,000 people from across the country came to see him in July and urged him to run.

Preval stood for years in the shadow of Aristide, his dominating predecessor. Aristide, who referred to Preval as his "twin," was ousted amid accusations he ordered gangsters to attack opponents and pocketed millions of dollars.

Preval made a point of saying in a recent interview that he has split with Aristide, who is in exile in South Africa.

"If I'm his 'twin,' we do not have the same mother," Preval told the AP. Preval pointed out that nothing can legally prevent Aristide from returning to Haiti, but added that he may have to face a trial.

Preval would have a fresh start in relations with Washington, said Robert Fatton, a political science professor at the University of Virginia.

"When (Preval) was president, the U.S. did not necessarily think he was a bad man, but they considered he had his hands tied up by Aristide," Fatton said in a telephone interview. "The U.S. now believes Preval is his own man."

Associated Press writers Stevenson Jacobs in Port-au-Prince and Joseph B. Frazier in Marmelade contributed to this report.

## **Preval: Aristide twin or quiet achiever?**

**09 Feb 2006**

**Source: Reuters**

**By Jim Loney**

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti, Feb 8 (Reuters) - Given Haiti's history of dictatorship, human rights abuse and perpetual political chaos, it could be seen as high praise that Rene Preval's first term as president was relatively peaceful.

He managed to build some roads and public squares, worked with peasants on land reform, and was not accused of massive human rights violations, despotism or theft.

But his presidency was marred by a political crisis that damaged his administration's credibility, paralyzed the government and alienated international donors.

The only leader in Haiti's 202-year history to win a democratic election, serve a full term and peacefully hand power to a successor, Preval, 63, appeared on his way to victory in Tuesday's presidential election, the first since Jean-Bertrand Aristide was deposed in a bloody 2004 revolt.

Electoral authorities had not released any results, but tallies from some polling stations showed Preval with a large lead and a number of other candidates conceded that he seemed headed for an easy victory and might avoid a runoff.

Preval's past ties to Aristide were a central theme in the campaign. Preval was the hand-picked successor to the fiery former Roman Catholic priest and during his term from 1996 to 2001 was viewed in some quarters as a puppet, patiently holding the presidency for his mentor.

Supporters in Aristide's slum strongholds adopted Preval as their candidate this year. "Preval and Aristide are twins!" they shouted at election rallies.

The wealthy elite who campaigned to send Aristide packing turned their hostility on Preval, fearing his possible victory would lead the way for Aristide, accused of corruption and despotism, to return.

Preval has distanced himself from his one-time ally but not by much. He referred to Haiti's first freely elected leader as "President Aristide" in a recent interview and has said there is nothing to stop him from returning from South Africa.

### **ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND CRISES**

An agronomist, Preval is credited with ending a battle between peasants and the "grand dons," powerful landholders in Haiti's northern Artibonite farming region. He gave poor farmers government land the dons said they owned.

He helped introduce Haitian Bleu, a high-end coffee grown near Jacmel in the south, creating a new industry.

"While in office, Preval was not as bad a head of state as others Haiti has had," said Jean-Germain Gros, a Haiti analyst at the University of Missouri. "He does have a record of some accomplishment, which is important."

In a country terrorized by a brutal, now disbanded, army and the dreaded Tontons Macoute -- the Duvalier family dictatorship's thugs -- Preval's presidency was notably free of widespread accusations of murder and corruption.

Haiti's best-known journalist, Jean Dominique, was slain during his term, but the public did not blame Preval.

During his tenure, Haiti was without a prime minister for 21 months and his administration failed to hold elections for 18 Senate seats, crippling the legislature.

Preval was also accused of startling insensitivity when in 2000, he said Haiti's economic situation was dire and advised Haitians to "swim to get out."

The phrase seeped into the lexicon of a nation where tens of thousands of people, many of whom do not swim, have boarded rickety boats for a dangerous journey to the United States in search of a better life. Many vanish at sea.

When he handed the National Palace back to Aristide in 2001, Preval retreated to his hometown of Marmelade, where he continued a program to grow bamboo used in art and furniture.

A low-key campaigner, Preval said in an interview with Reuters television last week that he wants to decentralize government, strengthen the judiciary and police, and achieve the "great dream" of primary education for all.

"Five years will not be enough to finish the work," he said.

He ran under a coalition of political parties and civic groups called Lespwa, "the hope" in Haiti's Creole language.

## Haitians Await Election Results

By Ron Haviv

Washington Post Blog

Feb. 9, 2006

By all accounts, Haiti had a relatively peaceful election.

There were moments of chaos and lack of preparation on all sides, but the early word here is that more than 50 percent of Haitians voted. Now people are just waiting to see the results. Already the Rene Preval campaign is claiming a first round victory of over 60 percent of the vote, enough to win outright without a runoff.

Though the official count is still underway, local election officials were posting unofficial results at polling places throughout Port-au-Prince. In Preval strongholds such as Cite Soleil, he seemed to be ahead with as much as 90 percent.

As his supporters await word -- some with guns and others with dreams -- the capital has begun to regain some normalcy. Traffic is picking up, schools are to open and the checkpoints and U.N. patrols are fading.

Here again is the cycle of stilted democracy that has existed in Haiti since 1990: Election, overthrow, election, overthrow and now hopefully, a new era of sustained peace.

Award-winning photojournalist Ron Haviv documents Haiti's presidential and legislative elections from Port-au-Prince. >

**Clear leader for president seen in Haiti's ballot count**  
**By Jacqueline Charles, Trenton Daniel and Joe Mozingo**  
**Knight Ridder**  
**Feb. 9, 2006**

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti -- Ballot by ballot, the tallying of votes from Haiti's critical election proceeded slowly Wednesday amid signs that René Préval would finish a strong first in the presidential race.

It was not clear whether the former president and onetime supporter of ousted President Jean-Bertrand Aristide would earn the 50 percent he needs to avoid a runoff March 19 against the second-place finisher.

But a Knight Ridder look at several individual polling centers -- which post results on their outside walls -- in the capital and the port cities of Gonaives and St. Marc suggested Préval might win outright. By 6 p.m. Wednesday, only 3 percent of the vote had been officially tabulated, and only 20 percent of the tally sheets from each of about 800 polling centers across Haiti's mountainous terrain had arrived at electoral headquarters in Port-au-Prince.

"We're asking everybody to be patient and wait a couple of days," said Jacques Bernard, director-general of the national electoral council. "By Saturday, we will know, more or less, if we'll have a president elected in the first round."

Disorganization on Tuesday resulted in long lines and polls closing well after dark, with many voters casting their ballots by candlelight. Then the counting of votes at each polling station took much longer than anticipated, so the transport of those tally reports -- by mule, truck convoy and U.N. helicopter -- was in turn delayed.

At the Lycée Alexandre Pétiou in the capital's Bel Air neighborhood, it was noon Wednesday by the time bleary-eyed poll workers handed bags of results to U.N. peacekeepers to take to the tabulation center.

But at more than 200 other polling centers, the votes had not even been picked up for transport to the headquarters.

Turnout for the first election since the populist Aristide departed the country in 2004 during an armed insurrection appeared to be unexpectedly high in a country where many until recent weeks were dubious that the balloting would be fair. Bernard estimated it at more than 50 percent.

The candidacy of Préval -- a 63-year-old agronomist and former bakery owner -- energized much of the poor majority that once saw the populist Aristide as their champion. Préval was the front-runner in the polls, and a look at the results in four large polling centers in Port-au-Prince and three more in Gonaives and St. Marc suggested he was far ahead of the pack of 32 candidates.

Of the 6,163 votes counted at several voting centers in Port-au-Prince -- in the middle-class suburb of Petionville, the poorer neighborhoods of Lalue and Bel Air and one that served the strongly pro-Aristide slum of Cité Soleil -- 4,718 went to Préval.

In Petionville -- where conservative candidates Charles Henri Baker, 50, a garment factory owner, and Leslie Manigat, a former president, were expected to receive strong support -- Préval received about 70 percent of the votes at the polling stations checked.

Manigat, 75, came in a clear second in the stations checked across the metropolitan area. One Haitian electoral official cautioned, however, that early results showed Préval had not garnered as much support in outlying provinces, where the majority of Haiti's 8.1 million people live.

**Wyclef Jean Casts Vote in Haiti's Election**  
**KGET TV, California**  
**Feb. 9, 2006**

Wyclef Jean participated in the national election held in his native country of Haiti on Tuesday (Feb. 7), calling the experience “a historical day.”

The artist, a member of the recently-reunited hip hop outfit The Fugees, joined millions who turned out to elect a government to replace that of President Jean-Bertrand Aristide, who was ousted in a bloody rebellion two years ago.

Jean flew in via helicopter because commercial flights to Port-au-Prince were suspended on election day. Upon arrival, he made a beeline to a voting center and quickly became disenchanted with the long lines – some over a mile long.

The fact that the elections were held peacefully should be a sign that Haiti’s future holds promise.

"People showed incredible patience, and that should send out a signal internationally that the Haitian people are not violent people," Jean said. "I think in the situation that we're in, the international community must not let us down."

When asked who he voted for in the election, he simply pointed to his green shirt. "See, that should let you know everything."

Green symbolizes hope in Haiti — and Hope is the name of candidate Rene Preval's party. Preval, the front-runner, is highly popular among the poor and has pledged to do all he can to relieve their plight.

Photo Copyright Getty Images

## **Analysis: Haiti's hopes on Preval**

**UPI**

**Feb. 9, 2006**

WASHINGTON -- Street violence and organizational snafus did not mar Tuesday's Haitian presidential elections, roundly hailed a success by international monitors. But as the results are tallied in the coming days, some analysts say opponents of front-runner Rene Preval may thwart the country's best hope for recovery.

Thousands of Haitians showed up at more than 800 voting stations across the country to restore democracy after a Feb. 2004 armed revolt deposed former President Jean-Bertrand Aristide, traveling long-distances on foot to reach the polls despite the threat of attacks.

The head of the Organization of American States, Jose Miguel Insulza, said the vote was free and fair after repeated delays due to logistical problems, bureaucratic incompetence, and instability. "We will have a democratic government ... that this country has fought so long and hard to have," he said, echoing a view shared by U.S. and U.N. officials, who oversee a 9,500-man peacekeeping mission.

When results are announced Friday, few Haitians doubt that government will be led by Rene Preval, a one-time Aristide protégé and overwhelming favorite according to a recent poll sponsored by USAID.

Preval already served as president from 1996-2001 and is the only elected Haitian president ever to finish his term. Early returns show that the 63 year-old agronomist took 90 percent of the vote at stations in the most impoverished districts of the capital, Port-au-Prince, and did better than anticipated in wealthier areas.

However, if none of the 34 candidates -- some of which are alleged to have been involved in drug and other criminal activities -- receives a 50 percent majority in the first round, the top-two vote getters must engage in a run-off, a prospect that troubles Robert McGuire, a Haiti expert at Trinity College in Washington, D.C.

"Whether or not Preval has enough votes to get that 50 percent plus one, it is an issue," said McGuire. "If he does not win in the first round, he could be that his horde of opponents will try to find common ground to defeat him in a run-off."

Human rights groups have already charged members of Haiti's small but dominant elite with sowing unrest through attacks and kidnappings to deter participation among the poorer masses in the run up to the vote. An average of 12 persons were abducted each day in December and doctors in gang-controlled slums where most of the estimated 210,000 guns in Haiti circulate reported a sharp surge in shooting victims.

Preval had to cancel a series of rallies before and after the vote after receiving threats against supporters. "From what I heard on the radio all day, with the prospect of Preval being president, the elite is already lining up and getting ready to derail him and keep him from governing," Dumarsais Simeus, a former presidential candidate, told the New York Times earlier this week.

His fiercest enemies include Charles Henri Baker, a white Haitian industrialist expected to finish a distant-second, and Guy Phillippe, a former rebel leader investigated by the U.S. for drug trafficking who spearheaded the insurgency that forced Aristide from power two years ago.

Baker has called Preval a "criminal" that must not be allowed to take office if Haiti is to survive. Like Phillippe, he had a hand in Aristide's ouster as one of the so-called bourgeoisie businessmen who financed protests to topple former slum priest.

Both candidates say Preval is a puppet of Aristide, and are convinced the exiled leader would be instantly whisked back to Haiti if Preval wins.

But McGuire insists that Preval "is not a clone of Aristide" as his detractors argue.

"He was less rhetoric and more action than Aristide was," he said, noting successful agrarian reforms that reached out to people in the countryside during his first term in office and urban projects to improve sanitation and public spaces.

Since then, Preval has founded his own party, LESPWA, and tried to distance himself from Haiti's most controversial figure. He has said the national Constitution does not allow for the permanent banishment of any Haitian, but that he would not interfere with future investigations of charges against the Aristide regime that include arming slum gangs and stirring unrest during his presidency.

Despite a recent calm, bringing stability to warfare racked slums in the capital will be Preval's biggest challenge after the elections, say U.N. officials whose mission has grown increasingly unpopular among the poor for heavy-handed offensives that have allegedly killed innocent civilians.

Although he has committed to disarming the gangs -- many of which have thrown their support behind him -- Preval prefers social programs that create jobs and provide primary education to force.

But Preval's biggest obstacle in office, says McGuire, will be building a consensus in the legislature so sweeping reform initiatives vital to sustaining his popularity among Haiti's poor will not be blocked as in years past. Otherwise, another lapse into class-based bloodletting will be hard to avert.

"When Preval was President in the late 90s this was also a period when the parliament rebelled against the executive and essentially blocked all of its programs," he said. "That could happen again. The problem in Haiti is that it's kind of a winner take all and no compromise political society... and this could hamstring Preval."

## **Brazil sends note congratulating Haiti on Monday's elections**

**Nelson Motta**

**Agência Brasil**

**Feb. 9, 2006**

Brasília - The Brazilian government sent a message, yesterday (8), congratulating the Haitian people on the first round of general elections to choose their parliamentary representatives and president. Over 3 million people were registered to vote in Monday's (7) elections, and, according to the Electoral Council, between 75% and 80% of the registered voters turned out at the polls around the country.

"This kind of turnout, in a country where voting is not mandatory, attests the Haitian people's commitment to the country's administrative normalization and the revitalization of its institutions. It also confirms their confidence in the process overseen by the collaboration between the transitional government and the international community," the message states.

According to the message, the Brazilian-led United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) played "an essential role in guaranteeing the security necessary for democratic elections to be held, for the Haitian people to reassume full control over their country's destiny."

The Brazilian Ministry of Foreign Relations ("Itamaraty") informed that the official election results should be announced within three days. A runoff, if required, is scheduled for March 19.

Translation: David Silberstein

## **Preval Likely Will Win Haitian Election**

**By MICHAEL NORTON**

**The Associated Press**

**Thursday, February 9, 2006**

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti -- Rene Preval took a strong lead Thursday in Haiti's presidential election, with most of the first votes counted going to the former president who is seen as a champion of the poor.

Preval, the former protege of deposed President Jean-Bertrand Aristide, won 61.5 percent of 282,327 votes counted, Haiti's electoral council said. It refused to say what percentage of the total votes cast these figures represented. According to the United Nations, a majority of Haiti's 3.5 million eligible voters cast ballots.

The council said of the next two highest vote getters, Leslie Manigat had 13.4 percent and Charles Henri Baker had 6.1 percent.

There was no immediate reaction from the candidates, and the streets of Port-au-Prince were quiet after the results were announced.

Vote counting was to resume on Friday, but election authorities said it might be Saturday until enough ballots are counted to draw conclusions about the race.

Manigat, however, said early returns tallied by his party members showed Preval might win a majority of votes that would give him outright victory.

If the winning candidate lacks a majority of votes, he and the second-place finisher would go against each other in a March runoff.

"There is a tiny chance that we will have a second round, but I fear Preval has made a clean sweep of the votes," Manigat said.

Standing on the porch of his family home in Marmelade, a rural northern town, Preval said he was marking time and catching up on sleep until official results are out. Election authorities said that might not be until late Friday or Saturday.

"My work is over," Preval told The Associated Press. "I'm waiting. It's boring."

His campaigning is over unless he fails to win a majority and must go to a second-round election in March against the other top vote-getter. But Preval faces monumental tasks if he wins the presidency of this impoverished nation.

Most Haitians can't read or write, and subsist on about a dollar a day. A wave of kidnappings by heavily armed gangs has swept the capital. Amid the insecurity, assembly plants are closing, causing the losses of thousands of jobs. Donor nations are hesitant to contribute money because of a legacy of government corruption.

## Preval Likely Will Win Haitian Election

Preval's own tenure as president from 1996-2001 was less than stellar. His efforts at agrarian reform failed because landless peasants who received land couldn't live on the small amount they were given. He clashed with parliament over the legitimacy of the legislators who won contested elections. Human rights advocates accused him of interfering in the judicial system and of politicizing the police force.

But poor Haitians remember that Preval tried to help them. Even the smaller efforts are remembered by those whose plight was ignored by a series of governments and dictatorships.

"He built the big marketplace downtown. He fixed it so that the vendors could get out of the mud," said Yves Valea, a 70-year-old street sweeper.

In Cite Soleil, a slum ruled by gangs that have grown stronger since a rebellion ousted Aristide two years ago, a dozen jobless youths stood idle outside decrepit storefronts plastered with Preval campaign posters. Some of the young men shouted: "Long live Preval!"

Israel Privil, a 40-year-old shoe repairman standing nearby, proudly pointed to his ink-stained thumb, proof he had voted on Tuesday.

"I voted for Preval because I was without hope," he said. "When Preval was in power, there were agricultural jobs and more programs for the peasants. We hope that if he becomes president he'll continue that work."

Preval pictures himself as a reluctant candidate.

When he stepped down after serving out his five-year term \_ the only Haitian president to complete his term in office \_ Preval went to live in his grandmother's house in Marmelade, where he devoted himself to local development projects. He said he decided to run for the presidency after 1,000 peasants from all over the country came to see him in July and urged him to run.

Preval stood for years in the shadow of Aristide, his dominating predecessor. Aristide, who referred to Preval as his "twin," was ousted amid accusations he ordered gangsters to attack opponents and pocketed millions of dollars.

Preval made a point of saying in a recent interview that he has split with Aristide, who is in exile in South Africa.

"If I'm his 'twin,' we do not have the same mother," Preval told the AP. Preval pointed out that nothing can legally prevent Aristide from returning to Haiti, but added that he may have to face a trial.

Preval would have a fresh start in relations with Washington, said Robert Fatton, a political science professor at the University of Virginia.

"When (Preval) was president, the U.S. did not necessarily think he was a bad man, but they considered he had his hands tied up by Aristide," Fatton said in a telephone interview. "The U.S. now believes Preval is his own man."

Associated Press writers Stevenson Jacobs in Port-au-Prince and Joseph B. Frazier in Marmelade contributed to this report.

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**Security Council presidential statement congratulates Haiti on elections, says country has taken 'fundamental step' towards restoration of democracySC/8633**

**Source: United Nations Security Council**

**Date: 09 Feb 2006**

Security Council  
5368th Meeting\* (PM)

**Calls on All Parties to Respect Outcome, Renounce Violence; Stresses Long-Term Engagement Required to Tackle Challenges in Rule of Law, Development**

The Security Council this afternoon congratulated the Haitian people on the holding of the first round of national elections on 7 February, calling it a fundamental step towards the restoration of democracy and stability in that country.

In a statement read out by Council President John Bolton ( United States), the Council called on all parties to respect the outcome of the elections, remain engaged in the political process and renounce all forms of violence. It thanked the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH), the Organization of the American States and others in the international community for providing crucial assistance to the Transitional Government and the Conseil Electoral Provisoire during this period.

Underlining that the electoral process should lead to the inauguration of a representative Government, the Council also reiterated the importance of national, municipal and local elections and emphasized the need to promote national reconciliation and political dialogues in Haiti once the new Government takes office. While recognizing the importance of elections for democratic institutions and procedures, however, it stressed that they do not constitute the sole means to address the country's longer-term problems and that significant challenges remain, in particular in the fields of the rule of law, security and development. Long-term engagement of the international community would be required to tackle those challenges.

The meeting was called to order at 12:15 p.m. and was adjourned at 12:18 p.m.

The full text of presidential statement S/PRST/2006/7 reads as follows:

“The Security Council commends the Haitian people on the holding of the first round of national elections on 7 February 2006 with high voter turnout, and congratulates them on taking this fundamental step towards the restoration of democracy and stability in their country. The Council calls on all parties to respect the outcome of the elections, remain engaged in the political process, and renounce all forms of violence. The Council wishes to thank the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH), the Organization of American States, and others in the international community for providing crucial assistance to the Transitional Government and the Conseil Electoral Provisoire during this period.

“The Security Council underlines that the electoral process should lead to the inauguration of a representative Government. The Council reiterates the importance of national, municipal and local elections as pillars of democratic governance in Haiti. The Council emphasizes that, once the new Government takes office, Haitians should continue to promote national reconciliation and political dialogue in order to strengthen their democracy, and to ensure social, economic and political stability.

“The Security Council, while recognizing the importance of the elections for democratic institutions and procedures, stresses that they do not constitute the sole means to address Haiti’s longer-term problems and that significant challenges remain, in particular, in the fields of rule of law, security and development. Tackling these challenges will require a long-term engagement of the international community.”

