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Haitian presidential hopeful decries gap between rich and poor

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AFP

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti (AFP): Haiti's elites must do more to help the poor, the frontrunner in Haiti's presidential race told AFP in an interview.

"If those who have, begin to invest in the education of the weakest among us, they would be grateful," said former president Rene Preval, who leads opinion polls ahead of the February 7 election.

"Children must be taken off the streets. Weapons must be taken from the hands of children and replaced with pens and books," he said late on Friday. "That is how we will harmonize relations between rich and poor."

Cite Soleil, a sprawling slum in the capital that is controlled by armed groups, represents the failure of the country's elites, he said.

"We must realize it," he said. "The rich are cloistered in their walled villas and the poor are crammed into slums and own nothing. The gap is too big," he said.

Preval opposed a military solution to the problems posed by Cite Soleil, the source of much of Haiti's ongoing insecurity. "I am against a military solution to this problem," he said in an interview late Friday, proposing dialogue, "intelligence and firmness" instead.

Preval called for judicial reform, the expansion of Haiti's 4,000-strong police force and for the UN Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) to remain in place until Haitians can ensure stability themselves. "

Those that want to create instability in the country and to continue drug trafficking will be the first to demand MINUSTAH's departure. They will wave the flag to demand that they go," he said.

"I'm not going to take a falsely nationalist stance. MINUSTAH should leave as soon as possible, but when we ourselves are ready to assume responsibility for security," he said.

Preval was Haiti's president from 1996-2001 and served as prime minister for former president Jean Bertrand Aristide in 1991.

U.S. government needs to reconsider what democracy really entails
January 24th, 2006
Devin Stone, regular columnist
The Collegiate Times at Virginia Tech, VA

Haiti has been one of the most under reported stories of the past couple of years. Public knowledge of the events that have occurred has thus been minimal, and often misinformed. It seems that with the Iraq war where American troops are putting their lives on the line, the public is well aware of the tragedies and the dangers their sons and daughters will face daily. The constant terrorist attacks at least provide a small mention of the daily dangers Iraqis face. But in Haiti, where American soldiers are not in harm's way there is very little public outcry, even though the violence is supported by American dollars.

In December 2004, Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) set up a local hospital in Port-au-Prince, Haiti, to provide free emergency medical care. Since then, MSF has treated over 2,250 people for violence-related injuries including 1,500 gunshot victims and 500 machete victims. Nearly half of the victims have been women, children and the elderly.

This month alone, MSF has treated over 47 gunshot victims in its second hospital located in Haiti's capital, Cité Soleil. According to witnesses who have seen the ongoing violence, human rights commissions and independent journalists, the gunshots tend to come from the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) and the Haitian National Police (HNP).

To many, the violence is seen as a massacre, but to the United Nations the dead bodies are considered "collateral damage." According to the wealthy elites, dangerous "bandits," "gangs" and "chimeras" roam the poor neighborhoods of Haiti bringing instability. Many believe those phrases are nothing more than code words to justify violence against anyone who is a supporter of President Jean Bertrand Aristide; the democratically elected president who was overthrown with the help of the United States, Canada and France. On Jan. 16, the wealthy elites staged a protest in front of the U.N. Headquarters, demanding that the U.N. take a stronger role in cracking down on the poorest neighborhoods.

The U.N. listened, and later that day four civilians would be killed. This is nothing more than a continuation of well-documented violence. From the July 6 massacre, where the U.N. left at least 20 civilians dead, to Aug. 20, when the United States Agency for International Development sponsored a soccer match where hooded police men and civilians massacred at least 20 spectators with machetes, to last Wednesday when witnesses claim that MINUSTAH fired upon St. Catherine hospital, it is important to understand the political role of violence. Pre-election violence is a terrorist activity, with political goals, said Andy Apaid, the wealthy sweatshop owner who leads the Group of 184 and led the staged protest on Jan. 16. Already the election has been delayed repeatedly, and it is very likely that the violence will increase.

On Jan. 7, the head of the U.N. stabilization mission was found dead in his hotel room. The autopsy ruled the death a suicide. The United Nations has subsequently named General Eduardo Aldunate as the interim leader of MINUSTAH. A frightening thought when one considers Gen. Aldunate's questionable past. After the U.S.-sponsored overthrow of the democratically elected President Salvador

Allende, Augusto Pinochet came to power in Chile and ruled as a harsh dictator. Gen. Aldunate participated in that coup, and during Pinochet's dictatorship Aldunate was consistently promoted.

Trained at the School of Americas (known by activists as the School of Assassins) in Fort Benning, Ga., he went on to be a member of the National Information Center (CNI), and many believe he worked for the Chile's secret police (DINA).

Both the CNI and DINA were brutal organizations that tortured and murdered Pinochet's political opposition, trade unionists, teachers, journalists and human rights workers. Despite his troubling past, Aldunate will be leading the U.N. to bring about the stability the economic elites such as Andy Apaid and Charles Henry Baker want for the election.

There is no oil in Haiti, but the US sponsored overthrow of Aristide has brought forth the signing of Free Trade Agreements with the interim government. Although others have argued that there is an economic self-interest involved in America's actions, I'm afraid the economic aspect is exaggerated, and this is why Haiti needs to come under the radar screen of current political debate.

The overthrow of the democratically elected Aristide was not a grass roots campaign, but was instead led by the business elites and militants who originally overthrew Aristide during the 1991 CIA-led coup. I'm afraid that understanding our government's foreign policy in Haiti requires a look at our own country's ideology and the troubling problem of racism.

The justification for our policy in Haiti stems from a concept of democracy that is tied to free trade and rhetoric, which often mirrors the White Man's Burden. For it is not the poor living off two dollars a day that our government supports, but instead the powerful wealthy sweatshop owners and militant conservatives who demand more violence in the poorest neighborhoods to whom our government funnels large amounts of money; all in the name of Democracy.

New UN military chief in Haiti vows stabilization

24 Jan 2006

Source: Reuters

By Joseph Guylor Delva

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti, Jan 23 (Reuters) - The new commander of the U.N. peacekeeping force in Haiti said as he took charge on Monday that his troops were not sent on a combat mission but deployed to stabilize the troubled Caribbean country before a crucial election next month.

Brazilian Gen. Jose Elito Carvalho Siqueira said the U.N. troops were not an occupation force and had no plan to violate the rights of innocent people living in volatile slums, as several human rights groups have charged.

"The mandate is very clear. We are not an occupation force, we are a stabilization force," Elito said.

Several business leaders have been pressing U.N. troops to raid Cite Soleil, Haiti's largest slum, to fight criminal gangs who take refuge in the area on the edge of the capital.

Weapons and violence have proliferated across Haiti as it lurches toward its first national election since 2000. A presidential vote, originally scheduled for November, is now due on Feb. 7, after repeated delays caused by incompetence, bloodletting and logistical problems in the poorest country in the Americas.

An earlier statement by the U.N. envoy to Haiti, Juan Gabriel Valdes, about a large-scale military operation being contemplated at the beginning of this month to flush armed gangs out of Cite Soleil, predicted "collateral damage." It prompted several human rights groups to accuse the United Nations of preparing a massacre in the slum.

"We are here to provide security, to help the people, not to fight," explained the new force commander, who said he will improve some plans already set up to secure the election.

Elito, 59, replaced another Brazilian general, Urano Da Matta Bacellar, who killed himself two weeks ago in his hotel room in Port-au-Prince.

The U.N. force is comprised of some 9,000 peacekeepers including 7,473 soldiers commanded by Elito. The U.N. police component is led by Canadian commissioner Graham Muir.

Elito and Valdes, who spoke at a transfer of command ceremony at the Brazilian military base, described Haiti's security situation and their assignment as complex. But they said plans have been made to meet the challenges and to neutralize any groups seeking to stir violence during the balloting.

"We are going to control the movement of the bandits. We are not going to allow them to disrupt the election process," Valdes said.

Jacques Bernard, director general of the Provisional Electoral Council, said on Monday that voting stations would be removed from Cite Soleil as a protective measure for Feb. 7.

He said the decision was prompted by insecurity in the lawless ghetto and to help ensure that gangs there would not influence the election.

US Democracy Promotion and Haiti
Anthony Fenton interviewed by
Amy Goodman
Democracy Now!
January 23, 2006

Nearly two years after the overthrow of President Jean Bertrand Aristide, Haiti will be holding national elections next month. Former President Rene Preval, a Aristide ally, is leading in the polls. Meanwhile, a judge has dropped the most serious charges against jailed priest Gerard Jean Juste. Jean Juste was imprisoned in July over the murder of journalist Jacques Roche - killed while Jean Juste was in Miami. After Jean Juste's arrest, Haitian officials prevented Lavalas - the political movement aligned with Aristide - from registering him as their presidential candidate, on the grounds he was imprisoned. Although he has been cleared in Roche's murder, authorities say Jean Juste will remain in prison over weapons charges. Amnesty International calls him a prisoner of conscience. Calls for his release have intensified with the recent announcement he's been diagnosed with leukemia. Meanwhile, violence continues to affect Haiti's poorest areas. Last week, two Jordanian troops with the UN mission were killed in a gun-battle in the poor neighborhood of Cite Soleil. Local residents later reported UN troops had shot at a hospital in the area. UN troops have stepped up armed raids on Cite Soleil amid pressure from business leaders and foreign officials.

We want to continue our Haiti coverage leading up to the election by looking at the activities of a government-funded organization that is pouring millions of dollars into trying to influence the country's political future. The National Endowment for Democracy is one of a handful of state-funded groups that have played a pivotal role in the internal politics of several Latin American and Caribbean countries in the service of the US government.

The NED operates with an annual budget of \$80 million dollars from U.S. Congress and the State Department. In Venezuela, it's given money to several political opponents of President Hugo Chavez. With elections underway in Haiti, it's reportedly doing the same to groups linked to the country's tiny elite and former military.

Last week Democracy Now! interviewed Anthony Fenton about NED's activities in Haiti and across the Caribbean and Latin America. Fenton is an independent journalist and co-author of the book "Canada in Haiti: Waging War On The Poor Majority." He has interviewed several top governmental and non-governmental officials dealing with Haiti as well as leading members of Haiti's business community. Last month, he helped expose an NED-funded journalist who was filing stories for the Associated Press from Haiti. The Associated Press subsequently terminated its relationship with the journalist.

AMY GOODMAN: Last week, I interviewed Anthony Fenton, about N.E.D.'s activities in Haiti and across the Caribbean and Latin America. Fenton is an independent Canadian journalist and co-author of the book, Canada in Haiti: Waging War on the Poor Majority. He has interviewed several top governmental and non-governmental officials dealing with Haiti, as well as leading members of Haiti's business community. Last month, he helped expose an N.E.D.-funded journalist who was filing stories for the Associated Press from Haiti. The Associated Press subsequently terminated its relationship with

her. We go now to an excerpt from that interview. Anthony Fenton was in a studio in Vancouver. I began by asking him to talk about the current situation in Haiti.

ANTHONY FENTON: Well, indeed, obviously, there is an ongoing military occupation there ever since the forced ouster of President Jean-Bertrand Aristide in February of 2004 in a coup d'état that was assisted and planned by the Canadian government, along with the U.S. government and the French government. Of course, speaking from Canada, Canada played an integral role in the overthrow of Aristide and continues to play an integral role in the post-invasion occupation of Haiti.

They're leading up to what are now the fourth scheduled period of elections. There have been several postponements. This is due in part -- the original intention of the invasion, of course, was to subvert the young process of popular democracy that existed in Haiti prior to the coup, and of course, if Aristide hadn't been overthrown, Haiti would have already carried out their democratic election, their presidential elections.

And, of course, the fear of the United States and of organizations like the National Endowment for Democracy and the State Department, of course, was that popular democracy would take root in Haiti under another Lavalas government, and they have set about to undermine the popular movement that existed in support of Jean-Bertrand Aristide and the Lavalas Party. And we're seeing today the consolidation of the elite rule that they have long envisioned for Haiti ever since the fall of "Baby Doc" Duvalier in the mid-80s.

AMY GOODMAN: Anthony, can you just lay out what the National Endowment for Democracy is?

ANTHONY FENTON: Well, yeah, they were formed in the early 1980s under the Reagan administration. Ostensibly, they purport to promote pro-democracy organizations and democratic values across the world. Just last October, President Bush spoke at a National Endowment for Democracy gathering, reiterating the vision of Reagan as he set about to, as they say, "promote democracy throughout the world," and they were given -- they've been given various budgets allocated by Congress every year, as you said at the onset. Now their budget stands at \$80 million a year. But they are, of course, just one organization among many that are linked to the U.S. Agency for International Development, as I said, the State Department. Hundreds of millions of dollars now, in fact, more money is now being spent than ever before on what they call democracy promotion.

Now, the historical record on the National Endowment for Democracy is very clear, when we look at the work of people like Philip Agee and William Robinson and William Blum, Noam Chomsky and others, and most recently, if we look at the work of attorney and independent journalist, Eva Golinger, who exposed, through Freedom of Information Act requests, the role that the N.E.D. played in attempting to subvert democracy and the revolutionary process that's unfolding in Venezuela in 2002. The N.E.D. played a crucial role in fomenting the opposition to Hugo Chavez, and they did play a role in the attempted coup against him in April of 2002, and very much the same patterns we have seen develop in Haiti.

On your show, in 2004, you interviewed Max Blumenthal, who wrote an article, an important article for Salon that outlined the role of the International Republican Institute, and when we talk about the N.E.D., we can't talk about them without also talking about the International Republican Institute and

the other affiliated organizations. There's a virtual labyrinth of these organizations that receive funding that's specifically earmarked for the undermining of any widespread social movements, any rudiments of popular democracy that should manifest, either in Latin America or anywhere in the world.

So, again, this is sort of the premise of what the National Endowment for Democracy really does, and as we look at what they're doing in Haiti – and how I was able to learn about what they're currently doing in Haiti came about through the process of a first documentary reporting trip to Haiti in September and October of 2005, where we spoke to a number of N.E.D. grantees, Haitian organizations that received funding from the National Endowment for Democracy. I returned to Canada and set about to conduct a series of interviews with N.E.D. and any program officer, in particular, with I.R.I. officials, with in-country officials who are managing several million dollars in U.S.-funded democracy promotion activities, as you said also, that are linked closely to the Haitian elite, to the opposition organizations, such as the Group of 184, the Democratic Convergence. These are the organizations that agitated most strongly for the overthrow of Aristide and that were working with the N.E.D. and the I.R.I. in the years preceding the 2004 coup.

AMY GOODMAN: The I.R.I. being the International Republican Institute.

ANTHONY FENTON: Yes. We know that – for example, just the other day, I spoke to a woman who is the leader of an organization called COFEL. It's an umbrella organization of women political leaders. In the years before the coup against Aristide in 2004, the I.R.I. would bring in, they would bus in or fly in groups of anywhere between 60 and 80 of these women. And, of course, they're busing in other men and other political figures in Haiti. But they would bus them into the Dominican Republic, because in 1999, at the time, Ambassador Timothy Carney – he was the U.S. ambassador at the time. That's very important, because Ambassador Carney is the current interim ambassador to Haiti, and he was also a member of the lobby – the think tank in Washington called the Haiti Democracy Project that played an integral role in fomenting this demonization campaign against Aristide.

In any case, in 1999, the I.R.I. was closed down. Their operations were shut down. They were forced to leave Haiti, and until the coup in 2004, the I.R.I. did not have an in-country presence, so they were doing most of their work in the Dominican Republic with people like Stanley Lucas, who is well known as a card-carrying Republican Haitian American who was hired by the International Republican Institute during the first coup period against Aristide in the early 1990s, and he's the one who sort of helped to build the political opposition from the Dominican Republic and enable the coup to take place. But that process has just followed through since the coup. Well, of course, the International Republican Institute now has an in-country office in Haiti, and through that office they're able to penetrate all sectors of Haitian civil society in their attempt to undermine the popular movement.

Now, I would like to mention that in my interview, and this is a rare interview with an N.E.D. program officer, and this is the program officer in Washington who is responsible for Haiti currently, a woman named Fabiola Cordoba. She took over in, I believe in, November, as the program officer, and she revealed to me, not only an extensive list of documents that show the N.E.D.'s approved grants for 2005. These are, in a sense, declassified, because these are documents that are not supposed to be published until May of 2006, at least according to another N.E.D. spokesperson. But what's clear in these documents is that the N.E.D. went from, for example, a zero dollar budget in Haiti in 2003 to a \$540,000 budget in Haiti in 2005.

What they've also done -- and many Haitian people that I speak to have told me that Haiti is considered the laboratory for these sort of subversive activities on the part of the United States government. And in the context of this experimental process, they've hired, for the first time, an in-country program officer, as you mentioned, Régine Alexandre, who was a stringer for the Associated Press and the New York Times, was doubling, moonlighting as an N.E.D. program officer, and the Associated Press severed ties with her as a result.

Now, Fabiola Cordoba also told me that when she was in Haiti in 2002, working for one of the N.E.D.'s affiliated organizations, the National Democratic Institute, she said a lot of lines were being drawn between Haiti and Venezuela, where although 70% of the population supported Aristide, there was a very fragmented opposition. The rest of the 30% was divided between 120 different opposition groups, so the objective of the I.R.I. and the N.E.D. was to consolidate this opposition to build a viable opposition to somehow break the grip that the popular movement in Haiti had on the political environment there. And she said that Chavez -- something very similar was happening in Venezuela, and of course, in 2002, the coup d'état happened there on the basis of this sort of analysis, the basis, this fear that the United States has of popular democracy and the need to subvert any attempts at consolidating popular rule and implementing policies that are in the interests of the majority poor in places like Venezuela and Haiti.

AMY GOODMAN: We're talking to Anthony Fenton, independent author and journalist who has exposed a A.P. stringer in Haiti, Régine Alexandre, as also being on the payroll of the National Endowment for Democracy. And now talking about those parallels between Haiti and Venezuela, of course, 2002, the attempted coup against Hugo Chavez, what is your understanding of the U.S. involvement in terms of the, you know, dollar amount in Venezuela, putting money into the opposition?

ANTHONY FENTON: Well, it is very interesting, because since the activities of the N.E.D. have been so thoroughly exposed by the likes of Eva Golinger and Jeremy Bigwood through *The Chavez Code*, they're very concerned with their perception in the area. So what they're doing, in a way, they've continued to funnel large amounts of money into Venezuela, but they're doing it also by outsourcing, if you will. For example, they have given a grant to a Canadian think tank called the Canadian Foundation of the Americas, and through that, they're attempting to go through the back door, if you will, riding the perception of Canada as being a benign counterweight to the U.S. in the hemisphere, in order to penetrate Venezuelan civil society.

This is an important year, of course, not only in Venezuela, but throughout the hemisphere, in the sense that there are many presidential elections taking place. Now the N.E.D. program officer told me that Venezuela, Haiti, Ecuador, and Bolivia are the four top priority countries for the N.E.D. in 2006, looking ahead to 2006 and, of course, Cuba is the perennial top of that list. They're a special exception, because the Department of State earmarks a certain amount of funds for the N.E.D.'s work in Cuba. In fact, they doubled the amount of money being used to subvert revolutionary Cuba in 2005.

Now, what they're doing with the Foundation of the Americas is, in fact, on the board of directors there you have a former coup plotter in the form of Beatrice Rangel, who not only played an active role, when she was an advisor to former Venezuelan president Perez in the late 1980s, literally carrying

bags of money, according to William Robinson, to Nicaraguan Contras operating out of Venezuela, but she is the person, Rangel, who facilitated this N.E.D. program with this Canadian think tank, and she herself said that, you know, Canada enjoys this perception, and N.E.D.'s outsourcing to Canada is just another way for the N.E.D. to penetrate Venezuelan civil society.

But in the case of Haiti, getting back to that point, what we're seeing is the N.E.D. works very closely with the International Republican Institute. One of the N.E.D.'s primary grantees in Haiti is a key member of the Group of 184 political opposition to Aristide, named Hans Tippenhauer. He heads up an organization that works with Haitian youth. Typically we see the N.E.D. working with Haitian youth, with Haitian women, but what they're doing – Mr. Tippenhauer, he was one of the first people to call the rebels, the paramilitaries that entered from the Dominican Republic in 2004, he referred to them as “freedom fighters,” and he get grants from, not only the N.E.D., but also the I.R.I., and he also happens to be on the campaign of an independent presidential candidate named Charles Henri Baker, who was also one of the leaders of the Group of 184. He's a sweatshop owner there and a brother-in-law of Andy Apaid, another leader of the Group of 184, who recently has been pressuring, with other members of the elite, such as Reginald Boulos, for the United Nations [inaudible] to force to enter the poor neighborhoods and commit more atrocities, so as to enable this process of consolidating elite rule in Haiti to take root.

And so, Hans Tippenhauer, as he doubles as a campaign manager for the Group 184 political candidate, the business candidate, basically a candidate that the U.S. is supporting, he is also working to penetrate Haitian civil society on a level that will allow, in the long term, this neo-liberal vision, this corporate vision of Haiti to take root, the so-called democracy, because the National Endowment for Democracy does promote some form of democracy. It's a very narrow institutional form, kind of like we see in Canada.

It is ironic that we have elections going on here in Canada right now, but we don't see the National Endowment for Democracy or the International Republican Institute here trying to manipulate the political environment, because we're already on page with the State Department. We're already on page with the N.E.D., so we don't need their guidance, but a place like Haiti, where there were -- where popular democracy was beginning to take root, even though in the face of a massive economic embargo and in the face of destabilization by these very organizations, it is very necessary that these organizations are in Haiti right now playing this fundamental role, behind the scenes, I should say, because the mainstream media has not written a single story about what these organizations are doing behind the scenes to effect political change in Haiti today.

AMY GOODMAN: Independent journalist, Anthony Fenton. We will return with him in a minute.

[break]

AMY GOODMAN: We return to our interview on Haiti with independent journalist Anthony Fenton, co-author of the book, *Canada in Haiti: Waging War on the Poor Majority*.

AMY GOODMAN: Anthony Fenton, one of the people that you have written and talked about is Ira Lowenthal. I remember him from, well, more than a decade ago in the midst of the first coup against President Aristide in 1991 to '94, working for USAID in-country in Haiti. What is his role today?

ANTHONY FENTON: Well, after the coup, Ira Lowenthal reentered Haiti. Now, he had had to leave, I believe, in 2002, because he was getting too hot. He was up to some activities that were being scrutinized by the Haitian government. Now, he joined and helped create the Haiti Democracy Project in 2002, in late 2002, and then he supported the emergence of the Group of 184 shortly thereafter, which is basically the Haitian version of the Haiti Democracy Project. I mentioned the Boulos family. Rudolph Boulos is a board member, founding board member of the Haiti Democracy Project, as well, and he's actually running for Senate in the area of Haiti where they plan to develop free-trade zones and open up a whole swath of sweatshops.

But Ira Lowenthal, he was working for the Americas Development Foundation, which is one of the key organizations implementing these so-called Democracy Enhancement projects prior to the coup. After the coup, he had a brief stint with them, and then he moved on to this other organization called the United Nations Office for Project Services. Now, it's a very interesting organization that does reconstruction work, and they're working -- they're called the self-financing arm or management services arm of the United Nations, very obscure and little known, but Ira Lowenthal became the director of this organization in Haiti just after the coup, and he helped set up registration centers for the elections, and he's played an integral role in the sort of infrastructure of carrying out this election process.

Now, he stepped down as director of UNOPS, and UNOPS currently gets a \$3 million contract from USAID to work and funnel money to the political parties -- the "approved" political parties, most of which happen to comprise the former political opposition to Aristide, the Democratic Convergence. Now Ira Lowenthal is a key consultant for UNOPS today, and in fact, there's a Canadian by the name of Jean-Francois Laurent, who directs the UNOPS activities in Haiti. But Ira Lowenthal, anyone I speak to, everyone speaks glowingly of him in the democracy promotion community. He's an old hand there, as you've said. He had links to the Boulos family back in the previous coup period, and, of course, the Boulos family is said to have had relations with FRAP, the paramilitary organization set up by the C.I.A. in order to destroy the popular movement at that time.

Now the Boulos family again, it has been widely reported that they may be linked along with the Apais to death squad activity in Cite Soleil, anti-Lavalas gangs that are designed to destroy the popular support for the calls of demanding the return of Aristide or demanding the right to vote for the candidate of choice, now Rene Preval. But Ira Lowenthal has played an instrumental role. In fact, every week this organization, UNOPS, to give you an example of the sort of familial relations there, they meet with the I.R.I., the N.D.I., with USAID, and with I.F.E.S, which is linked to the I.R.I. The chairman of I.F.E.S. is a former Reagan advisor and a Bush appointee as U.N. ambassador just before the 9/11 attacks in 2001, William Hybl.

