

HAITI NEWS ROUNDUP: JANUARY 2 – 9, 2006

Latortue says he will step down as Haiti's prime minister on Feb. 7

AFP

South Florida Sun Sentinel

January 5 2006

PORT-AU-PRINCE -- Haitian Prime Minister Gerard Latortue told AFP Thursday he will step down on Feb. 7, despite the country's elections being postponed.

"I stand by my decision and my pledge to step down on Feb. 7, along with the government," said Latortue, a former exile from Boca Raton.

He said he would attend to the country's minor day-to-day affairs until a newly elected government takes over.

But he stressed that, "from Feb. 7, I will not undertake any new initiatives or make any decisions that involve the state, and I will not approve any laws."

"No matter when elections are held, I will step down on February 7, 2006. I hope the transition period will be as short as possible," he added.

A coalition of political parties had clamored for Latortue's resignation, charging that he had failed to organize elections in a timely fashion.

According to Haiti's constitution, the new president should take office on Feb. 7. But, as Haiti has struggled to keep a date for its first elections since former president Jean Bertrand Aristide was forced from office in early 2004, that will not be possible.

A new date for the vote has not been set since elections slated for January 8 were postponed. However, sources close to the government and the electoral council have speculated that a first round could be held on Feb. 7.

Haiti blames new election delay on U.N., OAS

04 Jan 2006

Source: Reuters

By Joseph Guylar Delva

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti, Jan 4 (Reuters) - Haiti's election officials have put the blame for the latest postponement of national election on the Organization of American States and the United Nations, accusing them of failing to distribute voter cards and set up polling stations.

Rosemond Pradel, secretary-general of the Provisional Electoral Council, said the OAS had not lived up to a commitment to distribute voter identification cards in time for a Jan. 8 election.

OAS and U.N. officials rejected the accusations.

Elections officials said on Friday they were delaying the vote but did not announce a new date.

"The OAS said voting card distribution would be completed by December 25th, but as of now not even half of the cards have been distributed," said Pradel in a weekend interview. "That's grave, that's very grave."

Haiti has been ruled by a U.S.-backed interim government since President Jean-Bertrand Aristide was pushed from office in February 2004. A U.N. peacekeeping force comprised of 9,000 soldiers and police has provide security for the troubled Caribbean country of 8.5 million people, which has been plagued by gang and political violence.

The transition government has struggled to organize a national election, which was initially scheduled for November but has been delayed several times by disorganization.

Election officials said the OAS was responsible for voter registration and for the distribution of voting cards, while the U.N. stabilization mission in Haiti, known as MINUSTAH, was in charge of placing voting centers around the country and of logistics for the election.

"We are fed up with those foreigners who sit there spending money and not delivering," said Pradel. He said MINUSTAH refused to set up voting centers in sufficient numbers to increase accessibility.

SIX-HOUR WALK TO VOTE

He said the U.N. mission had offered assurances that Haitians would not have to walk more than two hours to reach voting centers. "Now we learned voters have to walk six, seven hours to reach a voting center in some areas," he said.

U.N. spokesman David Wimhurst rejected the allegations, saying MINUSTAH had carried out its responsibilities, which did not include deciding the location of voting stations.

"Our mission was to verify that the voting centers the electoral council had selected physically existed," Wimhurst said. "It had never been our job to determine the location of voting centers."

Interim Prime Minister Gerard Latortue said the OAS had guaranteed the voting cards would be distributed by Dec. 25.

"December 25th has come and gone, the cards are not there and now they said January 5th," Latortue said.

The head of the OAS mission in Haiti, Denneth Modeste, also rejected blame. OAS officials said they were ready to start distributing the cards on Sept. 25, when the first ones arrived from printers in Mexico, but election officials told them to hold off because polling stations had not yet been chosen.

Fewer than 2 million of 3.5 million registered voters have collected their voting cards, according to election officials.

"The cards are available in several hundred distribution centers around the country, people just have to go and collect them," said Modeste. He said his organization cannot be blamed if voters fail to collect the cards.