## Background

Members of the Council had before them the Secretary-General’s report on the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) (document S/2006/6), which covers major developments since the last report (document S/2005/631 of 6 October 2005) and provides an outline of some additional tasks that the Mission might assume in the post-electoral period. The Secretary-General proposes a six-month extension of the present mandate in order to allow for further assessment of the situation once a new Haitian administration has taken office.

According to the electoral calendar, with the first round of national elections having been held on 7 February, the second round would be held on 19 March, the new President would be sworn in on 29 March, and municipal and local elections would be held on 30 April. While the current Government would formally resign on 7 February, the constitutional date for the assumption of office by a new President, it will carry out ongoing business until a new Government took office. During the reporting period, the main focus of the Haitian authorities and MINUSTAH was on ensuring the organization of credible and timely elections.

The report states that the completion of the elections will only represent a first step in the political transition process. The newly elected officials will inherit weak state and local institutions that suffer from a lack of trained personnel and insufficient administrative infrastructure. The continued availability of capacity-building and material support from MINUSTAH and the international community will be essential. The task of rebuilding lay in the hands of the Haitian authorities and people. An inclusive approach after the elections will be essential. Further progress on the national dialogue would enable Haitian society to reach a common position on outstanding issues resulting from past political divisions and violence.

The overall security environment continued to be relatively stable in most of the country, according to the report. However, there was a significant decline in security in some parts of the capital such as Cité Soleil, as well as a sharp increase in the number of kidnapping victims reported during the final months of 2005. The MINUSTAH continued to play a pivotal role in providing security and stability in the country, drawing on its strengthened capacity as authorized in Security Council resolution 1608 (2005). Efforts to stabilize the situation, however, have carried a grave cost to MINUSTAH peacekeepers. The Mission’s military and police have been targeted in a series of attacks in the vicinity of Cité Soleil, suffering five fatalities and a number of injuries.

As for disarmament, demobilization and reintegration, the report notes that despite earlier progress made in setting up the institutional framework for that purpose, the conditions for comprehensive disarmament remain elusive, with inadequate national commitment to reconciliation, limited progress on security sector reform, lack of clarity on the future status of former military and limited job creation, as well as large numbers of weapons in circulation. The MINUSTAH, in conjunction with the National Commission on Disarmament, has helped to establish community violence reduction and development committees in some volatile districts and has followed up with disarmament and reinsertion efforts where opportunities exist.

The Secretary-General states in his observations that MINUSTAH will make further, concentrated efforts to curb criminality and violence within the country at a time when perceptions of insecurity could have a disproportionate impact on public confidence. Stability during the elections period could be further enhanced by one or more Member States undertaking to provide backup support, if required, during the electoral process. In the longer term, Haiti's security will require reform and strengthening of the Haitian National Police, and the sustained involvement by the international community in that regard for a number of years. Technical assistance aimed at the strengthening of rule-of-law institutions could be more effective if it is supplemented by inclusion within MINUSTAH of a capacity to provide policy-level advice to related ministries.

Police reform should be complemented and reinforced by addressing shortcomings in the judicial system. A swift solution has to be found to the high level of prolonged pre-trial detentions, which is unacceptable from a human rights point of view. The strengthening of Haiti's judicial system requires the adoption of legal reforms and a systematic, internationally-supported programme of professional capacity-building, which could include the incorporation of appropriately qualified experts within MINUSTAH. They would serve as a professional resource for judicial actors in the offices of the prosecutor, investigating magistrates and trial judges.

The Secretary-General observes further that, if the new administration is to be successful, continued international institution- and capacity-building would be required at all levels, in the longer term. Just as enhanced security can facilitate economic and social development, some immediate improvement in social and economic conditions can make a crucial contribution to stability. He hopes that the fruits of the Interim Cooperation Framework process will become clearly visible in the coming months and that this can be supplemented by targeted assistance to the new authorities in meeting basic needs in such areas as health, education, agriculture and job creation.

The Secretary-General recommends that, under these circumstances, the Mission be continued in its present configuration for a period of six months, to permit time for further consultation and assessment regarding its role in a post-electoral environment. Recommendations in that regard will be presented to the Security Council in a further report, to be issued well in advance of the end of the next mandate, which begins on 15 February.

\* The 5367th Meeting was closed.

For information media • not an official record

## **CANADA CONGRATULATES HAITI ON ELECTIONS**

**Feb. 9 2006**

**Press Release - Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade**

Foreign Affairs Minister Peter MacKay and International Cooperation Minister Josée Verner congratulated the people of Haiti on the first round of presidential and legislative elections in their country, held on February 7, 2006.

“While any incidents are regrettable, Canada notes that the few that occurred were largely the result of the logistical challenges posed by the unprecedented voter turnout,” said Minister MacKay. “We encourage the presidential candidates, the political parties and the electoral authorities in Haiti to respect the democratic expression of voters by exercising restraint and allowing the post-election democratic process to proceed in a peaceful and orderly manner.”

“We wish to offer our congratulations to the people of Haiti on their participation in such large numbers in this first round of elections. The determination of voters to exercise their democratic right is all the more noteworthy given the continued difficult conditions in Haiti,” said Minister Verner.

Over the coming days, Canada will look to the final tabulation of the results as well as the assessment of the Embassy of Canada in Haiti. Canada also looks forward to the preliminary conclusions of the international observation missions, including those of the International Mission for Monitoring Haitian Elections, led by Elections Canada.

**Haiti awaits results of presidential election**  
**The Independent Online, South Africa**  
**February 09 2006**

Port-Au-Prince - Haiti awaited results on Wednesday of its first election since Jean-Bertrand Aristide was deposed two years ago, after a vote troubled by poll problems but relatively free of violence.

Vote counting started shortly after polls closed on Tuesday evening. Balloting was extended for several hours at some polling stations, where Haitians voted by candlelight after a chaotic start to election day left many stations closed for hours after they were scheduled to open.

The first results were expected to trickle in on Wednesday, but officials have said the winner might not be known for days. Ballots were being carried by mule across mountainous terrain in some remote locations.

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Officials said turnout was among the best for any election in the short democratic history of the poorest country in the Americas.

Some voters walked kilometres to voting centres

Thousands of voters had marched out of Port-au-Prince slums, many to cast ballots for ex-president Rene Preval, a former Aristide ally favoured to retake the presidency.

A US official said Washington was prepared to work with whoever wins but the result could prove a disappointment for US policymakers who pressured Aristide to leave Haiti in 2004 only to find his one-time protege the favourite to regain the National Palace.

Preval, one of 33 candidates, must capture more than 50 percent of votes cast to avoid a runoff on March 19.

Despite the problems - some voters walked kilometres to voting centres only to be turned away because they could not find their names on registration lists - Haitian election authorities and some international officials called the vote a success.

"Finally the elections took place and they are good elections of which all Haitians can be proud," Jose Miguel Insulza, secretary-general of the Organisation of American States, said. The vote was originally set for November.

A UN spokesperson said a police officer shot and killed a citizen near a polling centre in Gros-Morne and then was slain by a mob. - Reuters

This article was originally published on page 2 of Cape Times on February 09, 2006

## **Haitians wait on election results**

**Mules help get ballots as long vote count in 1st elections in 2 years gains momentum**

**By Stevenson Jacobs**

**Associated Press**

**The Indianapolis Star**

**February 9, 2006**

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti -- Guarded by U.N. troops, mules carrying sacks of balloting results trotted down from mountain villages Wednesday as officials began the slow process of collecting and tabulating the vote count from the first elections since a revolt two years ago.

Scores of U.N. peacekeepers patrolled quiet streets of the capital, Port-au-Prince, as Haitians eagerly awaited the returns from Tuesday's vote, the first since a bloody uprising ousted President Jean-Bertrand Aristide two years ago.

The polls, guarded by a 9,000-strong U.N. force, were fraught with delays early in the day but largely free of the violence that has plagued the capital since Aristide fled.

The leading contender heading into the vote was Rene Preval, a 63-year-old agronomist and former president widely supported by Haiti's poor masses. The shy, soft-spoken Preval, Haiti's only leader to finish his elected term, is a former ally of Aristide, who is in exile in South Africa.

Preval's closest rivals include Charles Henri Baker, 50, a wealthy garment factory owner, and Leslie Manigat, 75, who was president for five months in 1988 until the army ousted him.

More than 50 percent of the 3.5 million registered voters were believed to have cast ballots, said David Wimhurst, a U.N. spokesman, adding that a precise figure wasn't yet available.

Although official results had not been released, partial returns from individual polling stations showed big leads for Preval.

Wimhurst said the vote count was gaining momentum but still going "very slowly" because of delays retrieving ballots from rural areas.

"The hardest part is getting ballots back to the capital," where the vote tabulation center is located, he said. To help the effort, U.N. officials were relying in part on 280 mules.

## **After Tense Election, a Smooth Count in Haiti**

**By GINGER THOMPSON**

**New York Times**

**February 9, 2006**

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti, Feb. 8 — United Nations troops began hauling ballots on Wednesday from remote voting centers across the country, as a politically polarized population braced nervously for results from Tuesday's presidential election.

Gérard le Chevalier, head of the United Nations electoral mission here, said that poll workers had counted ballots through the night, and that tamper-proof transmission of results had begun. He said that he expected initial results to be released Thursday, but that final results might not be available until the weekend.

The calm that prevailed at the voting centers on Wednesday struck a stark contrast to the mass confusion and tensions that complicated the voting on Tuesday. United Nations officials and officials of the interim government said none of several reports of missing or improperly opened ballot boxes were significant enough to tarnish the results.

"I would like to congratulate all Haitians who participated in the vote for their commitment to exercising their democratic right to choose their future leaders," the United Nations secretary general, Kofi Annan, said in a statement. "This is a significant step forward for Haiti."

That sentiment was expressed over and over again on Wednesday by Haitians and their political leaders. Haitian voters turned out in strength — much more than 50 percent of an estimated 3.5 million registrants — and endured long lines and scuffles to cast their ballots.

Jacques Bernard, director of the Provisional Electoral Council, hailed the election as a demonstration of "courage and democracy" by the hemisphere's poorest country.

André Bouchard, a consultant for the Canadian International Development Agency, said the election appeared much more transparent than those he had observed here in 1995, when poll workers discarded truckloads of ballots because they were too tired to count them.

"We are not claiming victory and ignoring mistakes," he said at a news conference, "but we believe the elections were a success."

The leading candidate in pre-election polls was René Préval, a 63-year-old agronomist who was president from 1996 to 2000 and an ally of former President Jean-Bertrand Aristide. His closest rivals included Charles Henri Baker, 50, a wealthy garment factory owner, and Leslie Manigat, 75, who was president for five months in 1988, until the army ousted him.

Although no results were announced, tabulations posted at voting centers across the capital showed that Mr. Préval was winning strong support. His spokesmen have predicted that Mr. Préval would win more than 50 percent of the vote and avert a runoff.

"Political leaders need to be sending the message to their supporters that the results of the election should be respected," said Mark Schneider, of the International Crisis Group. "And once there is a winner, he will have to reach out quickly to his opponents and bridge the polarization that is Haiti."

## **South Florida's Haitians tune into Creole radio for news of elections**

**By Alva James-Johnson**

**South Florida Sun-Sentinel**

**February 8 2006**

If there was a clear winner on Haiti's election day, it was Creole radio.

South Florida Haitian-Americans desperate for news from their homeland received live coverage of the election Tuesday while purchasing groceries, driving vehicles and sitting at community centers with radios at full blast.

They heard the latest not only from Creole-speaking journalists in South Florida, but also from reporters and voters in Haiti who called in by cell phone.

"We never had that kind of coverage before," said Daniella Henry, a community activist who spent the day as a commentator at a small station in Lantana. "There are more radio stations now and everyone was competing to give the news."

Haitian voters in the Caribbean country stood in line for long hours waiting to elect a new president and parliament, two years after Jean-Bertrand Aristide was overthrown in a violent rebellion. In South Florida, the Haitian radio community listened to the chaos and frustration. They also heard slum dwellers take to the streets of Port-au-Prince encouraging people to go to the polls with rhythmic Creole chants of, "Come on, let's go. We need relief. Let's go."

They heard tired and hungry people at the polls expressing their disappointment at organizers for failing to register voters at the right precincts.

Rarely, if ever, do South Florida Haitian stations broadcast an event live without interruption or popular music shows cutting in.

Fritzner Applys, 47, a Sunrise taxi driver, says the only time it happened was when Jean-Claude "Baby Doc" Duvalier left the island for exile in France 20 years ago Tuesday. At the time, Haitians tuned in to the only station broadcasting in Creole -- WLQY-AM 1320, which was leased on an hourly basis.

Now, with at least three more stations at his disposal, Applys tuned in at 4 a.m. to hear the pre-election coverage.

"It urged me to wake up earlier," Applys said. "I listened to all those stations."

On WLQY, midday show hosts urged listeners to attend a demonstration organized by Vényé Yo, a pro-Lavalas group in Little Haiti. About 200 people gathered to celebrate an expected victory by Rene Preval, a former president.

Alex Saint Surin, of WHRB-AM 1020 Radio Mega in North Miami Beach, began broadcasting at 6 a.m. Tuesday, providing listeners with a steady stream of information until deep into the night. Haitian

listeners trickled into the studio with food and drink for his staff. "We had to tell them, `Look, this isn't a party here,'" he said.

Ed Lozama, host of Planet 17's morning show, was surprised at the response from listeners online. He said about 800 Web users checked out the station, WJCC-AM 1700, causing many to call the North Miami Beach station and complain.

"It was saturated," Lozama said. "It was our biggest volume ever."

Technological advances such as cell phones allow stations to stay in touch with correspondents in the most remote parts of Haiti, where Lozama's station had 16 working Tuesday. With the Web, surfers around the world who do not have a local Haitian news station can quickly find news out of Haiti.

"This is the most important election since the departure of Duvalier 20 years ago today," Lozama said."

Lesly Jacques, owner of Boca Raton's Radio Haiti-Amerique Internationale, began live broadcasts at 6 a.m., intersecting segments throughout the day with music, a la "World News Tonight."

He said Haitians were in suspense as they listened to the radio at work and at home, if only to hear whether things would go wrong.

"Haitians are living with a big hole in their hearts" Jacques said, "There are so many candidates and uncertainty."

Staff Writer Madeline Baró Diaz contributed to this report.

Alva James-Johnson can be reached at [ajjohnson@sun-sentinel.com](mailto:ajjohnson@sun-sentinel.com) or 954-356-4523.

## **Haitians here turn anxiously to radio for election news**

**By Dianna Smith, Tania Valdemoro**

**Palm Beach Post**

**Wednesday, February 08, 2006**

DELRAY BEACH — Before daybreak Tuesday, when most were asleep, Haitians in South Florida flipped on their radios.

Madeline Faustin left the warmth of her bed at 5 a.m. It was dark outside when she huddled by her radio, listening to a man speaking in Creole, praying for the elections. The polls were slated to open one hour later.

Tuesday was Haiti's first presidential election since a violent uprising ousted President Jean-Bertrand Aristide two years ago, causing rampant violence, kidnappings and chaos. Though a U.S.-backed interim government quickly took over, Haitians desperately have demanded an election to bring another Haitian to power.

Faustin's children are visiting their father in Haiti, and she worried all day that violence would break out and her family would be hurt. She said her husband tried to vote in Haiti's capital, Port-au-Prince.

"The line was too long, and he could not stand. I said, 'For your own safety, just go home,' " said Faustin, who lives in Boynton Beach.

Although polls were scheduled to open at 6 a.m., some didn't open until mid-afternoon, according to reports from Palm Beach County Haitian radio stations. Voting hours were expected to end at 4 p.m., but were extended into the evening because of the problems opening the polls.

People in Haiti rely heavily on the radio because, for many, it's the only way to learn whether it's safe to leave their homes. Though some Haitians also have television sets, electricity in sections of the impoverished country is sporadic, so Haitians depend on battery-powered radios for news.

Haitians have kept this habit in the United States, and, on Tuesday, many in South Florida kept radios blaring, trying to learn what they could about the future of their country. Many radio stations were broadcasting from different areas in Haiti.

"They're fighting because there's no space to vote," said Oswald Varemond, a business owner in Delray Beach. He pointed to the radio in his store as Creole flowed through the speakers. Haitian flags, beach towels and bumper stickers for sale were draped across his walls. "That's what they're saying right now. There's no place to vote."

Though there were supposed to be more than 800 polling sites, Varemond said many were several miles from homes. In the sprawling neighborhood of Cité Soleil, where election officials decided not to place polling stations because the area is controlled by heavily armed gangs, the 200,000 people who could vote had to walk 20 miles. Some weren't able to find their polling places, and radio stations

were reporting that some of the sites had been changed at the last minute, leaving people without a place to vote.

Mimose Alerte of Delray Beach said it was done on purpose.

"Nobody's there to tell them where to go," Alerte said.

The front-runner among the 33 presidential candidates is former President René Préval, 63, an agronomist who led the country from 1996 to 2001. He was expected to win support from many poor Haitians, including backers of Aristide.

On Lesly Jacques's radio show on WHSR-AM 980 in Boca Raton, Haitians called in to voice their support for Préval and Leslie Manigat, 75, who was president for five months in 1988 until he was ousted. Other callers argued strenuously that Préval should not win.

Between the heated debates in Creole, the show aired live reports from Port-au-Prince.

"Nobody knows exactly which way the election is going to go," Jacques said. "We've been hearing the turnout is really great. Everybody wanted to vote to change the country. There were irregularities in the morning where people could not find their names on the voting lists, but now officials have said those with voting cards can vote anywhere."

Leo Baptiste of Delray Beach said his relatives safely made their way to the polls. Baptiste said he was skeptical of the news coming from Haiti and wondered whether the election was going better than was being reported. Baptiste said news from Haiti isn't always correct.

His cousin "said everything went well, but, unfortunately, you can't get that here because they're all Lavalas," Baptiste said of those broadcasting on local Haitian radio stations. The Lavalas Party is a left-wing political party in Haiti that supported Aristide and is said to be backing Préval.

Though polls were scheduled to close at 6 p.m., Jacques aired France's Channel 5 evening newscast, which reported long lines at polling places and little or no violence on the streets. Many Haitians were worried a civil war would break out Tuesday, and, when they learned that nothing had happened as of the afternoon, they said something could happen later in the week. The election results are expected to be released on Friday.

The callers and the rumors on the radio were too much for some, such as Loulouse Dejoie in Delray Beach. She works part-time at a Caribbean restaurant, where she stands in front of a cash register, right next to a radio. About 2 p.m., she shut it off. The restaurant was finally quiet.

She said she'll hear about the election some other way.

"It's driving me crazy. It's so stressful," Dejoie said. She moved her head sideways, as if disapproving of something. "I told my mom (in Haiti) not to vote. I feel bad for the people there, but I don't think anything will change."

## **CHILE'S MILITARY INVOLVED IN HAITI ELECTION VIOLENCE**

### **Chilean Soldier Stabbed During Hectic Poll**

**The Santiago Times, Chile**

**Feb. 9, 2006**

Haiti finally held its presidential elections on Tuesday after a long delay caused by poor organization and security fears. The election proceeded relatively smoothly. However the day was marred by violence which left four dead and dozens hurt. A Chilean soldier was among the injured.

Chilean peacekeeper, Sgt. Maj. Luis Huenel Cona, was stabbed in his left arm while trying to calm an unruly crowd in the northern city of Limbé. His attacker fled the scene before he could be caught.

Huenel is one of 600 Chilean soldiers currently serving in Haiti as part of a UN peacekeeping force. Chile's Defense Minister Jaime Ravinet has said the troops will stay at least until June.

As well as contributing manpower, Chile has a key leadership role in the mission. Chilean Gen. Eduardo Aldunate Herman assumed interim command of the United Nations (UN) forces in Haiti on January 7, after the former commander, Brazilian Gen. Urano Teixeira Da Matta Bacellar, committed suicide (ST, Jan. 9). The veteran Chilean diplomat Juan Gabriel Valdés is head of the UN's civilian mission in the country.

Vote counting began late Tuesday night. UN troops have mobilized using helicopters, trucks and even mules to collect ballots from remote areas. Results are expected on Friday, at the earliest. Exit polls on Wednesday showed that former president René Préval was leading in several parts of the Haitian capital, Port-au-Prince. His lead appeared consistent in both rich and poor neighborhoods.

Haiti's elections have been postponed four times because of poor security and logistical problems (ST, Jan. 9). Despite the deaths and injuries, Tuesday's election has been heralded as a success by most commentators. This is the first time that Haitians have gone to the polls since President Jean Bertrand Aristide was ousted in 2004. Since then, the country has had an interim government supported by UN peacekeepers.

David Wimhurst, a UN spokesman, said that the UN had not received any reports of major voting irregularities. In 2000, Haiti's elections were marred by violence and fraud. Most of the problems during Tuesday's voting were due to poor organization. Several polling stations were overrun by crowds.

Officials said two of the four deaths had resulted from overcrowding and crushes at polling stations. The other two were victims by intentional violence.

The head of the UN election observers, Belgian Johan van Hecke, said that the poll should be considered a success, despite these problems. "People have been voting in massive numbers, after all. Moreover, with (only) four people dead and dozens injured, it's all passed off relatively peacefully."