So you see this family meeting on a weekly basis, coordinating their activities. They're funneling millions of dollars to the political parties, by way of giving them credits for TV advertising, for pamphlets, for t-shirts and all sorts of other activities. And, of course, this is all geared towards -- they're hoping, I think, right now, that there will be a run-off election, sort of like there was in Liberia, where the International Republican Institute and these other organizations played a central role, as well, because if there's a run-off election -- and it's possible that one of their rightwing candidates, perhaps such as Marc Bazin, who's running under the Lavalas name today, but of course was a World

Bank candidate that Aristide beat in a landslide in 1990 -- they're hoping that one of these candidates, maybe it'll be Henri Baker, will be able to win in a run-off.

But there's also the terror card that they're holding over their heads. The paramilitaries that entered in 2004 like Guy Philippe. Other well known NARCO traffickers, the nephew of the current Prime Minister, Gerard Latortue, his name is Youri Latortue, the mere mention of his name in Haiti, strikes the fear in the people's eyes when you speak to them, and this person is running for senate in the Artibonite region. And the possibility of a violent intervention in this election process is in the background, and it looms, and people like Ira Lowenthal and these other organizations, the N.E.D., they are well aware of this, and so it will be interesting to see how it plays out.

AMY GOODMAN: And the role, Anthony Fenton -- you're speaking to us from Vancouver, Canada, in the midst of your own elections -- of Canada and the current candidates in the coup of 2004, as well as what you understand is the U.S. role that forced Aristide out?

ANTHONY FENTON: Well, indeed, Canada in September hosted a meeting with members of Haiti's private sector with that think tank that I mentioned earlier that's getting N.E.D. funding, FOCAL, the Foundation for the Americas. Reginald Boulos, one of the long-time elites who supported this U.S. vision for Haiti and has long-standing ties to Washington, he was invited to this meeting. And what you were seeing is Canada supporting whole-heartedly. In fact, Roger Noriega, former Secretary of State for the western hemisphere, came to Canada just after the coup with Adolfo Franco from USAID. Franco, incidentally, has refused to be interviewed on the question of USAID's activities on the democracy promotion side in Haiti recently. But they came to Canada just after the coup with the intention of asking Canada to play a leadership role in Haiti, and Canada quickly acquiesced.

In fact, when I was in Haiti in September with a couple of other Canadian journalists, we interviewed a top-level Canadian diplomat, and he was boasting how finally in Haiti there's a government that's being ruled by the transnational elite in the private sector and civil society. And Canada's job is to stand on the frontlines diplomatically, politically, and they're also helping out militarily, and on the intelligence side, to prop up this illegitimate regime that was installed by the United States, that was imported from Florida and installed -- imposed on the Haitian people. And so Canada is playing an increasing role and they are expecting to play -- in fact, this high level diplomat told us Canada is sort of like earning its stripes in Haiti, because there is going to be a coming transition, and he mentioned Cuba specifically, and of course, strategically where Haiti is situated -- the State Department in 2005 listed Haiti and Colombia as the two primary strategic states -- so it's very important that they take control of Haiti.

There is a Dominican Republic interest there, as well. They are possibly establishing military bases there. The U.S. has for a long time dictated the Dominican military's policies for the region, and the Canadian government here, what we're seeing, is under the liberal government that is about, it appears, to lose power to a neo-conservative electoral coup, if you will, led by Canada's Conservative Party and Stephen Harper, who is a well-known admirer of George Bush. Canada, the liberal government, initiated a rightwing shift over the past decade, that we've seen a new role for Canada in the Americas. In fact, this high-level diplomat referred to the destiny of Canada and the Americas being fulfilled through their role in Haiti today.

AMY GOODMAN: Anthony Fenton is our guest. He's speaking to us from Vancouver, Canada. And the proof of the involvement of the U.S. government in the coup that forced out President Aristide February 29th, 2004?

ANTHONY FENTON: Well, in 2003 there was a meeting held in Ottawa called the Ottawa Initiative on Haiti. At the time, it was a secret high level round table that did not involve any Haitians, although it was a meeting that was designed to discuss the future of Haiti. It was leaked by the host of that meeting, a Canadian Member of Parliament named Denis Paradis, to a Quebec magazine, that the possibility of removing Aristide and installing a U.N.-style trusteeship was discussed. This was quickly glossed over, and the Canadian government retracted that this was discussed, but after the coup I submitted a Freedom of Information Act request and did receive some of the documents, which seem to corroborate what was leaked at the time, that there were high-level meetings being held not only in Ottawa, but other follow-up meetings, I understand, in Washington and in El Salvador that planned the overthrow of Aristide on the diplomatic side.

The Organization of American States was involved. And the then Assistant Secretary General of the O.A.S., Luigi Einaudi, who famously said on the eve of Haiti's independence, 'The problem with Haiti is that the international community is so screwed up and divided that we're actually allowing Haitians to run Haiti.' It's people like this and sentiments like this that informed these sorts of meetings that took place before the coup, and, you know, the writing was on the wall for Aristide when he was elected in November of 2000. We saw the opposition boycott the elections. The Gallup polls indicated a landslide victory for Aristide, and again we return to the point made by the N.E.D. program officer, it was simply the case that, from the perspective of the United States, Canada, and France, and the European Union, the primary backers of this coup d'etat, that Aristide was consolidating power, that the Lavalas Party, in particular, and that the popular movement was emerging and was taking root, and that is what had to be overthrown and stopped in its tracks, and that's what we're seeing happen today.

AMY GOODMAN: Very quickly, Anthony Fenton, on the issue of what is happening in the Cite Soleil with the killings of innocent residents there, also the killings of U.N. forces there, recently you had Reginald Boulos and Andy Apaid, well known anti-Lavalas leaders, holding a major protest, calling for a crackdown on Cite Soleil. Can you talk about that?

ANTHONY FENTON: Yeah, again, this -- I read that as a provocation. They've been -- if you go back to summer of 2005, there was a kidnapping spree, as the The New York Times and the L.A. Times reported it, that was used as a pretext to demand that the U.N. go into Cite Soleil and root out the so-called chimeres, the so-called bandits, the so-called terrorists. Now, I learned through sources inside the prime minister's office in Haiti and through other sources that, again, Youri Latortue, the nephew of Gerard Latortue, was involved in this kidnapping spree, that he was carrying out and overseeing a kidnapping ring of his own that was used as a pretext to go into these neighborhoods and commit massacres. And on July 6th, it's been well reported and well documented that a massacre did take place, and it was carried out by the United Nations. It buckled to the pressure that was being exerted on it by the likes of Reginald Boulos and other members of the elite, like Andy Apaid.

And so I see, I think, from what I can tell, this is being replayed, and the kidnapping spree -- it's possible that these assaults on the so-called peacekeepers, the Jordanians who have played one of the more repressive roles in Cite Soleil, that that is another provocation that is intended to pressure the

U.N. forces to go into Cite Soleil and fire arbitrarily, as they've been doing repeatedly. You know, within the past few days a number of people have been killed in Cite Soleil, even since that demonstration. Canadian journalists who are there right now, Aaron Lakoff and Leslie Bagg, reported on how four people in Cite Soleil have been killed.

And the U.N. knows that they can't go into Cite Soleil and conduct these operations without killing civilians, and yet people like Reginald Boulos don't seem to mind if civilians get killed. It's just collateral damage, and he's said that he is willing to create a fund to assist the victims of Cite Soleil. When we interviewed Mr. Boulos in September, he referred to himself as Mr. Cite Soleil. So, he has a vested interest in putting down this popular movement that's calling for Aristide's return or calling for free and fair elections that would see Rene Preval win in a likely landslide.

AMY GOODMAN: Independent journalist Anthony Fenton, co-author of the book *Canada in Haiti: Waging War on the Poor Majority*. Haitian elections are February 7. Canadian elections are today.

Wyclef Jean saved Pitt-Jolie from being kidnapped in Haiti!
23 Jan 2006
New Kerala.com

Washington: Brad Pitt and Angelina Jolie have to thank Fugees star, Wyclef Jean for their safe sojourn in Haiti recently, for had it not been for his painstaking behind the scenes work, the two of them might still have been in the captivity of Haitian kidnapers, with a hefty ransom demand for their release.

Jean, who himself is a Haitian, says that kidnappings are commonplace in his native country, and a high-profile couple like the superstars, would have made an attractive target.

He however says that he personally contacted gang leaders on the island to ensure that they were not targeted during their visit ten days ago.

“The kidnapping is crazy. (There were) 30 kidnappings per day the previous weekend,” Contactmusic quoted him, as saying.

He therefore appeared on a local TV show before their visit to appeal for sanity during their visit, and is happy his efforts paid off.

“Listen, I Got Angelina Jolie Here, I got Brad Pitt here. Please do not embarrass me this weekend.”

“The whole weekend went by and there was not one kidnapping,” he was quoted, as saying.

Haiti - That Most Curious Place
The Bahama Journal
January 23, 2006

Things are such in the region and the world that the fate of some countries is intricately bound together. In the case of Haiti and The Bahamas these bonds are cemented by family and other relations. So no matter what any government does or does not do about the so-called 'Haitian problem' in The Bahamas, Haitians and Bahamians will be obliged –as it were- to work it out.

This is precisely what is happening in today's Bahamas as these two peoples work to build and consolidate bridges of understanding between their two countries. Family relations and blood ties can only help.

Be that as it may, the fact remains that Haiti is today a most curious place. Things are looking bad and things are looking good. This blend of optimism and disaster is today resonating and reverberating world wide.

One bit of very good news concerns the fate of Reverend Gerard Jean-Juste. We are today learning that a judge dropped charges against a politically influential Catholic priest in the death of a journalist, but indicted him on two lesser counts, the cleric's lawyer said Friday.

As we know the Rev. Gerard Jean-Juste, a supporter of ousted President Jean-Bertrand Aristide, has been in prison since July in connection with the killing of the prominent Haitian journalist and poet Jacques Roche.

We know too that the 59-year-old priest had always denied the allegations.

Jean-Juste, who has drawn comparisons to Aristide for his impassioned sermons and advocacy for the poor, has emerged as a prominent figure in the ousted leader's Lavalas Family party.

We are learning that Jean-Juste remains in prison with no court date. His supporters, meanwhile, have for said several months that he has cancer and should be allowed to travel to the United States for treatment.

On Friday, a high-level international delegation that included U.S. Undersecretary of State Thomas Shannon arrived in the Haitian capital of Port-au-Prince to press authorities to hold elections as scheduled on Feb. 7.

Elections have already been postponed several times because of organizational problems, mounting chaos and violence.

Information reaching us indicates that Haiti looks and sounds like it is on the eve of elections. The Caribbean country has been virtually blanketed with posters, flyers and billboards urging Haitians to vote for 35 presidential candidates and some 1,300 legislative candidates.

We are told that radio stations blast political jingles and get-out-the-vote public service announcements. Banners hanging over streets insist that Haitians "Vote!" And 80 percent of Haitian adults have registered to do so -- one of the highest voter registration rates in the world.

However we are advised to hold the drum roll.

The truth today is that Haiti is not about to vote.

As we have previously indicated, elections for president and Parliament have been postponed four times, the last time indefinitely. Those who thought they would go to the polls last fall now hope to by the end of January. Others are beginning to doubt elections will happen at all.

We now know that "in a country that has had only rare glimpses of democracy, a surprising number of citizens still have faith in the future, but these elections are putting that faith to the test."

Another story coming in speaks about some of the misery that is emanating from Cite Soleil. As Amy Bracken writes: "It was 1:30 in the morning and the sound was deafening -- machine gun fire, the crack of rifles, and the boom of heavy artillery, as bullet tracers flew through the black sky like fireworks.

"The battle raging between U.N. troops and armed civilians in Cite Soleil, one of the poorest cities in the hemisphere, is wounding and killing innocent residents on a daily basis. And as Haiti prepares for elections now scheduled for Feb. 7, the violence is getting worse."

For our part, we remain optimistic that the Haitian people will pull through. Having weathered any number of other perilous storms and having suffered so very much, they are extraordinarily resilient.

We have come to this conclusion based --in part at least- on some of what we are today hearing from reporters in the field; from Haitian-Bahamians living and working in this country and from some of the stories about Haiti that come from Haitians living elsewhere in the world.

As these stories are exchanged, more and more people are coming to the realization that while Haiti may seem to be stewing in misery and violence; there is yet hope for a brighter tomorrow. This is bolstered and buttressed by the fact that so many people are registered to vote. Whenever they are allowed to vote, we are certain that they will.

INTERVIEW-Haiti priest to remain jailed; fears for his life

22 Jan 2006

Source: Reuters

By Joseph Guylar Delva

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti- A jailed Haitian priest and former adviser to ousted President Jean-Bertrand Aristide says he was cleared of murder but indicted on weapons charges in a bid to keep him in prison and out of politics.

Popular Roman Catholic priest Gerard Jean-Juste has been jailed for more than six months by Haiti's interim government, which accused him of involvement in the July killing of prominent journalist Jacques Roche.

In a telephone interview from his prison cell late on Saturday, Jean-Juste told Reuters a judge cleared him of the murder late last week but indicted him instead on illegal weapon and "criminal gang" activity charges.

Jean-Juste also denies the new accusations and says he desperately needs medical attention to treat his leukemia.

"My life is in danger. I've lost consciousness several times. I'm in a very bad shape," he said. "I hope the government will give me the permission to travel to get medical treatment, because such treatment is not available in Haiti."

Amnesty International calls Jean-Juste a prisoner of conscience jailed for expressing his views and members of the U.S. Congress have also called for his release.

Widely viewed as the natural successor to fellow priest Aristide, who was ousted by an armed revolt in February 2004, Jean-Juste said the government had always wanted to jail him because they believed he wanted to become president. He denies any presidential ambitions, however.

A presidential election was originally scheduled for November. It is now due to take place on Feb. 7 after repeated delays caused by incompetence, violence and logistical problems in the poorest country in the Americas.

Jean-Juste, who served as a spiritual adviser to Aristide and was deeply involved in his Lavalas movement, said he would fight the new charges.

"I absolutely have nothing to do with criminal gang activities. I've never carried a weapon, I've never used one and I don't have weapons," he said.

Weapons and violence have proliferated in Haiti as it lurches toward its first national elections since 2000. The country, which shares the Caribbean island of Hispaniola with the Dominican Republic, is patrolled by United Nations peacekeepers and still struggling to establish a stable democracy after decades of dictatorship and military rule.

Once a hero of Haitian democracy, Aristide was accused of despotism and corruption in his second term and was forced into exile in South Africa. A Haitian council of elders appointed an interim government under Gerard Latortue, a Florida business consultant and former U.N. official who became prime minister and has ruled without a parliament.

Jean-Juste noted that presidential candidate Dany Toussaint had recently been caught carrying an illegal weapon but was allowed to go free.

"In Dany Toussaint's case, the corpus delicti was there, they let him go anyway," he said. "In my case there is no corpus delicti, but they want to keep me in jail."

Pay attention to security for elections

BY RAYMOND A. JOSEPH

rayjoseph@haiti.org

Miami Herald

Jan. 23, 2006

Lest we forget, the "free, fair and democratic elections" of December 1990 that catapulted a fiery Catholic priest to Haiti's presidency and ushered him unto the international scene were organized and secured by Haitians. The international community was present mainly as advisors and observers. How is it, then, that in less than two decades Haiti has become such an intractable problem that some well-meaning experts are now calling for a complete international takeover of the electoral process, if not of the country itself?

In 1990 Haiti depended on its own 7,000-strong armed forces augmented by some 5,000 rural policemen and auxiliaries to provide security. A young colonel named Raoul Cedras did such a good job as overall security chief for the elections that President Jean-Bertrand Aristide, elevated him to commander-in-chief of the armed forces. This same Cedras headed the coup that toppled a dictatorial and constitution-bashing Aristide only seven months after his swearing-in.

After three years of exile, mostly in Washington where one would have expected Aristide to enroll in "Democracy 101," he returned to power in Port-au-Prince under the wings of more than 20,000 American soldiers. A few months after his arrival, Aristide unconstitutionally disbanded the hated army and its rural arm.

He could have instead cleaned it up. Instead, he corrupted the newly formed Haitian National Police that the international community had helped him organize. He relied on a motley crew dubbed "armies" -- "the Saddam," "the Red," "the Cannibal," "the Clean Sweep," "the Sleep in the Woods," and more -- to perpetuate himself in power, not unlike in the days of the "Tontons-Macoute," Gestapo-like police of the Duvaliers.

Moreover, foreign bodyguards, including American and South African, were the immediate security cordon of Aristide, who became enamored of helicopters for the shortest of trips.

On February 29, 2004 when Aristide chose exile instead of an ignoble assassination at the hands of rebels from the old armed forces and his own "armies," he left behind heavily armed loyalists who were not disarmed by the international community -- neither by the American-led original force nor by the U.N. peacekeepers led by Brazilian officers.

In September, 2004 when the heavily armed thugs linked to Aristide launched their "Operation Baghdad," Haiti became a mini Iraq. But major events elsewhere -- precisely in Iraq, Afghanistan and the Middle East in general -- captured the attention of the United States and the rest of the international community.

When Mario Andresol, the new chief of the Haitian National Police, took over in July, 2005, a clear amelioration of the security situation was discernible and voter registration picked up speed. The violent thugs were isolated in Cité Soleil, the vast shantytown north of the Haitian capital. But Andresol has publicly complained of lack of resources to do his job well. Moreover, he said that as we

approach the elections, we should expect the bandits to renew their assaults, because they have to prove that Haiti is a replica of Iraq. In other words, the Bush administration has failed at regime change in Iraq as well as in Haiti.

Now that the U.N. peacekeepers are being brazenly attacked, perhaps attention will focus on tight security for the elections. As reported, two Jordanian peacekeepers were gunned to death last week at a checkpoint in Cité Soleil while a third one was wounded. Some gunmen in that vast shantytown, reputedly a bastion of Aristide, have publicly pledged their allegiance to a presidential candidate, who has failed to refute them. What can be expected if the armed bandits continue to be coddled by those intent on emulating the dictators and would-be dictators of the past?

It's a shame that in just a decade the international community has had to come twice to Haiti to help steer it in the right path. By "internationalizing" the process of democratization instead of "nationalizing" it at all levels, there is a danger of long term dependence without much positive result to show for it. At this late hour, a concerted effort must be made to work with a renovated National Police toward long term security. Only then will Haiti attract the investment needed for durable development and the flowering of true democracy.

Raymond A. Joseph is Haiti's ambassador to the United States.

**Worst charges against Jean-Juste dismissed; he still faces others
Former Miami activist, and jailed Roman Catholic priest Gérard Jean-Juste was cleared of the
most serious charges by a Haitian investigative judge.**

BY JACQUELINE CHARLES

Miami Herald

January 21, 2006

An investigative judge in Haiti has dropped murder and conspiracy charges against the Rev. Gérard Jean-Juste, saying there isn't enough evidence to indict the jailed Roman Catholic priest and former Miami activist.

But Jean-Juste, arrested six months ago in connection with the July murder of prominent Haitian journalist Jacques Roche, will have to stand trial on lesser charges of illegal weapons possession, according to an indictment issued this week by investigative judge Jean Péres Paul.

That charge, Paul told The Miami Herald on Friday, stems from Jean-Juste's refusal to provide the names of his security guard whom he authorized to carry five unlicensed guns.

The guns were found during a search of Jean-Juste's parish.

"He will have to go before a court and answer to that charge," Paul said in a telephone interview from Port-au-Prince.

But on the more serious charges of conspiring against the state by attempting to assassinate Haitian police officers during the bloody period known as Operation Baghdad, "the investigation did not reveal any participation of Jean-Juste in any attempt or conspiracy, nor his complicity in premeditated murder of police officers," the judge ruled.

"I did not find anything," Paul said.

The same was true, he said, in the case of Roche, who was kidnapped July 10 and was found shot dead five days later in what some Haitians believe was the work of pro-Aristide gunmen.

Jean-Juste, an ardent supporter of ousted Haitian President Jean-Bertrand Aristide who was arrested after he turned up at Roche's funeral, has longed denied any involvement in Roche's death.

Still despite the ruling, Jean-Juste remains in jail. Paul said he is not authorized to release Jean-Juste because of the indictment on the lesser charge.

"Another judge could release him on humanitarian grounds," he said.

In recent weeks, Jean-Juste supporters have stepped up demands for his release after medical tests showed that he suffers from leukemia. They've requested that the U.S.-backed interim government release him so he can travel to the United States for treatment.

**Haitian migrants face rising backlash next door
In the Dominican Republic, Haitians looking for work face poor treatment and an increasing threat of attack.**

**By Danna Harman | Staff writer
The Christian Science Monitor
January 24, 2006 edition**

DAJABÓN, DOMINICAN REPUBLIC – The bodies were found scattered along the side of the road: suffocated to death and thrown out of the truck in which they had been traveling. The 25 Haitians were headed across the Caribbean island to the Dominican Republic this month, and to what they probably hoped would be a new beginning.

"We can not bear this disrespect," explained Anelio Ciceron, a Haitian farm worker standing at the northern Ouanaminthe-Dajabón border crossing two days later. "But we have no recourse, because we are Haitians. And to be Haitian is to be powerless."

An estimated 700,000 to 1 million Haitians, most of them illegal, live in the Dominican Republic, home to 8.8 million people. Haitians come in by foot over the border bridges, holding tight to their visas, or wading below those bridges, without papers. They pour across the 243-mile frontier hiding in the backs of cramped trucks, and in the trucks of cars. They come for one reason.

"My heart is in Haiti. My wife is in Haiti. My children are in Haiti. But work - that is lacking in Haiti," says Jonnie Senatin, who has been working on a sugar plantation in the east of the country for 15 years.

Haiti, a country about half the size of the Dominican Republic, has more than 75 percent unemployment, according to the CIA World Factbook. The Dominican Republic (DR) is faring better, with 17 percent unemployment, and one of the highest growth rates (7 percent) in the region last year.

It's not quite the sort of disparity that exists between the US and Mexico, but the dynamics create a similar debate here over illegal immigration: Whom does it benefit and whom does it hurt? Can, and should, it be stopped? And what part does racism play in the story?

Both countries share the Caribbean island of Hispaniola, but language, culture, physical appearance, and a long history of mutual antagonism and conflict - from Haiti's 22-year rule over the DR in the early 1800s to the 1937 massacre of up to 30,000 Haitian migrants in a campaign ordered by then-Dominican dictator Rafael Trujillo - keep them apart.

Haiti's deteriorating economy and political instability in recent years has further strained relations, as ever more Haitians flee to take on the low-paying jobs in construction sites; cattle ranches; and rice, coffee, and sugar fields across the border.

In August, four young Haitian men were gagged and set on fire in the Dominican capital, Santo Domingo. Last month, Dominicans burned about 20 shacks occupied by Haitian migrants and beheaded two workers in reprisal for their alleged involvement in the killing of a businessman.

When Dominican President Leonel Fernandez traveled to Haiti two weeks later, he was met by hundreds of demonstrators throwing rocks and chanting, "Fernandez, racist, stop murdering Haitians."

The Dominican human rights organization National Committee for Migrations voiced concern last month over increasing "outbreaks of xenophobia" targeting Haitians. The Inter-American Court of Human Rights issued an opinion that the Dominican Republic is illegally denying birth certificates to babies born here to Haitian parents. And Human Rights Watch has called on the government to afford equal schooling opportunities to Haitian migrant children.

Armed Forces Minister Sigfrido Pared calls the continual immigration of Haitians "an attack" on Dominican sovereignty and beseeched the international community to help.

"This is a problem that can only be alleviated by helping Haiti," agrees Bernardo Vega, former Dominican ambassador to the US. "As long as Washington contains the flow of Haitian boat people to [US] shores, they don't see a problem - but it increases pressure on us, as the Haitians have nowhere to escape to but here," he says.

But while the government calls for an end to illegal immigration, the upper class continues to benefit from their cheap labor, charges Guillermo Starcinon, a Dominican Merengue singer. "They pay them slave wages and call immigration police on them before payday. Of course they want this," he says.

It's the Dominican poor who suffer, says Mr. Starcinon. "We know what it's like to be immigrants. We ourselves are immigrating to America all the time, so we feel sorry for the Haitians." But, he stresses, "they are working for nothing, are sometimes violent, and they are bringing us down."

Mr. Senatin lives in a sugar-company settlement in St. Jose de Los Llanos. He has no running water, shares a bunk bed in a shack, and makes about 85 pesos (\$2.50), on a good day, which he keeps under lock in a secret place. At the end of the year, he manages to send his family 7,500 pesos (about \$227). It's almost double what he would make at home, if he could find work.

In all the time he has lived in the Dominican Republic, Senatin says, he has not made one Dominican friend.

"We're not liked here. I know that," he says without sentiment.

Adriana Yuan, a Haitian woman who sells hair extensions and perfume on a sidewalk in Santo Domingo, does not want to talk about bad treatment and tough conditions here.