The clear favorite leading up to election was 63 year old René Préval. Haitian president from February 13 to October 11, 1991, Préval was deposed by one of Haiti's many military coups. He was reelected in 1995 serving a full term before handing over to Aristide on February 7, 2001.

Some protesters claimed the delays in voting were part of a concerted attempt to stop people in poor areas from voting for Préval; who's support is thought to be strongest among the poor.

Préval's closest rivals are businessman Charles Henri Bakerand and former President Leslie Manigat.

The election did not lack choice. Over 30 candidates ran for president, 312 competed for 30 senate seats, and more than 1,000 vied for 89 seats in the Chamber of Deputies.

If no presidential candidate achieves a 50 percent majority in the first round of voting, the top two candidates will compete in a run-off election.

In Haiti's recent past, the only constant has been chaos. The nation has been crippled by poverty and crime since dictator Jean-Claude Duvalier, alias Baby Doc, was overthrown exactly 20 years ago Tuesday.

Haiti is the least developed country in the Western Hemisphere and one of the poorest in the world. It ranks 153rd of 177 countries in the UN's Human Development Index. About 80 percent of the population live in extreme poverty.

Crime is rampant. In the capital, Port-au-Prince, criminal gangs terrorize urban slum dwellers, while Haiti's rural areas are effectively governed by groups of lawless former soldiers, who have taken advantage of the absence of functioning government institutions.

UN officials, NGOs, and Haitian leaders hope that these elections will mark a new beginning.

Juan Gabriel Valdés, and another Chilean diplomat, the secretary general for the Organization of American States (OAS), José Miguel Insulza, were content with Haiti's election day. The day was "more than satisfactory," Valdés said. In a press release from Chile's Foreign Ministry, both officials expressed their hope that the counting process would be carried out with "normalcy and transparency so that the new, elected Haitian government can carry out its job at this important juncture for Haiti's new democracy."

Joanne Mariner, a Haiti expert at Human Rights Watch, warned that successful elections are only the first step towards Haiti's recovery. "Even a successful election will not instantly put an end to violence and impunity ... The international community should not assume that its task is over once the polling stations close on election day."

SOURCE: LA TERCERA, DIARIO SIETE, LA NACIÓN, EL MERCURIO, BBC, REUTERS, WASHINGTON POST

By Geoff Burt (editor@santiagotimes.cl)

## **Five die in chaotic Haitian poll**

**The Taipei Times**

**Feb. 9, 2006**

LONG QUEUES: Observers declared the parliamentary and presidential election a success, despite the deaths and disorder as eager voters jammed the polling booths

Five people died on Tuesday as Haitians voted in their first parliamentary and presidential election in six years with the hope that the new leaders will bring the Western Hemisphere's poorest nation out of political chaos and violence.

International organizations declared the election historical and a success despite the deaths, dozens of injuries and lines sometimes as long as 2km as voters queued under heavy security for an election that had been delayed four times since last fall.

Two people died in a clash in a village when a police officer shot and killed one person in a melee and the crowd turned on and killed the officer, Radio Metropole said.

Two older voters died of heart attacks in crushes of voters outside polling stations in Port-au-Prince, while the fifth fatality was a man who died in an accident in front of another polling place, the radio station said.

The scene outside many polling stations was one of chaos, disorder and flaring tempers as Haitians began lining up before the 6am start of voting and as some stations opened hours late.

As a result, Haiti's electoral commission extended voting hours through the night until everyone in line had a chance to vote in the country's first election since former president Jean-Bertrand Aristide was ousted in February 2004.

More than 9,000 UN troops and Haitian police provided security, which was stepped up around the polling stations after the first death.

Election results were expected in a few days, but the frontrunner for a five-year presidential term, according to opinion polls, was Rene Preval, an Aristide confidant from the Lavalas Party.

His nearest rival was expected to be entrepreneur Charles Henri Baker, who campaigned on a platform of economic recovery under the slogan "Order, Discipline, Work."

Apart from a president, about 3.5 million registered voters were choosing 99 lower-house deputies and 30 senators.

The head of the UN mission in the Caribbean country, Juan Gabriel Valdes, and the secretary-general of the Organization of American States, Jose Miguel Insulza, said that while there were problems, the vote was a success and marked an extraordinary day in the history of Latin America.

A majority of Haitians exercised their right to vote, showing a determination to do so despite long lines and other obstacles, they told reporters in Port-au-Prince.

"We did what was possible," interim President Gerald Latortue said after the chaotic voting.  
This story has been viewed 426 times.

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## **Haiti counts votes, Preval dances**

**ABC News**

**Reuters**

**Feb 8, 2006 — By Jim Loney and Joseph Guyler Delva**

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti (Reuters) - U.N. troops moved ballots by helicopter and mule across rural Haiti and the front-runner danced in a village square on Wednesday after the country's first presidential election since Jean-Bertrand Aristide was ousted two years ago.

Vote counting moved into high gear but election authorities did not release any official results on Wednesday. They said they might have a few results on Thursday but a more complete vote count would take at least another two days.

Tensions ran high and at least four people died in election-day incidents but a feared explosion of violence failed to materialize as Haitians cast ballots on Tuesday in what could prove the latest election to trouble Washington.

U.S. officials pressed Aristide to quit Haiti after a monthlong armed revolt in 2004 only to find his one-time ally Rene Preval the election favorite.

Preval, who retreated to his northern hometown of Marmelade for the election, ventured into the town square on Wednesday and danced to a bolero song played by a local band with villagers cheering him on.

Tallies at a handful of polling stations in the capital had Preval leading handily. When told the unofficial word in Port-au-Prince was that he had won the election, Preval said: "It makes me happy, but I'm not going to answer that until I have an official source."

There was no widespread election bloodshed in a country that has seen repeated coups and into which U.S. troops have been sent three times in the past century. Haiti was plagued by kidnappings and gang violence in the months before the vote and one of the dead on Tuesday was a policeman killed by a mob after he shot someone.

The United Nations and Organization of American States said the election appeared to be a step forward in impoverished Haiti's quest to establish a stable democracy after years of dictatorship and military rule.

U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan praised Haitians for a relatively calm vote and appealed to them to respect the results.

"As the new authorities assume their responsibilities, it will be essential that all political and social actors come together in a spirit of national reconciliation and dialogue ...," he said in a statement issued in New York.

Counters worked overnight by candlelight to tally votes in places where there was no power. Mules retrieved ballots from remote villages and helicopters were used to fly them to the capital, U.N. officials said.

## EARLY RESULTS

A tally of 20 polling stations in a trash-strewn warehouse near the Cite Soleil slum produced an expected result — 75 percent for ex-president Preval. His top rivals, former President Leslie Manigat and industrialist Charles Baker, had 10 and 3 percent respectively.

The sample of about 3,700 votes was likely not representative because it was so close to a Preval stronghold.

But even a couple of polling stations in Petionville, the Port-au-Prince suburb where many of Haiti's wealthy live, appeared to have gone heavily for Preval, 63, who led Haiti from 1996 to 2001, between Aristide's two presidencies.

Preval, who is opposed by the elites who helped push Aristide into exile in South Africa in 2004, must capture more than 50 percent of the vote to avoid a runoff on March 19.

In an election carried out under the watchful eyes of some 9,000 U.N. peacekeepers, many poor voters cried fraud when polling stations near the Cite Soleil slum failed to open on time, reinforcing concerns that the authorities would try to prevent slum residents from voting.

Businessman Baker, who ran second in opinion polls, said the election had "a lot of problems," citing late openings and reports that some people voted more than once.

The turnout was among the best in the short democratic history of the poorest country in the Americas, officials said.

Some voters said the heavy turnout proved the people of Haiti — beset by poverty, violence and political turmoil — desperately wanted democracy despite their nation's struggles since the brutal Duvalier family dictatorship ended in 1986.

Critics accused Aristide of corruption and despotism during his second term but he remains popular in the slums. Preval has gained the support of many Aristide loyalists.

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## **Haiti Vote Counting Could Take Until Friday**

**By Peter Heinlein**

**VOA News**

**09 February 2006**

U.N. officials say it could take up to three days to finish tabulating votes in Haiti's presidential and legislative election. The vote is being called a significant step forward for one of the western hemisphere's poorest countries.

Secretary-General Kofi Annan on Wednesday hailed the large turnout in Haiti's long-delayed elections. His statement, read by Mr. Annan's spokesman Stefane Dujarric, called on politicians and the public to respect the results, whatever they may be. "It will be essential that all political and social actors come together in a spirit of national reconciliation and dialogue in order to build strong democratic institutions and an inclusive governance system," he said.

The spokesman called the election a significant step forward for Haiti. But in a country where some ballots are being transported by mule, he cautioned that vote counting was going slowly. "From the ground, the U.N. mission in Haiti says the tabulation of the results will take at least three days, and in the meantime it is calling for calm and for all Haitians to remain patient," he said.

U.N. officials in Port au-Prince have said they were not aware of any reports of major irregularities or election-day fraud.

U.N. peacekeeping chief Jean-Marie Guehenno earlier called the successful election a sign of hope for Haiti. But Guehenno told VOA the impoverished Caribbean country will need continuing international help for years, if not decades, to come.

More than nine thousand blue-helmeted U.N. peacekeepers helped Haitian police provide security for the election, and more than half of Haiti's three-point-five million registered voters are believed to have cast ballots.

If no candidate wins a majority, a runoff between the top two vote-getters will be held March 19.

**Annan congratulates Haitians for high turnout in national elections**  
**UN News Centre**  
**8 February 2006**

United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan today congratulated Haitians for the high turnout of voters in the first round of national elections yesterday and pledged the support of the international community as they seek stability and development.

“On 7 February, the people of Haiti turned out in large numbers to vote in the presidential and parliamentary elections,” he said in a statement issued by his spokesman, offering words of praise to “all Haitians who participated in the vote for their commitment to exercising their democratic right to choose their future leaders.”

Mr. Annan called the election “a significant step forward for Haiti” and pledged that the international community would “continue to support the people of Haiti as they seek to achieve stability, normalcy and development.”

Compared to previous elections, yesterday’s poll was remarkably free from violence, he noted, applauding the Haitian people for their commitment to restore democracy.

The UN peacekeeping mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH), along with the Haitian National Police, provided security. It was the first nationwide voting since an insurgency forced elected President Jean-Bertrand Aristide into exile two years ago, as Haiti celebrated the 200th anniversary of its independence from France.

The Secretary-General urged Haitians to respect the official results that the Provisional Electoral Council would announce in the coming days.

As the newly elected Government took up its responsibilities next month, it would be essential for all political and social parties to approach one another in a spirit of national reconciliation and dialogue, with the goal of building strong democratic institutions and an inclusive governance system, he said.

Earlier this week, Mr. Annan recommended that MINUSTAH be continued in its present configuration for another six months while a post-electoral mission strategy is worked out for the new phase in the Caribbean country’s transition to a stable democracy.

The counting of votes is being completed and the tabulation of results will begin as results flow from the regions into Port-au-Prince, according to MINUSTAH, which said this process will take at least three days, with local voting centres sending their results to the Communal Electoral Offices by road and down from the hills by mule in some cases.

From the Communal offices, the ballots will then be transferred to the Departmental Electoral Offices where they will be picked up by UN helicopters and flown to Port-au-Prince and delivered to the tabulation centre, which is guarded by a Chinese Formed Police Unit.

**Counting of Ballots Continues in Haiti**  
**Wednesday February 8, 2006**  
**By STEVENSON JACOBS**  
**Associated Press Writer**  
**The Guardian Unlimited**

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti (AP) - Guarded by U.N. troops, mules carrying sacks of ballots trotted down from mountain villages Wednesday as authorities began the slow process of collecting and tabulating election results.

Scores of U.N. peacekeepers patrolled quiet streets of the capital, Port-au-Prince, as Haitians eagerly awaited the returns from Tuesday's vote, the first since a bloody uprising ousted former President Jean-Bertrand Aristide two years ago.

The polls, guarded by the 9,000-strong U.N. force, were fraught with delays early in the day but largely free of the violence that has plagued the capital since Aristide fled.

The leading contender heading into the vote was Rene Preval, a 63-year-old agronomist and former president widely supported by Haiti's poor masses. The shy, soft-spoken Preval, Haiti's only leader to finish his elected term, is a former ally of Aristide, who is in exile in South Africa.

Preval's closest rivals include Charles Henri Baker, 50, a wealthy garment factory owner, and Leslie Manigat, 75, who was president for five months in 1988 until the army ousted him.

More than 50 percent of the 3.5 million registered voters were believed to have cast ballots, said David Wimhurst, a U.N. spokesman, adding that a precise figure wasn't yet available.

"I think no one can deny the legitimacy of this process because people really participated," the special U.N. envoy to Haiti, Juan Gabriel Valdes, told Associated Press Television News.

However, he conceded that polls opened too late and "some people were not even able to vote."

Senate candidate Myrlande Manigat, the wife of Leslie Manigat, said initial reports from party representatives monitoring the vote count indicate Preval has a big lead in her western district, which includes much of metropolitan Port-au-Prince and outlying areas.

"We are very worried that Preval has won on the first round," Manigat told The Associated Press.

Preval was in his rural hometown of Marmelade and wasn't speaking to reporters.

If no candidate wins a majority, a runoff between the top two vote-getters will be held March 19.

Election workers counted votes by candlelight overnight and resumed early Wednesday, Wimhurst said, adding that the process was gaining momentum but still going "very slowly" because of delays retrieving ballots from rural areas.

“The hardest part is g areas.”

To help the effort, U.N. officials are relying in part on 280 mules, some of which were loaded with bulging sacks of ballots and then led by handlers and U.N. troops from the countryside into towns. Later, the ballots were to be loaded onto helicopters that will carry them to the capital, Wimhurst said.

Initial results were expected to be released after 20 percent of the vote is counted, which could happen late Wednesday, said Stephan Lacroix, a spokesman for Haiti's electoral council. Final results are expected later this week.

The huge turnout all but overwhelmed electoral officials, who conceded they were ill-prepared for the crush of voters.

Many Haitians voted Tuesday night after spending hours in lines stretching up to a mile at some polling stations.

Many stations opened late, lacking the necessary workers, security and ballots to handle the number of voters who turned out by foot, car and brightly colored buses.

“It could have been better,” Jose Miguel Insulza, head of the Organization of American States, said of the vote. But he said the enthusiasm of Haitian voters made the elections successful.

“In many places, people would not have stood in line for so long waiting to vote,” Insulza said.

The United Nations has not received any reports of fraud or other major irregularities in the voting, Wimhurst said.

The elections were deemed vital to averting a political and economic meltdown in the Western Hemisphere's poorest nation. In the aftermath of Aristide's ouster, gangs went on a kidnapping spree and many factories closed because of security problems and a shortage of foreign investment.

Associated Press writers Joseph B. Frazier in Marmelade and Michael Norton in Port-au-Prince contributed to this report.

## **Slum battles hurt U.N. efforts to fix Haiti crisis**

**08 Feb 2006**

**Source: Reuters**

**By Kieran Murray**

CITE SOLEIL, Haiti- In the narrow alleys of Haiti's most notorious shantytown, one-room cinder block homes bear the ugly scars of battle between local gang leaders and U.N. peacekeepers that many residents see as the real enemy.

Blazing gunfights in the last two years have killed dozens of people in this Port-au-Prince slum and their homes have been blasted with powerful machine guns mounted on U.N. armored personnel carriers.

Resentment runs high and Cite Soleil, which was already a symbol of Haiti's misery, is now the toughest nut to crack in U.N. efforts to pacify the Caribbean nation and attack the poverty that largely defines it.

"We need schools, we need food, but all they do is shoot at us," screams Marie Nicole Nazeur, a 35-year-old woman at a market just hundreds of yards from the sandbagged building where Jordanian troops hunker down between clashes.

Many of Cite Soleil's powerful gangs are tied to Jean-Bertrand Aristide, their elected president who was forced into exile by a bloody rebellion in February 2004. Those gangs, and many residents, see that episode as a U.S.-backed coup against their leader

Around Nazeur, at least two dozen stall holders and local residents shouted complaints about the U.N. forces. Some showed off back, stomach and leg wounds suffered in the fighting. Thirteen members of the U.N. force have also been killed in Haiti, some of those victims of firefights in Cite Soleil.

### **WHY DO THEY ATTACK US?**

Despite chaos at polling stations and fears of violence, Haitians voted in huge numbers on Tuesday in the first election since Aristide left office.

The peaceful vote raised hopes for democracy in Haiti but U.N. peacekeepers still have to tame Cite Soleil's powerful gangs, and try to win over ordinary residents.

"Why do they attack us? We need help, not war," said Marie La Claude, a mother of seven, pointing to where a woman was killed in the cross-fire of a battle in the market last year.

The U.N. has deployed about 9,000 troops and police to support the interim government installed after Aristide was ousted and to help organize a return to democratic rule.

It has had some successes and may have prevented a collapse into civil war, but hundreds of people have been killed since Aristide was chased out and almost 2,000 more were kidnapped for ransom just in the last year.

Although votes from Tuesday's election are being counted slowly and a second round run-off is possible, ex-president Rene Preval is widely expected to win. He was once Aristide's protege and Haiti's rich elite mistrust him despite efforts to distance himself from the radical former priest.

With Haiti crippled by years of political violence, U.N. leaders hope that whoever wins will cut deals with his rivals to disarm the gangs, reform the police, build schools and hospitals in poor areas and try to create jobs in a country where unemployment is estimated at well above 60 percent.

"If Haiti is to have a better future, its people must learn to work together and to reconcile in the wake of the elections," Heddi Annabi, deputy head of U.N. peacekeeping forces, said this week.

Haiti is regarded by many as a "failed state" and the United Nations has struggled to persuade its members to commit their best troops and police for its mission here.

Washington, for long the main power broker in Haiti, has pulled away and has a minimal presence in the U.N. force. Jordan has the biggest contingent but its troops are widely criticized as being too trigger happy in Cite Soleil.

While some Aristide allies see U.N. troops as aggressors, business leaders have angrily demanded the U.N. strike much harder at gang leaders linked to the former president.

U.N. troops are stuck in the middle but there is no simple escape route and analysts say Haiti could fall back into chaos if U.N. members do not commit to staying for years to come.

"Even with all the problems, nobody here is saying they want them to leave -- on the left, right, or center," said Mark Schneider of the International Crisis Group, which recommends policies on the world's main conflicts. "They are needed here not for one year, or two years, but for the next 10 years."

**Ballot counting in Haiti is going slowly**  
**By JOE MOZINGO and JACQUELINE CHARLES**  
**Miami Herald**  
**Feb. 8, 2006**

PORT-AU-PRINCE - The counting of ballots from Tuesday's national elections proceeded slowly Wednesday amid early signs that René Préval would finish first in the presidential race, as predicted by polls.

But it was not clear whether the former president would earn the outright majority he needs to avoid a run off run-off March 19 against the second-place finisher.

The first partial results are expected to be announced at 6 P.M., but it is unlikely they contain enough votes to settle a winner for President or any of the 129 seats in Parliament.

The tally sheets from each of about 800 polling centers spread out across Haiti's mountainous and largely roadless terrain had to be transferred -- by mule, by truck convoy, by U.N. helicopters -- to Port-au-Prince to be counted.

Disorganization on Tuesday resulted in long lines and polls closing well after dark, with many voters casting their ballots by candlelight. While the results from many centers were set to be transported overnight, many were just getting picked up by late morning today.

Turnout for the first election since President Jean-Bertrand Aristide fled the country in 2004 was unexpectedly high in a country where many until recent weeks were dubious of the balloting. The balloting was postponed four times because of logistical problems.

The candidacy of Préval, a one-time protege of Aristide, energized much of the poor majority that once saw the populist former priest as their champion, and shook a political and business elite that helped drive Aristide from power.

Préval was the frontrunner in the polls, and a look by the Miami Herald at the results in four large polling centers in Port-au-Prince, as well as several in the port city of Gonaives, suggested Préval was far ahead of the pack of 32 candidates.

Of the 6,163 votes counted at several voting centers in Port-au-Prince -- in the well-off suburb of Petionville, the poorer neighborhoods of Lalue and Bel Air, and one near downtown that served the strongly pro-Aristide slum of Cité Soleil -- 4,718 went to Préval. That well above the 50 percent he needs for an outright victory.

One Haitian electoral official cautioned, however, that early results showed Préval had not garnered as much support in outlying provinces, where much of Haiti's 8.1 million people live. No reliable exit polls were conducted.

Presidential candidate and businessman Charles Henri Baker said his information suggested there would be a second round but it was not clear who would wind up in second -- or or former president Leslie F. Manigat.

"We are patient," said Baker.

## **After massive turnout in Haitian elections, the vote count begins**

**Feb 8, 2006**

**STEVENSON JACOBS**

**CBC News, Canada**

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti (CP) - UN troops mobilized helicopters, trucks and even mules Wednesday to recover ballots from remote areas in an arduous vote-counting process as Haitians awaited results of long-delayed presidential and legislative elections.

Bleary-eyed election workers counted ballots by candlelight into late evening after Tuesday's vote, which officials hailed as a success despite massive delays that crippled polling stations and enraged voters. The poll was largely free of violence.

An international observer said turnout was high, although no official figures were available.

Rene Preval, 63, an agronomist who led Haiti from 1996 to 2001, was the front-runner among 33 presidential candidates. His closest rivals include Charles Henri Baker, 50, a wealthy garment factory owner, and Leslie Manigat, 75, president for five months in 1988 until the army ousted him.

The elections, held under the watch of a 9,000-strong UN peacekeeping force, were deemed vital to averting a political and economic meltdown in the Western Hemisphere's poorest country.

Canada has about 100 civilian police in Haiti as part of the UN peacekeeping effort, and is providing \$180 million over two years for stability and reconstruction. For the current elections, Canada dispatched 106 observers and contributed \$30 million for the electoral process.

If no candidate wins a majority in the first round, the top two finishers will compete in a March 19 runoff.

The vote count gained momentum as election workers returned to polls early Wednesday. Ballots from 40 of the 800 polling stations have been counted and will be transported to the capital later Wednesday, UN spokesman David Wimhurst said.

A trickle of early results should be released later Wednesday, but a final tally is not expected until Friday at the earliest, Wimhurst said.

A huge turnout all but overwhelmed electoral officials, who conceded they were ill-prepared for the crush of voters who formed long lines before dawn.

Many Haitians voted by candlelight after spending hours in long lines.

"People were yelling and screaming to get inside the voting booths," said Mona Joseph, 21, one of the last people to vote. She had to go to several polling centres in Port-au-Prince before finding her name on the voter registry.

Outside the gang-controlled Cite Soleil slum, frustrated voters pounded on empty ballot boxes and chanted, "It's time for Cite Soleil to vote!"

Many people in Cite Soleil accuse the government of trying to disenfranchise them, citing a decision not to put polling stations there. Officials said it was for security reasons.

Cite Soleil was where retired RCMP officer Mark Bourque was shot by unidentified gunmen last December.

In the rural northern town of Gros Morne, a Haitian policeman shot and killed a man in line at a polling station; a mob then killed the officer, a UN spokesman said.

Experts called the election a step toward democracy in the destitute Caribbean country, saying the heavy turnout showed Haitians felt safe despite warnings that chronic violence would keep voters away. At least four deaths were reported, but authorities said the balloting was largely free of violence.

Jose Miguel Insulza, head of the Organization of American States, said "a large majority of the Haitian population voted," although no specific numbers were available.

"We will have a democratic government . . . that this country has fought so long and hard to have," Insulza told reporters.

In the aftermath of a February 2004 rebellion that toppled President Jean-Bertrand Aristide, gangs have gone on a kidnapping rampage and factories have closed because of security problems and a shortage of foreign investment.

## **Despite Election Day Mishaps, Haitians Vote**

**By Amelia Shaw**

**Port-au-Prince, Haiti**

**VOA News**

**08 February 2006**

Haitians stayed at the polls into the late hours Tuesday in the first democratic elections since former president Jean Bertrand Aristide went into exile following a violent uprising nearly two years ago. Millions turned out for the vote, in some cases overwhelming their polling sites.

Midline George woke up at dawn Tuesday to walk to her polling stations to vote for a new government. But, when she got to her polling site on lower Delmas in Port-au-Prince, she had no idea she would be in line for so long.

"I am hungry," she said. "I have been [here] since four in the morning. I left my kids at home alone, they have not eaten, it is 10:30 and we still have not voted."

Many polls opened hours late because a lack of materials, absent election workers, and missing ballots. There were other problems, too. Many Haitians found their names left off the voting register or that they had been assigned to the wrong voting booth.

Violence broke out in some polling sites. In Port-au-Prince, two elderly men died when crowds stampeded a polling center. Near the town of St. Marc, a policeman shot into a stampeding crowd, killing one. The policeman was then killed by the crowd of angry voters.

But overall, Haitians waited patiently to vote.

In a statement released by Provisional Election Council president Max Mathurin, the government sought to maintain calm.

UN-sponsored poster reads: "I vote for Haiti's future"

"Despite the problems," he said, "we guarantee that every Haitian who has a voter identity card will have the chance to vote."

The polls remained open a few hours later to accommodate the voters. U.N. officials say that the population voted in large numbers. They say they hope this will be an important step to returning the country to legitimacy, after 20 years of instability and successive coups. Hundreds of international election monitors watched the vote.

There are 33 presidential candidates on the ballot. The frontrunner is a former president and Aristide protégé, Rene Preval. If no candidate receives the 50 percent of the vote, there will be a run-off election next month.

Ballots are returning to the capital by U.N. helicopter, and by mule over Haiti's mountain roads. Final results are expected Friday.

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**AP Blog on Haiti Elections**  
**By The Associated Press**  
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**Houston Chronicle**  
**Feb. 8, 2006**

— This is the third of periodic dispatches by Andrew Selsky, the AP's Chief of Caribbean News, who is in Haiti covering the first elections held since President Jean-Bertrand Aristide was ousted in a February 2004 rebellion.

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WEDNESDAY, Feb. 8, 10:15 a.m. local

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti

I was impressed by the huge turnout of voters who waited with incredible patience when many found their polling stations were not open on time, and then stood in neat lines for hours to fill out their ballots to elect a new government in Haiti.

There were some scuffles, some shoving, and in at least one polling station, the crowd of voters stormed into a polling station, overwhelming the few police officers there before order was restored.

Haiti is the only place in the world where slaves successfully rebelled and threw out their colonial masters, the French. But democracy has never fully taken root in Haiti, the most impoverished nation in all the Americas and the Caribbean.

Only one president, Rene Preval, has been elected and then finished his turn in office. The others have been ousted in military coups or rebellions.

But today, the people in Haiti have hope that their individual ballots will make a difference.

Not everyone could vote though. There were some foulups.

As I was standing amid lines of voters at a large polling station outside the Cite Soleil slum yesterday, an elegant woman was loudly complaining to no one in particular, her patience having finally boiled over.

Her name was Adrienne Francois, 53, who has six children and eight grandchildren. She was dressed in a blue satin-like dress. A wide-brimmed straw hat warded off the sun's rays. She had walked for miles, from one polling station to another, to vote. At each one, and she said she had been to five, she was told her name was not on the rolls and was directed to another polling station. At each polling station, she had to endure waiting in long lines before finding out she was not registered there.

"Every place I go, I'm getting the runaround," she told me. "I'm giving up."

She had walked such a distance \_ probably eight miles \_ that her open-toed shoes were coming apart. She had done a quick repair job on one with a safety pin, and the other with a piece of red plastic tied into a knot.

Like millions of other Haitians, this is what she wants for her country, and what she hopes a new leadership can bring:

"I'll be happy when there is security, so that when I'm sick in the middle of the night, the person that will take me to the hospital won't be afraid to drive me. If I'm sitting by the side of the road selling used clothes, I won't have anything to worry about. There won't be shooting or anything. I'll be in a place of peace."

\_ Andrew Selsky

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This is the second of periodic dispatches by Andrew Selsky, the AP's Chief of Caribbean News, who is in Haiti covering the first elections held since President Jean-Bertrand Aristide was ousted in a February 2004 rebellion.

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PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti

MONDAY, Feb. 6, 9:52 a.m. local

Haiti is a visual feast.

Driving around the capital, down narrow, pitted streets lined with sidewalk vendors, your eyes dart everywhere \_ to the "tap tap" buses painted in a riot of bright colors, to baskets of tropical fruit for sale, to women carrying huge loads atop their heads, to children in school uniforms of clean white shirts and dark skirts making their way past vendors, heedless traffic, piles of trash and parked cars.

The buses are called tap taps because the passengers signal the driver they want to get off by tapping against the sides of the bus with their knuckles.

In a country as poor as Haiti, there are messages all over reminding people to cherish what they have, and telling them things are OK. The tap taps often bear positive messages painted onto their flowery sides.

"Everything is good," says one.

"God gives love," says another.

My AP colleagues Brennan Linsley, Evens Sanon and I drove into a poor neighborhood to find a church and see what the pastor had to say about the elections coming up on Tuesday, and whether Haitians should be hopeful a new government can help make their future brighter.

We found a church in Savanne Pistache neighborhood, next to one of Port-au-Prince's ubiquitous smouldering garbage dumps on a hillside overlooking the sea.

Pastor Yves-Innocent Louis welcomed us inside the unpainted cinderblock church. Next to it is an orphanage that Louis runs: the Life is Wealth Orphanage (yet another positive message, pointing out that you still have something, life, even if you do not have a mother and father).

Louis says the parents of the 60 orphans died of AIDS and other diseases and that some were killed by the "chimères," or ghosts, as gangs loyal to then President Jean-Bertrand Aristide were called.

Louis says the message of hope is a mainstay of his sermons.

"When I'm preaching, I usually ask the people to believe that one day things will change, and I preach to them that hope will make you go a long way," Louis says.

Hope \_ or "lespwa" in Creole \_ is also the name of the party of Rene Preval, a former president who is the front-runner among three dozen presidential candidates. A plane towing the one word, with Preval's name alongside, has been flying over Port-au-prince in recent days.

Hope springs eternal in Haiti.

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This is the first of periodic reports by Andrew Selsky, the AP's Chief of Caribbean News, who is in Haiti covering the first elections held since President Jean-Bertrand Aristide was ousted in a February 2004 rebellion.

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SUNDAY, Feb. 5, 8:30 a.m. local

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti, Villa Creole Hotel

Petionville is the upscale neighborhood of the capital of Haiti. Petionville, which sits on a hillside with a sweeping view of Port-au-Prince, is not West Palm Beach by any means.

Even a middle-class American suburb would look downright ritzy compared to Petionville, where street vendors sell stalks of sugar cane in front of a mishmash of shops, a few art galleries and French restaurants.

But Petionville is luxurious indeed compared to Cite Soleil, a wretchedly poor neighborhood controlled by gangs armed with M-16s and 9mm pistols.

As you drive down the hillside from Petionville on Port-au-Prince's narrow, traffic-clogged streets, the neighborhoods become poorer. At the end of the line is Cite Soleil, near the sea.

Cite Soleil's shacks aren't made of sheets of corrugated tin, like you find in many other slums around the world. They are made of fragments of corrugated tin \_ rusty pieces, their edges as sharp as knives.

There are no bathrooms. Kids and everyone else use the outdoors, often near canals where raw sewage flows.

Blue-helmeted U.N. peacekeeping troops have made only a tentative incursion into the slum of 200,000, fearing that many civilians will die if the troops and gangs engage in open warfare in its streets and alleyways.

Back in 1994, U.S. Army troops arrived in Haiti with rifles at the ready to reinstate President Jean-Bertrand Aristide \_ who had been ousted in a coup. I visited Cite Soleil then as U.S. Army Blackhawk helicopters buzzed overhead. The people were overjoyed. They had just lived through an awful period, when death squads linked to the military dictatorship went on nighttime killing sprees in Cite Soleil, which was hugely loyal to Aristide, a former slum priest and liberation theologian.

International news photographers would drive at the crack of dawn to Cite Soleil to look for the carnage. Bodies were sprawled in the streets, hands tied behind their backs, with bullet holes in the head or chest of the victims. One day, outside Cite Soleil, I was attracted by a group of people standing on an overpass, staring down at a mound of garbage. I joined them and looked down. There was a pig rooting around the trash, tugging at a burlap sack. Staring harder at the sack, I couldn't believe what I was seeing. It was full of severed heads \_ the heads of men who had perhaps been tortured and executed at a nearby police station.

So when the U.S. troops arrived in 1994, the people of Cite Soleil were overjoyed. They gathered in groups as the choppers swooped overhead, cheering and laughing with sheer joy.

Aristide came back from exile a few weeks later. But during his second term in office, he fell victim to another rebellion amid accusations he used gangs to attack his own opponents and was corrupt. A U.S. plane flew him out.

The other day, I came across an 18-year-old shoeshiner who had just been shot by U.N. peacekeeping troops in Cite Soleil, according to witnesses and the man's own account. AP photographer Brennan Linsley, translator Evens Sanon and I arrived quickly after Evens spotted a makeshift Red Cross ambulance rushing somewhere, and followed it.

George Alain Colbert, the wounded man, would have been around six years old when the U.S. troops arrived in 1994. He may have been one of those kids I saw turning cartwheels in joy back then.

Now, he's in a hospital, wounded in his heel and groin by a U.N. peacekeeper, a force that has caused civilian casualties as it tries to control criminal gangs.

Things haven't gotten any better for the people of Cite Soleil.

\_\_Andrew Selsky

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## **Haitian Elections Bring Back Long History of Turmoil**

**By Bill Rodgers**

**Washington, D.C.**

**VOA News**

**08 February 2006**

Throng of voters turned out for elections in Haiti, exactly two decades after the downfall of the Duvalier dictatorship and almost two years after populist president Jean Bertrand Aristide was forced out of office. Tuesday's election took place in a country wracked by violence, political turmoil, and poverty -- in which a United Nations peacekeeping force has been unable to completely restore order.

Haitians have gone two years without a democratically-elected president -- ever since President Jean Bertrand Aristide was ousted.

**Jean Bertrand Aristide**

Mr. Aristide, a former priest who had a wide following among Haiti's poor, had been overthrown before in 1991 but was returned to power by U.S. troops in 1994. He was elected again in 2000, but his rule was marred by corruption and violence -- and tension between his government and Haiti's minority elite. Despite this, he remains popular among many poor Haitians -- and the leading candidate in Tuesday's vote, former President Rene Preval, is viewed as his protégé.

**Robert Maguire**

However, Robert Maguire of Trinity University in Washington says Mr. Preval, who governed the country in the late 1990s, appears to have put some distance between himself and Mr. Aristide.

"There's no doubt that in the past Preval and Aristide were very, very close; in fact they were called 'The Twins,' said Mr. Maguire. "And Preval was Aristide's prime minister in 1991 when Aristide was elected and stuck with him throughout. But they are not twins anymore. I think Mr. Preval has distanced himself both personally and politically from Aristide."

**Former President Rene Preval**

According to reports, many voters believe if Mr. Preval is elected, he would allow the exiled former president to return. But the Haitian ambassador to the U.S., Raymond Joseph, says this would be a mistake.

"If Aristide were to come back then I would expect the same cycle of violence and problems that he installed in Haiti over the past 15 years. So it's up to the person who becomes president to know whether he is going to invite him," said the ambassador.

**Ambassador Raymond Joseph**

Tuesday's vote is the latest chapter in Haiti's struggle to emerge from poverty and destitution. It is the poorest country in the western hemisphere, where life expectancy is only about 50 years.

Haiti's interim government, led by technocrat Gerard Latortue, has been faulted for its inability to improve conditions. Also, the UN peacekeeping force led by Brazil that was deployed in 2004 has failed to stop rampant violence.

Ambassador Joseph says the situation would have been different if U.S. troops were on the ground now.

"I think the Haitians have more respect for American marines than they have for Brazilian soccer players," said Mr. Joseph. "They love the Brazilian soccer players but they respect the marines, and if the marines had stayed a little longer perhaps we would not be in the mess we are today."

Voters lined up by the thousands to vote in Haiti's presidential election

But Haiti expert Maguire draws a different lesson from the events of the past few years.

"If Haiti is a weak state, which it no doubt is, in order for it to strengthen itself you've got to strengthen the institutions. The dilemma being: what if you don't like the leader? Well, if you don't try and find a way of working with the state and strengthening its institutions it becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy that this state is going to fail and is going to become chaotic."

Despite the election, Haiti's future remains uncertain, as does the future role of the international community in the Caribbean nation.

## **Haiti awaits results of presidential vote**

**08 Feb 2006**

**Source: Reuters**

**By Jim Loney and Joseph Guyler Delva**

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti - Haiti awaited results on Wednesday of its first election since Jean-Bertrand Aristide was deposed two years ago after a vote troubled by poll problems but relatively free of violence.

Vote counting started shortly after polls closed on Tuesday evening. Balloting was extended for several hours at some polling stations, where Haitians voted by candlelight after a chaotic start to election day left many closed for hours after they were scheduled to open.

The first results were expected to trickle in on Wednesday but officials have said the winner might not be known for days. Ballots were being carried by mule across mountainous terrain in some remote locations.

Officials said turnout was among the best for any election in the short democratic history of the poorest country in the Americas.

Thousands of voters had marched out of Port-au-Prince slums, many to cast ballots for ex-President Rene Preval, a former Aristide ally favored to retake the presidency.

A U.S. official said Washington was prepared to work with whomever wins but the result could prove a disappointment for U.S. policymakers who pressured Aristide to leave Haiti in 2004 only to find his one-time protege the favorite to regain the National Palace.

Preval, one of 33 candidates, must capture more than 50 percent of votes cast to avoid a runoff on March 19.

Despite the problems -- some voters walked for miles to voting centers only to be turned away because they could not find their names on registration lists -- Haitian election authorities and some international officials called the oft-delayed vote a success.

### **'GOOD ELECTIONS'**

"Finally the elections took place and they are good elections of which all Haitians can be proud," Jose Miguel Insulza, secretary-general of the Organization of American States, said. The vote was originally set for November.

But complaints were rampant in the capital. Some voters were told they could not cast ballots because their polling stations were changed at the last moment.

Others said poll workers tore small paper stickers that designated their appropriate polling station off their voter identity cards and sent them to others. When they arrived, they could not vote because they did not have the sticker.

"I went in the first line and they took it off. Then I went to a second line and they told me I could not vote because I didn't have it. This is not fair," said Gertha Estira, 19, who arrived at a voting center at 8 a.m. after a long walk from the Cite Soleil slum but six hours later had still not voted.

At least three people died in election day incidents. A U.N. spokesman said a police officer shot and killed a citizen near a polling center in the northern town of Gros-Morne and then was slain by a mob of bystanders.

Critics accused Aristide, a former Roman Catholic priest who was a champion of the poor, of running a corrupt administration in his second term in office but he remains popular in Haiti's overcrowded slums.

Although Preval did not run for Aristide's Lavalas Family party, he gained the support of many Aristide loyalists, who accused the wealthy elite of fraud because many voting stations in poor areas failed to open on time.

"I am patient because our deliverance is Lespwa," said voter Rony Florvil, referring to the coalition of groups that supported Preval. Lespwa translates as "the hope."

"Without Lespwa, there is nothing," Florvil said.

## **A chaotic vote in Haiti**

**Voters storm into understaffed polling sites, but officials say balloting was free of organized violence**

**BY LETTA TAYLER**

**STAFF CORRESPONDENT**

**Newsday.com**

**February 8, 2006**

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti -- Enraged by long lines and severe disorganization, voters stormed polling centers and scuffled with United Nations peacekeepers yesterday in Haiti's first presidential election since an armed revolt two years ago pushed the country to the brink of collapse.

At least one person was asphyxiated and several others injured in stampedes in the capital, Port-au-Prince, where voters braved tear gas to rip down metal gates and pour into gigantic, dramatically understaffed polling stations, many of which opened several hours late.

At a polling center in the northern town of Gros Morne, a Haitian policeman was reportedly killed by a mob after shooting dead a man waiting to vote.

Nevertheless, Haitian and international officials hailed the vote as a critical step in replanting democracy in the hemisphere's poorest and one of its most troubled nations. They noted that turnout was heavy, order slowly prevailed and balloting was free of the organized violence that has ravaged many elections here.

"The electoral process today was truly admirable," said Juan Gabriel Valdes, chief of the United Nations mission here. "Clearly there were difficulties... but this vote showed Haitian history is in the process of changing."

A 9,300-strong UN peacekeeping force has struggled to contain political violence and kidnapping in this Maryland-size nation of 8 million since the armed ouster of firebrand President Jean-Bertrand Aristide in February 2004.

René Préval, 63, a onetime Aristide protege and president from 1996 to 2001, was widely expected to lead by a wide margin in the 33-way presidential race. But with the UN short on helicopters and many ballots being hauled down nearly impassable mountain paths by hundreds of mules, horses and donkeys, partial returns weren't expected until at least today.

Though much of the countryside was calm yesterday, mayhem bubbled even at polling centers in wealthy neighborhoods of Port-au-Prince. The chaos was greatest outside Cité Soleil, a gang-ruled slum so volatile that election officials refused to place polling centers there, directing voters to instead cast ballots in industrial buildings on the periphery.

Hundreds of angry Cité Soleil residents marched through streets jammed with UN tanks and littered with burning mounds of garbage, waving their voting cards and pounding on empty ballot boxes to protest voting snafus.

"The bourgeoisie is trying to stage an electoral coup so the poor people can't vote their choice," screamed demonstrator Paul Ery, 45, who is jobless, as are most Cité Soleil residents.

Ery warned that protesters "will take to the streets" in droves if the winner isn't Préval, a favored candidate of Haiti's impoverished majority.

Fanning the discontent, some Cité Soleil gang members and community leaders roamed the neighborhood, erroneously telling residents and media that police had opened fire on voters.

Haitian authorities extended voting by several hours. In a desperate attempt to beef up several polling centers where ballots arrived hours late or workers had simply failed to show, officials began pulling volunteers from voting lines and giving them crash courses in helping to run polling booths.

Once doors opened, frantic voters pushed their way around tanks or under the legs of heavily armed UN soldiers in a rush to enter. Some then waited an hour or more in one line, only to be redirected to another line and then another - or to be told their names didn't appear on voting rolls.