"I work all the time, from morning until night, and I keep my head down," she says. "If someone says they don't want my hair extensions because I am a dirty Haitian, that is OK. I am just working here."

Michele Oriol, a sociologist in Haiti, argues that complaining about the treatment of the Haitians is a folly.

"All these human rights groups should not be so selfish when it comes to criticizing the [Dominican Republic]," she says. "They need to do their homework: We don't have any economic possibilities in Haiti."

Complete villages in Haiti are being sustained by money sent home from the Dominican Republic, she argues. "Sure, it's not paradise," she says, "but look at the big picture - if they were turned away instead, people here would starve."

Father Christopher Hartley, a Roman Catholic priest who ministers to the workers in St. Jose de Los Llanos, disagrees. "Poverty should not serve as anyone's excuse for abuse of power," he says. "Desperation of these people is no excuse for the way they are being treated."

Back at the Dajabón border crossing, Dominican authorities recently tried to drive the bodies of the 25 would-be immigrants back to Haiti for burial. They were met with violent protests in which two more Haitians were shot.

"We will keep on being disrespected, and we will keep on dying," says Ciceron, the farm worker. "But we will keep on coming across, too. We don't see a better option."

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

DR-Haiti trade corridor to be built with 45M euros
European funds to fund project
The Dominican Today
Jan. 23, 2006

DAJABON, Montecristi.- The National Office for the European Development Funds (Onfed) will build a bi-national project between Haiti and Dominican Republic, called "the Hispaniola Island North Corridor," at a cost of 45 million euros.

Onfed director Onofre Rojas made the announcement, and said that the corridor consists of a highway from Cape Haitian to Dajabón and a new bridge on the Masacre river, to be built next to the one already there.

The official, speaking while visiting this border city, said that this project includes the construction of a market in Dajabón, because it is one of the province's most pressing demands.

"In the last 12 years this population has been demanding the market as a source for trade between Dominican Republic and Haiti," he said, and pointed out that Haiti is the country's second trade partner, after United States.

Coast Guard told not to encourage asylum claims by Haitian migrants

BY RUTH MORRIS

South Florida Sun-Sentinel

Jan. 23, 2006

FORT LAUDERDALE, Fla. - Hiding in a storage closet in the belly of a boat from Haiti, Deliste Joseph didn't have enough room to lie down, so he stood or sat for 11 days, lurching toward South Florida.

But Joseph, 23, might count himself among a lucky few, immigration lawyers say. By reaching U.S. soil in May 2004, at least he was able to apply for political asylum and to argue his case, which is pending before an immigration judge.

If the Coast Guard had caught him at sea, the overwhelming chances are he would have been returned to Haiti without any such hearing.

That difference is making immigrant advocates increasingly angry, particularly with national elections expected in Haiti in early February. The vote could bring more bloodshed, impelling more Haitians to leave.

In the most recent wave of political instability, the Coast Guard intercepted 3,229 Haitians in fiscal 2004, when an armed revolt forced the ouster of President Jean-Bertrand Aristide. The Coast Guard and immigration enforcement agencies have bolstered their vigilance in recent years with cutters and surveillance planes and only a trickle of Haitians get through.

A key part of the problem, advocates say, is that Coast Guard officials are instructed in a longstanding executive order not to encourage or elicit asylum claims when they come across migrants at sea. Nor can Coast Guard officials initiate interviews that might determine whether a Haitian has a claim to refugee status in the United States. Almost all Haitians interdicted at sea are returned immediately to their volatile homeland.

The policy prompted Marleine Bastien, vice-chairwoman of Miami's Haitian-American Grassroots Coalition, to file an affidavit two months ago with the Organization of American States, a diplomatic body that has promoted democracy in Haiti.

She said Coast Guard officials genuinely are concerned for Haitians' well being.

"Safety is their primary role but their hands are tied," she said. "They are given orders they have to follow."

Coast Guard Commander Peter Brown confirmed that under a policy that dates to the late 1970s, his agency does not ask boat migrants if they need protection, regardless of their country of origin. He said, though, that Coast Guard officials call on an asylum officer if migrants aggressively insist they fear for their lives, a standard that rights advocates refer to as the "shout test." It usually involves showing proof of persecution, such as scarred skin, or documentation of abuse.

"We don't actively elicit asylum claims from migrants of any nationality, but if those kinds of statements or fears are manifested, the Coast Guard is directed and will assure that migrant has an opportunity to communicate to an asylum pre-screening officer," he said.

Cheryl Little, of the Florida Immigrant Advocacy Center, said the situation was compounded by the fact that Coast Guard cutters patrolling the waters between Haiti and Florida usually do not carry asylum officers.

This leaves Coast Guard officials, many of whom do not speak Creole, to decide unaided whether Haitian boat migrants can talk to an asylum prescreening official, by phone or radio, to plead their case.

Brown acknowledged asylum experts were rarely on board cutters that intercept Haitians, but he said the cutter patrolling closest to Haiti carried a Creole-speaking officer.

Immigrant advocates point to statistics to support their claim that authorities aren't properly screening Haitians. Of the 1,850 Haitians interdicted at sea in fiscal 2005, only nine were granted preliminary interviews to see if they had a legitimate fear of returning to their homeland, according to figures supplied to Rep. Kendrick Meek, D-Fla.

Of those nine, only one is known to have received refugee status.

Supporters of the current policy, meanwhile, say that inviting asylum claims at sea would encourage more migrants to risk a potentially deadly crossing.

"The message that would send is tantamount to a clarion call to this dangerous migration," said John Keeley, spokesman for the Center for Immigration Studies, a Washington, D.C.-based think tank in favor of tighter immigration policies. "The good men and women of the Coast Guard have enough on their plate."

Joseph's lawyer, Andre Pierre, said his client, with no scars and no documents, surely would have failed the shout test if he had been caught at sea. He thinks Joseph's case is typical of many Haitians who are turned back.

Joseph is asking for political asylum based on claims that political opponents murdered his father, Deika, who was a member of Aristide's Lavalas movement. After the slaying Joseph learned from neighbors that armed thugs were circulating his picture and trying to track him down. He went into hiding and was wearing the same clothes when he arrived in Fort Lauderdale. His pockets were empty. Today, he lives near Fort Myers and is looking for work laying carpet.

"If he had been interdicted at sea, he would have been sent back to Haiti immediately and probably he would have been killed by the same people who killed his father," Pierre said. "You know what the statistics don't tell you?" he said, and answered, "How many (repatriated migrants) were found later, on the streets, dead. We don't have that number."

Judeh: Government doesn't consider pulling out troops taking part in Int'l peace-keeping forces
Jordan News Agency
Jan. 23, 2006

Judeh: Government doesn't consider pulling out troops taking part in Int'l peace-keeping forces

Amman/ Jan.23/(Petra)-- The Jordanian government is not considering pulling out its military men taking part in the UN-supervised peace-keeping forces, government spokesperson Nasser Judeh stated Monday. The Jordanian Armed forces are honored by performing a role in preserving peace in various parts of the world and "the government is not considering pulling out troops taking part in peace-keeping forces operating in Haiti," Judeh told reporters during his weekly press briefing on Monday. "This is a principled stand for Jordan," he said. Last Saturday, Jordan laid to rest two of its military men who were martyred in fire exchange with an armed gang in Haiti. A third one was wounded. The three were manning a checkpoint when they came under fire by unknown men. "Our forces are concerned with implementing peace and not only preserving it in Haiti and Jordan will continue fulfilling this humanitarian duty," Judeh said. About 1497 Jordanian soldiers are deployed in Haiti and 750 of them are having their posts in slums neighborhoods around the Haitian Capital. The dispute within the ruling family in Kuwait is an internal affair of the ruling family and "God forbid! that we interfere in it," Judeh said in reply to a question. "All we hope for Kuwait is to overcome the tragic loss of Sheikh Jaber and Kuwait is a brotherly and dear country whose stand by us is highly appreciated," he added. In reply to another question, Judeh said he personally knows nothing about a call by Israeli acting prime minister Ehud Olmert to hold a quartet summit bringing together Jordan, Palestine, Egypt and Israel to draw up outlines for the coming stage. In general, Jordan will save no effort designed to go back to the roadmap and to bring the peace process back into track. He hoped the Palestinian elections starting on Wednesday will go smoothly with no obstacle. "We are very much interested in seeing the elections going on smoothly," Judeh said describing the elections as crucial step on the road to realize Palestinian hopes and aspirations. He said Jordan has sent an official delegation to monitor the election process after receiving an invitation from the authorities supervising these elections.

Interim PM Latortue to meet with Caricom Chairman
Radio Jamaica
Jan. 23, 2006

The interim Prime Minister of Haiti Gerard Latortue is to hold talks with Trinidad and Tobago's Prime Minister Patrick Manning starting Tuesday.

A statement from Port-of-Spain said the two leaders will be having talks on the situation in Haiti.

Haiti was suspended from the Caribbean Community (Caricom) after President Jean-Bertrand Aristide was forced out of office in February 2004 as rebels threatened to attack Port au Prince.

Mr. Aristide was later given temporary asylum in Jamaica, much to the displeasure of Mr. Latortue who was also critical of Caricom.

Trinidad and Tobago was among a majority of countries which favoured re-establishing links with the interim government but failure to achieve consensus meant the country was left in the cold.

That position has not changed. "The present situation in Haiti requires a new intervention on the part of Caricom for the advancement of the interest of Haiti and the rest of the Community," the foreign ministry statement said.

The statement said that Mr. Manning's discussions with Mr. Latortue would also touch on presidential and legislative elections, scheduled for February 7.

Voting has already been postponed several times because of organisational problems, mounting chaos and violence.

Better U.S. ties if Canada ousts Liberals

UPI

Jan. 23, 2006

TORONTO -- Diplomatic relations between Canada and the United States would almost certainly warm with a Conservative election victory Monday, The New York Times reports.

Various national polls give the Conservatives a 10-point lead over Prime Minister Paul Martin's Liberals, who have been in power for the past 13 years.

Relations between Washington and Ottawa were chilled by Canada's refusal to send troops to Iraq, trade and environmental disputes and Canadian moves to soften domestic drug laws, the newspaper said.

Conservative leader Steven Harper has been careful not to appear overly supportive of President George Bush, and has suggested he would reconsider Canada's refusal to join the U.S. missile defense program. He has also promised to increase military spending and make a bigger contribution to NATO and peacekeeping operations in places like Haiti and Afghanistan, but also said recently that he had no intention of sending troops to Iraq.

Charges Dismissed Against Haiti Solidarity Activists; Suits Filed to Stop Deportations
by Ben Terrall
San Francisco Bay Area IndyMedia
Jan. 22, 2006

On January 19, charges were dismissed against 16 San Francisco Bay Area residents who were arrested Sept.30 at the San Francisco Federal Building while demonstrating in solidarity with the people of Haiti.

The September 30 nonviolent civil disobedience action was taken as part of a coordinated series of protests in 47 cities,17 countries and 4 continents (Africa, Europe, North and South America) calling for an end to the UN/U.S.-backed bloody repression of Haitian dissidents in opposition to the current illegal government.

Dave Welsh of the San Francisco Labor Council said, "What's happening in Haiti is a monstrous crime -- an all-out war on the poor majority. The US has prepared the crime, and now the National Police and UN forces are committing it -- slaughtering people in the poor neighborhoods that support Aristide and his Lavalas Party, the majority political movement in Haiti. These mass killings, including the July 6th massacre of civilians by UN troops in Cite Soleil, have been well documented on videotape and by witness testimony. International supporters of peace and justice need to keep the pressure up to stop systematic repression by the Haitian police and death squads."

Also on January 19, immigration attorneys and advocates on behalf of Haitians facing deportation in removal proceedings in key cities throughout the United States simultaneously submitted motions to stop deportations to Haiti. Those motions ask immigration judges to administratively close cases due to catastrophic and ever-deteriorating human rights conditions in Haiti. The motion asserts that an immediate decision "protecting Haitians from forced return is imperative."

The coordinated effort on behalf of Haitians facing deportation comes after unsuccessful attempts by immigration advocates to get the Bush administration to grant temporary protected status, known as TPS, to thousands of undocumented Haitians living in the United States.

The motion states that "despite the ongoing chaos that continues in Haiti, including brutal civil strife, documented bloody political conflict, indisputable countrywide insecurity and the proven inability of the Haitian state to protect its own people, the United States continues to refuse refuge to fleeing Haitians."

National organizations, and personalities endorsing the legal campaign include World Service Immigration and Refugee Program, Dr. Paul Farmer, TransAfrica Forum, Ira Kurzban, Esq., American Immigration Lawyers Association, Church World Relief, National Council of Churches of Christ USA, Mark Dow, Jonathan Avirom, Esq., Haitian Lawyers Association, Episcopal Migration Ministries, National Immigration Project of the National Lawyers Guild, the Center for Justice and Accountability, and the Jesuit Refugee Service.

Chilean Exports to Haiti: Macoutes and Opportunists
by José Antonio Gutiérrez - for Haiti Tribune,
Bimensuel d'Information
Sunday, Jan 22 2006
Anarkismo.net

address: 190, Boulevard de Charonne, 75020 Paris
Haiti Tribune, December 2005 -2nd Year, No 29

We in Chile knew that this “Socialists” and Pinochetistas thugs could work smoothly, hand in hand in Haiti. After all, they’ve been doing it for 15 years in Chile, when in 1990 the transition to democracy marked this wedding of the Chilean macoutes and the opportunists politicians trained in Europe. Why couldn’t they do it in Haiti?

Almost a year and a half after the arrival of MINUSTAH troops to Haiti, with the explicit mission of bringing stability to the country and to protect its citizens from political violence, thus paving the way to a return to democratic rule, it seems that things are really going the opposite direction they should be: insecurity has increased, the number of people killed in political violence has increased to scandalous levels and certainly, the MINUSTAH troops are not doing much to protect Haitian people. Instead, the troops have been reported to have taken an active role in serious violations of Human Rights. Having a quick glimpse to the list of countries sending troops, there’s hardly any reason to be surprised: countries like Pakistan, Nepal and Morocco aren’t known, particularly, for their respect to Human Rights, let alone Civil Liberties. And the armies of these and other countries, like Argentina, Brazil and Chile have serious records of Human Rights violations and have observed a traditional contempt for democratic values –the history of military interventions in those republics stands as an unequivocal proof for the skeptical. Still, many people were really shocked to know that Eduardo Aldunate, second in command of the Chilean troops in Haiti was a torturer under Pinochet and member of the sinister CNI, the political police of the dictator, the tontons macoutes of our southern republic.

This revelation, lead quite naturally to another question: Could it be possible for a former agent of the Chilean CIA-backed dictatorship to be working, hand in hand, with the Chilean “socialist” Mr. Juan Gabriel Valdés, head of the UN Mission in Haiti? It doesn’t seem to bother that much either of them, in honor to the truth.

Funnily enough, considering the dubious elements in the MINUSTAH and the frequent denunciations by International Human Rights groups regarding to the situation in Haiti, on the 11th of June Mr. Valdés, said that in Haiti there was no political persecution like the one that existed in Chile during Pinochet years. He knows well that the Chilean army in Haiti is the same army that persecuted the popular movement a bit more than a decade ago in Chile, so it wouldn’t be hard to believe they are behaving in a similar fashion in a different country. We were struck though, by the facility he talks about the repression during Pinochet regime and the knowledge he boasts of it. Surprising knowledge, indeed, as for most of Pinochet dictatorship –and certainly, for the hardest years of repression-, Mr. Valdés was in the USA, Mexico and England, doing postgraduate studies. An efficient man, he got to be quite well educated while his political partisans, militants of the Socialist Party, were shot dead on the streets of Santiago and in the concentration camps of the terrorist regime of Pinochet. With a

diploma under his arm, he came back to Chile, this time “renewed” in ideas by the refreshing winds of the European left, to negotiate the pacific and democratic way out for the dictatorship.

These negotiations were blessed by the US; the CIA put the dictator in power as a last resort to keep a tight grip over Chile, and when social unrest threatened to topple him, thus leaving open doors for a radical and grassroots democratic project, they decided it was time to remove him. Just like a chess piece. So the Uncle Sam welcomed the return of the repentant to their homeland, if they gave him a hand to make sure that the “return to democracy” was smooth and didn’t threaten the interest of the ruling clique and their allies in Washington. And voilà! The brand new democracy left untouched Pinochet Constitution, so as his neo liberal anti-popular economic model and the interests of those businessmen that made huge profit when the public enterprises were auctioned as bargains, leaving, as well, open doors for the multinationals to keep looting our resources. That was the key to Chile’s return to democracy. And Mr. Valdés, as a good acolyte of the IMF and the White House, was there to make sure that everything kept going on as planned. And he and his “Socialist” party were the perfect facade for the new front of the elite: these “converts” were socialists in brand, but deeply right wing in their politics –their hostile attitude towards Venezuela nowadays stands as the clearest example of this.

And there, firmly stuck to the new “democratic” institutions, where the putschist and the offsprings of Pinochet shared power and office with these converts, through one job to another, Mr. Valdés made himself a name: as one of the negotiators of Chile for the NAFTA (1996), in different diplomatic missions, in different State departments, as ambassador in Spain (1990-1994) and Argentina (2003). In 1998, when the dictator Pinochet was arrested in London, to the joy of many in Chile, as the Minister for Foreign affairs of Chile, he became the loudest voice demanding to “bring citizen Pinochet back to Chile”. Yes, the Socialist militant, the old advocate for democracy ended up protecting the dictator – using all sorts of shameless excuses, though. After all, it was thanks to Pinochet dictatorship that he has the job and the position he has now. He's one of the winners with Pinochet social model, that turned Chile into the 7th country in the world ranking of social inequality, according to the World Bank. And the Socialists are having now their share of the cake with the Chilean macoutes. After all, discipline and obedience to the master has always been well rewarded....

From that moment, he started going to more ambitious posts: representing Chile in the UN (2000) and finally, making his entry into the Security Council of the UN, where Chile got temporary representation (2003). From there, the leap to Haiti was quite natural given his political opportunism and his skills as a diplomatic mercenary.

We in Chile knew that this “Socialists” and Pinochetistas thugs could work smoothly, hand in hand in Haiti. After all, they’ve been doing it for 15 years in Chile, when in 1990 the transition to democracy marked this wedding of the Chilean macoutes and the opportunists politicians trained in Europe. Why couldn’t they do it in Haiti? The army, brings the repression necessary to tame the unrest, and the politicians bring the recipes for a transition to “democracy” Chilean style. This formula has been well known to be a success.

We, therefore, were not surprised when we heard the story of Eduardo Aldunate, or the declarations of Mr. Valdés on the 11th of June. We turned off the radio, and thought to ourselves “Yes Mr. Valdés, no political persecution in Haiti”...

José Antonio Gutiérrez D., November 2005

New Attack in Haiti
Two Reports from the Haiti Information Project
by Haiti Information Project
ZNet
January 20, 2006

“It was a campaign of fear. Didn’t you hear the radio? They told people that if they left their homes they would be arrested by the police and the U.N.,” stated Jean Joseph Jorel, a representative of the National Commission of the Family Lavalas Cell of Reflection. Jorel made the comment from Cite Soleil on January 9, the same day the Haitian Chamber of Commerce had called a national strike to condemn insecurity in Haiti and a recent spate of kidnappings throughout the capital. Roadblocks manned by the Haitian National Police and the U.N. went up throughout the capital on January 8 and traffic remained sparse as most residents stayed in their homes.

Jorel made his comments from Cite Soleil, a bastion of support for ousted president Aristide and current presidential candidate Rene Garcia Preval. It has served as a launching site for massive demonstrations demanding the return of Aristide and most recently as a staging ground for large Preval campaign rallies. Residents of Cite Soleil accuse Haiti’s business community of pressuring U.N. forces to commit a massacre there on July 6, 2005.

The January 9 strike came two days after the death of the commander of U.N. military forces in Haiti Lt. Gen. Urano Bacellar. His death was initially reported as a suicide but U.N. Special Envoy to Haiti Juan Gabriel Valdes has implied in recent interviews to the Haitian press that it may have been an assassination by forces trying to disrupt the electoral process. And finally, the right-wing opposition of president Mbeki in South Africa with ties to Haiti’s elite ridiculously implied that a sniper from their country, at the behest of Aristide, killed the general.

For Jorel and most residents of Cite Soleil, the Chamber’s call to shut down businesses and transportation is an ominous and frightening portent of things to come. They do not see the strike as a call for national unity to combat crime and violence; rather they view it as another attempt by Haiti’s wealthy elite, and those attempting to forestall upcoming elections, to force the U.N. to launch military attacks against the neighborhood. They see it as a repeat of events that led to the massacre of July 6, 2005.

“This is Apaid, Boulos and Baker working to force the U.N. to come in here and commit another massacre like they did on July 6” declared Jorel in a familiar refrain heard throughout Cite Soleil. Andy Apaid is a wealthy sweatshop owner and the leader of an organization that dropped the 0 from Haiti’s year of independence, 1804, to create a civil society organization named Group 184 that was heavily funded by the United States, France and Canada. The Group 184 helped to build opposition to Aristide’s government and Apaid was among the first to refer to para-military forces that invaded Haiti from the Dominican Republic as freedom fighters as they killed police officers and Lavalas officials in their bid to oust Aristide. Dr. Reginald Boulos is the president of the Haitian Chamber of Commerce who is implicated in the death of 60 children after his company, Pharval Pharmaceuticals, produced a poisonous cough syrup distributed throughout poor neighborhoods of the capital. Boulos had also pushed the U.N. to make armed incursions into pro-Aristide neighborhoods last May that many view

as having led to the massacre in Cite Soleil on July 6. Charles Henry Baker, another sweatshop owner, helped to create the Group 184 and is currently a presidential candidate seen as the preferred choice of Haiti's wealthy elite and business community.

“Why do they keep postponing these elections when everyone knows that Preval is the people's choice? Why are they afraid of democracy when they claim that removing Aristide was for democracy? We still believe they kidnapped our president and forced him out. Now we stand ready to vote again for Preval and they keep delaying the vote. Is it because they want to rob us of our democratic rights once again? Is it because so many people are getting rich from the coup of Feb. 2004 that the international community is so blind they can't see the truth?” asked Jorel.

“Don't go there. There are killers and bad people.”

As the jeep of journalists approached the two Armored Personnel Vehicles (APVs), manned by Jordanian soldiers and two Haitian police officers, they motioned for them to stop. Everyone got out of the car to have their identification checked as the soldiers assured themselves that the lone Haitian driver was not kidnapping them. The journalists were about to enter the fabled land of poverty and misery that has been targeted recently as a repository for kidnapping victims in the Haitian press and mainstream international media. One of the Jordanian soldiers cautioned, “Be careful. Don't go there. There are killers and bad people.”

After being followed by another APV, the Haitian driver finally negotiated his way to the central marketplace in Cite Soleil on a street named Bwa Neuf. Bwa Neuf is the site of a monument erected in honor of another supposed Lavalas “bandit”, Emmanuel “Dread” Wilme. U.N. forces assassinated Wilme and four of his armed lieutenants on July 6 and residents accuse them of targeting unarmed civilians during the raid. Dread, as residents of Cite Soleil refer him to, was an orphan who grew up in La Famni Selavi, the organization founded by Aristide to help homeless street children. Like so many others, he saw his parents killed by the military following the coup that ousted Aristide in 1991. While the US-installed government, the Haitian elite and the U.N. demonized Dread as a criminal, the impoverished residents of Cite Soleil put their pennies together and built a monument to his memory.

“They killed my wife and have left me to take care of our nine children.”

Bwa Neuf is patrolled by several APVs 24-hours a day. Residents claim that at any given hour wherever people congregate to talk about the community or share ideas with one another, they open fire with automatic weapons. According to the testimony of residents, four women were killed by U.N. forces in the marketplace of Bwa Neuf on January 6. Dieunord Edme, 51 years-old, described how his wife Annette Moleon, 45 years-old, was gunned down by U.N. forces on that day from a passing APV: “They started shooting everywhere for no reason. They killed my wife and have left me to take care of our nine children. Why did they do that?”

The fear was palpable as residents of Haiti's poorest neighborhood continued to surround the group of journalists to respond to the news that the U.N. had announced the results of an investigation into the events of July 6. APVs passed by several times and residents said the only reason they didn't open fire was because of the presence of white foreigners. Yet so many killings by U.N. forces have gone unreported by the press and human rights organizations. For example, Zapada Price, a man described

as “fou” (crazy) by the community, ventured too close to the U.N. checkpoint. His body lay on the road for four days because every time his family came to collect the corpse U.N. forces reportedly fired at them as well.

“The blue helmets are lying. They killed so many people and I praise God that I am alive to call them liars,” shouted 30 year-old Edline Pierre-Louis who was 6 months pregnant when the U.N. opened fire on July 6. Showing us the scars on her stomach, she exclaimed, “I lost my unborn baby to U.N. forces on July 6. If they say there was not a massacre then tell me where is my child? Where is my brother who bled to death in the street? The U.N. is lying. They are the ones embarrassing themselves with this lie. Look at how many victims have come forth to tell you the truth.”