"It's a sham," fumed Lithiane Miliace, 51, as she was turned away from a heavily guarded warehouse in Cité Soleil that had opened three hours late with five election workers for 15,500 voters.

Nearby, a frail 60-year-old woman sat with a dazed expression on a filthy cement floor, waiting in vain for someone to show her where she should vote.

An observer from the Alliance ticket, which is backing presidential candidate Evans Paul, a former Port-au-Prince mayor, grabbed a pregnant woman's pencil and tried to fill out her ballot.

"I can't believe the chaos," said Jean Guito Duverneau, an exhausted observer for Haiti's Provisional Electoral Council.

Some international observers said yesterday's disarray proved the UN should have had more control in organizing the election. Haitian officials said they could have had more and smaller voting centers had the UN supplied more troops to guard them.

Other top presidential contenders were Charles Henri Baker, 50, an assembly line factory owner, and Leslie Manigat, 75, who was elected in a rigged vote in 1988 and ousted by the army five months later.

If no candidate wins a majority, a second round of balloting will be held between the top two vote-getters March 19. Voters also are casting ballots for Haiti's 129-seat legislature.

**Haiti's elections - the poor want Préval**  
**by Hans Jaap Melissen**  
**in Port au Prince\***  
**Feb. 8, 2006**  
**Radio Netherlands**

Favourite to win Haiti's presidential elections  
René Préval

Although Tuesday's elections in Haiti passed off in relative peace, there were some chaotic scenes, with ballot papers failing to arrive and some voters having to stand in line for hours before they could actually exercise their democratic right.

"I want to vote now. I want to change Haiti," was the desperate call from one woman at a polling station near the slum district of Cité Soleil in the capital, Port-au-Prince. She and thousands of others waited for hours, initially quite patiently, but when it turned out that the polling station was nowhere near being ready at six in the morning, the crowd stormed the building. It didn't help. Inside there was no sign at all of any ballot papers or any boxes to put them in.

One of the people responsible for the polling station, Sony, said it had been clear on the day prior to the elections that Haiti was in for a chaotic day: "Yesterday, everything went wrong with the planning. We didn't even know where the polling station was meant to be." Polling station is a grand word for the location finally used: the bare skeleton of the ground floor of an unfinished apartment building.

Préval

Most of the people waiting outside came from Cité Soleil itself, where it was not possible to vote because the UN peacekeeping force wasn't able to guarantee security at polling stations. However, some people claim that it was all a plot: "They don't want us to vote for René Préval."

Mr Préval is the absolute favourite to win the battle for the presidency. He's already served in that office and was once the protégé of another - now exiled - former president, Jean-Bertrand Aristide. Although he's since distanced himself from Aristide, Mr Préval enjoys great popularity among exactly the same poor sections of Haiti's population.

"Préval can give us jobs, food and security," was the comment from one voter. But can Préval also do something to combat the armed groups which make areas such as Cité Soleil unsafe and get most of their money from the innumerable kidnappings for which they are responsible? The same voter has an answer:

"Why do those guys have weapons? Because they don't have work. Préval will sort that all out."

Abuse

Finally, the missing items arrived at the makeshift polling stations. Self-assembly ballot boxes in large cardboard containers. Some of the cardboard was subsequently used to make improvised booths and tables. The crowd moved further forward, with people pushing and shoving and shouting abuse.

Throughout the day, the polling stations were busy, even those in the 'better parts' of the capital. Nearly all of them stayed open a few hours longer than originally planned. The head of the UN election

observers, Belgian Johan van Hecke, said it was sad that the elections had ended up going this way, but added,

"On the other hand, people have been voting in massive numbers, after all. Moreover, with four people dead and dozens injured, it's all passed off relatively peacefully."

Sabotage

Mr Van Hecke doesn't believe technical problems were the only reason for the chaos that surrounded the elections, or the fact that they were postponed four times:

"I've noticed that numerous people have attempted to sabotage this process. Political considerations probably also played a role."

He also thinks there was a severe lack of cooperation between the various organisations involved, including the UN, the Organisation of American States and the electoral commission.

And it's these circumstances which pose the main problem for the immediate future. If René Préval is indeed declared the presidential victor, either now or after a possible second round of voting, his opponents will have numerous reasons to raise doubts about the elections. On the other hand, if Préval doesn't turn out to have done as well as expected, his supporters in the slums districts will rise up.

Johan van Hecke wishes it could have been different:

"These motivated, nice Haitians deserve much better organised elections."

## **S. Florida Haitians are looking home as hope, fear mingle on eve of election**

**By Alva James-Johnson**

**South Florida Sun-Sentinel**

**February 7, 2006**

As Haitians trek to the polls today to elect a new government, their compatriots in South Florida are feeling a wide range of emotions.

Those who demonstrated in 2004 to oust former President Jean-Bertrand Aristide from office are disappointed in the interim government that followed. And those who supported Aristide are still bitter that he no longer heads their nation.

But most of all, Haitian-Americans in South Florida, home to the largest Haitian population outside the country, wish the best for an impoverished land that has been buffeted by political turmoil for 200 years.

"There's a lot of fear and uncertainty around this election," said Marleine Bastien, vice chairwoman of the Haitian-American Grassroots Coalition in Miami. "We hope things will be well, and the people of Haiti will be safe."

Haiti's latest round of political woes began Feb. 29, 2004, when Aristide was removed from office during a violent rebellion. A U.S.-backed interim government led by Boca Raton retiree Gerard Latortue replaced his government.

The interim prime minister promised to lead the country to a brighter future with the help of the Haitian Diaspora, which pumps more than \$1 billion into the economy annually. But many of his supporters said he never delivered.

"I think most people I've spoken to feel very disappointed and depressed," said Parnell Duverger, a Haitian-American economist in Fort Lauderdale. On Monday night, some expatriates were scheduled to gather for prayer vigils in Miami's Little Haiti and at Our Lady of Perpetual Help in Delray Beach.

"The service will be dedicated to Haiti, that's the best we can do right now," said the Rev. Roland Desormeaux, who said he is hopeful the election will help solve some of the country's turmoil.

Jacques Lafontant, president of the United Haitian-American Democratic Club in Palm Beach County, which represents more than 100 Haitians, fears more fraud than democracy.

"We believe the election will take place, but it will not be a democratic election," he said. "Somebody is going to not be elected, but selected. I'm supporting none of those candidates, none of them."

Others in South Florida are staying close to their radios for the latest news from home.

Among those watching the election closely is the Rev. Gerard Jean-Juste, a Catholic priest recently released from a Haitian jail for cancer treatment in Miami.

On Monday he stood outside the Wyndham Fort Lauderdale Airport Hotel in Fort Lauderdale, his neck still healing from a biopsy incision. With all the strength he could muster, he endorsed his friend, former Prime Minister Rene Preval, for president.

Preval, who belongs to Aristide's Lavalas Party, served as the country's president from 1996 to 2000, between Aristide's two terms.

"He's the most popular among the candidates," said the priest, who turns 60 today. "With the good results coming, this is my birthday present."

Jean-Juste and other Lavalas leaders said Aristide supporters will gather today at the headquarters of Veye Yo, a Lavalas organization, in anticipation of a Preval victory.

Other Haitian-Americans questioned whether Preval could serve without Aristide, now exiled in South Africa, pulling the strings.

"He was president before, but he wasn't president in his own right," said Gerard Ferere, a Boca Raton retiree and Latortue supporter. "What would Preval do now on his own? I don't know."

Jean-Juste and his supporters, who said they had paid for a room and made arrangements to hold the news conference inside the hotel, were evicted Monday morning, said Jack Lieberman of the Haitian Solidarity Committee, a pro-Aristide civil rights group.

"I can't believe this would have happened if this was a Haitian official or someone in favor with the powers that be," Lieberman said.

A woman who answered a phone call to the Wyndham said management had no comment.

Broward Sheriff's Office deputies were called and reporters were told they couldn't enter the building.

Chief Bryan Cowart said deputies had received a call from the hotel reporting a public disturbance. He said his deputies turned people away because hotel management asked them to do so.

Throughout South Florida, rumors of a possible massacre at the polls back home spread. And many were still angry that Haiti doesn't allow dual citizenships, meaning Haitians with U.S. citizenship can't vote.

"It's very frustrating for us," said Margaret Armand, a Haitian-American community activist in Plantation. "They want our money, but they don't want our votes."

Staff Writer Erika Slife contributed to this report.

Alva James-Johnson can be reached at [ajjohnson@sun-sentinel.com](mailto:ajjohnson@sun-sentinel.com) or 954-356-4523.

**Monitors praise Haiti election**  
**BBC News**  
**February 8, 2006**

Crowds of people were forced to wait for hours at some polling stations  
International monitors have praised the running of Haiti's general election, as vote-counting gets under way.

The head of the Organisation of American States, Jose Miguel Insulza, said voting was satisfactory despite a chaotic start.

At least three people died and dozens were injured in crushes at polling stations or altercations with police.

It is the first vote since President Jean-Bertrand Aristide was ousted a year ago. Results are due on Friday.

People in Haiti - the poorest country in the Americas - were choosing a new president, as well as a 129-member parliament.

The front-runners are Rene Preval, a former ally of Mr Aristide who is popular with the poor, and Charles Henry Baker, a businessman.

If none of the candidates achieves a 50% majority, the two best-placed candidates will compete in a run-off.

The BBC's Claire Marshall, in Haiti, says the issue now is whether the outcome will be seen as free and fair.

#### Delays

The chief European observer, Johan Van Hecke, said early logistical problems had been resolved, while the United Nations special envoy, Juan Gabriel Valdes, praised Haitians for turning out in large numbers.

A US government spokesman said Haiti's election appeared "pretty successful" and said the US would work with whoever is elected.

Polls closed several hours later than expected. Voting was extended because some polling stations in the capital, Port-Au-Prince, failed to open on time.

#### HAITI FACTS

Life expectancy: 51 years  
Population below poverty line: 65%  
Adult literacy rate: 52%  
Source: UNDP

In pictures: Haiti elections  
Eager voters cause chaos

This led to shoving and stampedes, with angry voters trying to force their way in. Among the victims was a police officer who was lynched by a mob, the authorities said.

Many impoverished supporters of Mr Preval alleged that it was all a plot to see their candidate defeated.

But the electoral authorities denied this, and appealed for calm. Thousands of armed UN troops were deployed to watch over the election process, which has been delayed several times.

Despite the presence of peacekeepers, the country has continued to be blighted by political and criminal violence and instability.

Aristide return?

Mr Aristide was first elected in 1990, but within a year he was overthrown, and replaced by a succession of military governments.

Voters vented their anger  
The US, backed by the UN, intervened in 1994 to restore order.

In the elections that followed, Mr Aristide was barred from standing, but Mr Preval, his close ally, took nearly 90% of the vote.

Mr Aristide later returned to power, but he was forced out in early 2004 when opposition to his rule grew increasingly violent. He remains in exile in South Africa.

Mr Preval has told the BBC that Mr Aristide may return if he wishes, but that he will not tolerate the violent groups that pledge him allegiance.

**Voting under the gun**  
**by Lyn Duff**  
**San Francisco BayView**  
**Feb. 8, 2006**

Hopes for a peaceful return to democracy were quashed Tuesday when tens of thousands of voters were literally turned away from the polls in Haiti's first presidential election since the violent ouster of President Jean-Bertrand Aristide by a group of demobilized Haitian soldiers, drug traffickers and convicted human rights offenders.

Pre-election polls showed that former President René Préval, who served from 1995 to 2000 as a member of the Lavalas party and is now leader of the Lespwa political party, was the frontrunner with 37 percent of the popular vote. His closest contender, businessman Charles Baker, was a distant second with only 10 percent in independent pre-election polls.

The bulk of Préval's support comes from the middle and lower income populations and from members of Lavalas. But early reports indicated that the bulk of Port-au-Prince's population was effectively barred from voting by polls that were moved without notice, polling stations that did not open, and by what one international observer termed "intentional and systematically created chaos."

Human rights attorney Evel Fanfan from the Association of University Graduates Motivated for a Haiti with Rights described it as an "electoral coup d'état," saying, "At area 2004, where the Electoral Commission without explanation had transferred the voting center for Cité Soleil, (there were) more than 80 voting booths for 400 voters each, giving a total of 3,200 voters a space designed only for 1,000 people.

The appearance of U.N. troops at the entrance to the Delmas 2 polling station didn't discourage voters, even though U.N. troops have often acted more like death squads than peacekeepers recently.

Photo: William Farrington

"It was the Tower of Babel, total confusion for voters with cards in their hands searching in vain for their names. No list of names was posted ... the voters looked high and low to find an explanation, and there was no one in charge present," he said.

Before results were even in, Bay View people on the street reported voting problems in Port-au-Prince and violence at the polls.

Steve, 43, driver: I drive my friend's tap tap (communal bus) on two routes in Delmas and up from Petionville, so I see things. I was up the hill in Fairmont and Kenscoff, where the bourgeoisie lives. Their polling places were clean and well organized. They had many election workers and people to help you find your polling place. On the wall you could see the list of voters.

I drove to Nazon. It was chaos. The people were waiting in huge lines all day. There was no one to help them. There were no voters lists posted. A man went to ask where he should go to vote, and the election worker sent him away saying they had no time for him. He protested, and police came and a

policeman hit him in the face with the butt of his gun. This man was being peaceful at that moment, and I saw this crime against him with my own eyes!

Poor voters waited in apparently endless lines like these outside Sonapi polling station in the industrial park, while wealthy voters had plenty of clean, well staffed polling stations that opened on time.

Photo: William Farrington

Leoran, 18, high school student: We went to five places to find our polling station and waited in line all day, since 4 a.m. It is now close to 4 p.m., and we have been turned away again. The polls close soon and I know that my voice will not be heard.

Augustine, 29, construction worker: In the area of downtown, the police came to the polling places and told the people it was too crowded and they were obliged to leave the line and come back later because they were blocking the street. When the people in line refused to leave, the police drew their guns. ... This government is terrorists, and they are committing terrorism against the population because they know we will vote for Préval.

Pluto, 20, vocational student: It's clear that the rich intend to steal this vote from us. I'm not sure if it will succeed yet; we are too early in the day to tell. But already I heard on the radio that the New York Sun newspaper is saying that Haiti will need to have a runoff in the presidential elections. How could they know that if the vote is not already rigged? This is a scandal that the interim government is creating to keep their power over us and to squash the wishes of the majority of the Haitian people.

Arlene, 30, merchant: What can I say? This is the normal story for Haiti. We elected Aristide and the rich hated him, so they had the army do a coup against us. Then Aristide was brought back and the rich still hated him, so they had the foreigners take all the (international) aid away so we would starve.

That too was a coup against us. Then when Aristide was elected again, the rich still hated him, so they spread lies saying that the elections were false and that he was corrupt. That was also a coup against us because the Haitian people did not want to see Aristide go – only a few did, and they are the wealthy minority.

Then when the old Haitian Army came back, the whole world did a coup against us, because they did not respond to our requests for help. And since that time, many people have been arrested without charge or have been executed by the new macoutes. This election is really just a fraud, because no one I know has been allowed to vote today. So what can I say? This election is just one more coup against us.

Gerald, 70, gardener: At my age, you aren't fooled by the charlatans anymore. I knew this would happen, that the people holding the puppet strings would not allow a just and fair vote. The question is, since there are so many people who are voting for Lespwa, will the masterminds of this situation be able to prevent him from winning? We will see.

Our enemy thinks so poorly of us that he underestimates us. He thinks we are uneducated and ignorant, but his misunderstanding of the Haitian people will be his undoing.

Lyn Duff, [LynDuff@aol.com](mailto:LynDuff@aol.com), is a reporter currently based in Port-au-Prince. She first traveled to Haiti in 1995 to help establish a children's radio station and has since covered Haiti extensively for the Bay View, Pacifica Radio's Flashpoints, heard on KPFA 94.1 FM weekdays at 5 p.m., and other local and national media.

**Massive turnout from slums in Haiti**  
**ELECTION PROCEEDS IN PEACE AND ORDER**  
**By Joe Mozingo, Jacqueline Charles and Trenton Daniel**  
**Knight Ridder**  
**San Jose Mercury News**  
**Feb. 8, 2006**

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti -- They set out from their slum before dawn, shadows walking through smoky darkness and arriving by the thousands to vote Tuesday for a new president who might deliver them from the bloodshed and hunger that is Haiti.

By 7 a.m. some 5,000 stood in line outside the polling center at a motor vehicle bureau, knowing it would take hours but determined to vote in the first election since President Jean-Bertrand Aristide left the country two years ago.

While the balloting was marred early on by bureaucratic problems, the massive turnout from the slums -- who consider the populist Aristide a savior -- was a dramatic glimpse of how Haitians in recent weeks came to embrace a four-times-postponed election they once doubted could bring any change. "We need peace, so we can rest finally," said Manele Joseph, 55, who recently took refuge in a church because of the fighting around her home in the slum of Cité Soleil, where violence between gangs and

U.N. peacekeepers has been so severe that a polling center could not be safely put there.

A quiet woman with sad, hooded eyes, she put on her church dress and a string of purple beads and began the one-mile trek from Cité Soleil to the motor vehicle bureau just after 3 a.m., joining some of the 60,000 registered voters in the slum who walked to the polls. Fears that armed anti-Aristide groups would attack polling places to derail the election -- the front-running candidate, René Préval, is a former president viewed by his conservative critics as an Aristide proxy -- proved unwarranted. Four deaths were reported, though it was not clear whether they were directly related to the elections.

But in the poorest country in the hemisphere, a country with a long history of election violence and now candidate for the world's list of failed states, the balloting for a president, 30 senators and 99 members of the lower chamber turned out to be notably peaceful.

The high turnout so early, with most voters showing up right around dawn, caught electoral workers off guard. Many were unprepared and could not open the polling centers on time, creating tension at many times, pandemonium at others.

At several polling places around the capital, voters stormed past some of the U.N. peacekeepers and Haitian police guarding the sites. But by the afternoon, most polling places appeared calm and voters were slowly moving along.

Haitian officials, foreign diplomats and observers held their breath during the chaos of the morning, but began to praise the process by the afternoon.

“A stunning example of success for the Haitian people,” said Tim Carney, chief of mission at the U.S. Embassy in Haiti. “They came out early, they braved the ragged initial disorganization and insisted on voting, and did.”

The turnout among the 3.5 million registered voters who cast ballots had not been determined by Tuesday evening because some of the polls that opened late were staying open past the scheduled 4 p.m. closing and still had voters waiting in line.

Once the votes are counted, the tally sheets will be sent to a tabulation center in Port-au-Prince. Because many polling centers are isolated -- 180 can be reached only by mule -- final results are not expected at least for two days.

But reports from around the nation of 8.1 million indicate turnout was high everywhere.

**Masses of Haitians endure long waits to vote**  
**The Detroit Free Press**  
**February 8, 2006**

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti -- Scuffles broke out and polling stations stayed open hours late Tuesday as masses of Haitians waited, sometimes in mile-long lines, to vote under the protection of United Nations peacekeepers.

Rene Preval, a 63-year-old former president backed by many poor Haitians, was the front-runner among 33 candidates for president, according to pre-election polls. The nation's electoral council said early results wouldn't be available until late today.

Jose Miguel Insulza, secretary-general of the Organization of American States, said a majority of registered voters cast ballots, though specific figures weren't yet available.

The vote has been postponed four times since October. If no one wins a majority, a March 19 runoff would be held.

By the Associated Press

## **Preval Reportedly Leads Haitian Vote**

**By STEVENSON JACOBS**

**The Associated Press**

**Washington Post**

**Wednesday, February 8, 2006**

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti -- A spokesman for former Haitian President Rene Preval said Wednesday that unconfirmed early results showed him with a wide lead in the country's presidential race \_ even though many ballots were still being carried in from remote polling places by plane, truck and mule.

The claim from Preval's team could not be verified, and the first official results were not expected to be released until Thursday, said Jacques Bernard, director general of Haiti's electoral council. Final results could come on Friday or Saturday, he said.

Haitian electoral workers count ballots by candlelight during a regular blackout in the Bel-Air neighborhood of Port-au-Prince, Haiti, Tuesday, Feb. 7, 2006. Haitians voted in overwhelming numbers in an election aimed at restoring democracy in this impoverished nation, swamping electoral officials who struggled to cope with the large turnout making them to extend the voting period by several hours. (AP Photo/Ariana Cubillos) (Ariana Cubillos - AP)

Tuesday's elections were the first since the government of Jean-Bertrand Aristide was ousted in a bloody revolt two years ago, and officials said collecting and tabulating the results would take several days.

But some polling stations posted unconfirmed local results outside. These showed strong early support for Preval, a shy and soft-spoken 63-year-old agronomist widely supported by Haiti's poor masses.

At a large polling center near the huge slum of Cite Soleil, unconfirmed results taped to large columns inside showed Preval winning about 90 percent of the votes cast there.

Across the capital in Petionville, home to many of Haiti's wealthiest citizens as well the poor Haitians who serve them, Preval took slightly more than 70 percent of the vote at another polling station, according to posted results.

Preval's political adviser, Bob Manuel, said preliminary calculations show the former president having won 67 percent of the nationwide vote, with 16 percent of votes counted.