On Jan. 8, residents of Cite Soleil also spoke against a campaign by Haiti’s wealthy elite to destroy them because of their fidelity to the cause of ousted president Aristide and their support for the campaign of Rene Preval. “My brother has been shot and killed by the U.N., my cousin was shot and killed by the U.N. on July 6. The U.N. is lying. Look at my stomach and the operation they performed to save my life. The U.N. is lying!” stated Amavil Joudain. He was shot in the stomach by U.N. forces on July 6, 2005. Other victims of July 6 who gave testimony to journalists included:

Pierre, Samson, 37, bullet in the stomach; Carole Janvier, 52, bullet to the chest; Mimose Gabriel, 52, home fired upon, stray bullet to the stomach; Leonise Cenard, 46, bullet to the stomach.

During the raid of July 6, not a single ambulance or medical unit accompanied U.N. forces as they opened fire in the community with what was described by residents as “a hail of bullets.” The U.N. ultimately relied upon witnesses and testimony presented to them by the Haitian police and human rights “expert” Jean-Claude Bajoux to dismiss the evidence. Bajoux is a member of the Group 184 and known for his bias and visceral hatred of Lavalas. The U.N. to date has never interviewed nor spoken to a single resident of Cite Soleil. Despite direct testimony by victims of the July 6 U.N. military incursion, the official report by the MINUSTAH forces concluded: “The targeted victims were either individuals suspected of having been the informants of MINUSTAH, or of the people who imprudently expressed their joy at the announcement of the supposed disappearance of Dread Wilmé and some of his close associates.” In other words, the U.N. ultimately concluded that the victims were shot and killed by members of Lavalas in retaliation for informing and expressing “joy” for their [the U.N.’s] military incursion.

The U.N.’s dismissal of the testimony of victims of July 6 and the recent pressure applied for another raid in Cite Soleil by virtue of the strike called by the Haitian Chamber of Commerce on Jan. 9 was foreshadowed by another dark event on December 30, 2005. The Canadian government, responsible for the reformation of Haiti’s corrupt judiciary, stood by and watched without comment as Judge Jean Pérs Paul ordered the release of the following individuals implicated in kidnapping in Haiti but never mentioned by the Chamber of Commerce during their strike:

* Stantley Handal; * Wilfrid François, Haitian police officer Agent 1; * Sony Lambert, Haitian police officer Agent 3; * Réналd Cinéus, Haitian police officer Agent 4.

Handal is a member of one of Haiti’s wealthiest families that supported the ouster of Aristide in 1991 and 2004. He was initially arrested along with eight members of Haiti’s police force for running a

kidnapping ring after he attempted to use a stolen credit card taken from one of his victims. The judge that released them, Jean Pérs Paul, is responsible for keeping Father Gerard Jean-Juste behind bars and for the arrest of journalists Kevin Pina and Jean Ristil on September 9, 2005. The police officer responsible for the initial investigation into Handal's case has reportedly been forced into hiding. The U.N. and the Canadian government have not commented on the case since Jean Pérs Paul ordered the suspects released.

U.N. accused of attacking hospital in Haiti

Friday, January 20, 2006

HIP, Haiti - It was about 11 p.m. at St. Catherine's hospital in Cite Soleil on Wednesday night as exhausted doctors and nurses were treating numerous victims of gunshot wounds and filling out paperwork for the four corpses of the unfortunate ones whose lives they could not save.

"There had been a rush of gunshot victims and those who would talk told us it was the result of the U.N. opening fire on them. All of a sudden we heard loud booms and glass breaking and then we realized the hospital was being fired upon. At first we couldn't tell where it was coming from but then we saw the tracers coming from the direction of the old Boulos market that is now an armed encampment for the Jordanians in Cite Soleil. There was panic as a bullet struck a window in the Children's Ward and everyone went diving for cover," explained a hospital worker who asked to remain anonymous.

A foreign doctor who also asked their name not be used stated, "We are not sure where the bullets came from but if what everyone is saying is true [that the gunfire came from U.N. troops] there can be no excuse or justification for firing at this hospital."

Jeanette Lager, a 38 year-old mother clutching her ailing 2 month-old son, described the attack, "My friends who were on the street said they saw the U.N. firing at the hospital. I was inside with my sick baby when all of sudden glass started breaking and we could hear the gunfire from across the road where the U.N. controls the street. Look at the size of the bullet holes, look at the damage they caused. These were not small weapons. The U.N. is killing us in the streets and now they are attacking the only hospital we have in Cite Soleil. It's criminal and it must be stopped."

Benis Benjamin, whose 8 year-old daughter Valancia was shot in their home by U.N. forces the same night, described his fear as gunfire struck the hospital. "My little girl was shot in our home by MINUSTAH last night and I had to rush her here to save her life. The only reason she is alive is because of this hospital. Then I had to worry she might be a killed a second time when they began firing on the hospital. Thank God the hospital is still here," Mr. Benjamin stated.

As the on again, off again elections approach a renewed deadline of Feb. 7, the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) is being pressured to crack down hard on poor neighborhoods that are accused of remaining loyal to ousted President Jean-Bertrand Aristide. Many of these same communities have also been staging grounds for large campaign rallies in support of presidential candidate Rene Garcia Preval.

The attack on St. Catherine's comes on the heels of the killing of two Jordanian soldiers last Tuesday night. Those killings were preceded by a demonstration in the capital the day before by Haitians that supported the forced ouster of Aristide on February 29, 2004. Led by members of Haiti's wealthy elite, most notably Andre Apaid, Dr. Reginald Boulos, and Charles Henry Baker; the demonstrators criticized the U.N. for being too soft on criminals and not doing enough to restore security.

Andy Apaid is a wealthy sweatshop owner and the leader of an organization that dropped the zero from Haiti's year of independence, 1804, to create a so-called civil society organization named Group 184. The organization was heavily funded by the United States, France and Canada and helped to build opposition to Aristide's government. Apaid was among the first to refer to para-military forces that invaded Haiti from the Dominican Republic as freedom fighters even as they killed police officers and Lavalas officials in their bid to oust Aristide.

Dr. Reginald Boulos is the president of the Haitian Chamber of Commerce who is implicated in the deaths of at least 60 children after his company, Pharval Pharmaceuticals, produced a poisonous cough syrup distributed throughout poor neighborhoods of the capital. Boulos had also pushed the U.N. to make armed incursions into pro-Aristide neighborhoods last May. Survivors and members of the community charge this led to a massacre committed by U.N. forces in Cite Soleil on July 6, 2005. Charles Henry Baker, another sweatshop owner, helped to create the Group 184 and is currently a presidential candidate seen as the preferred choice of Haiti's wealthy elite and business community.

Jordanian forces in Cite Soleil attempted to block the access of journalists into another area of the community where more reported killings of unarmed civilians occurred yesterday. After finding another route around the Jordanians, journalists saw evidence of at least two more persons residents said were gunned down by MINUSTAH forces Thursday morning. John Erickson's body lay less than 30 feet from a wide street named Bwa Neuf that is patrolled by Jordanian soldiers in Armored Personnel Vehicles 24-hours a day. Residents claimed he was shot along with several others at about 9 a.m. when gunfire erupted from U.N. forces.

Another man, known by his neighbors only as "Ti Blan", lies in a pool of blood and was the apparent victim of a single shot that ripped into his chest. All of those interviewed at the scene repeated several times that the victims were unarmed at the time U.N. forces opened fire.

Journalists leaving Cite Soleil and traveling through the neighboring community of Pele witnessed first-hand new tactics being employed by Brazilian forces to pacify the area.

A man described by residents as being a member of a group called the GNB, hid his identity behind a mask made of camouflaged cloth as he led Brazilian soldiers through the area in search of what he described as "bandits." He stopped and questioned a woman using a cellular telephone on the street and then took the phone away from her and began searching through the directory for numbers. He called a number with no apparent luck, returned the phone and told her that if he saw her again he would have her arrested.

When questioned by a reporter the masked man stated he was a private citizen who had "volunteered to help the Brazilians rid Haiti of bandits" and said he was not being paid for the service. When asked if

he was otherwise gainfully employed he retorted, "This is my job. I am going to find the bandits for these guys and they have given me my authority. I don't need money to eat."

After the masked man led the Brazilians down a side street and out of earshot, residents began to complain that he was one of at least eight individuals being used by U.N. forces in the area as paid informants. One woman who spoke out afterwards said, "Those masked guys have been responsible for arresting a lot of innocent people over the past three weeks. They are using this as a form of political and personal revenge and the U.N. doesn't seem to care if innocent people are killed as a result or if they end up in jail. This situation is like living in a nightmare."

For article with photo essay visit: http://haitiaction.net/News/HIP/1_20_6/1_20_6.html

The Haiti Information Project (HIP) is a non-profit alternative news service providing coverage and analysis of breaking developments in Haiti.

For more information: To view 7-minute trailer of "Haiti: The UNTold Story" visit: www.teledyol.net
for further information about the Haiti Information Project (HIP) visit:
<http://www.teledyol.net/HIP/about.html> Contact: HIP@teledyol.net

**The Politics of Brutality in Haiti
Canada, the UN and "collateral damage"
by Aaron Lakoff
The Dominion, Canada
January 21, 2006**

PORT-AU-PRINCE, HAITI -- In his book *The Uses of Haiti*, author Paul Farmer writes:
...the world's privileged are protected from suffering violence, they are protected from having to perpetrate it – directly – and they are protected from having to apologize for it. This, then, is the political economy of brutality. Just as the violence of the poor must be understood as imbedded in their poverty – the structural violence done to them – so, too, must the 'goodness' of the rich be measured against their power and privilege." [1]
Here, I hope to illustrate how my country, Canada, is profiting from this political economy of brutality that Farmer describes here in Haiti.

I came to Haiti having known very little about the country just six months prior. My voyage here was very much an attempt to relay information, to the best of my abilities, to Canadians, in order to further expose Canada's role in Haiti. Just as Canada is now carrying out its brutal policy of Responsibility to Protect, a modern version of "white man's burden", I feel that citizens of the Canadian state like myself have a responsibility to confront the real issue in Haiti – that of Canadian imperialism.

To follow Farmer's analytical framework of a political economy of brutality, let us first examine who is suffering from this violence. Yesterday, we visited the Ste-Catherine's hospital in Cite Soleil, the largest and poorest area of Port au Prince. While ailing patients lay hooked up to IV Tubes in rows of beds, it was impossible to not notice that the exterior and interior walls of the hospital were covered with bullet holes. In a shocking image that will never leave my mind, there was a large bullet hole in a glass window looking in on cribs in the children's ward. Eyewitnesses told us that at around 11pm the previous night, the hospital came under heavy fire, and the perpetrators were MINUSTAH (United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti) troops. Opening fire on a hospital is a serious war crime under the Geneva Convention, and here, in Cite Soleil, we were looking at the evidence of war crimes committed by the very body which is supposed to uphold international law.

On the ground floor of the hospital, we met Valencia, an 8-year old girl who was recovering from a gunfire wound she sustained the night before, when MINUSTAH let loose a few rounds on her house. Her father, standing beside her bed, still looked like he was in shock.

Dead bodies were strewn throughout the streets on Thursday morning. The death toll of the day, even before noon, was three. Residents said all three were killed by MINUSTAH, and all three were unarmed. We saw the dead body of one unidentified man, still baking in the hot sun, who was gunned down just blocks away from a large cart that he used to deliver groceries and other goods for a living.

This week's death toll in Cite Soleil was already over ten, all killed by UN forces. For many like myself, we have been raised by the myth that the UN, the infamous and benevolent 'casques bleus', operate around the world to protect peace and security. Now the UN is even publicly admitting that they have killed civilians as "collateral damage" in some of their missions.

Two important questions must be asked: who constitutes this collateral damage, and why is the UN killing and not saving lives?

The answer to the first question is simple and well-documented. Just like hundreds of thousands of Madeline Albright's little targets in Iraq, the collateral damage in Haiti is found amongst the nation's poorest. They are the ones suffering the brunt of this violence.

The answer to the second question is slightly more complicated, and leads into the second part of Farmer's thesis. It also begins to uncover Canada's not-so-well hidden interests in the country. In a nutshell, the UN is committing acts of violence in Haiti because the country's privileged are protected from having to perpetrate that violence directly. They are putting pressure on the UN to do their dirty work for them.

Haiti's privileged and wealthy, represented by the Group of 184, a so-called "civil society" group that orchestrated the bloody coup d'etat against democratically-elected president Jean-Bertrand Aristide in 2004, have a lot at stake right now. In order to protect their carefully planned coup, they need two things to happen: their favored candidate (and sweatshop owner), Charles Henri Baker needs to be elected as president, and the support base for Lavalas candidate Rene Preval in poor areas like Cite Soleil and Bel Air, needs to be effectively demobilized and crushed.

The Group of 184 is taking steps to ensure these things happen before the elections on February 7th. In order to put pressure on MINUSTAH to get tough on crime and "terrorism", they called for a general business strike on January 9. On January 16th they held a sit-in in front of the UN mission headquarters in the capital. They got their wish, and MINUSTAH killed four more people the same day as the demonstration.

The Group of 184 is led by a shady cast of characters. Their spokesperson, Andy Apaid Jr., is the owner of Alpha Industries, the largest garment producer in Haiti. In his factories, more aptly called sweatshops, workers toil to produce clothing for Montreal-based Gildan Activewear. Most are women between the ages of 18-30 years old, and are paid a measly 75 Gourdes (Less than \$2 US) per day.

Another important Group of 184 player is Reginald Boulos, head of the Haitian Chamber of Commerce. According to the Haiti Information Project, Boulos was also implicated in the death of 60 children after his company, Pharval Pharmaceuticals, produced a poisonous cough syrup distributed throughout poor neighborhoods of the capital. Patrick Elie, a Haitian activist we met the other day, recounts to us how he applied for a job with a pharmaceutical company in Canada. When he told his prospective employers that he used to work for the Boulos family in Haiti, they replied, "You know, those guys are killers..."

So how does a group of rich maquiladora-owners and mad scientists maintain even a shred of credibility on the international scene? Through plenty of funding and support from the USA, France, and Canada.

Since the 2004 coup d'etat, Canada has lent its explicit support to the Group of 184, not only in sending 500 soldiers to aid in the process of ousting Aristide and thousands of elected officials, but also by

funding many of the opposition groups in the Group of 184 via the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA). Seemingly progressive Canadian NGO's such as Alternatives and Rights and Democracy have helped maintain the Group of 184's credibility by affirming that they are indeed a "civil society" group.

Through this support for the Group of 184, Canada has also supported, de facto, institutions that are committing human rights abuses in post-coup Haiti, including the interim Haitian government. Thousands of political prisoners continue to sit behind bars without charges since the coup, while Paul Martin has said that "there are no political prisoners in Haiti". At the same time, known killer and coup leader, Guy Phillippe, who was trained by the CIA in Ecuador, is running for president. The Canadian Embassy in Haiti, which was quick to support the removal of Aristide, has had little to say about this.

Furthermore, through its support for the Group of 184, Canada is also turning a blind eye to the killings of MINUSTAH. Haiti's poor know quite well who is responsible for these attacks. As Jean-Joseph Joel, a resident of Cite Soleil put it, "MINUSTAH must cease being manipulated by the private business sector – stop taking orders from the hands of Baker, Boulos, and Apaid, at the detriment of the masses, to destroy the people of Cite Soleil, Bel Air, Laforcette, to destroy all who live in the popular neighborhoods".

On the ground, Canada's "Responsibility to Protect" means poor Haitians are slaughtered.

So to bring us to the third and final part of Farmer's political economy of brutality, we have to look close to home. This is where we find the perpetrators who are protected from having to apologize. I am Canadian (for an anarchist, that's a hard admission), and my concern is primarily what my government is doing in Haiti, in my name.

Canadians are going to the polls for a federal election on January 23rd. The lead-up to our own elections won't be a bloodbath, but for Haiti, the outcome could be. Sadly, the outcome of our election won't make for any positive change in Haiti. Either the Liberals will form the new government (and we've already seen their abysmal performance here), or the Conservatives will, bringing our foreign policy even more in line with the American foreign policy.

A look to the north end of Montreal shows an interesting scene playing out. There, where many Haitian-Canadians reside, Canada's Liberal Foreign Affairs Minister, Pierre Pettigrew, is engaged in the fight of his political career -- and he's losing.

Pettigrew is one of the main players responsible for Canada's imperialist ventures in Haiti, but when called on it, he is unrepentant. In fact he is proud of Canada's role in Haiti.

Haitians in Montreal, along with activist groups such as Haiti Action Montreal, are ready to fire Pettigrew from his job. He's been publicly challenged and humiliated, and now posters with his face denouncing him for crimes against humanity cover telephone polls in his riding. As the most recent polls show he is way down, he actually might soon be forced to say his apologies.

Our solidarity with the Haitian people demands that we make people like Pettigrew, Martin, and the rest of the Canadian government pay for their crimes. We must challenge the structural violence being

done unto Haiti's poor, and we must take down the defenses that allow for the profiting by the Canadian state of this political economy of brutality. Voting out Pettigrew and his kind could be a start, but imperialism doesn't end at the ballot boxes. We need not a new foreign policy towards Haiti, and it isn't enough for people like the NDP's Svend Robinson to go down to Haiti if he is elected, as he has promised. Canada needs to get out of Haiti, and the mechanisms of the political economy of brutality that we have seen need to be abolished. Here in Port-au-Prince and back in Montreal, Haitians are demanding no less.

Aaron Lakoff is an activist and independent journalist based in Montreal. He will be in Haiti for the month of January, filing reports focused on the role of Canada in the country. He can be reached at montrealtohaiti@resist.ca

UN forces commit war crimes in Cite Soleil

Seven Oaks Magazine

January 21, 2006

Leslie Bagg

Port au Prince -- As pressure from Haiti's elite on MINUSTAH (United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti) continues to escalate, so too does the violence perpetrated by UN forces against civilians in Cite Soleil.

The death toll in the desperately poor neighborhood has been climbing steadily since the elite's 'Group of 184' organized a business strike and a demonstration on January 16th outside UN headquarters in Port-au-Prince with the aim of pushing MINUSTAH to do more to provide security and eliminate so-called terrorists in the city's poorest neighborhoods. At least 10 civilians have been killed by UN forces this week.

Many feel that more killings could also be in order in retaliation for the January 17th deaths of two Jordanian MINUSTAH soldiers in Cite Soleil. Representatives from Cite Soleil contest that no one from the community was involved in these killings, and that outsider intervention is a possibility.

Residents of Cite Soleil showed us the bodies of two of the most recent victims of MINUSTAH's campaign of terror. Jean Ericson, a man in his early twenties, lies dead on the sidewalk in a pool of his own blood. His neighbors tell us he was killed by MINUSTAH bullets at 9:00 am on January 19th. The second body is a short walk away. An unidentified man lies with a bullet hole in his chest. He was a porter, residents tell us, one of many who pull heavy loads in the hot sun in order to survive. They show us his empty cart a few blocks away

Our next visit is Ste-Catherine's hospital, where we meet eight-year-old Valencia who was shot in the leg during a MINUSTAH attack on her home during the night of January 18th. We learn more disturbing news at the hospital: that the facility was itself a target of MINUSTAH fire that same night. Lani Byeneme, who was present at the hospital with her 13 year-old child, Aline Jean-Denis, during the attack explains:

"Yesterday night, we were sleeping here, and MINUSTAH came to kill us. It was MINUSTAH that shot the bullet which almost killed my little child. The window was broken, and it fell on the bed of the child." Small children and their parents look on as we photograph bullet holes in the glass window of the children's ward.

Thus far, the only MINUSTAH personnel we have come in contact with have been ensconced in their armed personnel carriers. However, as we drive through Pele, another slum area adjacent to Cite Soleil, we see armed blue-helmeted soldiers out patrolling a busy street. They are accompanied by a masked man who is questioning people, including a woman sitting by the side of the road. She tells us that he is a Cite Soleil resident who has been hired by MINUSTAH to lead them to the 'chimeres', the armed bandits who are supposedly terrorizing the neighborhood.

The actions of MINUSTAH in Cite Soleil make one wonder just whom is terrorizing whom. The Geneva Convention states, "Combatants must distinguish between civilian and military objects and

attack only military targets.” (Protocol I, Art. 48). Residents that we interviewed stressed that the two men who had been gunned down in the street were unarmed. It is impossible to make the argument that eight year-old Valencia is a combatant. The Geneva Convention also specifically protects hospitals, stating, “Fixed establishments and mobile medical units must be protected and respected by all sides in a conflict.” (Convention I, Art.19).

If the United Nations is willing to ignore international law to serve the interests of the rich in Haiti, it should be cause for concern not only for residents of Cite Soleil, but for citizens the countries like Canada whose governments are supporting the UN mission here.

Leslie Bagg is an activist and independent journalist based in Montreal. She will be in Haiti filing reports during the month of January. Leslie can be reached at montrealtohaiti@resist.ca.

Lawyers Protest Deportation of Illegal Immigrants to Haiti

By RACHEL L. SWARNS

The New York Times

Published: January 20, 2006

WASHINGTON, Jan. 19 - Dozens of lawyers around the country joined forces on Thursday to protest the Department of Homeland Security's decision to continue deporting illegal immigrants to Haiti, an island nation plagued by political instability, violence and human rights violations.

The lawyers filed motions in dozens of cases, asking immigration judges to stop the deportations because their clients' lives may be threatened. The State Department has warned Americans against traveling to Haiti, citing the lack of an effective police force and the presence of armed gangs engaged in kidnappings and violent crime.

The lawyers, who held news conferences in Miami, New York, Boston and Philadelphia, said they were acting because homeland security officials had not given Haitians temporary protected status, which temporarily prevents the deportation of immigrants who cannot return to their native countries because of armed conflict, natural disasters or other extraordinary conditions.

Immigrants from Burundi, El Salvador, Honduras, Liberia, Nicaragua, Somalia and Sudan have temporary protected status. The immigration lawyers involved in Thursday's protest said the situation in Haiti had been far worse than in those three Central American countries since a violent uprising and intense pressure by the United States forced President Jean-Bertrand Aristide from power in 2004.

The United Nations says it has documented widespread cases of unlawful arrests and has received credible reports of police involvement in executions and banditry. The State Department says more than 25 Americans were kidnapped in Haiti last year, and local authorities say that over Christmas, kidnappings peaked to as many as 12 a day. Travel is so hazardous in Port-au-Prince, the capital, that American Embassy personnel have been barred from leaving their homes at night. More than 10 United Nations soldiers have been killed, officials say.

The lawyers want immigration judges to close the deportation cases until the situation in Haiti improves. Several lawyers said the legal strategy might not succeed on a broad scale because judges typically require assent from the government's lawyers before closing a case. But advocates for Haitian immigrants said they were trying to send the Bush administration a message and hoped that some judges would take action, even if it meant simply delaying decisions in deportation cases until Haiti stabilizes.

"I don't think it makes sense for the United States to send people back to a country where such devastating human rights violations are occurring," said Paromita Shah, associate director of the National Immigration Project in Boston. "Those Haitian deportees face grave risk to their lives, and that's not acceptable."

Candace Jean, a Miami immigration lawyer, said her clients were terrified of what they would experience when they returned to Haiti.

"They're horrified," Ms. Jean said. "Many are going into hiding."

Bill Strassberger, a spokesman for the Department of Homeland Security, said the decision to grant temporary protected status was made in consultation with the State Department. Mr. Strassberger noted that many Haitian-Americans felt safe enough to travel to Haiti and that conditions in the country varied from place to place.

The State Department, which ordered the departure of non-emergency personnel and family members of embassy officials in Haiti last May, lifted the order several months later. But embassy officials have been told that dependents under 21 are still not permitted to travel to or remain in Haiti, the department said.

"It's a tough decision," Mr. Strassberger said. "The country itself is in a desperate situation. But at this point the United States government feels that the situation can be corrected by providing more aid as opposed to providing temporary protected status."

Karline St. Louis of Miami is hoping that officials will change their minds. Her husband, Kevin, who is being represented by Ms. Jean, expects to be deported any day.

"I'm praying that something will change," said Ms. St. Louis, 27, who has a 4-year-old son. "There's a lot of kidnapping in Haiti, a lot of killings going on. It is very scary."

Maggy Duteau, an immigration lawyer in New York, said she could not understand why Salvadorans, Nicaraguans and Hondurans would be granted temporary protected status while Haitians would not.

"How bad does it have to get before something is done?" Ms. Duteau asked.

Haiti Struggles with Gun Violence
Red Cross with victim of violence
VOA News
Jan. 20, 2006

Haiti continues to struggle with violence and instability in the wake of its upcoming presidential elections in February. Gun violence and kidnappings threaten the lives of thousands of people every day in the country's capital, Port-au-Prince. A leading humanitarian aid organization says the situation is only getting worse.

The international humanitarian organization Doctors Without Borders released a statement Thursday appealing for armed groups to respect the safety of civilians and aid workers, and allow the wounded safe access to medical care. Their appeal comes in response to a dramatic increase in gun violence in the city.

At a news conference in the capital on Thursday, the group's head of mission, Dr. Ali Besnaci, said that it is unacceptable that the recent wave of violence is claiming so many victims of civil society. He says he fears the violence will only get worse.

Since August of 2005, Doctors Without Borders has operated St. Catherine Hospital in the precarious slum of Cité Soleil, where more than 250,000 Haitians live in crowded shacks along the waterfront. For the residents of Cité Soleil, St. Catherine's is the only access they have to medical care.

Dr. Loris de Felippi, who directs the hospital, says that many of the victims are women and children. "We had a young girl with a bullet in the stomach, we just finished the intervention, and the situation is serious. And yesterday, this is really unbelievable, but we had an infant of 11 months with a bullet in the back," he said.

He says that while 34 people were wounded by gunfire in November, the hospital treated over 80 gunshot victims in December, and in the first two weeks of January alone, over 60 gunshot victims have been treated. Six of them have died. Dr. De Felippi says that these are the cases the hospital knows about. Many other people are wounded or die, and are never reported.

A five-year-old boy named Henri has been brought into the emergency room with a gunshot wound.

He says he was at home when bullets tore through his house and one hit him in his leg. A man near his house found him and carried him here. He says that he hopes his mother will come find him soon.

Since the departure of former president Jean Bertrand Aristide in February 2004, security has been a major problem in Haiti, particularly in the capital. Armed gangs loyal to Mr. Aristide control many of the slums, and kidnappings have increased to epidemic levels.

The United Nations sent a peacekeeping mission of more than 7,000 troops in June of 2004 to stabilize the country. On Tuesday, two U.N. peacekeepers from Jordan were killed in Cité Soleil.

VOA News

Haiti's election postponed again: Is it because democracy might win?

by Lyn Duff

San Francisco Bay View

Jan. 18, 2006

A Haitian man lies dead while people run for cover as they hear the roaring engines of approaching Jordanian U.N. troops in an armored vehicle on Thursday, Jan. 19, a day in which four people were killed and seven wounded in Cité Soleil. Angry residents blamed the killings on Jordanian peacekeepers who they alleged had earlier fired high-power weapons from armored vehicles that blew large holes through cinderblock dwellings. The Haitian elite, apparently fearing the strong support for presidential candidate and former President René Préval in Cité Soleil, have been demanding U.N. crackdowns on the neighborhood, ostensibly to quell crime and violence.

The U.S. backed interim government of Gerald Latortue has postponed Haitian presidential elections for the fourth time, sparking an emergency session of the United Nations Security Council on Jan. 13.

Elections were to be held Jan. 8. Now they have been rescheduled for Feb. 7.

“It is the wish of the Council members that we get a briefing ... on what is exactly happening on the ground and in particular on the circumstances that have led to the postponement of the elections,” explained Tanzania’s UN envoy Augustine Mahiga.

“We were told [the elections postponement] could be for technical reasons, but there might be other reasons, and that’s why we have, on an urgent basis, requested a briefing on Haiti.”

Electoral Council Secretary-General Rosemond Pradel told reporters that a postponement was necessary because registered voters have not received their electoral identification cards.

Meanwhile, questions have been raised about the process of voter registration which many Haitians say was inaccessible.

“I had to walk two hours to the place to register to vote. I waited in line all day and then was turned away in the evening because the workers who were doing registration had to go home. In the poor areas it is hard to register to vote, but in the wealthy areas they registered without waiting in line,” says Daniel Bijou, a 37-year-old mason.

Pradel claims that 3.5 million of Haiti’s 9 million people have registered to vote, but Bijou says that he only knows of a few people in his neighborhood who were successful in completing their voter registration process; and those people, he says, have not yet received the identification cards they need to take to the polls.

Some in the pro-democracy movement suspect that the interim government is intentionally delaying the elections to prevent former President René Préval from becoming president. Préval was formerly a member of the Fanmi Lavalas party, which is led by Jean Bertrand Aristide. Aristide, the democratically elected president of Haiti, was forced from the country during a violent coup led by a

group of drug traffickers, demobilized soldiers, convicted human rights violators and militias hired by the country's wealthy elite.

Préval formed the Lespwa party in 2005 and is running on their ticket. Many Lavalas members say they are voting for Préval because he has promised to release the thousands of Lavalas members and supporters who are currently illegally jailed as political prisoners. According to published polls, the vast majority of Haitians have indicated that they plan to vote for Préval.

Lyn Duff, 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.

Preelection situation reports on Haiti

Michèle Canes

Agência Brasil

Jan. 20, 2006

Brasília – As the February 7 date for general elections in Haiti approaches, various preelection situation reports are being prepared. The six-nation group that has assumed responsibility for stabilizing the country, Brazil, Argentina, the United States, Canada, Chile and France will send an evaluation team this Sunday. And Brazil will send its own, consisting of José Eduardo Martins Felício, a diplomat, and professor Ricardo Seitenfus, an expert in International Relations.

According to Seitenfus, Haiti has to be rebuilt from the ground up. "It is one of the world's poorest nations and a regular succession of crises and problems just makes it poorer year by year. This perverse cycle must be broken. What Haiti needs is social and political peace, and a legitimate government." The professor goes on to emphasize that Haiti is going to need long-term assistance, especially from Brazil and other Latin American countries. "After the election the international community must realize that the new government will need a helping hand with infrastructure, from telecommunications to urban garbage collection."

Translation: Allen Bennett

20/01/2006

Trading guns for drugs lucrative, say Jamaican police

Sunday | January 22, 2006

Glenroy Sinclair, Staff Reporter

ONTARIO, Canada:

The Jamaica Gleaner

THE DRUGS-for-gun trade between Haiti and Jamaica is proving highly lucrative for Jamaican criminals.

Police Commissioner Lucius Thomas told Jamaicans living in Canada that five pounds of compressed ganja can be exchanged for three AK-47 or three M-16 rifles.

"Our informants tell us that five pounds of ganja can be exchanged for these weapons in Haiti. It costs between \$130,000 and \$150,000 to buy an AK or M-16 in Jamaica. Therefore, you can see how lucrative the drugs-for-guns trade has become," said Mr. Thomas.

Commissioner Thomas further explained that intelligence reports clearly indicated that illegal guns were still flowing into the country from the United States and some Central American countries.

WELL-DRESSED MEN

Speaking at the Jamaica Canadian Association head-quarters on Arrow Road in Toronto, Thomas said that poor people in inner-city communities could not afford expensive ammunition, so the question was where were they getting it from.

Based on intelligence, the police said they have now turned their searchlight on at least 13 well-dressed men, living in upscale communities across the island.

He disclosed that 70 per cent of the over 1,650 murders reported last year, were committed by men between the ages of 15-35 and also, at least 70 per cent of that age group were the victims of those crimes.

AI concerned about guns fuelling Haiti's instability

RJR94fm.com

Jan. 20, 2006

According to human rights group Amnesty International, Haiti is awash with small arms which fuel violence and human rights abuses and threaten planned elections.

The group says armed criminal gangs and police officers act with impunity towards civilians.

It urges the United States-appointed interim government and United Nations peacekeepers to carry out complete disarmament.

The UN mission in the country is struggling to maintain law and order following a surge in violence in Haiti.

The country has recently been hit by a string of abductions and police say that more than 450 people have been kidnapped since March.

The UN has carried out a series of high profile raids on shanty towns on the edges of the capital, Port-au-Prince, in a bid to stamp out the armed gangs they say are behind the violence.

But Amnesty says rogue police officers and demobilised Haitian armed forces are also responsible for human rights abuses.

It accuses the UN force of not doing enough to control the situation ahead of elections planned for October and November.

The report said Haitians remain mired in a human rights crisis despite the presence of a UN peacekeeping force.

The government, it says, is failing to protect the basic rights of the Haitian people.

The country's interim Prime Minister, Gerard Latortue, has admitted that police commit abuses but has maintained these are investigated.

Haiti Q&A

Por by Diego Hausfather and Nicholas Berry-Shaw

CMI Brasil

Centro de Midia Independente

21/01/2006

Haiti has once again fallen victim to a U.S.-orchestrated coup d'etat, and this time the Canadian government is deeply complicit.

What's happened in Haiti since Feb. 29 2004?

=> After the democratically elected government was overthrown, the rebels and the newly formed police have been on a killing spree; thousands of poor peasants and slum dwellers have been massacred in "a pattern of repression" against "those close, or perceived to have been close, to ... Fanmi Lavalas (FL)", the political party that held power prior to Feb. 29, 2004, according to Amnesty International.

=> In the month after the coup d'état, the morgue reported 900 additional deaths above the usual level, many of them violent, while the Catholic Church's Peace and Justice Commission estimated that 500 people were killed in the capital of Port-au-Prince. On October 15, 2004, the general hospital had to call the Ministry of Health to send emergency vehicles to remove the more than 600 corpses that had accumulated there over the previous 2 weeks.

=> Rape is once again being wielded as a political tool to prevent women from speaking out against the coup d'etat and the subsequent repression.

=> Political freedom has been severely restricted since the coup; Journalists critical of the interim government have been killed or threatened by the paramilitaries and radio stations have been shut down.

=> Peaceful demonstrations calling for the return of democracy and an end to the repression have frequently been met with police bullets.

=> Leading FL politicians, Lavalas activists and poor people perceived to support Lavalas are routinely arrested without a warrant and then packed into the overcrowded jails, where prisoners are abused and denied the right to see a judge. Prisoners also lack access to adequate food, potable water, or healthcare. The Catholic Peace and Justice Commission estimates that there are at least 700 political prisoners in Haiti today.

=> Many people have become internal refugees, fleeing to the mountains or to Port-au-Prince, as a result of the campaign of killing, repression, and intimidation.

Didn't President Aristide resign?

=> President Jean-Bertrand Aristide was confronted by US Marines with a letter of resignation prepared for him by the State Department and given two choices: sign the letter and leave with them on a jet to an unknown location or stay in Haiti, in which case the Marines would not provide him with any protection and he would be left at the mercy of the rebels.

=> The State Department prevented President Aristide's American security company from sending more bodyguards and ordered the remaining ones to return to the U.S. for "security reasons".

=> When the U.S. took Aristide, they flew him and his wife, without informing them of their destination, to a French military base in the Central African Republic, where Aristide was held against his will for a number of days before eventually going into exile in South Africa.
=> President Aristide, his "resignation" having been made under the threat of violence, was the victim of a coup d'état, aided by his kidnapping by the U.S.

Who are the rebels?

Wasn't Aristide overthrown by a popular rebellion?

=> The leaders of the rebels, Guy Philippe, Louis Jodel Chamblain, Jean "Tatoune" Baptiste and others, are high-ranking former soldiers or members of the CIA-created paramilitary FRAPH.
=> The FRAPH, along with the military, slaughtered 4,000-5,000 civilians from 1991-1994 after the 1991 coup that overthrew Aristide for the first time. Aristide thus disbanded the hated military when he returned to power in 1995.
=> Many ex-soldiers trained with the Dominican Army on military bases and received M-16s from the US. From 2000 to 2004, Guy Philippe led frequent cross-border attacks into Haiti, killing police officers and government officials.
=> The rebels overthrew Aristide after a 3-week insurgency, killing police officers, emptying jails and burning down government buildings.
=> 500 members of the former military have been integrated into the Haitian National Police (HNP), with another 500-1000 in training. Former soldiers also occupy top posts in the HNP.
=> Vast swaths of the countryside are under the control of Guy Philippe's men, who play judge, jury and executioner in the absence of any functioning justice system.

Who is the interim government?

=> Shortly after forcing President Aristide's departure, the U.S. swept aside Haiti's constitution and produced a handpicked "Conseil des Sages" (Council of the Wise) to appoint a new government.
=> Gerard Latortue, a UN bureaucrat and business consultant, was selected as Prime Minister, along with a cabinet of right wing ideologues and supporters of the old dictatorships.
=> After taking power, the installed government granted a three-year tax holiday to the largest business owners, while firing thousands of government workers and cutting funding for literacy programs, subsidies for textbooks and school uniforms.
=> The U.S.-backed government also stopped paying the wages of doctors and nurses, leading them to go on strike, but managed to find \$30 million to pay "back wages" to the disbanded military
=> Violating a 13-year arms embargo with the active complicity of the U.S., the Latortue government purchased \$7 million worth of weapons from the American government.
=> The Ministry of Justice has organized sham trials for ex-army officers like FRAPH leader Louis Jodel Chamblain accused of carrying out massacres or assassination during the 1991-94 coup. The defendants have unanimously been acquitted in proceedings described as "an insult to justice" and a "mockery" by Amnesty International.

How is Canada involved in Haiti?

=> In January 2003, Canada hosted the "Ottawa Initiative", a gathering of all the "major players" in Haiti, none of which were Haitian, and reached a consensus that "Aristide must go".

=> Joint Task Force 2, an elite commando squad in the Canadian Armed Forces, was on the ground in Haiti February 29, 2004, securing the airstrip from which U.S. Marines forced Aristide out of the country.

=> Canada also contributed 550 Canadian Forces troops to the French and American forces that occupied Haiti after Aristide's ouster.

=> The Deputy Minister of "Justice" in Haiti, Philippe Vixamar, is an employee of CIDA (Canadian International Development Agency) and was given his position by CIDA. Vixamar, who has overseen the illegal arrest and detention of political prisoners while setting free notorious human rights abusers, has said "the United States and Canadian governments play key roles in the justice system in Haiti."

=> 100 RCMP officers are leading CIVPOL, the UN police mission that is training, arming, and patrolling with the new HNP. CIVPOL is helping to integrate the brutal former military into the HNP's ranks while providing a veneer of legitimacy to the police's violent actions.

=> Hypocritically, Canada claimed it cancelled a police training program during Aristide's presidency because of the "politicization" of the police, yet now seems totally unconcerned by the politicization of the police and the egregious abuses this is spawning.

=> Prior to the coup, Canada had cut off all aid to the elected government of Haiti and was channelling the remaining trickle of money to anti-Aristide NGOs. After the coup, however, Canada announced more than \$180 million in aid to support the installed government.

=> Canada claims the aid is intended to help hold "free and credible election"; In reality, Latortue's government has done everything it can to assure that free and fair elections cannot be held, by embracing the former military as "freedom fighters" and actively repressing FL, the majority political party in Haiti.

=> The Caribbean Community, the African Union, and Venezuela have all refused to recognize the installed government, and the ANC, Nelson Mandela's party, has started a campaign for the return of democracy to Haiti.

=> The Canadian government, on the other hand, has gone to great lengths to legitimate Gerard Latortue's installed regime. Foreign Affairs Minister Pierre Pettigrew and Paul Martin have both made official visits to Haiti since the coup, and Martin appeared with Latortue at a conference for the Haitian Diaspora in Montreal. Martin et al. continue to echo the interim government's false claims that there are no political prisoners in Haiti.

Doesn't the UN have peacekeepers in Haiti?

=> There are 7,400 UN police and troops in Haiti, with the military component led by Brazil, whose (contradictory) mandate consists of supporting the interim government and protecting civilian life.

=> The UN forces have participated in numerous "weapons sweeps" with police in the slums of the capital, but have made little effort to disarm the ex-soldiers.

=> UN troops have passively watched as police shot at peaceful demonstrators: On Feb. 28, the UN stood by as the Haitian Police fired into a crowd of peaceful demonstrators. News of this blatant repression caused the UN to bar the police from providing "security" for marches. This lasted about a week, until the interim government accused the UN of violating its sovereignty. The UN backed off, and soon enough, on April 27, the police opened fire on peaceful demonstrators, killing 9 according to Amnesty International.

What is "Operation Baghdad"?

=> On Sept. 30, tens of thousands of people peacefully marched in Port-au-Prince to call for the return of Aristide. Police fired upon the crowd as they passed the Presidential Palace, killing several protestors.

=> The interim government later claimed that Lavalas militants had attacked and beheaded 3 cops at the demonstration. However, according to CARLI, a human rights group critical of Aristide's government, there had been only 2 police officers beheaded, and they had been killed the day before in a shootout with former military.

=> Claiming Lavalas had initiated "Operation Baghdad" to destabilize the interim government, the Latortue regime used this as a pretext to embark upon an intense wave of repression against pro-Lavalas slums.

=> The Latortue government claimed their brutal incursions into the slums were "weapons sweeps" to disarm the "chimères", yet a recent study by the Small Arms Survey found that the vast majority of the weapons were located in the wealthier neighbourhoods, not the slums.

Wasn't Aristide a dictator?

Didn't he rig the 2000 elections?

=> All observers, including the OAS (Organization of American States), hailed the May 2000 legislative elections as "free and fair" with an impressive 60% turnout.

=> When it became clear that Fanmi Lavalas had won the vote by a large majority, the OAS began disputing the results for 8 of the 18 Senate seats up for election, claiming that the counting method used to tally the votes was incorrect.

=> After Aristide won the November 2000 presidential elections, he persuaded the 7 Senators from FL to resign and offered to hold new elections, but the opposition refused to participate. Subsequent offers for new elections and concessions by Aristide were similarly rejected.

=> USAID-commissioned Gallup polls taken in 2000 and 2002 consistently found Aristide and his FL party to enjoy the support of a majority of Haitians. Since the coup, representatives of the American and Canadian embassies in Haiti have admitted if free elections were held, FL would win again.

=> As animosity between government supporters and opponents increased, the opposition claimed that Aristide was using gangs, called "chimères", to maintain his power and suppress dissent.

=> While there was violence by pro-Lavalas gangs, there is no evidence linking it to Aristide, who consistently condemned acts of violence by all parties, and was vocal in his calls for the peaceful resolution of conflicts. On several occasions the government arrested prominent government supporters accused of crimes, even in the face of popular protest.

=> This violence was in the context of multiple coup attempts against Aristide and finally a full-scale invasion by the former military from the Dominican Republic (DR). In this volatile climate, from 2000 to 2003, there were at most 30 political murders attributable to pro-Lavalas forces, roughly the same as for opposition supporters and the DR-based paramilitaries. This is in no way comparable to the current repression, nor to that of the past, either during the Duvalier dictatorships or the 1991-94 coup.

Who were the opposition?

=> The main opposition comprised the Group of 184 and the Convergence Democratique, who were financed by the U.S. and supported by the Haitian elite.

=> The Group of 184, led by sweatshop owner Andy Apaid, is a right wing coalition of 184 "civil society" (i.e. the wealthiest 15% of Haiti's population) organizations. Funded by IFES (International

Foundation for Electoral Systems), which was financed by USAID, the Group of 184 led a number of anti-government demonstrations and attacked Aristide in the international media prior to the coup.

=> The Convergence Democratique (CD), financed and organized by the International Republican Institute, is a grouping of anti-Lavalas political parties composed mostly of former Aristide allies willing to implement the IMF's (International Monetary Fund) demands, popularly referred to as the "plan lanmo" (death plan) by Haitians.

=> Despite the large sums of money flowing to them, the CD was never able to poll higher than 12%.

U.S. Black Ops in Haiti - Undercover "journalists" - gunboats off Cité Soleil?
by Haiti Watcher
San Francisco Bay Area IndyMedia
Saturday, Jan. 21, 2006

See the full story at http://www.kathryncramer.com/kathryn_cramer/haiti/index.html

Consultants Advisory Group™ (CAG) Spying in Haiti; Whistleblowers Detained for Reporting Human Rights Violations

I seem to have uncovered a strange little black ops organization that's spying in Haiti and elsewhere. Not long ago, they were also looking to drum up some business in the US in the Homeland Security market. I got a few tips from whistleblowers. But all of the most substantial information has come from one of their own employees who wrote me a number of long letters.

This post covers a lot of ground, ranging from a mysterious company owned by US ex-pats placing spies disguised as journalists in the audience of Haitian presidential debates, to CAG arranging for the detention of people who wrote to me to ask for information about CAG and complain about CAG's involvement in human rights violations in Haiti. So bear with me. This is my second post about CAG, and part of an ongoing series on Top Cat Marine Security.

A while back, when I was writing about the would-be pirate hunters, Top Cat Marine Security, I got a query from someone in Haiti asking what I knew about a company called Consultants Advisory Group and if I had any idea of why they were following Top Cat Marine Security's sales leads. I looked into the matter of CAG, resulting in the post Consultants Advisory Group™ (CAG): A Security Company Born Every Minute? CAG had a domain name registered a week earlier (just about the time the US State Department issued Top Cat a cease and desist order) and CAG was using Melbourne IT's domain privacy service beloved of spammers and scammers. So I toasted them a bit to see what they had to say for themselves.

A CAG representative, Valerie Sendeki, obediently appeared to try to discuss matters, requesting that we settle this as "ladies." The resulting exchange was pretty strange, but the general upshot was that CAG, ostensibly staffed with ex-military and ex-"agency" personnel, wished to remain unknown and inasmuch as it was known, it wished to be known as a "management consulting" company. It was founded by US ex-patriates and is registered in Panama. And, very specifically, CAG did not wish to be seen as either a private military company or as a security company. They claimed to be management consultants.

Well. All right then. Management consulting.

So time goes by. I hear nothing further from my initial correspondent, Jordan Sage Thomas, who initially queried me about CAG. In her second and last note to me, she said that she had dropped CAG for her list of potential vendors, whatever that meant. And so I thought that was that.

Then, on January 10th, I got a note which read:

Sra Cramer,

Dr Sage requested I send to you this MINUSTAH document concerning the use of Mercenaries by the UN in Haiti. The TopCat Blancs are killing poor Haitians fleeing by sea from UN oppression in Cite-Soliel. The US spies called CAG are undermining the election process to prevent the popular election of Rene Preval and the return of President Aristide.

Dr Sage is afraid that Comandante <Comander??> Sendeckki of the US Navy is going to harm her for exposing this dispised behavior. She has been reassigned to Jeremie and has no acess to internet. This is her response to the abuse. She advices you to be very careful as they having eyes many and wishes you the best of luck.

Saludos

Mariely Puello

It came with an attachment in PowerPoint, which I will get to presently. But first, I want to be very clear that neither Valerie Sendeckki nor CAG are in the employ of any aspect of the US government inasmuch as I have been able to check. I talked to some people who talked to some people and no one, I mean NO ONE, knows who the heck these people are. But to be very specific, Sendeckki is not in the US Navy.

(I wonder how people got that impression. Has CAG represented themselves as having current ties to the US military?)

But, OK, is the UN using mercenaries to kill civilians in Haiti? I don't know. But there were recent news reports of civilians killed in Haiti by the UN. (Here is what Amnesty International has to say about that.) And what did Puello specifically say CAG was up to? "The US spies called CAG are undermining the election process to prevent the popular election of Rene Preval . . ." So the key claims are, then, that (a) CAG is spying (and that the company is what might be called a private intelligence company), and (b) that CAG is attempting to undermine the upcoming election.

(Both Valerie Sendeckki and Mariely Puello agree that CAG is run by US citizens.)

Also, Puello claimed that "Dr. Sage" was concerned for her own personal safety. So I called the number at the bottom of Puello's letter and got a cheerful woman in the Dominican Republic who spoke only Spanish. I tried Jordan Sage's email address, writing only to ask whether Sage was able to receive email at that address.

Instead of a reply from Jordan Sage, I got a sinister message from Sendeckki explaining that the phone line I'd called had been tapped (and giving the reverse lookup for my number to prove the point); that the two email addresses I had -- Jordan Sage's and Mariely Puello's -- were now under CAG's control. This sounded ominous, and so I asked Sendeckki about the fate of my correspondents. She replied:

Sage and Puello were taken into custody by lawful authorities in Haiti and the DR. Sage had diplomatic immunity so she has already been released and expelled from Haiti. She's against democracy but of course she headed straight to the Miami from here. Puello was detained for questioning by Dominican authorities and her status is unclear. Both "ladies" agreed to give full access

to their accounts and phones in order to fully confirm the extent of their treachery rather than be subject to further legal consequences.

On January 13th, I asked Sendeki for documentation to support her version of what had happened to these people:

Dear Val:

I would appreciate some documentation that these individuals were (a) lawfully detained, and (b) that Dr. Sage was in fact released, (c) the exact location and circumstances of Mariely Puello's detention with contact info and (d) that both of these individuals are in fact alive and in good condition.

I'm sure you will understand the reason for this.

Kathryn

As of today, January 18th, I still have not heard back from Sendeki, presumably because she is unwilling to provide the documentation I requested.