Preval himself was in his rural hometown of Marmelade and wasn't speaking to reporters. He emerged from his family home once, briefly dancing along to a band playing outside and waving to supporters.

Bernard said only a small percentage of balloting results had reached the capital, slowing the vote count. "By Friday night or Saturday noon, we will have a clear idea of the results of the election," he told reporters

Haitians eagerly awaited the first returns Wednesday as scores of U.N. peacekeepers patrolled quiet streets in the capital, Port-au-Prince. Tuesday's voting, guarded by a 9,000-strong U.N. force, was

fraught with early delays but largely free of the violence that has plagued the capital since Aristide fled.

The leading contender among the 33 presidential candidates was Preval, the only elected leader in Haitian history to finish his term. He is also a former ally of Aristide, who remains in exile in South Africa.

Preval's closest rivals include Charles Henri Baker, 50, a wealthy garment factory owner, and Leslie Manigat, 75, who was president for five months in 1988 until the army ousted him.

More than 50 percent of Haiti's 3.5 million registered voters were believed to have cast ballots, said David Wimhurst, a U.N. spokesman, adding that a precise figure wasn't yet available. He also said that the United Nations has not received any reports of fraud or other major irregularities in the voting.

"I think no one can deny the legitimacy of this process because people really participated," the special U.N. envoy to Haiti, Juan Gabriel Valdes, told Associated Press Television News.

Haitian electoral workers count ballots by candlelight during a regular blackout in the Bel-Air neighborhood of Port-au-Prince, Haiti, Tuesday, Feb. 7, 2006. Haitians voted in overwhelming numbers in an election aimed at restoring democracy in this impoverished nation, swamping electoral officials who struggled to cope with the large turnout making them to extend the voting period by several hours. (AP Photo/Ariana Cubillos) (Ariana Cubillos - AP)  
However, he conceded that polls opened too late and "some people were not even able to vote."

Manigat's wife, Senate candidate Myrlande Manigat, said initial reports from their own party's representatives monitoring the vote count showed Preval with a big lead in her district, which includes much of metropolitan Port-au-Prince and outlying areas.

"We are very worried that Preval has won on the first round," Manigat told The Associated Press.

If no candidate wins a majority, a runoff between the top two vote-getters will be held March 19.

The vote count was going "very slowly" because of delays retrieving ballots from rural areas, Wimhurst said.

"The hardest part is getting ballots back to the capital," where the vote tabulation center is located, he said. "In some cases, it will take two days to get ballots from outlying areas."

U.N. officials were relying in part on 280 mules, loaded with bulging sacks of ballots and other material. A U.N. plane also arrived in the capitol, carrying balloting results from the countryside.

The huge turnout all but overwhelmed electoral officials, who conceded they were ill-prepared for the crush of voters. Many stations opened late, lacking the necessary workers, security and ballots to

handle so many voters who turned out by foot, car and brightly colored buses. Many Haitians cast ballots after spending hours in lines stretching up to a mile.

"It could have been better," said Jose Miguel Insulza, head of the Organization of American States, but he said the voters' enthusiasm made the elections successful. "In many places, people would not have stood in line for so long waiting to vote."

The elections were deemed vital to avoiding a political and economic meltdown in the Western Hemisphere's poorest nation. In the aftermath of Aristide's ouster, gangs went on a kidnapping spree and many factories closed because of security problems and a shortage of foreign investment.

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Associated Press writers Joseph B. Frazier in Marmelade and Michael Norton in Port-au-Prince contributed to this report.

**Hope for Haiti?**  
**The Providence Journal**  
**Opinion: Editorials**  
**Thursday, February 9, 2006**

Haiti's presidential election Tuesday occurred on a significant date: the 20th anniversary of the exile of notorious dictator Jean-Claude "Baby Doc" Duvalier.

Yet the last two decades have hardly seen smooth progress away from Haiti's tormented history. In many ways, the country is now worse off than it was 20 years ago, as the boatloads of refugees landing on Florida beaches -- or drowning en route -- sadly attest. With an annual per-capita income of less than \$400 and some 80 percent of Haitians living in abject poverty, it is the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere. The literacy rate is 53 percent.

Tuesday's election tells the story. Ever since President Jean-Bertrand Aristide's government was overthrown two years ago, an interim government and 8,000 United Nations peacekeeping troops have been trying to organize free and fair elections -- in the face of mounting chaos and violence, which has taken more than 1,500 lives, including nine U.N. peacekeepers and 78 police officers. In December alone, there were 247 reported kidnappings in Port-au-Prince, the capital. Parts of the country, including Port-au-Prince's sprawling slum, Cité Soleil, are too dangerous for the peacekeepers even to enter.

Then there are the problematic logistics. Mules are being used to collect the election ballots from much of the country, which is impassable to vehicles. Extensive flooding -- result of the loss of once-lush forests -- has washed out the roads.

Yet despite the conditions, the voter turnout was large. Many polling stations stayed open long into the night, to accommodate all who had come to cast their ballots.

The results are due tomorrow but may not be final for days. Favored is former President René Préval, who before the election seemed to have a big lead. He was once closely allied with Mr. Aristide, who still commands the loyalty of Haiti's poor. Charles Baker, a factory owner, is supported by business groups; he led street protests that helped bring down Mr. Aristide.

Whoever wins, Haiti will still need much international support. Indeed, many say that this failed state -- so chaotic, violent and incapable of self-governance -- should be run under a U.N. mandate, with foreign troops indefinitely maintaining law and order. The United Nations, however, would shrink from such a role.

## **Minor problems reported in presidential voting**

**By Reed Lindsay**

**THE WASHINGTON TIMES**

**February 9, 2006**

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti -- Observers complained about minor voting irregularities yesterday as Haitians awaited the results of Tuesday's presidential election, which many hope could help end the country's slide into violent political conflict.

A spokesman for former President Rene Preval, the apparent front-runner, said he had a substantial lead, but those claims could not be verified.

In spite of the various problems at the polls, international monitors praised the relative lack of violence compared with past elections and declared the vote a success.

"It's possible that these are the best elections in Haiti's history," said Gerardo Le Chevallier, head of the elections for the United Nations' peacekeeping mission in Haiti.

Mr. Le Chevallier expected half of the ballots to be counted by last night, but the final results were not to be announced until tomorrow at the earliest. Jacques Bernard, director-general of the Provisional Electoral Council, said the release of preliminary tallies would begin today.

Organization of American States Secretary-General Jose Miguel Insulza estimated that two-thirds of registered voters cast ballots, while Juan Gabriel Valdes, chief of the U.N. mission in Haiti, put turnout at more than 60 percent.

Some observers were critical of the voting process.

Close to Cite Soleil, a vast neighborhood where armed groups frequently clash with U.N. peacekeepers, thousands of voters waited at polling stations that opened more than three hours late.

Spontaneous demonstrations erupted as angry voters denounced the electoral council's decision to remove polling stations from Cite Soleil as a ploy to disenfranchise its poor residents. The area strongly supports Mr. Preval, who dominated pre-election polls.

In other areas, some voters could not find their names on the lists at packed voting centers.

Vincent de Herdt, who is leading an observation mission by IFES, a Washington-based pro-democracy group funded partly by the U.S. Agency for International Development, said that 95 percent of the polling stations IFES monitored opened late.

"It's difficult to know just how many people were turned away or discouraged from voting. But I think at the end of the day most people could vote," he said. "The counting has been better organized than the voting."

Mr. Insulza said fraud was unlikely.

"The elections were perfectly clean, and the votes are going to be counted well," he said. "There is no way the results can be altered here."

Mr. Preval would need more than 50 percent of the vote to forgo a second round with his closest competitor. His immediate rivals are Charles Henri Baker, 50, a wealthy garment factory owner, and Leslie Manigat, 75, who was president for five months in 1988 until the army ousted him.

A 63-year-old agronomist, Mr. Preval is hotly opposed by business leaders, who consider him a puppet of the only politician they hate more: former President Jean-Bertrand Aristide.

But he has strong support among the poor, who see him as an efficient and honest administrator.

"Everybody in my neighborhood voted for Preval," said Roland Solange, an artisan who sells wooden handicrafts outside the luxurious Hotel Montana, which is serving as election headquarters. "He's the only one to vote

**HAITI: OAS PLEASED WITH VOTING PROCESS - Counting of ballots under way**  
**Thursday | February 9, 2006**  
**Jamaica Gleaner**

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti (CMC):

COUNTING OF ballots continues in Haiti following Tuesday's elections, with the organisers expressing general satisfaction over the conduct of the polls.

So far, no official word has been given on the actual turnout of the elections for which preliminary results were expected yesterday.

Electoral officials say all indications are of a high turnout of the 3.5 million eligible voters, given an unexpectedly high level of voter participation.

On Tuesday, Haitians flocked to the polls in the thousands to exercise their franchise in an election in which former President René Preval was the favourite to replace exiled President Jean-Bertrand Aristide.

Aristide's Lavalas Family party also remains a force to be reckoned with in Haiti, where over 50 political parties and more than 1,000 candidates also contested legislative elections on Tuesday.

The assistant secretary general of the Organisation of American States, Ambassador Albert Ramdin, told the Caribbean Media Corporation that despite several hiccups recorded in the process, he was generally pleased that the majority of the electorate was not disenfranchised.

## **Voters battle obstacles to cast historic ballots**

**Voters overcame major obstacles to cast ballots in the first election since President Jean-Bertrand Aristide fled the country nearly two years ago.**

**BY JOE MOZINGO, JACQUELINE CHARLES AND TRENTON DANIEL**

**Miami Herald**

**Feb. 8, 2006**

PORT-AU-PRINCE - They set out from their slum before dawn, shadows walking through smoky darkness and arriving by the thousands to vote Tuesday for a new president who might deliver them from the bloodshed and hunger that is so much of Haiti.

By 7 a.m., some 5,000 stood in line outside the polling center at a motor vehicles bureau, knowing it would take hours, but determined to vote in the first election since President Jean-Bertrand Aristide fled into exile two years ago.

While the balloting was marred early on by bureaucratic problems, the massive turnout from the slums -- filled with voters who consider the populist Aristide a savior -- was a dramatic glimpse of how Haitians in recent weeks came to embrace a four-times-postponed election they once doubted could bring any change.

"We need peace, so we can rest finally," said Manele Joseph, 55, who recently took refuge in a church because of the fighting around her home in the slum of Cité Soleil, where violence between gangs and U.N. peacekeepers has been so severe that a polling center could not be safely put there.

A quiet woman with sad, hooded eyes, she put on her church dress and a string of purple beads and began the one-mile trek to the motor vehicle bureau just after 3 a.m., joining some of the 60,000 registered voters in the slum who had to walk to the polls. While many taxi and jitney drivers stayed home amid confusion over whether they would be allowed to circulate, voters flooded the streets on foot.

**'SUCCESS'**

"A stunning example of success for the Haitian people," said Tim Carney, the chief of mission at the U.S. Embassy in Haiti. "They came out early, they braved the ragged initial disorganization and insisted on voting, and did."

Fears that armed groups would attack polling places to derail the election proved unwarranted. Several deaths were reported, though it was not clear whether they were directly related to the elections. But in the poorest country in the hemisphere, a country with a long history of election violence and a candidate for the world's list of failed states, the balloting for a president, 30 senators and 99 members of the lower chamber turned out to be notably peaceful.

The front-runner in the polls for President is René Prével, a former president and one-time protege of Aristide, followed by businessman Charles Henri Baker and former President Leslie Manigat. One U.N. official who monitored the beginning of the vote counting Tuesday night at a major polling station in the well-to-do suburb of Petionville -- where Baker and Manigat had been expected to draw their strongest support -- said that Prével had taken upwards of 70 percent of the vote there.

If no candidate gets 50 percent of the vote, there will be a runoff, scheduled for March 19.

The high turnout so early in the day, with most voters showing up right around dawn, caught electoral workers off guard. Many were unprepared and could not open the polling centers on time, creating tension at many sites, pandemonium at others.

At several polling places around the capital, voters stormed past some of the U.N. peacekeepers and Haitian police guarding the sites. But by the afternoon, most polling places appeared calm and voters were slowly moving along.

"Many voters came very early, and some of the centers, particularly the big ones, were overwhelmed," said Mark Schneider, a senior vice president of the International Crisis Group, here to observe the elections. "But the patience of the Haitian people is formidable. And the will of the people to vote is truly impressive."

Jean-Gilles Anite, 25, waited in line for 4 ½ hours in the lower-class Bel Air neighborhood to vote for Préval.

"It was no problem," she said. "We need this country to change. But it's not only the new president that has to change things. The Haitian people have to change, to put our heads together and unite." Haitian officials, foreign diplomats and international observers held their breath during the chaos of the morning, but began to praise the process by the afternoon.

The turnout among the 3.5 million registered voters who cast ballots had not been determined by

Tuesday evening because some of the polls that opened late were staying open past the scheduled 4 p.m. closing and still had voters waiting in line.

But one top U.N. advisor in Haiti estimated the turnout at 70 percent or higher.

The votes were expected to be counted overnight, and the tally sheets were to be sent to a tabulation center in Port-au-Prince by midday today. Because many polling centers are isolated -- 180 can only be reached by mule -- final results are not expected for two days.

But reports from around the nation of 8.1 million indicate turn-out was high everywhere, including Gonaives -- a port city in the north that spawned the revolt against Aristide, a former priest now living in exile in South Africa.

Aristide engendered hope among the poor when he won Haiti's first truly democratic elections in 1990. A military coup toppled him in 1991, some 20,000 U.S. troops returned him to power in 1994 and he was elected in 2000 to a second term -- during which he enlisted slum gangs to protect his government.

When he was ousted again in 2004, U.S. Marines and now some 9,000 U.N. peacekeepers arrived to keep order -- a situation that troubles many in this nation that is so proud of its status as the second free republic in the Americas.

Bureaucratic foul-ups caused frustration around the country, mostly about voters' names that could not be found on registration lists.

"I'm a citizen, but I can't vote because they can't find my name," Rony Auderuste, 29, said at a Gonaives poll after waiting seven hours. ``I'm going home because they couldn't find my name." In Port-au-Prince, many of the voters had the same complaint, with some saying that they had to walk to two polling centers before they found the correct one.

## GLITCHES

Serge Gilles, a presidential candidate for the social democratic group Fusion, blamed the glitches on the electoral council and advisors from the United Nations and the Organization of American States. "When I think of what I went through here today, as a presidential candidate, what will the Haitian people have to do to be able to vote?" he said shortly after a police escort allowed him to negotiate the chaotic mass of people waiting to vote in the Port-au-Prince suburb of Petionville.

At the motor vehicle bureau, the first person in line was Marie-Ange Francois, a 20-year-old who is nine months pregnant and had to walk a mile to get there -- and then wait in line for hours. "I came with her in case the baby breaks on the way," said her mother, Marie Joseph.

A little way back in line was Lucien Louis, a wiry 71-year-old Cité Soleil resident who shook violently like someone who suffers from Parkinson's disease. He walked with uncontrolled energy and relied on neighbors to keep from falling into the slum's open sewers.

But he wasn't going to miss the election no matter what.

"We can't eat, we can't sleep, there are bullets all over the place . . . I feel like I'm in the middle of a war," he said.

``This has to change."

**Freed Haitian Priest Gerard Jean Juste on His Imprisonment and the Haitian Elections  
Democracy Now!**

**Wednesday February 8, 2006**

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As Haitians await the election results, Haitian Catholic priest Father Gerard Jean Juste, temporarily released from prison after more than 6 months in a Haitian jail, speaks on the election, his arrest and jail conditions, and the leadership and future of Haiti. [includes rush transcript]

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Last week Father Gerard Jean Juste was temporarily released from jail in Haiti in order to be treated for leukemia and pneumonia. Hundreds of religious, political and human rights leaders and 50 members of the U.S. congress had called on the interim Haitian government to release him. Amnesty International had labeled him a "prisoner of conscience." On Monday, Father Jean Juste announced his support for Rene Preval.

Gerard Jean Juste, freed from prison in Haiti

AMY GOODMAN: We welcome you to Democracy Now! It is great to have you with us, Father Jean-Juste.

GERARD JEAN-JUSTE: Thank you very much.

AMY GOODMAN: How are you feeling?

GERARD JEAN-JUSTE: I'm feeling a little bit better and I thank all of you, friends, religious people, people everywhere in different countries around the world and legislators. I thank all of you who helped me recuperate now, and I have received outstanding medical treatment at the Jackson Memorial Hospital. I'm so happy that so many people caring for me and I want to remain grateful to all of you for my whole life.

AMY GOODMAN: Father Jean-Juste, can you share your response to the election that took place in your country, as you are here in the United States right now?

GERARD JEAN-JUSTE: Of course. That was my birthday present, as I foresaw it. And the people have responded in big numbers and they wanted to exercise their rights to vote and indeed have exercised it. I am happy, and I hope that from now on, nobody should stop the Haitian people from enjoying the right to vote. Also now, I hope that no one should try once more to go against the will of the people because that's created so much turmoil, such a chaotic situation that we have lived since February 29, 2004, so we hope that everyone from now on will have great respect for the poorest one will have great respect for everyone. Particularly those poorest people who are trying hard to get off misery and to organize themselves and we have one more chance in history to regain our place as a nation and to contribute as our ancestors have contributed to freedom. This is a great step in the right direction, and I congratulate everyone who helped us to live this great day, February 7, 2006.

AMY GOODMAN: Father Jean-Juste, we last spoke to you on July 21st. You were headed to the funeral of a journalist named Jacques Roche. You were arrested after being attacked by a mob. They

charged you with the murder of Jacques Roche, and you ended up more than six months in jail, temporarily released right now for medical treatment. Can you describe what happened that day? I remember when we were talking to you, you said you were being followed at that point. We were talking to you in your car on the way to the funeral.

GERARD JEAN-JUSTE: Yes, indeed. On my way to the church I was followed by the police and the siren going loud was distracting me while I was talking to you on the radio. So when I arrived at church, and then I humbly wanted so much to offer my condolences and my comfort to the parents of Jacques Roche, to all the friends, because this is a brother that I didn't know personally, but after his death, I've learned a lot about him. And also knowing that his father is from the same town from where I am from in Haiti, from Carvaillion. We have a good time in Carvaillion, the Jean-Juste family and the Roche family.

So I took the opportunity to go there to pray and accompany them. But unfortunately, there was a plot going on. I was not aware of it. They directed the mob in my direction so I saw myself surrounded in the church and on the sacristy of the church and then I kneeled down to pray. I said, "God, I surrender unto you my soul," because I was ready to accept death as one of the attackers have told me that what I see coming for you, father, is bad. You better leave right away. Then as I was leaving, walking backward toward the sacristy and toward the rectory, the mob keep attacking me, and I was accompanied by the attorney, Bill Quigley, a volunteer attorney, who had done a great job, to help us in the struggle, and then the mob keep coming on me, beating me all over my neck, beating me all over my shoulders. They threw some liquid at me, which was poured over my neck. I didn't know what kind apparently it was a chemical liquid.

Also, at a certain time, I was -- I saw a young lady tear into the crowd, rushing toward me, jump on my neck and with a rosary in her hands and praying, helping me to pray. She was-- received blows for me. And then someone has withdrawn a pick about two feet long, tried to stab me from my heart side. And the lady got in her jacket the pick that pierced the side of her and missed me. So that lady saved me. And we moved up the stairs to the rectory. At the rectory, we hid ourselves at the ladies' restroom.

From there the police and the minister, the troops from the United Nations, they arrived. They told me that it is not safe to stay where I was because they were trying to burn the rectory. They had to take me away to the police commissariat. I went to the police headquarters, even though a priest friend of mine said "No, the priest is okay here at the Rectory. There would be no attack. Leave him here." So they decided -- police force decided to take me away to the police headquarters which was about a mile from the rectory.

AMY GOODMAN: And they then arrested you?

GERARD JEAN-JUSTE: Then, I arrived there by 11:30 A.M. By 9:30 p.m., instead of letting me go home, me, who has been the victim, and the attackers who have all have been left alone, going freely in the streets. I was the one being arrested and thrown at the bare floor of the cell at the police station, joining about 44 others -- 44 other prisoners there. It was a tough day for me without food, without drink and beaten, in very bad shape. I had received no medication at all. There I was on the floor, suffering. The next day, they brought me to the main penitentiary, where they put me in isolation which has been a kind of tomb on the heavy set of a building so they call it 'Titanic.'

So there I spent over a month where I kept fainting, I couldn't survive, until the prisoners took good care of me. They brought me up on their shoulders to the clinic, to the medical clinic. There I received some treatment. From that day, I decided to go on hunger strike for many reasons because the deportees I found in a section of the jail, where there nobody knew about them, and they had no hope at all. Also, some prisoners were sick. Instead of receiving treatment, they were maltreated. Also, overcrowding situation at the jail, and some youngsters dying and some of them who suffered from mental sickness. Instead of receiving care, they punished them further. That was heartbreaking for me.

AMY GOODMAN: Father Jean-Juste, when you were held in prison for the six months, there was word that you were going to run for president, but that the interim government, the unelected government said because they had jailed you, you could not run. Is that right?