I spent a little while looking up the precise definitions of verbs like "arrest," "detain," "abduct," and "kidnap." The most value-neutral of these words is detain, in that the term does not address the lawfulness of the act. However the distinction between an arrest, on the one hand, and a kidnapping or abduction, on the other has to do with whether the detention takes place under lawful authority. So what I'm trying to establish is that CAG are not simply affiliated with kidnapers.

Given the evidence Ms. Sendeki has furnished me with, it's pretty clear that CAG has the skill set to do spying. The question is whether that is their core competency, or just a sideline. So let's have a look inside that PowerPoint document I mentioned earlier. It is seven screens long. It seems to document the following items of interest:

There are "Topcat" patrol boats off Cite Soleil, and CAG provided "covert surveillance" in the form of operatives disguised as reporters who had color-coded press passes for "a public debate between representatives of presidential candidates . . . in Fort Liberte."

CAG has claimed in the past that they do not sell Top Cat boats, but only recommend their purchase. Are these "Topcat patrols" boats supplied by Top Cat Marine Security? Is so, who was the purchaser? And who was the seller? Did Top Cat Marine Security export these boats to Haiti? As discussed in a previous post on Top Cat, Top Cat Marine Security is not registered with the US Department of State to export items on the munitions list, as these boats are. And what is being done with these boats? Mariely Puello claims, "The TopCat Blancs are killing poor Haitians fleeing by sea." To the best of my ability to check, I established that CAG is not under contract to the UN. Just who is manning those boats?

And then we return to the subject of CAG, which looks more and more like a low-end private intelligence company. What are we to make of the idea of a private intelligence company stocking the

crowd at a presidential debate with secret agents disguised as reporters? This would seem to support Puello's claim that their purpose is to undermine the election.

What is CAG, really, and who are they working for? I'd like to know.

Note that the PowerPoint document makes it appear that the United Nations seems to support the concept of CAG posing as press to spy on innocent people. I wonder what the UN really thinks. I doubt they are in the habit of deloying private spooks disguised as reporters.

The document user info on the orginal of the PowerPoint document displays Author as "pkf" (perhaps short for "Peace Keeping Forces"?) and Company as "UN."

On December 15th, Valerie Sendecki wrote to me:

I wish we could talk about this over a fine cup of Haitian coffee so that you could enjoy the beautiful from the Hotel Montana. It's breathtaking.

To the best of my knowledge, she's still registered there.

On January 7th, The Globe and Mail reported: UN commander kills himself in Haiti

The Brazilian commander of UN peacekeepers in Haiti was found dead on the balcony of his hotel room Saturday after shooting himself in the head, authorities said, in a blow to the 9,000-strong force and efforts to restore democracy in Haiti.

UN officials and Haitian police swarmed the upscale Hotel Montana where Lt.-Gen. Urano Teixeira da Matta Bacellar was slumped on a tile floor against the balcony, blood staining his white T-shirt.

Anyone know if this room -- the Presidential Suite -- was his room? [1/20 Update: I'm told by someone who stayed in the hotel during this general time period that the Presidential Suite was occupied by somone else, and so presumably Gen. Bacellar stayed in a different suite; aparently the hotel has a number of fine suites.]

UPDATE, January 19th: I have published an edition of the collected letters of Valerie Sendecki in pdf.

UPDATE: CAG's website's got a new look and an address in Panama: Sun Tower, 7th Floor, Panama City, Republic of Panama.

Now, they don't give a suite number for the Tampa location, but Suite 101 at that address has an awful lot of other businesses using it, suggesting that there may be a message center at that address. The Sun Tower in Panama City just happens to be the location of Panama Offshore Services, Inc., "Best source for Panama Corporation, Foundations & Offshore Accounts"! But it is actually possible that CAG has real offices at these locations. Can one of my Panama City readers take a stroll over to the Sun Tower and have a look?

So. Is this Panama office a place? Or just a state of mind?

www.kathryncramer.com/kathryn_cramer/haiti/index.html

**Legal campaign seeks to curb U.S. deportations to Haiti
Frustrated by Homeland Security's inaction, immigration attorneys will seek a temporary halt to deportations of Haitians to their Caribbean country.**

BY JACQUELINE CHARLES

Miami Herald

January 19, 2006

As an increasingly violent Haiti staggers toward long postponed elections, lawyers representing Haitian migrants will ask immigration judges in the coming weeks to halt all deportations to Haiti temporarily.

The coordinated effort on behalf of Haitians facing deportation comes after unsuccessful attempts by immigration advocates -- and Haiti's own interim prime minister -- to get the Bush administration to grant temporary protected status, known as TPS, to thousands of undocumented Haitians living in the United States.

By filing individual motions on behalf of their Haitian clients, lawyers would be leaving it up to immigration judges and not the federal government to decide whether to grant a temporary stay until conditions in Haiti improve.

Although it isn't unusual for attorneys to ask a judge to issue a continuance or administratively close a case, Miami immigration attorney Ira Kurzban said the current effort is "extraordinarily unusual," because it's happening as part of a concerted effort by immigration lawyers nationwide.

It is unclear how many lawyers will file the request on behalf of an estimated 20,000 undocumented Haitian migrants living in the United States or whether immigration judges will adhere to the motions by attorneys.

Still, the coordinated effort, which is officially being launched in key U.S. cities today, including Miami, may be the best hope for undocumented Haitians at a time when anti-immigration sentiments are sweeping Washington and when the U.S. Department of Homeland Security is considering ending temporary protected status for hundreds of thousands of Nicaraguans, Salvadorans and Hondurans.

"This is a very small Band-Aid, but a giant recognition there is a problem in Haiti," said Thomas Griffin, a Philadelphia immigration attorney, who spent hours drafting the motion and has traveled to Haiti extensively since 2000.

The motion, which Griffin said has already been requested by about 200 lawyers across the country, states that "despite the ongoing chaos that continues in Haiti, including brutal civil strife, documented bloody political conflict, indisputable countrywide insecurity and the proven inability of the Haitian state to protect its own people, the United States continues to refuse refuge to fleeing Haitians."

In addition to Miami, the effort is being launched today with scheduled press conferences in key cities with growing Haitian populations, such as Philadelphia, Boston, Washington and New York. It comes a little less than three weeks before Haiti's Feb. 7 presidential election, which has been postponed repeatedly.

Fifteen months ago, interim Haitian Prime Minister Gerard Latortue formally asked the homeland agency to grant temporary protected status for Haitians, but to no avail. The privilege, which would allow Haitians temporarily to live and work in the United States legally, has not been granted.

"The Department of Homeland Security and the Department of State continue to closely monitor the situation there," said State Department spokesman Peter Eisenhauer.

Miami attorney Ariol Eugene, who is spearheading the campaign on behalf of the Haitian Lawyers Association, said he plans to file the motion on behalf of 10 of his Haitian clients.

"It is very clear the conditions in Haiti are horrendous," Eugene said. "The government right now cannot protect its own people. It is in the best interest of the U.S. government and Florida to have stability in Haiti. When there is no stability in Haiti, there is a mass exodus."

Haiti more violent as election nears

SFGate.com

Edward Gomez

Jan. 19, 2006

Haiti is a mess, and with a presidential election that has already been postponed four times coming up on February 7, no end is in sight to the escalating violence that threatens the impoverished Caribbean nation's political future. (BBC)

On Tuesday, two Jordanian members of the 9000-strong United Nations peacekeeping force in Haiti were killed during a shootout with residents of the infamous Cité Soleil slum in the capital, Port-au-Prince. A third Jordanian peacekeeper from MINUSTAH, as the U.N. Stabilization Mission in Haiti is known, was injured. Cité Soleil "has become a refuge for armed gangs...and supporters of former President Jean-Bertrand Aristide," who was forced from power in 2004. (Xinhua)

From Port-au-Prince, Le Monde's correspondent reports that, sometimes, armed gang members in the slum are "just teenagers" who are "high on crack." These "soldiers," he writes, "have a vast assortment of weapons of war at their disposal." Representatives of non-governmental organizations in Haiti claim that Haitian police have had a hand in - and have profited from - a wave of kidnappings of businessmen in the capital; those crimes have been carried out by gangs who still support the ousted Aristide. "[T]he corruption of the justice system [here] benefits [such] impunity," the head of a human-rights group said. Some criminals arrested by the police simply pay them off, he said. They "buy their freedom."

A consortium of organizations and political parties known as the Group of 184 has been working for the establishment of a secure civil society in Haiti. The coalition has demanded that the U.N.'s peacekeepers take a more active, aggressive approach to fighting the gangs. (Radio Kiskeya/ReliefWeb) Meanwhile, though, the U.N. force has faced some problems of its own. On January 7, its commander, a Brazilian general, was found dead in a Port-au-Prince hotel room with a bullet wound to the head. His death was assumed to have been a suicide. (BBC) This week, U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan asked another Brazilian general to take over the Haiti command. (Agencia Brasil)

The civilian head of the U.N.'s mission in Haiti emphasizes that the February 7 election will go ahead as planned (Haiti Press Network), but some observers doubt the struggling island nation will ever shake its designation as a "failed state," or that countries which have contributed soldiers to the U.N.'s peacekeeping force will ever be able to bring them home. Writes one commentator in Argentina's La Nación: "Those [countries] that are currently involved...will not want to look like deserters" if they say they want to pull out or if they criticize the "inefficiency" of the U.N. effort in Haiti in the face of "international calls" to help the tiny nation democratize. Still, the fact is, La Nación's commentator writes, that "the governments of those countries don't know how to make any headway in Haiti because it isn't clear to them why they got involved in the first place."

From Brooklyn to Haiti: US cop brings skills, heritage

By Danna Harman

The Christian Science Monitor

January 20, 2006 edition

CAP HAITIAN, HAITI – Ralph Lee Vieux is a long way away from Brooklyn, N.Y., where he was born and raised. He is a long way away from Kingsborough Community College in Manhattan Beach where he graduated with a double major in tourism and criminal justice 15 years ago. And he is a long way away from his wife and three kids in Benson, N.C. But still, somehow, this place is a home of sorts.

Up until a year ago, Mr. Vieux had never visited Haiti. But with two Haitian parents, he knew the country through the rice, beans, and plantains his mother cooked for her seven kids; through the Creole his father spoke to them all; through the Kompa music always in the background.

I'LL GO: Ralph Lee Vieux saw an ad in his local paper for Creole-speaking police to join the UN team in Haiti. He went.

Today, the narcotics detective is helping keep the peace in his ancestral home as chief of northern operations and planning for the UN police - a force of 1,781 men and women from 38 countries who are here helping to train and monitor their Haitian counterparts.

"It's just a job," he insists over and over again, trying to sit tall in a rocking chair on a hot, buggy, late afternoon. "I know law enforcement and can help out ... and it's good for my résumé," he says, speaking in clipped tones. As one of 50 Americans on the ground here in Haiti with the UN, Vieux says "we are all here ... to serve our country - same as any American."

But, after much prodding, Vieux will also admit - with a nervous grin making a brief, rare appearance across his face - that there is something about this mission that is special to him. "I consulted a lot with my parents before I took it on," he says. They were worried, yes, and even told him not to go. But perhaps, he allows, "...they were a little proud, too."

Haiti is the poorest country in the Western hemisphere. The government's revenues last year were \$330 million, less than the budgets of many large US school districts. Close to 80 percent of the population lives on less than \$2 a day, and 42 percent of children under 5 suffer from chronic malnutrition.

Along with poverty come crime statistics. Ten kidnappings were reported every day last month, while the national police force makes do with 6,000 officers - for a population of 8 million. New York City, with roughly the same population, has close to 40,000. National police chief Mario Andresol freely admits that not only does he lack the needed manpower to fight crime; institutional credibility is also missing. "High-ranking police officers' involvement in illegal activities," he says, "...has become institutionalized."

With Haiti's illiteracy rate of 60 percent and much of its population poorly educated, UN northern district spokesman Christian Lindmeier says many of those the UN works with "don't speak or

understand French, let alone English." That means Haitian-Americans on the UN force like Vieux often find themselves working double-time here, translating and mediating between the UN, the locals, and the national Haitian police.

While the UN cannot dictate who its member countries send, says Mr. Lindmeier, "we all know that having Creole speakers and international UN staff of Haitian descent is an asset, and we welcome those people."

And it's not just language," stresses Lindmeier. "It's an invaluable service ... these Haitian-Americans usually bring with them a knowledge of the culture and history here - and a sensitivity for the people we are dealing with," he says. "They are our best way to access and understand the community."

While Creole speakers like Vieux don't get preference for leadership positions, Lindmeier says they naturally rise up through the ranks as they are better able to communicate and understand the society. And in Haiti, where there is growing mistrust of the UN from all sides, that is invaluable.

"Everywhere I go I get tapped on the shoulder and asked questions," says Vieux, who first learned about the UN mission from a State Department ad in the local paper asking for Creole-speaking police to volunteer for service.

"Everyone wants to talk. To explain. To understand." It gets a little tiring, he says. It can take up a lot of time in his day, but, also, it can be, he says, "pretty nice," to be able to lend a hand. The boy who shines his boots in the mornings asked Vieux for school lunch money the other day. Vieux decided to sponsor his studies for the whole school year. "I felt good about that," says the cop. "I have family in this country," he mumbles. "It's good to help."

Vieux's wife, Rochelle - a fellow Haitian-American also born in Brooklyn - had never been to Haiti either before last year. Now, she has been twice to visit: Once the couple went to the beach together. Another time they took a road trip across the border to visit the Dominican Republic. The kids have not come, explains Vieux, in part because the political situation makes it too dangerous - but also because he does not want to "push" Haiti on them right now.

"We are Americans. I want to teach my children that before I confuse them with something different," he says. "But maybe, when they are a little older, they will get interested in their heritage, and ask me questions about where we came from."

After his time here, he says, he will be ready to answer. "I will tell them, it's not my country. But it is, too." He gets up from the rocking chair to head back to UN headquarters. "Haiti is complicated."

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

Latin American diplomatic mission to visit Haiti
China View
Jan. 18, 2006

The Argentine government said on Tuesday that Latin American nations will send a diplomatic mission to visit Haiti soon to show support to local political parties and candidates contesting the upcoming general elections.

Argentina's Foreign Ministry made the announcement shortly after Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Ecuador, Guatemala, Peru and Uruguay held an emergency meeting on Tuesday. All the participant countries will send representatives to Haiti.

The meeting was also joined by head of the Organization of American States (OAS) Jose Miguel Insulza and Juan Gabriel Valdes, the United Nations representative in Haiti.

The diplomatic mission will urge Haiti's political leaders to build a democratic, peaceful, stable and prosperous state that will benefit all Haitians, and to respect the results of the elections, said the ministry in the statement.

Haiti badly needs to ensure security during and after the voting as well as the rule of law so as to sustain the country's democracy, it added.

The ministry said the UN peacekeeping mission in Haiti should be extended, but added that it must be appropriately funded and include a plan for Haiti's independent development.

It also expressed its sympathy for the "irreparable losses suffered by Minustah (the acronym for the UN mission in Haiti)," including the death of Brazilian general Urano Teixeira da Matta Bacellar, who led the mission.

Haiti's general elections, set for Feb. 7, have been postponed several times because of organizational problems and violence.

The UN peacekeeping forces suffered more losses on Tuesday when two Jordanian soldiers who were taking part in an operation to control the Cite Soleil slum and disarm political and criminal gangs there were killed by gunmen.

Haiti's presidential favorite renounces Aristide
Taipei Times
January 19, 2006

DEMOCRACY: Reclusive agronomist Rene Preval said he did not want to be compared with the exiled president, although many fear he will bring Aristide back if he is elected

Front-running presidential candidate Rene Preval on Tuesday asserted that he has emerged from the shadow of ousted president Jean-Bertrand Aristide, his former mentor who fled Haiti amid a rebellion and accusations of corruption.

"I don't want to be compared with Aristide or with anybody else. I want to be compared with myself," Preval told reporters in the first interview he has given since he declared himself a candidate.

Elections, set for Feb. 7, have been postponed several times because of organizational problems and violence. There was more bloodshed on Tuesday as gunmen shot and killed two Jordanian UN peacekeepers and wounded a third in the Cite Soleil slum, a stronghold of Aristide supporters. It was the bloodiest day for the 9,000-member peacekeeping force since being deployed in June 2004.

Preval was elected president in 1995 and served until 2001.

Many Haitians fear that if Preval wins the presidency again he will bring back Aristide from exile in South Africa. Preval, who turned 63 on Tuesday, insisted he will govern without being influenced by Aristide.

Aristide was Haiti's first democratically elected leader since the Caribbean country won independence from France in 1804, but was accused of masterminding attacks by armed gangs and breaking promises to the poor. Aristide has denied both.

Preval, a reclusive agronomist, appeared relaxed and confident during the 90-minute interview in an upscale house belonging to one of his supporters.

But he expressed concern about the effects of Haiti's violence. Pointing out the electrified wire and high walls surrounding the house, Preval said: "Fear has isolated everybody."

Since the February 2004 rebellion, the situation in the Western hemisphere's poorest nation has not improved despite the presence of a UN peacekeeping force charged with providing security and ushering in elections to restore democracy.

A wave of kidnappings have engulfed Haiti's capital, snaring ordinary Haitians as well as international election workers and journalists.

The UN troops killed on Tuesday were the eighth and ninth peacekeepers to die in action since the force was deployed. The top commander of the peacekeeping force was found dead in his hotel on Jan. 7, an apparent suicide.

Preval said the UN mission "should stay as long as it is necessary" to re-establish security.

"Those who don't want stability are opposed to democracy," he said.

Preval said that if he wins the election, he will pick up from where he left off in 2001.

In his 1996 inaugural address, Preval promised to turn Haiti into "a vast construction site" and "re-establish the authority of the state."

He now acknowledges that he failed. But he said he struggled against corruption and successfully privatized the state-run flour mill and cement factory.

"We didn't steal and we didn't violate human rights," he said, declining to comment on the allegations against Aristide.

Preval had been closely associated with Aristide since the fall of dictator Jean-Claude Duvalier in 1986 and was named premier after the slum priest was elected president in 1990. Aristide referred to him as his "twin."

Preval followed Aristide into exile after a bloody 1991 coup and returned to Haiti during the US military intervention that restored Aristide to power in 1994.

This story has been viewed 466 times.

The San Diego Tribune
Michael Norton
Associated Press
January 19, 2006

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti – Four people were shot to death Wednesday and Thursday in the latest surge of violence in Haiti's largest slum.

The three men and a woman were killed Wednesday night and early Thursday in the Port-au-Prince slum of Cite Soleil, authorities at Cite Soleil's St. Catherine Hospital said. Seven others were injured.

Residents blamed the killings on Jordanian peacekeepers who they said sprayed the area's cinderblock homes with high-powered weapons. U.N. spokesman Damian Onses-Cardona said he had no report on any troop offensives in Cite Soleil since Tuesday and said peacekeepers don't open fire unless attacked.

Residents said one victim was a man in his 30s who ran a business carrying goods with a wheelbarrow. His body lay on a walkway Thursday as onlookers showed journalists high-caliber weapon rounds they said were fired by U.N. troops.

The 9,000-strong U.N. force is struggling to restore order ahead of the country's repeatedly postponed elections, now set for Feb. 7, and has clashed often with well-armed street gangs blamed for kidnappings and killings.

Two Jordanians were gunned down at a Cite Soleil checkpoint on Tuesday.

Meanwhile, the humanitarian group Medecins Sans Frontieres, or Doctors Without Borders, said Haiti's violence was increasingly targeting women, children and the elderly. It said it had treated 2,500 people for gunshot or stab wounds at a single trauma center in the last year.

More than 1,500 people – including 78 police officers and nine U.N. peacekeepers – have died since former President Jean-Bertrand Aristide fled Haiti in February 2004, local human rights activist Pierre Esperance said.

Elections have been postponed several times because of organizational problems and violence.

Brazilian to lead U.N. peacekeepers in Haiti
CNN.com
Wednesday, January 18, 2006

BRASILIA, Brazil (AP) -- A Brazilian general will assume the command of the U.N. peacekeeping operations in Haiti, replacing another Brazilian general who committed suicide earlier this month, the government said.

Gen. Jose Elito Carvalho de Siqueira, 59, a three-star general who commands the army's 6th Military Region in the northeastern city of Salvador, was offered the command after meeting with U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan, Brazil's foreign and defense ministries said Tuesday in a joint statement.

"Annan's decision confirms the United Nations' recognition of Brazil's contribution to the [peacekeeping] mission," the statement read. It did not say when de Siqueira would arrive in Haiti or how long his command would last.

De Siqueira will replace Lt. Gen. Urano Teixeira da Matta Bacellar, who was found dead of a gunshot wound January 7 in his hotel room in Haiti's capital of Port-au-Prince. Brazilian and U.N. forensic specialists later concluded he had committed suicide.

De Siqueira will take charge of 9,000 peacekeeping troops from more than 40 countries sent to help restore democracy two years after a rebellion overthrew President Jean-Bertrand Aristide.

Brazil's command of U.N.'s peacekeeping forces in Haiti has been a key point in the country's foreign policy, which is heavily focused on giving Brazil a permanent seat on the U.N. Security Council.

Two Jordanian UN peacekeepers killed in Haiti

17 Jan 2006

Source: Reuters

UNITED NATIONS, Jan 17 (Reuters) - Two U.N. peacekeepers were killed and a third wounded by gunfire in the Haitian capital on Tuesday in the latest clash between U.N. troops patrolling a Port-au-Prince slum and the gangs who control it.

The three peacekeepers, all Jordanian nationals, were manning a checkpoint in the capital's restive Cite Soleil neighborhood when they came under fire, U.N. chief spokesman Stephane Dujarric said.

"One of the peacekeepers was reportedly killed on the spot. The other two were taken to hospital where one of them died of his wounds shortly after," Dujarric said.

The third peacekeeper, in serious condition, was evacuated to a better-equipped hospital in the Dominican Republic, U.N. officials said.

The U.N. mission in Haiti, known by its acronym MINUSTAH, was sent in to keep the peace after then-President Jean-Bertrand Aristide fled the country in February 2004 in the face of an armed revolt.

But the country of 8.5 million people has continued to be afflicted by political violence, and a wave of kidnappings has swept through Port-au-Prince in recent weeks.

At U.N. headquarters in New York, U.S. Ambassador John Bolton called the security situation in Haiti "very disturbing" but said presidential elections that have already been postponed several times should be held as planned in February.

"That's the announced plan of the government of Haiti, and that's what we think ought to happen," Bolton told reporters.

Counting Tuesday's killings, 13 U.N. peacekeepers have died in Haiti since 2004, including 10 soldiers, two police officers and U.N. Force Commander Gen. Urano Bacellar, who committed suicide earlier this month.

Business leaders, many of whom vigorously opposed Aristide, and the interim government installed after Aristide's departure, have called on the U.N. force to be more aggressive in taking on street gangs that control many of the sprawling slums in Port-au-Prince.

Many of the gangs are seen as supporters of the exiled Aristide.

But others have criticized the peacekeepers for being too aggressive in patrolling the slums. Dozens of civilians have been caught in the cross-fire during gunfights between U.N. troops and gangs.

Escalating violence in Port-au-Prince, Haiti inflicts heavy civilian toll

19 Jan 2006

Source: Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) – MSF International

Reuters AlertNet

MSF calls on all armed groups in the capital to respect safety of civilians and allow immediate access to emergency medical care.

"Today's unbearable situation resembles what Haitians faced this past summer and we're worried it is only going to get worse," said Ali Besnaci, the head of mission for the MSF trauma center at St. Joseph's Hospital in the city center. "People are living in constant fear, and we know that many injured are either afraid or prevented from getting the treatment they need. This is simply unacceptable."

MSF: Port-au-Prince, Haiti - With violent attacks intensifying and spreading to many parts of Haiti's capital, Port-au-Prince, the international medical humanitarian organization Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) today called on all armed groups in the city to respect the safety of civilians and allow those wounded during clashes immediate access to emergency medical care. The organization also called for the safety of national and international aid workers to be respected.

In the last several weeks, MSF medical and surgical teams have seen an alarming increase of people needing treatment for violence-related injuries, including a growing number of gunshot and knifing victims.

In December 2005, MSF treated more than 220 gunshot victims at two facilities - St. Joseph's trauma center in the Turgeau neighborhood and Choscal hospital in Cité Soleil. This included 26 gunshot victims treated at Choscal hospital from December 26 to 27, and was a dramatic increase from the 147 gunshot victims treated at both facilities in November 2005. Nearly 50 percent of all MSF's patients treated for violence-related injuries have been women, children, or elderly.

"It is unacceptable that so many civilians are victims of this latest wave of violence," said Ali Besnaci, the head of mission for the MSF trauma center at St. Joseph's Hospital in the city center. "We are receiving patients from St. Martin, Centre Ville, Martissant, Carrefour and other areas of Port-au-Prince. Recently, we treated a 15-month old infant and a 77-year old man for gunshot wounds."

Since December 2004, medical and surgical teams at St. Joseph's have treated nearly 2,500 people for violence-related injuries, including more than 1,500 gunshot victims and 500 knifing victims. MSF re-opened Choscal Hospital and the Chapi Health Center in the heart of Cité Soleil in August 2005, and staff performed nearly 12,000 medical consultations and 800 emergency interventions in the first three months. Since the January 1, 2006, MSF has treated 47 gunshot victims in Cité Soleil.

According to patients, people have been both deliberately and unintentionally shot by all of the armed groups in the city.

"Various groups, including Minustah, refer to civilian casualties as 'collateral damage,'" said Loris De Filippi, the head of mission for MSF's programs in Cité Soleil. "But it is inexcusable for so many lives to be torn apart every day in the crossfire."

The situation in Cité Soleil, an epicenter of the widespread politically motivated and criminal violence, is especially grave for those in need of emergency medical care.

"Our ability to work in Cité Soleil is precarious - we never know how much access we will have from one week to the next," said De Filippi. "The safety of humanitarian aid workers must also be respected. If we cannot do our work, a quarter of a million people - or the population of a small American or European city - would have few health care options."

Appalled by a peak of violence in June and July 2005, MSF made a similar call on the city's armed groups to respect the safety of civilians and guarantee unhindered access to emergency care.

"Today's unbearable situation resembles what Haitians faced this past summer and we're worried it is only going to get worse," said Besnaci. "People are living in constant fear, and we know that many injured are either afraid or prevented from getting the treatment they need. This is simply unacceptable."

MSF has been working in Haiti since 1991. In addition to emergency trauma care in Port-au-Prince, Choscal hospital and Chapi Health Centre in Cité Soleil MSF provides primary health care service to people in the capital's Decayette neighborhood.

Only selected MSF documents are posted on Alertnet. For a complete selection of MSF news, please visit the MSF International website

[Any views expressed in this article are those of the writer and not of Reuters.]

New peacekeeping head for Haiti

BBC News

Jan. 18, 2006

UN peacekeepers have struggled to restore order in Haiti

A Brazilian general is to head the UN peacekeeping mission in Haiti following the suicide of Gen Urano Teixeira da Matta Bacellar.

Gen Jose Elito Carvalho de Siqueira was offered the role after meeting UN Secretary General Kofi Annan, the Brazilian government said on Tuesday.

The appointment comes amid continuing violence in Haiti, which is preparing for much-delayed elections in February.

On Wednesday, two peacekeepers were killed at a checkpoint in the capital.

Postponements

Gen de Siqueira, 59, has been commanding the Brazilian army's 6th Military Region in the north-eastern city of Salvador.

ELECTIONS GUIDE

How Latin America's political landscape could be redrawn

He will take charge of peacekeeping troops sent to help restore democracy after President Jean-Bertrand Aristide was overthrown in 2004.

The UN Stabilization Mission in Haiti currently comprises more than 9,000 troops and police from more than 40 nations.

A statement from the Brazilian government said Mr Annan's decision confirmed the UN's recognition of Brazil's contribution to the mission in Haiti.

Peacekeepers are trying to improve the security situation before the 7 February presidential and parliamentary elections.

The polls, originally set for November, have been postponed four times because of security and organisational issues.

Haiti Struggles with Gun Violence

By Amelia Shaw

VOA News

Port-au-Prince

20 January 2006

Haiti continues to struggle with violence and instability in the wake of its upcoming presidential elections in February. Gun violence and kidnappings threaten the lives of thousands of people every day in the country's capital, Port-au-Prince. A leading humanitarian aid organization says the situation is only getting worse.

The international humanitarian organization Doctors Without Borders released a statement Thursday appealing for armed groups to respect the safety of civilians and aid workers, and allow the wounded safe access to medical care. Their appeal comes in response to a dramatic increase in gun violence in the city.

At a news conference in the capital on Thursday, the group's head of mission, Dr. Ali Besnaci, said that it is unacceptable that the recent wave of violence is claiming so many victims of civil society. He says he fears the violence will only get worse.

Since August of 2005, Doctors Without Borders has operated St. Catherine Hospital in the precarious slum of Cité Soleil, where more than 250,000 Haitians live in crowded shacks along the waterfront. For the residents of Cité Soleil, St. Catherine's is the only access they have to medical care.

Dr. Loris de Felippi, who directs the hospital, says that many of the victims are women and children. "We had a young girl with a bullet in the stomach, we just finished the intervention, and the situation is serious. And yesterday, this is really unbelievable, but we had an infant of 11 months with a bullet in the back," he said.

He says that while 34 people were wounded by gunfire in November, the hospital treated over 80 gunshot victims in December, and in the first two weeks of January alone, over 60 gunshot victims have been treated. Six of them have died. Dr. De Felippi says that these are the cases the hospital knows about. Many other people are wounded or die, and are never reported.

A five-year-old boy named Henri has been brought into the emergency room with a gunshot wound.

He says he was at home when bullets tore through his house and one hit him in his leg. A man near his house found him and carried him here. He says that he hopes his mother will come find him soon.

Since the departure of former president Jean-Bertrand Aristide in February 2004, security has been a major problem in Haiti, particularly in the capital. Armed gangs loyal to Mr. Aristide control many of the slums, and kidnappings have increased to epidemic levels.

The United Nations sent a peacekeeping mission of more than 7,000 troops in June of 2004 to stabilize the country. On Tuesday, two U.N. peacekeepers from Jordan were killed in Cité Soleil.

Norwich welcomes woman after release from jail

By BRIAN WALLHEIMER

Norwich Bulletin

Jan. 21, 2006

NORWICH -- Roselie Desardouin couldn't hold back tears Friday as she hugged dozens of people who worked for a month to stop her deportation to Haiti.

Roselie Desardouin was released Thursday from a Boston jail after spending a month there with no contact with her children. She was being deported because she entered the country 15 years ago with a fraudulent visa.

Her husband, Audrin Desardouin, rallied city officials, community members and Connecticut's Congressional delegation to write letters persuading the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Service to approve a waiver that would allow his wife to stay because her deportation would be an extreme hardship to her family.

"When you go back to Haiti you go to jail. The chances of you getting out are slim to nothing," Roselie Desardouin said Friday. "Going to jail in Haiti is not pretty, especially for women. Every day, I thought about jail in Haiti. All you have to do is think."

City officials presented Roselie Desardouin with flowers and copies of all the letters from her supporters that were sent to immigration officials to secure her release at a reception at City Hall to welcome her back to Norwich.

"I think she's surprised to find out she went to Hartford 30 days ago and came back today a local celebrity," City Manager Bob Zarnetske told the 25 people who gathered to welcome her. "I just want to say how proud of this community I am. People from all walks of life heard about Roselie's plight and took action."

Audrin Desardouin thanked the community and its leaders for the massive swell of support for his wife.

"I don't know how to say how happy I am," Audrin Desardouin said. "The case is not over yet, but I think we're on the way."

Roselie Desardouin's fraud charge has been cleared and she can now apply for permanent legal residency. It isn't certain she will be approved, but it is much more likely now.

Roselie Desardouin said she can't wait to get back to work and normal life.

"I'm going to try to get busy again. Get my mind off it all," she said.

Svend to Haiti?

By matthew burrows

Straight.com, Canada

19-Jan-2006

Svend Robinson has donned flak jackets before and gained headlines in both East Timor and the Middle East. This time, if he's elected in Vancouver Centre on Monday (January 23), the long-time NDPer claims he will head down to Haiti to see exactly what the Canadian government's role is in rebuilding the island nation.

"You heard me up there," Robinson told the Straight after a January 16 candidates debate in Gastown. "I said I will go down there and see what's going on. This [situation in Haiti] is absolutely awful."

Haiti, which borders the Dominican Republic, is a former French colony and the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere. Its brutal history includes the only ever successful slave revolt in 1791 and a 19-year American occupation that ended in 1934. On February 29, 2004, Canada, the U.S., and France were all involved in the overthrow of democratically elected president Jean-Bertrand Aristide, now exiled in South Africa.

According to locally based Haiti Solidarity BC's on-line Yahoo! chat room, "a UN sanctioned occupation force has been there since [Aristide's overthrow], protecting rightist gangs and soldiers of the disbanded Haitian army, and propping up an illegal coup regime." The group has repeatedly questioned Canada's involvement in this regime, and attempts in Haiti to hold elections for a new president—Haiti's constitution demands this happen within 90 days—have been postponed four times.

Monday's candidates debate was held at the Lamplighter Pub and organized by members of youth-voter advocate group Get Your Vote On. During question time, local activist and writer Charles Demers—who is currently working on Robinson's election campaign—directed a question at incumbent Vancouver Centre Liberal MP Hedy Fry.

"Do you stand with your party's egregious disrespect for this black nation—the only one to successfully form a slave-led revolt against its colonial oppressors—and its now continued oppression at the hands of its former colonial masters [France], the U.S. and Canada?"

Fry snapped back: "I have a difficult time answering questions based on rhetoric. Why do we have to keep bringing up the slaves? You have no idea what it's like to be a person of colour."

Eventually, once she was pressed by Demers and others in the agitated crowd, Fry said she became concerned about civil liberties in Haiti under Aristide when she looked on the Web site of Amnesty International before the overthrow.

"I was concerned," Fry said. "But peace and rule of law are what Canada is trying to bring to Haiti."

Robinson said that Haiti represented an "incredibly important issue".

“Canada’s silence on this issue has been deafening,” he said. “If I’m elected to Vancouver Centre, I intend to work very closely with Haiti Solidarity BC and even go down and see firsthand what’s going on.”

Haiti has been raised as an issue at almost every urban riding in the campaign so far. On January 7 at the West End Community Centre, an audience member questioned Canadian involvement in ousting Aristide and also the fact that Canada is doing little to advocate for the freedom of cancer-stricken prisoner Father Gerard Jean-Juste. Robinson responded by saying he voiced his opposition to the ousting and the imprisonment in the House of Commons.

City, Slave Lake schools win Jolie's praise for Haiti project
Students give 25 cents each toward schooling
Hanneke Brooymans
The Edmonton Journal
Thursday, January 19, 2006

EDMONTON - Alberta students who chipped in 25 cents each so children in Haiti could go to school have earned a deep sense of satisfaction, and the praise of one of the most famous women on the planet.

Angelina Jolie commended students from several Slave Lake schools and one Edmonton school who raised about \$2,200 to help pay for the educations of some Haitian children.

Jolie and Brad Pitt were in Port-au-Prince, Haiti, last Friday and met some of the 20 children who were helped by Albertans.

"We were touched to learn of the generosity of schoolchildren in Alberta, Canada, who made possible 20 tuitions to help less fortunate children in Haiti receive a better education," Jolie said Wednesday in a statement.

The money was collected by Yele Haiti, a charity established by hip-hop artist Wyclef Jean.

The organization focuses on education, health and the environment, says executive director Hugh Locke.

Locke's mother, Mikky, lives in Slave Lake. When she heard about the project, she decided to ask each student in the town's schools to donate 25 cents.

One school in Edmonton, which asked to remain anonymous, also collected quarters.

The contributions were deliberately kept small so no one would be left out, Locke said.

It costs \$60 US to educate one child for one year, he said. Almost all schools in Haiti are run on a fee basis, because the government has no money to run them.

"For most Haitians who are able to send their children to school, it is the largest sacrifice they will make in their lives," Locke said from his office in New York City.

In a country where 75 per cent of people are unemployed, schools are vital, he said.

"It is their hope for the future."

In the poorer areas of large cities, roads are almost impassable, and pigs root through garbage piled beside roads. Yet early in the morning, it's common to see parents, often dressed shabbily, escorting their immaculately clad children to school, Locke said.

Last year, Yele Haiti sponsored more than 3,800 Haitian students.

Jolie is a member of the charity's high-profile advisory board, which includes Susan Sarandon, Tyra Banks and

Norah Jones.

Jolie was filming a new movie in the neighbouring

Dominican Republic and told Wyclef Jean she was interested in visiting the project. She and Pitt joined Yele Haiti as they celebrated the first birthday of the organization, along with 100 children.

"They were just so nice," Locke said.

He knew that Jolie is pregnant, so he repeatedly offered to cut their visit short, but every time they declined.

"They were real troupers. And they were very engaged with the children. They would kneel down to be at eye level with the children and talked to them through the interpreter."

Ross MacDonald, a teacher at Lakeside Outreach in Slave Lake, said his students would probably think Jolie's comments about their help were "pretty cool." Many of the students in their junior and senior high school can relate to some of the difficulties faced by Haitian children, he said.

"As a student, I would think that would be pretty cool, that an internationally recognized star would recognize small-town Alberta."

Prison visit in Haiti on MLK Day with Father Jean-Juste
by Bill Quigley
Haiti Action Committee
January 17, 2006

Port au Prince, Haiti — We ended our prison visit in Haiti on Martin Luther King, Jr. day with Fr. Jean-Juste by standing hand in hand and singing "We Shall Overcome."

Fr. Jean-Juste has been in prison since July on sham charges in order to silence his life long voice for justice for the poor and democracy for all. Amnesty International has designated him a prisoner of conscience. Many other human rights organizations have taken up his cause. Scores of Congressional representatives have called for his release. Hundreds of religious leaders have signed letters to the President of the US and to the unelected leaders of Haiti calling for his freedom. This visit, we have brought an additional 2000 letters from around the world to Fr. Gerry.

In the prison in Port au Prince, Fr. Jean-Juste was in great spirits, frequently laughing. He admitted his neck and underarms ached from the cancer that threatens his life. He knows he is one serious infection away from death. But he remains unbowed.

"It is now a matter of life or death," he told us. "Life if the de facto government allows me to leave and receive medical treatment for the cancer. Death if the de facto officials remain deaf and stubborn, offering no humane treatment."

"I am happy to continue living as a member of our great team of freedom and justice lovers worldwide. But I am happy also in case I shall depart for the final voyage. I would happily enter, by the grace of God, enter heaven to see parents, friends, militants, ancestors, apostles, angels, archangels and be part of the great dynamic mosaic that God has created."

"I thank all who have worked so hard on my behalf. There are so many supporters, friends, doctors, benefactors and militants working for me and the rest of the political prisoners here. It is unusual to be on this side of the work. Usually I am one of the ones trying to fight for freedom and democracy. Even here I try to work with the other prisoners to keep their spirits up and to get them in shape for freedom. Freedom is coming, I tell them. We must be ready so we can help free the rest of the people who are unjustly in prison here and around the world."

As it grew dark, it was time for us to leave. We stood up before the barred windows and joined hands in a circle. First a religious song in creole. Then he prayed for all the prisoners and all the people without food and shelter in haiti and beyond. The the "our father." Finally he lead us in a loud and spirited "we shall overcome" that echoed off the concrete prison walls.

"And deep in my heart, I do believe, We shall overcome one day." After I hugged Fr. Jean-Juste, some of his spirit of resistance infected me. And as I walked past the mounted machine guns on the UN jeep, I must admit, I do believe. We shall overcome one day.

Bill Quigley is a professor at Loyola Law School in New Orleans. Bill is a volunteer lawyer for Fr. Jean-Juste assisting Mario Joseph of BAI and the Institute for Justice and Democracy in Haiti.

EMBRAPA did satellite mapping of Haiti for the UN
Érica Santana and Aloisio Milani
Agência Brasil
January 17, 2006

Brasília - The Brazilian Agricultural Research Company (EMBRAPA) was responsible for all the satellite mapping done to support the operations of the United Nations (UN) peace forces in Haiti (MINUSTAH). The images were produced at the request of the Ministry of Defense and executed by the EMBRAPA Satellite Monitoring unit, based in Campinas, São Paulo. The unit is a national model for this type of work.

According to Marcelo Guimarães, the researcher who heads the Research division of the EMBRAPA Satellite Monitoring unit, the UN troops in Haiti can use the images to plan military tactics, furnish information to the agricultural sector, and help in the formulation of infrastructure projects, such as roads and rural electrification, in the country. One of MINUSTAH's missions is to assist in the application of resources on projects in the poorest country in the Americas. Haiti's principal deficiencies are in the areas of health, education, transportation, and agriculture.

"In the case of relief maps, farmers can adopt techniques suitable to the environment. In the case of military use of relief maps, it is possible to simulate the best route, for example, for the movement of armored cars," Guimarães explains.

EMBRAPA is currently awaiting the formalization of another international cooperation proposal for Haiti. Through the Ministry of Foreign Relations' Brazilian Cooperation Agency (ABC) and in conjunction with a Haitian remote sensing unit, the company expects to prepare a project for the country's agriculture and water resources.

Translation: David Silberstein

Annan condemns anti-U.N. campaign in Haiti
By UNITED PRESS INTERNATIONAL
World Peace Herald, DC
Published January 17, 2006

UNITED NATIONS -- U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan has spoken up against what has been described as a a defamation campaign against the U.N. Stabilization Mission in Haiti.

Known as MINUSTAH, the mission and its chief, the secretary-general's Special Representative Juan Gabriel Valdes, have been under increasing verbal attack in recent weeks.

In a letter sent last week to the Haitian Prime Minister, Gerard Latortue, the secretary-general said the campaign was unacceptable, said Annan's chief spokesman, Stephanie Dujarric.

Annan called on Haiti's Transitional Government to publicly condemn the campaign and warned it could threaten the security of MINUSTAH as well as the holding of free and fair elections.

The secretary-general added all concerned in Haiti must work together in a sprit of mutual respect and close collaboration.

Insecurity has forced the postponement of elections four times and the U.N. operation in Caribbean nation was further hampered just over a week ago with the suicide of the military head of the mission.

The world organization aims to stabilize the impoverished nation in order for free elections to help it on the road to recovery from recent political turmoil.

Haiti limping toward elections
By Reed Lindsay
The Washington Times
The World Peace Herald
Published January 17, 2006

WASHINGTON -- Haiti is limping toward elections in February after more than two months of delays and with critics charging the country still is not ready and that residents of some remote areas will have to walk for five hours to vote.

Beleaguered U.N. officials responsible for organizing the vote -- which is expected to elect a former ally of ousted President Jean-Bertrand Aristide -- counter that the complaints are exaggerated and that no one will have to walk more than four miles.

The elections come two years after U.S. Marines whisked Mr. Aristide into exile in Africa amid an armed rebellion. Since then, the hemisphere's poorest country has grown even poorer while violence has ravaged Port-au-Prince despite the presence of 9,000 U.N. peacekeepers.

Acting President Boniface Alexandre issued a decree on Jan. 7 setting the date for the first round of national elections as Feb. 7, with a second round scheduled for March 19 and local balloting planned for April 30.

The electoral calendar has already been pushed back between two and four times -- depending on who is counting -- but U.N. and government officials say they are confident that the latest dates will stick.

"Feb. 7 is not negotiable," said Jean Junior Joseph, spokesman for Prime Minister Gerard Latortue. "The elections will take place no matter what."

The clear-cut favorite in the race is Rene Preval, president from 1996 to 2001, who is despised by sectors of the elite but popular among the poor who saw him as an honest and efficient administrator.

Mr. Preval is perceived to be an ally of Mr. Aristide, a former priest who campaigned as a champion of the disenfranchised, although the two have been estranged in recent years.

The repeated postponement of the elections was a result mainly of delays in the distribution of voter-identification cards, which now have been provided to nearly 60 percent of the 3.5 million registered voters.

But critics charge that the Provisional Electoral Council (CEP) is so plagued by partisanship and incompetence that it may not be capable of holding free and fair elections.

"We could be in for a fiasco on Feb. 7," said Patrick Fequiere, a member of the CEP who is highly critical of his colleagues. "I can understand the [U.N.] Security Council wanting to get these elections over with, but we're still not ready."

Mr. Fequiere and others point to problems with the 804 voting centers designated by the U.N. peacekeeping mission. They say that many voters have been assigned to the wrong center and others must walk too far because there are not enough centers.

A Dec. 27 report issued by Washington-based IFES, which is observing the elections with USAID funds, says the accessibility issue "threatens to disenfranchise thousands of voters."

The report says some people will have to walk as many as five hours to vote. But Gerardo Le Chevallier, chief of elections for the United Nations, said, "The most people will have to walk is 6 kilometers" -- about 3.75 miles.

"The fact that 2 million cards have been distributed, all 800 voting centers have been identified, we have all the electoral material, and we've recruited nearly 12,000 electoral voting-table workers means that we are ready to hold these elections," he said.

Another CEP member, Rosemond Pradel, said: "The only thing that could stop the elections right now is violence."

Port-au-Prince has suffered a surge in kidnappings that has alarmed Haiti's small-but-influential middle and upper classes. Violence also has worsened in the immense slum of Cite Soleil, where armed groups battle daily with U.N. peacekeepers.

Prominent members of the Haitian elite have called for the peacekeepers to crack down on the armed groups in Cite Soleil. But U.N. and Haitian police officials say that while many kidnapping victims are brought to Cite Soleil, the masterminds live elsewhere and some may be found among the nearly three dozen presidential candidates.

Strong bonds to Haiti's poor
by: Patricia Bartos
Pittsburg Catholic Newspaper
Jan. 20., 2006

Pittsburgh will further deepen its ties to the people of Haiti when an area woman takes over as rector of the University of Fondwa this month.

Dr. Rosemary Edwards of Gibsonia will head the new university, which was formed two years ago in the mountains of Fondwa, southwest of Port-au-Prince, to promote rural development in the poorest country in the western hemisphere. She has committed to an initial term of six months.

Edwards will welcome students when they return in mid-February for the semester that runs through mid-July. The 20 students — 10 men and 10 women from throughout Haiti — are currently serving in internships.

A pathologist in private practice who works at Butler Memorial Hospital, Edwards had earlier visited the Fondwa area to set up medical lab facilities. She has been involved for four years, working with the primary care clinic and community health promoters in education, outreach and in a physicians' lab diagnostic testing project. Her background is in pathology and transfusion medicine, and she hopes to continue in community health work while serving as rector.

Edwards' commitment is just the latest sign of strengthening bonds of support between Pittsburgh and Haiti, said Rich Gosser, executive director of Partners in Progress, which works to support sustainable community development there. Edwards is a board member.

The group hosted a meeting and reception at Duquesne University in Pittsburgh on Jan. 7 co-sponsored by the university president's office. Duquesne has agreed to provide expertise to help the new rector.

Edwards is nearing completion of a master's degree in public health at the University of Pittsburgh. The additional degree "will give me a bigger picture of the whole health care system," she said. "I wanted to get an overview and also further develop my skills."

As rector, she will focus on developing leaders.

"They're really impressive people," she said. "They already show such incredible leadership potential. They have such vision for themselves and for their country."

Fondwa calls itself a rural university, founded to aid the rural poor by offering majors geared to developing sustainable communities. The school offers three majors — in agronomy, veterinary medicine and business management. The goal is for students to return to their communities, taking their new skills and leadership abilities with them and transforming rural development.

It was launched in 2004 by the Association of Peasants of Fondwa to celebrate the 200th anniversary of Haiti's independence from France.

Mary McIntyre, executive assistant to Duquesne University President Dr. Charles Dougherty, will be the liaison for Edwards. McIntyre will serve as a resource to the first-time rector and provide input on “how a university system works,” she said.

“We have a strong connection between the university and Haiti,” McIntyre said.

The Spiritan order, which founded Duquesne, has worked in Haiti for generations and also helps to educate young Haitian Spiritan priests. For each of the last seven years it has welcomed two students, who are employees of the Fonkoze alternative bank for Haiti’s poor, to pursue studies in business and computers.

One priest in particular has strengthened those ties — Father Joseph Philippe, a native of Haiti and former student at Duquesne who is now provincial for the order in Haiti.

“When Father Philippe came to visit he brought Dr. Edwards with him and asked us to help,” McIntyre said.

Gosser, whose Partners in Progress works closely with Father Philippe, calls him “a visionary” who began the peasant movement, the university and the Fonkoze bank.

“We see ourselves as an educational and grant-making organization,” supporting the peasant group’s work in sustainable growth, Gosser said.

The Ligonier resident became executive director of the group in September and works to expand relationships with supporters and potential supporters.

Area parishes and schools have helped in that progress. Sacred Heart Parish in Shadyside for several years has helped to subsidize teacher salaries at St. Antoine School in Fondwa. Founded by Father Philippe, it has more than 650 children enrolled in kindergarten through high school.

Other schools have taken up special collections and helped the school through Lenten projects.

“We’re as much about building relationships as we are about seeking financial or technical support,” Gosser said. “It’s important to maintain a reality check by understanding that it’s very difficult. We struggle to find financing and meet technical needs while at the same time continuing to maintain funding of the peasant organization.”

Contact Gosser at 724-238-9204 or access the Partners in Progress Web site at www.piphaiti.org, or the university’s Web site at www.unif2004.org for more information.