GERARD JEAN-JUSTE: But that's what amazed me. I didn't know I was so popular in Haiti. The government, it seems that they had made some kind of survey. They tried to trap me before election. I didn't know that. Even the Bishop of Port-au-Prince who is a good friend of mine, Monsignor Miot, Bishop Miot, he advised me not to go on, to stay at the church, because they are plotting something against me. It happened just that day. I couldn't hold it. I went to the church, but it is true, they knew that something would happen. But myself, I was not aware of it at the time I talked to you, frankly.

When I was in jail and suddenly, listening to the radio, I heard the people who had been demonstrating for my freedom. Instead of saying freedom for me, they say that they want me to be their candidate. I was surprised. I was shocked. I was happy, too, because to tell you frankly, I was not looking to become a candidate to become president. But I flirt with that idea once in a while, especially when the reporters are after me. So it is a good feeling.

AMY GOODMAN: Ultimately, though, Father Jean-Juste, you supported René Preval, who is considered the front-runner in this election. It is said he would allow President Aristide to return home. Have you spoken to President Aristide?

GERARD JEAN-JUSTE: Yes, indeed. From July until January 29, From July, 2005, to January, 2006, I have not spoken to President Aristide. I wanted so much to talk to him. We tried to correspond. I tried to sneak a phone into the prison cell, a cellular phone, tried hard, badly to talk to him. I failed. Somebody else got the phone, and he was punished. The other prisoner was punished. They didn't catch me with it, but I finally talked to President Aristide. I was so happy the other day when I talked to him. I talked to the first lady also, Mildred.

AMY GOODMAN: Do you expect President Aristide to return to Haiti?

GERARD JEAN-JUSTE: Definitely. That's his right. That's his right because the Constitution of Haiti does not allow to keep any Haitian in exile. Even Jean Claude Duvalier, "Baby Doc." If he wants to return to Haiti, he should be able to return to Haiti.

AMY GOODMAN: Will you -- will you, Father Jean-Juste, return? You have been temporarily released for your health treatment.

GERARD JEAN-JUSTE: Ask my good doctors, Dr. Paul Farmer, Dr. Ann, and many others who are treating me now, Dr. Jennifer Fueh. Ask them, they tell me, “Gerry, you can go home now.” I will try to book a reservation and go home immediately, because this is the first time since many years I have missed such big events in Haiti. Remember, the first—excuse me?

AMY GOODMAN: I was going to ask: the former Prime Minister, Yvonne Neptune, still in prison in the same prison you were held at, the National Penitentiary?

GERARD JEAN-JUSTE: Yes, we were held together. During my first, I was stationed at the National Penitentiary, but they tried to separate us because whenever they see us together, they think that we are plotting something. So when I arrived this time where we have been in jail together, they said I have no right to visit him. But, you know, knowing me, I sneak in once in a while without permission, and then we manage to correspond by letters. We write a lot of letters to each other almost every day. We keep writing each other.

AMY GOODMAN: We only have -- GERARD JEAN-JUSTE: He refused to eat. He is in danger now. I'm afraid for my brother, Yvonne Neptune. Because since eight months, he consumed no solid food, only liquid, water, and some vitamins. I don't know how he survives.

AMY GOODMAN: Father Jean-Juste, we only have 30 seconds, but I want to ask you, if you return to Haiti, will you be re-imprisoned?

GERARD JEAN-JUSTE: Prison or not, I'd love to be back to Haiti because this is where the action is taking place. I love people around here too. I want to tell my brothers and sisters, all my friends, I love you all, Margaret, Francois who has been helping us with food, with the foundations and so many other people helping me from U.S.

Also, let me take this minute to say special thanks to Amnesty International. I received over 4,000 letters from December to January, coming from Canada, coming from Europe, and coming from the United States, all over. I'm so happy about it. That's helped the prisoners so much. Even the other prisoners share my letters. They took some of my cards and placed them by their bed. They were happy. So thanks to you all who were concerned about the prisoners, the lawyers and everybody else.

AMY GOODMAN: Father Jean-Juste --

GERARD JEAN-JUSTE: Brian Concannon, and everybody else.

AMY GOODMAN: I want to thank you very much for being with us and speaking to us from Miami, where you have been released to receive medical treatment. Thank you.

GERARD JEAN-JUSTE: You're welcome.

AMY GOODMAN: Father Gerard Jean-Juste, imprisoned in Haiti for more than six months, now in the United States, hoping to return very soon to his home in Haiti.

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Haitians await the outcome of the first presidential election since the U.S.-backed ouster of Jean Bertrand Aristide two years ago. Voters were frustrated by voting stations opening late and other major problems, leading to crowds storming polling stations and voting continuing late into the night. We get a report from Port-au-Prince, Haiti. [includes rush transcript]  
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There were no polling stations Tuesday in the Lavalas stronghold of Cite Soleil, home to at least 200,000 people. Voters swarmed out of that poor neighborhood as well as Bel Air and other areas to discover that voting stations had failed to open, election officials had no ballots, registration lists were incorrect and lines stretched for blocks. Angry crowds stormed the gates of the voting stations. At least four people died, including a police officer who was killed by a mob after fatally shooting a voter. In many polling centers, vote counting continued late in the night. Doors remained open far longer than planned in order to accommodate voters still lined up outside. Thousands of armed UN troops were deployed to watch over the election process, which has been delayed four times since October. Official results are expected on Friday.

Voters in Haiti were choosing a new president, as well as a 129-member parliament. The frontrunner in the election is an ally of Aristide named Rene Preval. He served as Aristide's first prime minister and succeeded Aristide as president in 1996. However Preval never joined Aristide's political party Lavalas. He has said he would not prevent Aristide's return to Haiti. A factory owner named Charles Henri Baker is polling second. He was a leader of the anti-Aristide Group of 184 and is the only white candidate in the race.

Andrea Schmidt, independent journalist currently in Haiti. She reports from Port-au-Prince, Haiti.

AMY GOODMAN: We go first to Haiti to speak with independent journalist Andrea Schmidt. She joins us on the ground from Port-au-Prince. Welcome to Democracy Now!, Andrea.

ANDREA SCHMIDT: Thank you.

AMY GOODMAN: Can you describe what happened yesterday, election day in Haiti.

ANDREA SCHMIDT: Well, I want to say to start the day at 4:30 and to roam the streets of Port-au-Prince was one of most incredible experiences of my life, because it was extremely inspiring to see, after two years of political repression in many areas and human rights abuses and a disintegrating – further disintegrating infrastructure, to see Haitians come out to vote and to be in the streets, lined up, ready to vote by 5:00 A.M. It was extremely powerful. Then we arrived in Cité Soleil or rather, on the outskirts of Cité Soleil because, as you mentioned in the introduction, there was a decision made by the C.E.P., the Provisional Electoral Council, to not have voting stations inside Cité Soleil for alleged reasons of insecurity, but of course, there is always a question of how politically motivated these things are.

So people had to leave their neighborhood and walk to the outskirts to one of four voting centers, and the scene, when we arrived [inaudible] was, again, incredibly inspiring. At 5:00 a.m., people waiting to vote. By 6:00 a.m., the voting stations, the polling booths were supposed to open. There's, I believe, 43 different polling stations within that one voting center. Which means that over 2,000 people – sorry,

20,000 people would have been set to vote in that area. People became very, very impatient when they realized that it was 6:00 a.m. They wanted to vote before the sun got too hot because they were in a warehouse area, no shade whatsoever, except inside. And they realized that the voting booths hadn't even been set up yet.

The questions about why these failures in logistical planning took place remain. One of the things I observed later on in the day was going up to [inaudible] going up the hill to the wealthy areas of the city where voting was going on in a very orderly fashion, where people were able to go into a building, line up, vote within half an hour of arriving, is that if you plan to hold an election in a warehouse where there are no walls and you assume that the poorest people in the city should have to use the poorest infrastructure in the city, you are going to have elections that look like people taping cardboard boxes up to create private polling stations. You are going to have the sort of elections that are very, very vulnerable to all sorts of spoiling and a sort of disenfranchisement based on class, and that's what we observed yesterday.

By about 8:30 in the morning, I'd been doing [inaudible] and as far as I could observe, no had yet been able to vote. People became very frustrated. There was a remarkable demonstration of, I'd say, about 10,000 people that grew as it went from Cité Soleil, where it picked up people who had not yet been able to vote, up to Bellaire and was about to go to the C.E.P. headquarters on Del Meaux when the demonstration turned around, and people returned to their neighborhoods, saying that they were going to try to vote again. And then as you mentioned, polling stations closed two hours later. Then foreseen at least in Cité Soleil, or in the environs, where we were watching the closings. Again, some very poor infrastructure and security arrangements made for increased frustration, increased disenfranchisement where, you know, people were basically having to wrestle with Jordanian soldiers who had been patrolling their neighborhoods, shooting for several months.

AMY GOODMAN: Andrea Schmidt, I want to thank you very much for being with us. Speaking to us from Port-au-Prince, in Haiti.

## **A Better Day Comes for Haiti?**

**Editor**

**The Bahama Journal**

**Feb. 8, 2006**

Like so very many other people who have opinions about what has been happening in Haiti, we pray that the Haitian people will be given a chance to become all that they can. We do most sincerely believe that Haiti can once again resume its purposeful stride towards democracy.

Quite evidently, democracy requires much more than elections. As most close observers of the international scene would agree, democracy also requires that those who win, respect the rights of the minority. This is precisely where we have the most forebodings about Haiti's future prospects.

No matter who prevails, efforts must be found whereby compromise becomes the leitmotif in decision-making, where winner-take-all is abandoned. The longer-term hope is for the Haitian people to grow their middle class. This is obviously just another way of saying that Haiti must find a way of bridging the gap between the richest and the poorest.

We are absolutely convinced that the Haitian people can succeed in this venture. While it is patently obvious that this is a long-term project, there is no doubting the resolve of the Haitian people themselves.

This time around – perhaps with Rene Preval in the lead- the Haitian people might yet surprise the world. As we understand some of what is currently happening in Haiti, it is said that some of that nation's poorest and some of its most desperately distressed citizens are hopeful for a Preval presidency.

One report notes that "a half-an-hour drive from Mr. Préval's house through the teeming streets of Port-au-Prince, filled with election posters and battered, exhaust-belching vehicles bearing campaign banners, lies Cité Soleil, the city's most desperate slum. It is a world apart.

"Constantly threatened by violence and killings perpetrated by armed gangs, many linked to Aristide, and attacks by the Haitian National Police and even UN peacekeepers, the residents of Cité Soleil live in a stinking squalor of rusted metal shanties and open sewers that serve as lavatories. There is no running water, no electricity and the only law-and-order is that of the various gangs. Pigs and dogs eat from huge piles of rotting rubbish. A single bucket of water can cost 15 US cents.

"Yet many in Cité Soleil hope and believe that today's election could be their salvation. This week the slum has been unusually calm and gang leaders invited the media to visit and witness the support for Mr. Préval in this long-time Aristide stronghold."

Quite evidently, such is the power of the voice of the people and such is their yearning for change that the slum dwellers are convinced that if they can not have Aristide, they will make do with Mr. Preval.

As that same report also notes, "The Haitian people have a destiny to support people who will do good things for them," one gang leader known as Ti Blanc told The Independent as he was organizing an election rally in support of Mr. Préval.

They are saying, "With Préval we can bring the country out of misery. Nobody in Haiti can match Aristide [but] maybe the change is good. The violence has to end. We have to sit down together - me with everybody else."

We shall know soon enough whether Rene Preval will emerge as Haiti's new president. We will know soon enough whether Jean-Bertrand Aristide will play any role in Haiti's immediate political future. What is clear today is that the Haitian people –despite the odds stacked against them- remain hopeful.

As some of yesterday's news put it: "Today Haiti, the poorest and most chaotic nation in the Western hemisphere, finally votes for a new president in what is one of the country's most crucial elections. And if the polls, combined with evidence on the streets, are correct, Mr. Préval will emerge as the country's new leader.

We are told that his aptly selected campaign slogan was Lespwa - Creole for "hope".

Today we –too- are hopeful.

As always our hopes and prayers are with the Haitian people as they continue in their trek towards Democracy's front door. Tomorrow may yet be a better day for the Haitian people.

**Haitians go to polls in droves  
Elections are mostly peaceful  
The voters avoid violence but must confront confusion.  
Tim Collie | South Florida Sun-Sentinel  
February 8, 2006**

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti -- Facing daylong waits, missing ballots and chaotic conditions -- but little violence -- Haitians turned out in huge numbers Tuesday to choose their first democratic government since a rebellion ousted their last elected leader two years ago.

In the nation's capital, tens of thousands of voters walked, some for hours, through garbage-strewn streets before dawn to polling places in disarray. Voting hours were extended by two hours because many polling stations opened hours late. Many others lacked workers or ballots. At several places, workers read instructions for setting up ballot boxes.

But peace was largely maintained, and that was no small achievement in a country where dozens typically die during political violence in the run-up to elections.

During the past year, Haiti's capital has been plagued by a crime wave that has made it the kidnapping capital of the Western Hemisphere.

Election results will not be known for at least two days, but the polling problems Tuesday could mar the mandate of the next president.

Contested votes in the 2000 Senate elections eventually festered into a civic movement and rebellion that toppled President Jean-Bertrand Aristide in 2004.

There were few reported casualties Tuesday. A 75-year-old man died and several dozen people were injured as unruly crowds surged forward against gates and walls outside several polling centers in the cities of Port-au-Prince and Gonaives. Police used tear gas on a crowd at one site in Port-au-Prince. In other areas, when tempers seemed near the boiling point, crowds burst into political chants and spontaneous marches without police intervention.

At one polling place on the major thoroughfare of Delmas Boulevard, hundreds of would-be voters broke out of line, waved tree branches -- a Haitian ritual -- and began chanting, "Whether they like it or not, we'll vote for Preval." The reference was to former President Rene Preval, a favorite of the poor who several polls show is the front-runner in the presidential race.

As the Haitian riot police and United Nations troops looked on with their guns pointed into the crowd, the chanting voters held up their new voting cards and ran toward the Haitian presidential palace several blocks away. When they returned, many stepped back into the long, quiet lines.

The South Florida Sun-Sentinel is a Tribune Publishing newspaper.



**HIP predicts Preval winner in Haiti with 63% of the vote**  
**Wednesday, February 8, 2006 - 9:00 PM Haiti Time**  
**Haiti Information Project**

HIP - Haiti — Based upon exit polls and initial results, the Haiti Information Project (HIP) predicts that Rene Garcia Preval has won the presidency of Haiti with a handy 63% of the vote.

Rene Garcia Preval was the former prime minister for six months under Aristide's first administration before a brutal military coup in September 1991. An agronomist educated in Europe, he is also a former president of Haiti whose term ran from 1996 to 2001.

Preval's closest rival in the electoral contest, industrialist Charles Henry Baker, is not expected to poll with more than 10%. Leslie Manigat, a former president elected as a military favorite in 1988, actually polled ahead of Baker with an estimated 13% of the votes tabulated.

Baker represents the movement that ousted president Jean-Bertrand Aristide on Feb. 29, 2004. His defeat, and Preval's victory, signals the end of a U.S.-installed government backed by the United Nations that is accused of widespread human rights abuses including summary executions and false imprisonment.

Throughout the capital and during yesterday's elections, most of those interviewed by HIP saw a vote for Preval as a vote for the return of Aristide.

## **Vote count under way in Haiti after tense elections**

**Patrick Moser | Port-Au-Prince**

**08 February 2006**

**Mail and Guardian Online, South Africa**

Vote counting began in Haiti on Tuesday, in some areas by candlelight, after elections that were free of the political violence many had feared but were marked by stampedes that left four dead.

As the counting was under way in some centres late on Tuesday, voters elsewhere still waited their turn to fill ballots out at the small cardboard voting booths. Results were not expected before Friday.

International observers hailed Haitians' determination to participate in the election for a successor to Jean-Bertrand Aristide, the last elected president, who fled the turmoil-torn Caribbean country two years ago. He now lives in Pretoria in South Africa.

Thronges of people walked for hours in the general absence of public transportation, only to find massive lines outside voting centres.

Hours-long delays in opening numerous voting stations stirred widespread anger, after vote officials failed to show up in time.

A policeman and a civilian died of gunshot wounds and four others were injured when a crowd rushed the gates of a voting centre in the northwestern town of Gros Mornes, a local radio station reported.

In Port-au-Prince, one man was asphyxiated, another died of a heart attack and several more were wounded during similar stampedes, officials said.

More people were reported wounded in other parts of the country, including a Chilean peacekeeper who was stabbed as he intervened in a fight outside a voting center.

Officials of the 9 500-strong United Nations military and police force in Haiti also said 22 people were wounded, four of them seriously, when the wall of a voting centre collapsed in St Louis du Nord.

The situation calmed down later in the day.

Electoral authorities ordered voting offices to remain open as long as people were still in line, but some voting centres did not get the message and shut at 4pm (9pm GMT) as initially scheduled.

At a school in the Bel Air shantytown near the presidential palace, about 16 people seated at two rickety tables counted ballots, as an observer from the US embassy watched on. The only light came from candles supplied as part of the electoral kit.

Despite problems during the elections, which had been postponed four times since November, international observers hailed the very fact that the voting could be held in a country terrorised by armed gangs, plagued by rampant poverty, and with a history of fraudulent elections and military coups.

A team of European Union electoral observers however criticised the long delays in opening the voting centres.

"A population that was so motivated deserved well-prepared and well-organised elections," said Johan Van Hecke, the European deputy who led the 61-strong team.

But he said "technical and logistical problems created considerable delays in opening the polls".

Van Hecke, a Belgian, said everything should have been in place on the eve of the voting.

But he hailed the fact that while "there were minor incidents, one cannot say there was a lot of violence".

UN forces kept a close watch on the election.

Armoured personnel carriers were positioned in key areas of the capital, particularly near the notoriously violent Cite Soleil slum.

Thousands of people staged a protest march, decrying the delays and the fact that residents of Cite Soleil were forced to cast ballots in neighboring areas due to security concerns.

The protesters also chanted the name of former president Rene Preval, the front runner in opinion polls.

In the dirt-poor slums of the capital that have been hotbeds of violence, many back Preval (63) a former ally of Aristide.

"All here are voting for the same candidate," said Wishick Dagrin (45) an office employee who stood in a long line outside a voting centre for Cite Soleil.

Dozens of others immediately cheered, chanting "Preval, Preval".

Better-off Haitians seem to have little sympathy for Preval, and generally favour industrialist Charles Henry Baker (50) or former president Leslie Manigat (75).

"We should not be afraid of change, we should not return to the old ideas," said businessman Alex Turner, 53, who said he would vote for Baker, but would wait till the crowds thin out.

Opinion polls ahead of the election gave Preval a lead of at least 27% over Baker and Manigat.

Should no candidate obtain 50% of the vote, the front runner would face off in March with his closest rival.

Officials said it could take about three days to compile the results. - AFP

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**Haitians `have voted massively'  
Election workers overwhelmed  
The Toronto Star  
Feb. 8, 2006**

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti—Scuffles broke out and polling stations opened hours late yesterday as masses of Haitians waited — often in long lines — to vote under the protection of United Nations peacekeepers crouching behind machine-guns and patrolling alongside armoured vehicles.

Polls closed nearly four hours later than scheduled, leading the country's electoral council to report that early results would not be available until late today. Many ballots are being hauled down nearly impassable mountain paths by mules, horses and donkeys.

Yesterday's chaos was greatest outside Cité Soleil, a gang-ruled slum so volatile that election officials refused to place polling centres there, directing voters to instead cast ballots in industrial buildings on the periphery.

Hundreds of angry Cité Soleil residents, believing that authorities were deliberately making it impossible for them to vote, marched through streets jammed with UN tanks and littered with burning garbage, waving their voting cards and pounding on empty ballot boxes to protest voting snafus.

Fanning the discontent, gang members roamed the neighbourhood, erroneously telling residents and media that police had opened fire on voters.

"The bourgeoisie is trying to stage an electoral coup so the poor people can't vote their choice," screamed demonstrator Paul Ery, 45, who is jobless, as are most Cité Soleil residents.

Ely warned protestors "will take to the streets" in droves if the winner isn't Rene Preval, 63, a former president and the favourite of Haiti's poor.

Pre-election polls show Preval, an agronomist, as the front-runner, although it is not clear whether he could take the absolute majority needed to avoid a runoff election.

In an interview yesterday, Preval said "people are investing everything in this election."

Among the 33 presidential candidates are a factory owner whose slogan is "Order, Discipline, Work," and another former president ousted in a coup.

Haitian authorities urged calm, and extended voting so anyone in line by 6 p.m. could cast ballots. In a desperate attempt to beef up centres where ballots arrived late or workers failed to show, officials pulled volunteers from voting lines and gave them crash courses in helping run polling booths.

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`If these elections are not fair ... houses will burn

and heads will be cut off'

Jean Pierre, Haitian voter

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Turnout for the vote — called a key step toward steering this bloodied, impoverished country away from collapse — all but overwhelmed electoral officials. At dawn, when the 800 polling stations were supposed to open, it became apparent the day would not go smoothly. In the upscale Petionville suburb of the capital, some in a crowd of thousands of voters stormed a polling station. Several women fainted.