Rules of immigration are confusing, unfair

By Maria Elena Salinas

Merced Sun Star

January 21, 2006

How inconsistent are immigration laws in the United States? They are so inconsistent that there are not only different policies for those who want to enter the country legally -- as maybe there should be -- but there are different sets of rules for those who enter the country illegally.

We already know what the rules are for Mexicans. If undocumented Mexicans make it across the border and they're caught, they are out, fuera, deported immediately. For those categorized by immigration authorities as OTM (Other Than Mexican), until a few weeks ago they were caught, processed and then set free because there were not enough beds to hold them all. The Bush administration has vowed to end that policy and send them all back.

About 350,000 Central Americans have enjoyed the privilege of Temporary Protection Status that was offered to them after devastating natural disasters ravaged their homelands. In the cases of Honduras and Nicaragua, it was after Hurricane Mitch killed thousands in 1998, left millions homeless and destroyed a large part of those countries' infrastructure. For Salvadorans, the immigration protection status came after a deadly earthquake in 2001 that buried more than 1,000 people alive under tons of mud and destroyed 2,200 homes. The TPS privilege expires in a few months, and the Department of Homeland Security is recommending that it be eliminated. Congress will have to make that decision.

For Cubans, it's a whole different set of rules that dates back to the Cold War in the 1960s. In 1966, Congress approved the Cuban Adjustment Act, which gave Cuban immigrants the right to become permanent legal residents of the United States no matter how they got here. It is a right that only applies to Cubans. Haitians, on the other hand, who flee a country ravaged by political turmoil, do not enjoy this privilege. They are routinely rounded up upon arrival and sent back to their impoverished and dangerous country.

During the Clinton administration, a new policy was put in place to deal with Cuban immigrants. Those Cubans who were able to reach U.S. soil had an opportunity to apply for permanent residency. Those caught in open waters were deported back to the island. They call it the wet-foot, dry-foot policy, and it has been upheld and strictly applied during the Bush administration.

Fifteen rafters recently became victims of the absurdity of this policy. They made it to the old Seven Mile Bridge in the Florida Keys. But since the bridge is no longer connected to land, the Coast Guard decided the obsolete bridge was not part of U.S. territory, so the 15 Cubans were sent back to the island.

The Cuban-American community is up in arms about it. The case is before a federal judge, who has hinted that he believes the Coast Guard might have made a mistake. But a reversal of that decision would not necessarily get the deported Cubans back to the U.S. Even if they received visas, the Cuban government would have to let them leave.

There's more to the immigration disparities. According to a breakdown found on the Web site of a group that supports stricter immigration laws, there are more than 1 million Europeans illegally in the United States. Most Europeans don't need a visa to come to this country -- they come under a "visa waiver" that allows them to remain in the U.S. for three months. If they overstay, they automatically become illegal and are subject to immediate deportation.

But in reality, is anyone out there hunting down 113,000 Germans who are here illegally? What industries are they working in? Do we hear of any raids on buses, clothing factories or street corners to catch 123,000 Brits who are now considered criminals for breaking our immigration laws? And what about the 226,000 Chinese here without legal papers, or the 243,000 Africans the Census Bureau claims are here illegally?

You have to wonder whether all undocumented immigrants are taken into consideration when you hear complaints about "illegals" invading our country and spreading disease, taking jobs from Americans and overwhelming our education and health-care systems.

Yes, we definitely have a broken immigration system. It doesn't work. It needs to be fixed. We could start by fixing some of the disparities in our laws.

Maria Elena Salinas is anchor of "Noticiero Univision." Visit her Web site at www.mariaesalinas.com to send comments.)

**As the PPN Warns of Violence:
Haiti's Bourgeoisie Calls for Blood
Haiti Progres
Jan. 18, 2006**

On Monday, Jan. 16, sweatshop magnate André Apaid's pro-coup "Group of 184" organized a small demonstration of about 200 people outside the headquarters of the United Nations Mission to Stabilize Haiti (MINUSTAH) in the capital's Bourdon district. The action was also supported by the "Group of Democratic Agreement," an alliance of nine political parties taking part in Haiti's upcoming elections, now scheduled for Feb. 7.

A week earlier, Haiti's bourgeoisie had called a general strike to protest the MINUSTAH's "inaction" in the face of the crime wave gripping Haiti (see *Haïti Progrès*, Vol. 23, No. 44, 1/11/2006). According to bourgeois leaders like Apaid and Haitian Chamber of Commerce and Industry head Réginald Boulos, Haiti's crime all emanates from the capital's giant slum of Cité Soleil, which they claim is infested with "bandits."

"It is necessary that the UN peace-keeping force of MINUSTAH take action against the bandits of Cité Soleil to free the population there, which has been taken hostage," Apaid told Radio Métropole in an interview just before his picket line. "During this gathering in front of the MINUSTAH headquarters, we will send a clear messages to the UN Secretary General and to the Brazilian government that MINUSTAH has to take up its responsibilities vis-a-vis the degradation of the security climate."

The picket, predictably, brought out a number of presidential candidates, such as Serge Gilles of the Fusion of social democrats, Paul Denis of the Organization of Struggling People (OPL), and independent candidate Charles Henri Baker, another sweatshop owner and leader of the "184." The latter read two letters addressed respectively to Brazilian president Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva and to Kofi Annan, and then gave them to MINUSTAH personnel.

"We completely support the Group of 184, which has called this picket," said Fusion's spokesman Micha Gaillard. "There must be peace in the head so that fear does not prevent us from going to vote... We agree with civil society [i.e. the bourgeoisie] which questions and wants to force Minustah to take up its responsibilities."

In his letter to Kofi Annan, André Apaid charged that Cité Soleil's "bandits" support "a presidential candidate," a veiled reference to former president René Préval, whose popularity is unrivaled by any of the other 34 candidates. This has "made impossible any true election campaigning," Apaid said.

The day before the picket, Kofi Annan issued an official statement condemning the bourgeoisie's "smear campaign" against the MINUSTAH and his special representative, Juan Gabriel Valdés. "Kofi Annan invites the provisional Haitian government to publicly condemn this smear campaign which aims to discredit the work of the UN in Haiti and which could carry serious consequences for the safety and security of Minustah personnel," the note said. "This campaign of unjustified criticism also threatens the construction of a society based on democratic values and could put in danger the holding of free and fair elections."

Also on Jan. 16, Haiti's National Popular Party (PPN) held a press conference denouncing Apaid and the bourgeoisie for overthrowing Haiti's constitutional government with the US, France and Canada and "leading the country into complete failure."

The PPN's Georges Honorat noted that the bourgeoisie accuses Cité Soleil of being the source of Haiti's rash of kidnappings. But over the holiday season, "more than a dozen kidnappings took place in [the bourgeois district of] Pétionville and not in the vicinity Cité Soleil," Honorat said.

He said that the people of Cité Soleil were not terrorists, but terrorized. The bourgeoisie had enforced their general strike (in fact, a lock-out) a week earlier by a terror campaign of "continuous shootings of automatic weapons" around the capital, thereby "forcing the population to remain in all day," Honorat said.

The PPN noted the complete disarray and confusion surrounding the upcoming elections. Honorat speculated that Washington, if unable to "select" a suitable candidate, will "proclaim Haiti a failed state thereby justifying a more total supervision and occupation."

Calling the upcoming elections a "masquerade," the PPN warned that "there could be a repeat of November 29, 1987," when soldiers and Tonton Macoutes aborted national elections with bloody massacres. "The PPN urges those holding national identity [voting] cards to not take part in the 'selection/elections' to avoid being victims... Do not go to the slaughterhouse into which the occupiers want to lead you."

Honorat closed by saying that "the population must mobilize in a peaceful way throughout the country to demand the release of all the Lavalas political prisoners and the return of Lavalas political exiles, including President Aristide, for there to be truly democratic, free and honest elections."

Lawyers Across U.S. Seek Deportation Moratorium for Haitians

On Jan. 19, 2006, immigration attorneys and advocates in key cities throughout the United States will simultaneously submit motions that all deportation proceedings against Haitians be dropped.

The lawyers will ask immigration judges to administratively close immigration cases involving Haitians due to the terrible human rights conditions in Haiti.

The motion to dismiss the cases, written by Philadelphia-based attorney Thomas Griffin and Colorado-based attorney Desiree Wayne, asserts that an immediate decision "protecting Haitians from forced return is imperative."

"Despite the ongoing chaos that continues in Haiti, including brutal civil strife, documented bloody political conflict, indisputable countrywide insecurity and the proven inability of the Haitian state to protect its own people, the United States continues to refuse refuge to fleeing Haitians," the motion states.

With a mandate previously wielded by the Attorney General, the Department of Homeland Security can grant Temporary Protective Status (TPS) to refugees from any troubled nation. TPS temporarily suspends the forced repatriation of nationals to countries whose governments cannot protect them from immediate threats to their lives, freedom, and welfare. "The criteria are armed conflict, civil strife, and environmental disaster," explained Tom Griffin. "For any one of these reasons a country can get TPS. Haiti qualifies under all three categories."

The "Motion to Stop Deportations to Haiti Campaign" involves some 200 lawyers and has been endorsed by dozens of human rights and activist groups and individuals. It is an effort to "circumvent" the Bush administration's refusal to grant TPS to Haitians.

The nationals from seven countries presently enjoy TPS: Burundi, Liberia, Somalia, Sudan, Honduras, El Salvador, and Nicaragua.

The same day as the nationwide filings, press conferences will be held in Washington, D.C., New York, Boston, Miami, and Philadelphia to discuss the motions.

"We're also holding press conferences to put some pressure on the Bush administration to grant Haitians TPS, which would be better than having to resort to these motions," Griffin said.

The lawyers in the campaign are hoping to create a cascade effect, where judges in one district will influence those in another to administratively dismiss cases. "We decided to organize the filings on one day so it would have a greater impact," Griffin said.

Motion authors Griffin and Wayne are both well-placed to know the dire situation of human rights in Haiti. Griffin was the author of a celebrated human rights report on Haiti released by the University of Miami Law School in January 2005, and is a former Federal investigator. Desiree Wayne, a former Federal prosecutor, is the chief prosecutor for the on-going International Tribunal on Haiti (see *Haiti Progrès*, Vol. 23, No. 37, 11/23/2005).

Among the dozens of organizations endorsing the campaign are Alternative Chance, the American Immigration Lawyers Association, Church World Service Immigration and Refugee Program, Episcopal Migration Ministries, Florida Immigrant Advocacy Center, Haiti Support Network (HSN), Haitian Lawyers Association, Haitian Women for Haitian Refugees, Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society, Jesuit Refugee Service, National Council of Churches of Christ USA, the Massachusetts chapter of the National Lawyers Guild, and TransAfrica Forum.

It is also supported by many dozens of lawyers and law professors as well as prominent individuals such as immigration author and expert Mark Dow, Detroit Auxiliary Bishop Thomas Gumbleton, and Haitian health crusader Dr. Paul Farmer.

For information on press conferences in different cities, contact: Washington, D.C.: Joia Jefferson Nuri, (202) 223-1960, Jnuri@transafricaforum.org; New York: Michelle Karshan, (786) 897-6572, mkarshan@aol.com; Boston: Paromita Shah, (617)227-9727 x 1, paromita@nationalimmigrationproject.org; Miami: Steven David Forester, Esq., 786 877-6999,

SteveForester@aol.com; and Philadelphia: Thomas M. Griffin, Esq., (215) 925-4435 ext. 108,
griffin@msgimmigration.com.

Undeclared War Escalates In Capital Slum

Amy Bracken

IPS

Jan. 18, 2006

CITE SOLEIL, Jan 18 (IPS) - It was 1:30 in the morning and the sound was deafening -- machine gun fire, the crack of rifles, and the boom of heavy artillery, as bullet tracers flew through the black sky like fireworks.

Some 200,000 residents of Cite Soleil, a slum on the outskirts of Port-au-Prince, heard the explosions and knew that even in their beds they were not safe.

Across the city, fist-sized holes in building walls showed that bullets can penetrate thick cement.

One patient at the city's Medecins Sans Frontieres (MSF) Belgium hospital had been hit in the head by a bullet that had entered her bedroom through the roof. On another day, MSF doctors treated 10 patients for bullet wounds. All had been struck in the back.

The battle raging between U.N. troops and armed civilians in Cite Soleil, one of the poorest cities in the hemisphere, is wounding and killing innocent residents on a daily basis. And as Haiti prepares for elections now scheduled for Feb. 7, the violence is getting worse.

The Cite Soleil MSF hospital alone received 47 gunshot victims, four of whom died, in the first 16 days of 2006. They had received 80 in the month of December, up from 34 in November. And this doesn't include the gunshot victims received by the Haitian Red Cross emergency centre in Cite Soleil, which treats and transports several violence victims a day to a hospital in Port-au-Prince.

Nor does it include the dead.

Port-au-Prince's MSF France hospital, near downtown, also reported an increase in gunshot victims from both Cite Soleil and the rest of the metropolitan area in recent months. They saw 122 gunshot victims in December, up from 103 in November, with the trend expected to continue, according to MSF France Mission Chief Ali Besnaci.

Port-au-Prince is a rare assignment for relief workers who usually work in areas of more traditional territorial conflict and conflict that is not confined to a single city. And the situation here is unusually complex. The violence in Cite Soleil resembles a war, but who is fighting, and why, is unclear. And all parties claim to be on the side of peace.

As gunfire rings out in Cite Soleil, Haitian radio broadcasts a war of words.

Armed residents of Cite Soleil say business leaders are backing a campaign of violence carried out by the U.N. Business leaders say the U.N. is willfully neglecting to control gangsters and kidnappers. And police and U.N. leaders accuse candidates in Haiti's upcoming presidential elections of backing gang violence.

Self-described "militants", otherwise known as gang members, say it is the U.N. soldiers who are terrorising the population, and they deny there are arms among civilians, even as boys and young men walk the streets openly displaying rifles and pistols.

"The situation is critical for the Haitian people," said a young "militant" known as Tutu.

"The U.N. troops landed in our country to carry out the work of the bourgeois, to create disorder in the country using the money of [business leader Andre] Apaid and [presidential candidate] Charles Baker, so that elections never happen in the country."

Because Rene Preval is the favoured presidential candidate among both the people of Cite Soleil and the rest of the population, some claim it is only other candidates, and not the people of Cite Soleil, who have an interest in destabilising the country before elections.

In wealthier parts of greater Port-au-Prince, shootings are rare but kidnappings have hit a high -- often 20 per day this winter, and most of the victims are held in Cite Soleil. Kidnappees are occasionally beaten and killed, and they are often traumatised and financially drained after days of negotiations for a ransom upwards of 10,000 dollars.

Business leaders have harshly criticised the U.N. for not doing more to protect the population from kidnappings. The Haitian Chamber of Commerce recently called a general strike, and Apaid and Baker organised a sit-in outside U.N. peacekeeping headquarters at which hundreds of protesters chanted and sang out their anger with the troops for doing too little or too much.

Protesters carried signs saying, "The U.N. mission makes money while Haitians die", and chanted, "Down with MINUSTAH!" -- the acronym for the mission. As a U.N. vehicle passed through the crowd to enter the headquarters, the crowd chanted, "We are not afraid!" while some threw plastic bottles at the truck.

The anti-U.N. event united supporters of ousted President Jean-Bertrand Aristide with their traditional enemies. (Apaid and Baker were leaders of the successful movement to oust Aristide two years ago.) Strangely, it also united people who advocate taking an aggressive approach to Cite Soleil, in spite of the civilian casualties that would incur, with those who believe the U.N.'s approach in Cite Soleil has already cost too many lives.

Brigadier General Mahmoud Al-Husban, force commander for the U.N. troops in greater Port-au-Prince, said the situation in Cite Soleil is growing worse every day.

Jordan's two battalions have the toughest job in the Haiti mission -- trying to control Cite Soleil alone. When the U.N. launched an appeal for troops to come to Haiti for the Cite Soleil mission, they asked more than 50 countries, and only Jordan volunteered. It was an overwhelming job from the start, but Al-Husban said armed civilians have grown more dangerous in the past month.

"They don't care about how much they are firing or shooting rounds,"

Al-Husban said. "In the beginning they used to fire three or four shots in maybe one hour, but now they are firing hundreds and sometimes a thousand."

A security operation in Cite Soleil Tuesday morning led to a shoot-out that lasted hours. By Tuesday afternoon, two Jordanian soldiers and at least two civilians were dead, and one Jordanian soldier and at least eight civilians were wounded by gunfire, including a one-year-old girl and 11-month-old boy.

Nine U.N. peacekeepers have been killed in Haiti since their mission began in July 2004. Most of the killings were in and around Cite Soleil, and four of those were Jordanian soldiers, whom a Jordanian commander characterised as "martyrs" for peace in the face of "evil".

Each side in the undeclared war vilifies the other, and one cannot live in Cite Soleil without a constant awareness of the armed conflict. But some argue there are deeper problems in the city that are more deserving of attention.

"It's not a question of gangs in Cite Soleil," said Richard Roger, a voter registration security guard who lives and works in Cite Soleil. "It's a question of misery, it's a question of the problem that people don't have work, people don't have the means to eat, somewhere to sleep, somewhere for them to do what they want comfortably because Haitians want to have a minimum standard of living, and they will use illegal means to get it."

Al-Husban said he believes his troops can bring security to Cite Soleil.

However, he said, "Solving the problems of Cite Soleil is not military. A military solution is part of it [but] there are a lot of political, humanitarian, socialà many things that have to be done together."

An unelected provisional government has been running Haiti for the past two years, and many residents of Cite Soleil say elections are their only hope for an end to their suffering. (END/2006) _____

Plus:

Haitian Press Agency (AHP) report, 17 January 2006 Residents of Drouillard, in the north of the capital (part of greater Cité Soleil), have let it be known that the individuals who shot dead two members of the UN mission are not from that locality. Two Jordanians were killed and one wounded by individuals who attacked a patrol sent in to establish better control of the zone. The UN soldiers returned fire, killing 12 people and wounding many others, according to local people, who insisted that those who shot at the foreigners don't live in the area. These are people who have been paid by sectors hostile to the elections who want to sow chaos in Cité Soleil and nearby areas, "they are people who infiltrate the local population in the area and fire on the MINUSTAH patrols with the aim of provoking UN raids," said one resident. The inhabitants of Drouillard are calling for the national and international authorities to intervene in favour of the population of this beleaguered district, he said. (translated from French by Charles Arthur for the Haiti Support Group)

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www.haitisupport.gn.apc.org

The Senate candidate for the Plateforme de l'Espoir Party the the South-east Department, Dr. Frantz Large, has denounced the current reign of terror in Haïti.

AHP

January 9, 2006

Port-au-Prince, 9 January 2006

Speaking on Radio Solidarité, Dr. Large holds one of the sectors of civil society responsible for this catastrophic state of affairs.

He claims that it is the same sector that had refused to negotiate a compromise solution with President Jean-Bertrand Aristide to stop the country from descending into chaos.

As for the multiple postponements of election dates, Frantz Large declared that the same sector is mainly responsible because its main objective is to stop the Plate-forme de l'Espoir presidential candidate, René Garcia Prével, "since this sector now realizes that it has no hope of winning the next electoral campaign."

When asked if the elections would indeed be held on the new dates that were established by the electoral and political authorities, he refused to comment.

However, he said that Haïti needs a government of national unity with wide popular support to help resolve the Haitian crisis that has been many years in the making.

According to Dr. Large, this type of a government, and not the MINUSTAH, will be able to find the solution to the problem of insecurity.

"If we persist in ignoring this advice," he predicts, " the country will end up experiencing the humiliation of yet another occupation."

The Senate candidate declared that he supports any initiative that will fight the problem of insecurity. He rejects and condemns, however, any political exploitation of insecurity within the country.

Dr. Frantz Large called on the Haitian population to mobilize, be vigilant and unite to stop national and international sectors from making a mockery of the country.

AHP 9 January 2006 2:25 PM

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Spotlight on Haiti
January 12, 2006
by Robert Nolan
Foreign Policy Association Newsletter
www.fpa.org

Violence in the streets. Journalists, politicians and civilians kidnapped and murdered ahead of elections. Troops sent to usher in peace and democracy under fire from warring factions. Sound familiar? While the above conditions could easily describe the situation in Iraq, they also offer a glimpse into life somewhere closer to home - Haiti.

Over the weekend, elections scheduled to usher in a permanent Haitian government following the 2004 violent overthrow of Jean-Bertrand Aristide were postponed for a fourth time. The move, agreed to by Haiti's nine-member election committee, has brought into question the effectiveness of the 7,000-strong UN peacekeeping force there, as well as the ability of the Organization of American States to establish a logistical infrastructure able to support free and fair elections. Perhaps more dangerously, though, it has further emboldened many of the criminal gang leaders who control pockets of the violent capital, Port-au-Prince.

“Welcome to Haiti,” reads a Miami Herald editorial, “Where politics, chaos and violence make recurring joint appearances.”

Peacekeeping's Shortcomings

Indeed, politics and violence have a long history in Haiti, a country that has experienced 33 coups in its 200 years of independence from France. While Haiti's internal political system has long been criticized for fostering a “winner takes all” atmosphere, numerous conflicts over the years have drawn in the international community, often culminating in lackluster results. From the U.S. deployment of 24,000 troops in 1994 to help restore Aristide to power, to the more recent French, American and Canadian effort to calm the situation following Aristide's ouster, the international presence in Haiti has been criticized by many for failing to get the job done. The most recent example cited is the fact that not even 10 percent of funds pledged to Haiti at an international donor conference in 2004 have been made available, according to the BBC.

“The main lesson from the past failures is that there was never a sufficiently comprehensive effort in Haiti,” said United Nations Undersecretary-General for Peacekeeping Jean-Marie Guehenno in an interview with the Council on Foreign Relations. “This time the international community should really stay the course and learn from past failures.”

Despite such statements, the UN presence in Haiti continues to serve as a magnet for critics, from so-called “spoilers” -- the thugs and drug-dealers who benefit from the current chaos -- to politicians, journalists and academics. Not only has the UN mission, led by Brazil, been unable to quell violence that has claimed more than 800 lives since 2004, they say, it has also failed to train a domestic police force able to combat heavily armed gangs that control pockets of Port-au-Prince like the now-infamous Cite Soleil long enough to hold elections.

“We are fed up with those foreigners who sit there spending money and not delivering,” said Rosemond Pradal, secretary-general of Haiti's Provisional Electoral Council, expressing the frustration of many following the most recent postponement. To date, the UN has sent more than 9,000 of its staff at a cost of \$60 billion to Haiti, with little to show in terms of improvement. Compounding external criticism of the UN presence was news this week that the mission's leader, Brazilian General Urano Bacellar, reportedly took his own life in a Port-au-Prince hotel room over the weekend. Bacellar had replaced another Brazilian General, Augusto Heleno Pereira, who famously asked to be relieved from his post, quipping one year in Haiti was “long enough.”

Elections: A Logistical Nightmare?

Observers of Haiti's troubles disagree over the impact elections will have in bringing about peace. “One line of thinking says that no matter which candidate wins the troubled Haitian elections, the new administration will fail because the country is infested with corruption, criminal activity and an inept security force,” writes author Kathie Klarreich in the *Christian Science Monitor*. “The other believes that the only way to stabilize Haiti is to install a legitimate government dedicated to providing security in defiance of political and economic pressure to keep the status quo.”

The U.S., for one, has vocally expressed support for the latter, with American officials urging respect for the tentative new date, February 7. “We believe it is essential that elections move forward,” said State Department spokesman Sean McCormack. U.S. Deputy Secretary of State Nicolas Burns added that, “The people of Haiti have an opportunity to overcome the challenges of the past decade,” by electing a new government “that can provide stability and peace.” Others, however, see the push for elections as a lifeline for another round of disengagement from Haiti. “The international community simply sees the elections as an exit strategy,” Dan Erickson of the *Inter-American dialog* told *Newsweek*.

The shortcomings of the Organization of American States, charged with orchestrating free and fair elections, have also placed the pan-American body under fire. At present, only half of the 3.4 million Haitians registered to go to the polls have received high-tech voting cards needed to participate, a number of the 35 candidates for president have complained the country's 850 voting sites are too far apart, and the 38,691 poll workers needed to carry out elections are not yet fully trained. “The best you can say is that this process has been a political, technical, logistical and financial fiasco,” Mark Schneider, senior vice president of the *International Crisis Group* in Washington, told the *Christian Science Monitor*. Schneider also questioned the ability of elections to bring stability to Haiti. “Empty elections that produce a government with little legitimacy could drive Haiti into permanent failed state status, run by drug and criminal networks,” he warned.

UN officials and others, however, sought to dispel such negative thinking. “The elections are going to be late but they will happen. Iraq and Afghanistan were no better prepared,” said UN spokesman Damian Onses-Cardona in the *Christian Science Monitor* report. “If we want elections in the style of Switzerland we can wait 1,000 years. But we are almost as close to ready as we will ever be.”