By early afternoon, all polls in this country of 8.3 million were open, said UN spokesman David Wimhurst.

Polls closed late last night, said Stéphane Lacroix, a spokesman for Haiti's elections commission.

"The people have voted massively," said UN special envoy Juan Gabriel Valdes.

Local radio reported gunfire killed a policeman and a civilian at Gros Morne in northern Haiti, and two elderly men reportedly died while waiting to vote.

The election stakes are huge. Haiti, which has seen only one president complete his term in office, could implode if the elections go wrong.

In the aftermath of a February 2004 rebellion that toppled president Jean-Bertrand Aristide, gang violence has escalated and the country's few factories are closing — causing thousands of layoffs — because of security problems and a lack of foreign investment.

"If these elections are not fair and if the person whom the population wants doesn't win, houses will burn and heads will be cut off," warned Jean Pierre, an unemployed 33-year-old.

The words recalled the battle cry of army Gen. Jean-Jacques Dessalines, who led a bloody rebellion against French troops and colonists in 1802: "Cut off their heads and burn their houses."

Canada, which has about 100 civilian police in Haiti as part of the UN peacekeeping effort, dispatched 106 observers and \$30 million for the election.

Star wire services

## **Going to Great Lengths to Vote in Haiti**

**Election day in the destitute nation sees a huge turnout driven by hope. But many face dismal conditions trying to cast their ballots.**

**By John-Thor Dahlburg and Chantal Regnault**

**The Los Angeles Times**

**Feb. 8, 2006**

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti — Haitians wearied by spiraling unrest and gang violence turned out in huge numbers Tuesday to choose a new president and parliament and perhaps put their impoverished Caribbean homeland on the path to some prosperity and peace.

Clutching her newly printed voter identification card, Marie Vincent, 20, a resident of Cite Soleil, the Haitian capital's most notorious slum, arrived at her polling station at 3:30 a.m., 2 1/2 hours before it was scheduled to open. Late in the morning, she was still waiting.

"I'm ready to spend the entire day here," Vincent said. "Because we want change in the country."

"We have tens of thousands of people outside some polling stations. Huge numbers," said David Wimhurst, a spokesman for the United Nations, which provided security and technical aid for the election.

"Sometimes they get unruly, but most are waiting patiently."

At one polling station in a vehicle registration bureau near Cite Soleil, thousands of people angered by the seemingly endless wait banged on the gates in frustration, then stormed the building.

Elsewhere, people in line were trampled by other would-be voters frantic to cast their ballots. According to local news reports, one person died of a heart attack, another of asphyxia.

In Bel Air, another Port-au-Prince shantytown, thousands of protesters waving their ID cards shouted in anger over the long lines and waits.

Technical and organizational glitches, including election workers arriving late or tardy deliveries of ballots, led to delays in opening polling stations, especially in Port-au-Prince, Wimhurst said. "It took far too long in some cases."

But by midday, the U.N. spokesman said, those problems appeared to have been resolved. In the afternoon, long lines had formed again outside the vehicle bureau that was the scene of the morning riot.

And Haitians who had feared the possible repeat of a 1987 bloodbath, when a gang armed with machine guns and machetes killed at least 20 would-be voters, breathed easier.

Thirty-three candidates were vying to become Haiti's first popularly elected president since Jean-Bertrand Aristide. The former priest and populist firebrand once enjoyed the backing of the United

States but was driven from power in early 2004, accused of corruption and political thuggery. Aristide now lives in exile in South Africa.

Since his departure, Haiti, the poorest nation in the Americas, has been ruled by an interim government and plagued by violence and disorder that have paralyzed commerce. In the slums, heavily armed gangs routinely clash with U.N. peacekeepers, and the crack of gunfire is heard daily. Kidnapping has become a common, and profitable, business.

The presidential front-runner is Rene Preval, 63, Haiti's president from 1996 to 2001 and a former Aristide ally. His bright yellow campaign posters were a common sight in Haiti's squalid slums and poor rural areas.

Preval's political foes, including members of the country's business elite, were worried that he could be a stalking horse for Aristide.

Also running were Guy Philippe, who led the armed rebellion that drove Aristide out of power; Leslie Manigat, a political scientist who was president for five months until a 1988 coup and was seen as the leading choice of the business sector; and Marc Louis Bazin, a former prime minister.

If no one wins a majority, a runoff between the two top finishers will be held March 19.

It could take days to count the votes. Roads and communications in Haiti's mountainous areas are often primitive, and ballots in some remote locations were to be collected by muleback.

For four years, Haiti has lacked a functioning legislature. Voters also were choosing among candidates for 129 parliamentary seats.

The election had been postponed four times because of security and organizational problems as well as squabbles within Haiti's Provisional Election Council.

To ensure that the casting and counting of ballots were fair, the 9,300-member U.N. peacekeeping force was deployed to protect polling places and to escort votes as they were brought to Port-au-Prince for tabulating, Wimhurst said.

The force "will do all it can to support the Haitian authorities in ensuring that the vote is held in freedom and safety," pledged U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan.

More than 92% of the country's electorate of 3.3 million had received voter ID cards, but election officials still were unprepared for them in many places. In Petionville, one of the choicest of Port-au-Prince suburbs, thousands of people were milling around the central square at midday, still waiting to vote at one of four polling stations. The election council extended polling hours to accommodate the crowds.

Authorities said they had put no voting stations in violence-plagued Cite Soleil for safety reasons, though some Preval supporters argued that this decision was a gambit by their foes to cheat them.

To make sure that their vote counted, many in the seaside slum, home to 60,000 registered voters, rose before dawn and walked trash-strewn, rutted streets to the places they were supposed to cast their ballots.

Josepha Manlet was in line outside her polling station by 4 a.m.

"You can't sleep in Cite Soleil," she said. "Bullets are flying all over."

"I'm voting for peace," Manlet said, by which she meant Preval, who has pledged to jail the gang bosses believed to be behind the crime wave in the capital.

A history of dictators, deposed presidents and the dashed hopes of the Aristide era have turned many Haitians into political cynics. But Tuesday's turnout, and the determination of ordinary people to have their vote count, provided a glimmer of hope.

Angeline Macet, 55, of Bel Air, got in line outside her polling station at 5 a.m. and was still there five hours later. Her back was hurting from standing so long, she said. But she was bent on casting her ballot.

"I'm not going home," Macet said.

A Haitian American specialist on the country's politics said it remained to be seen whether an election could help cure Haiti's many ills.

"The past two years have been for the vast majority of Haitians, and not just the poor, a nightmare, economically and also in terms of security," said Robert Fatton Jr., a political science professor at the University of Virginia. "It doesn't appear that anything has changed for the better."

However, antipathy toward Preval in the business community and middle class runs so deep that even if he wins, many Haitians might refuse to recognize him as president, Fatton said.

"Today the system is in crisis. It's not clear that we can extricate ourselves," Fatton said. "On the other hand, we're so close to civil war, it could be possible that whoever wins will benefit from a period of goodwill."

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Times staff writer Dahlburg reported from Miami and special correspondent Renault from Port-au-Prince.  
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## **Haitians Flock to Vote, on a Day of Anger and Hope**

**By GINGER THOMPSON**

**New York Times**

**February 8, 2006**

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti, Feb. 7 — After more than a year of planning, the long-awaited presidential elections began here on Tuesday with signs of the same tensions and disorder that have kept this poor, troubled nation at the brink of chaos for the last two years.

Haitians Storm the Polls, in Anger and in Hope At least four people died in a day of anger and confusion, as many polling stations opened hours late. Two people died after collapsing from exhaustion in the shoving to cast ballots, while a man in the northwestern town of Gros Morne was shot to death by a police officer. Later, the same officer was killed by a vengeful crowd that hacked him to death with machetes and burned his body, a Haitian radio station reported.

The voting was organized by the United Nations, the Organization of American States and an interim government installed by the United States. Initial results were expected Wednesday, with final results as late as Friday.

Haitian political observers and international election coordinators, including the O.A.S. secretary general, José Miguel Insulza, acknowledged the problems. Still, they said, the half-mile lines of people who walked hours to cast their ballots also showed an abiding determination and hope for something better.

"We cannot be complacent," Mr. Insulza said in an interview. "Mistakes were made and we will have to discuss them. But the fact is that we had a satisfactory election in Haiti, a satisfactory election in which many people voted."

In most polling places, electoral authorities said, more than 50 percent of registered voters showed up to the polls before 6 a.m., when the voting was to begin. Poll workers, Mr. Insulza said, were not ready for so many people so early, and voting centers opened hours late.

Also, in the poor neighborhood of Cité Soleil here in the capital, violence has been so common that the interim government did not open polling centers, so residents were angry even before the voting began.

Frustration among crowds of voters boiled over. People began scaling walls, smashing windows and breaking down doors to confront poll workers. Police officers fired tear gas and United Nations soldiers fired shots into the air.

The situation quieted after voting began. As time approached for polls to close at 4 p.m., the president of Haiti's electoral commission, Max Mathurin, announced that the centers would remain open until "there is not a single voter left in line."

Voters made clear they would settle for nothing else. Indeed, even after darkness fell, people were still voting by candlelight in polling places without lights.

"I don't want to see life this way, with kids washing cars on the streets instead of going to school," said Toussaint Wisley, 21, in Bon Repos, north of the capital. "I want to vote so that things can change and life in this country can be respected."

Barrett Kajuste, 49, said he did not mind walking an hour to vote in Gonaïves. "I am here because I want a change in my country," he said. "I have never been employed in my life. That is the change I want."

The election was widely considered a crucial step toward rebuilding a country pushed close to collapse after a violent uprising, mounting protests and pressure by the United States ousted former President Jean-Bertrand Aristide two years ago. Since then, the nation, in which more than half of the people live on less than \$2 a day, has been ravaged by kidnappings and killings.

Human rights groups estimate that some 1,500 people have been killed since 2004. They accuse the interim government, led by Prime Minister Gérard Latortue, of detaining hundreds of supporters of Mr. Aristide for political reasons. Meanwhile, opponents of the former president accuse street gangs loyal to him of conducting a campaign of violence across the capital to pressure the international community into returning Mr. Aristide to power.

Those tensions and the distrust that has come from them echoed through polling places.

The most heated incidents flared around Cité Soleil, where supporters of a leading presidential candidate, René Préval, shouted that the government was trying to deny people the right to vote and that the elections were a sham. Mr. Préval, previously elected president in 1995, is widely seen as a protégé of Mr. Aristide and heir to his supporters.

Some voters abandoned the polls and started protests. Most, however, stood firm.

"Even though there is so much disorganization, I want to fulfill my civic duty," said Jean-Gérald Luman, who lives near Cité Soleil. "People need a change. They need jobs. They need food. They need schools."

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Haitians Storm the Polls, in Anger and in Hope "But most of all, they need stability," he added. "That is why we are voting."

Martin Landi, director of electoral operations for the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti, acknowledged that the voting had a rocky start. But he said the United Nations had expected challenges in this "inflammable environment."

By early afternoon, Mr. Landi said, more than 90 percent of the 804 polling places were running peacefully. He likened the voting in Haiti to that in other countries ravaged by violence and upheaval, including Afghanistan and East Timor. "To me, the message that people are sending is that they want to vote," he said. "Some are pushing. And some are fighting. But they are voting."

Boxes of ballots were destroyed at polling places in the capital and around Gonaïves, electoral observers said, raising concerns about fraud and threats of more violence. Most people, however, seemed confident the vote would be fair.

A supervisor at a polling place inside a fancy apartment building Mr. Aristide built for government workers next to Cité Soleil complained that they did not get ballots and other materials on time. At another polling center inside a motor vehicle registration office, the electoral supervisor said he had only five employees to cover 17 voting tables.

In at least a few dozen stations, electoral authorities said, poll workers were illiterate and could not find voters' names on alphabetical lists, so they had to scan pages of photos. Illiterate voters could not read signs that explained where to vote.

At a station in Gonaïves, there were 45 voting tables for 18,000 voters. Jacques Toussaint had stood in line at almost every table.

"We don't have the right to vote," he said, sweaty and scowling. "Everywhere I go, I cannot find my name. I have been here since 6 in the morning, and I still cannot vote."

## **INTERVIEW-U.S. diplomat calls Haiti vote "successful"**

**08 Feb 2006**

**Source: Reuters**

**By Tom Brown**

MIAMI, Feb 7 (Reuters) - The top U.S. official for Latin America called Haiti's chaotic presidential election "pretty successful" on Tuesday and said Washington was prepared to work with whomever emerges as the impoverished country's new leader.

U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for Western Hemisphere Affairs Tom Shannon spoke in a telephone interview from Washington as voting, which began late and was glacially slow, was still under way.

Patrick Fequiere, a member of Haiti's electoral council, called the election "a mess" and Johan Van Hecke, head of a European Union observer mission, said there were serious problems involving voter lists full of mistakes.

But Shannon said early reports from the U.S. Embassy in the capital Port-au-Prince and U.S. election observers suggested things were going reasonably well.

"What we've seen so far seems to indicate that the vote has been pretty successful," Shannon told Reuters.

He stressed there was nothing "normal" about a country torn by chaos and gang violence that was holding its first election since democratically elected President Jean-Bertrand Aristide was toppled two years ago -- suggesting any criticism should take that into account.

Washington is seen as both a key ally and a major potential adversary by Haitians. U.S. troops have been sent in three times -- first between 1915 and 1934, then in 1994 to restore Aristide to power after he was ousted in a military coup, and lastly in 2004 when Aristide was again deposed by an armed revolt.

U.S. officials accused Aristide -- a champion of Haiti's overwhelming majority of poor -- of despotism and corruption, and urged him to leave during the rebellion two years ago.

Ex-president Rene Preval, a one-time Aristide protege, was favored to win Tuesday's election and he may open the door to the firebrand priest's return from exile in South Africa.

"We will work with (whomever) the Haitian people chose as their president," said Shannon, when asked about possible U.S. unease about the outcome of the Haitian poll.

"Far from looking backward, we're going to be looking forward," he added.

The U.S. commitment, along with that of much of the international community, will be to work with the new government "to address the kind of long-standing development and security issues that have plagued Haiti for many, many years," Shannon said.

"This is a vital and necessary step," he said.

## **Poll delays leave Haitians sweating in landmark vote**

**By Andrew Buncombe**

**Independent Online**

**Feb. 8, 2006**

It was 4am and still dark when Dieudoune Orelus left her home in the Delmas 33 district of Haiti's capital - quietly determined to play her part in deciding her country's future.

More than four hours later she was sitting inside the sweltering makeshift polling centre, tired and frustrated and still nowhere near casting her vote. She insisted, however, that she would remain as long as it took - even if that meant waiting until nightfall. "I came here to vote... so that the country can change," she said. "I will stay all day long. I have hope."

Yesterday this impoverished Caribbean nation went to the polls to elect its president and parliamentary representatives in the first election for six years, a process that an overwhelming majority of the population believe is vital if Haiti is to be turned around.

The process was slow and confused and sometimes chaotic; a 76-year-old man died after he was crushed by a crowd. But the violence that some had anticipated appeared to have been avoided, and while voters were often angry and accusatory, they were mostly peaceful.

"It's has been a bit bumpy. Some places opened very late and people were angry," said David Wimhurst, a spokesman for the UN mission in Haiti (Minustah). "But the [election organisers] say they have been dispatching people to help out. So it's been a bit bumpy but it is going forward." The vote was better organised in some areas than others.

In the city centre and in districts such as Bel Air, the voting lines seemed well ordered and calm. Outside Cité Soleil, the slum where up to 300,000 people live in poor and filthy conditions, the situation was much more chaotic.

"Tell the international community that they are not letting us vote," demanded Marc Jean-Baptiste, one of a group of angry young men standing in the centre of Cité Soleil who said they had been turned away from a voting centre. "They don't want us to advance. This the same group that sent Aristide away. Now they don't want us to vote."

In the poorest parts of Haiti, talk of Jean-Bertrand Aristide, the twice elected president who was driven out in a US-backed coup two years ago, is never far away. But with the former priest in exile in South Africa, most of the poor have switched their allegiance to René Préval, a former ally of Mr Aristide and a former president. Polls suggest he will win about 40 per cent of the vote.

In reality, the two men represent very different things. As he grew in influence during the Eighties, Mr Aristide preached a mixture of nationalism and liberation theology from the pulpit of this city's St Jean Bosco church. Mr Préval combines a desire to invest in programmes to help the poor with an apparent willingness to adopt World Bank and IMF reforms.

This has not stopped him being adopted by most of Haiti's poor as they have decided he represents their only hope. Across the city yesterday crowds of people burst into "manifestations" - tearing off tree branches and jogging through the streets as they chanted his name and showed off their voter ID cards.

Mrs Orelus, who had left her five children at home, came out to vote with her husband, Woodelson Jean. Like countless others, after Mr Aristide was ousted Mrs Orelus's husband lost his job. Formal unemployment in Haiti stands at about 80 per cent, and international aid groups estimate that every person who has a job has to support an average of 10 people.

Meanwhile, human rights groups have detailed how the interim government has carried out widespread repression of supporters of the former president, and there are hundreds of political prisoners in the nation's jails.

Life was hard, said Mrs Orelus, and her job selling items in the street was now her family's only source of income. And she had no doubt who she would be voting for. "Préval," she declared. "I'm poor and René Préval is for the poor."

## **Haitians suffer long lines to pick leader**

**By Mike Williams**

**Palm Beach Post**

**Wednesday, February 08, 2006**

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti — Haitians jammed polling places by the thousands Tuesday, some standing in line for hours to cast ballots for a new president and government they hope will bring stability to their troubled country.

Voting was extended for nearly four hours after long delays in opening many polling centers sparked anger among some voters.

Voters try to squeeze into a polling place at a Port-au-Prince school. At one point, workers let the elderly, infirm and pregnant in first.

"I've been here since 5 a.m.," said Renis Charles, 70, standing in line at mid-morning with hundreds of others in the capital's Bel-Air neighborhood, an area known for street crime and political violence. "I'll wait all day if I have to. This election is important, because Haiti is about to fall off a cliff."

The heavily favored front-runner is former President René Préval, a one-time ally of Jean-Bertrand Aristide, who dominated Haiti's political landscape for more than a decade before fleeing into exile after an armed rebellion two years ago.

Election officials said it would take several days to count the paper ballots, although partial results will be announced as the votes are tallied.

More than 30 candidates are vying for the presidency, with a March 19 runoff scheduled if no candidate receives a majority. Voters also were choosing among candidates for 129 parliamentary seats.

Some experts expect Préval to win outright in the first round, but Haitian elections are notoriously unpredictable. Charles Baker, a wealthy farmer and factory owner who was part of a business coalition that helped chase Aristide out of the country, ran a distant second in preelection polls.

Officials consolidated 8,000 polling sites into about 800 centers because of security concerns, but the widespread violence that many feared had not materialized by late Tuesday.

The consolidation did, however, spawn the long lines and frustration evident Tuesday.

In dozens of polling centers throughout the capital, thousands of people were trying to squeeze into tiny schoolrooms or government offices, many holding their newly printed plastic identity cards over their heads as harried poll workers struggled to check lists and hand out ballots. Lines seemed to inch along at a terribly slow pace.

In other places, voters waited patiently in orderly lines and seemed to have no problems.

"So far, it seems like it should be a fair election, although the organization clearly has some problems," said Garry Theopate, one of the international observers on hand to monitor the vote. "But the people are very motivated to vote."

Near one voting center set up near the capital's most notorious neighborhood, Cité Soleil, about 1,000 people shouted, "We want voting booths so we can vote for Préval!" as they rushed through the streets, many carrying small tree branches.

The marchers drummed their hands on a metal gate at a government vehicle inspection center doubling as a polling center, but gradually backed away, only to rush off down the street again. United Nations peacekeepers in armored vehicles were stationed inside the gate but showed little reaction to the protestors.

Haiti, the hemisphere's poorest nation, has been run by a U.S.-backed interim government since February 2004, when Aristide left amid charges that his government was corrupt and propped up by armed gangs.

A 9,000-member force of U.N. police and troops has struggled to keep order in the country for the past 18 months.

"It's going well so far," said Juan Gabriel Valdes, the U.N. special envoy to Haiti, after visiting a polling center in the downtown area. "I'm very impressed by the will of the people to vote."

Most of Aristide's followers appear to have flocked to Préval, 63, a soft-spoken agronomist. Préval has refused to say whether he would encourage Aristide to return, a move that most believe would spark new violence.

Préval warned that Haitians should be patient if he wins.

"We will not be able to do everything right away," he told The Associated Press. "But we are determined to do our best and raise the standard of living for the people of Haiti."

U.N. officials said some of the delays at polling stations were due to workers failing to show up. In some cases, people were drafted off the streets and given quick training so the voting booths could open.

By late afternoon, the process seemed more orderly, and it appeared that Haiti could pull off the election without major problems.

But uneasiness remained. Elections officials declined to set up voting centers inside Cité Soleil, an Aristide stronghold of rundown shacks and open sewers, saying they could not guarantee the security of poll workers. Instead, voters were asked to walk a mile or more to polling centers.

"They don't want us to vote because we are for Préval," said Metelus Rodriguez, a Cité Soleil resident who waited for hours outside one of the stations. "The rich people are voting and having no problems, but they aren't letting us vote."