Election officials plan to complete preparations by Jan. 28 and sources close to the council told Reuters the ballot could be set for Feb. 7. Latortue also suggested the same date.

OAS workers freed in Haiti

UPI

January 2, 2006

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti-- Two employees of the Organization of American States were released after their kidnapping in Haiti.

The two, both technicians for the OAS Electoral Support Group, are from Guatemala and Peru. The Haitian wife of one of the men was also abducted and freed.

In a news release, the OAS said that the couple were released on Friday, the day after the abduction, while the other man was released a day later.

Kidnapping has become increasingly common in Haiti since the ouster of President Jean Bertrand Aristide. In the last few days, two U.S. journalists were also abducted in Port Au Prince and released after payment of a ransom.

The government announced late last week that a presidential election had been postponed again

AU, Caricom to check Haiti's readiness for elections
China View
January 4, 2006

HAVANA -- The Caribbean Community (Caricom) and the African Union (AU) Wednesday said they would send a joint mission to Haiti to see if the country is ready to hold its oft-delayed elections, according to reports from Georgetown, capital of Guyana.

Colin Granderson, assistant secretary-general for the foreign and community relations of the Georgetown-based Caricom, said the AU-Caricom mission's task was to assess Haiti's election preparations for establishing a constitutional government.

Caricom is waiting for the AU to coordinate dates for the mission, he added.

Elections in Haiti had been previously set for Jan. 8, but were postponed again last week. It was the fourth time that the elections had been delayed.

Haiti has struggled to meet a date for its first elections since former president Jean Bertrand Aristide was ousted in early 2004.

Haitian officials blamed the latest delay on a failure to distribute 3.5 million voter ID cards on time, chaotic voting centers, and problems with the voter database.

Reports citing Haitian officials said the elections might take place on Feb. 7.

Security Council to meet this week on Haiti over poll delay
Caribbean Net News
Thursday, January 5, 2006

UNITED NATIONS (AFP): The UN Security Council is to meet Friday at Argentina's request to discuss the situation in Haiti where general elections have once again been postponed, the council president for this month said Wednesday.

Tanzania's UN envoy Augustine Mahiga told reporters that the 15-member council would meet "on an urgent basis" in the wake of the decision by Haiti's interim government to postpone the first round of the presidential and legislative polls scheduled for January 8.

"It is the wish of the Council members that we get a briefing from the Secretariat on what is exactly happening on the ground and in particular on the circumstances that have led to the postponement of the elections," he noted.

"We were told it 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 on Friday," Mahiga added.

The Haitian government on Sunday confirmed news from a member of the electoral council that the vote, already pushed back four times, would not be held on time.

Haiti has struggled to keep a date for its first elections since former president Jean Bertrand Aristide was forced from office in early 2004.

Haiti's Provisional Election Council (CEP) member Pierre Richard Duchemin said Friday the polls would be have to be rescheduled yet again.

Sources close to the electoral council and interim government said a first round vote was now being considered for February 7.

Preparations for the voting have been mired in disarray. Many of the 3.5 million registered voters have not received their electoral identification cards, while officials have yet to determine the location of the 800 voting offices and the make-up of electoral observer teams.

In addition, violence and kidnapping for ransom have continued to rock Haiti since Aristide fled the impoverished Caribbean nation on February 29, 2004 as rebels closed in on the capital.

When the elections are finally held, voters will be asked to choose from among 35 presidential hopefuls, including two ex-presidents and a former rebel leader who had played a key role in ousting Aristide.

Haiti, Mexico most perilous for media

Reporters Without Borders released their annual report showing countries that have jailed or killed numerous journalists.

BY JOE MOZINGO

Miami Herald

January 4, 2006

Seven journalists were killed in Latin America and the Caribbean last year, with Haiti and Mexico being the most dangerous countries for reporters, said an annual report released today by the Paris-based Reporters Without Borders.

Cuba meanwhile, has become the "world's second biggest prison for journalists" with 24 in jail, the group wrote. Only China, with 115 times the population of Cuba, imprisons more, with 32.

The war in Iraq accounted for 24 of the 63 journalists killed around the world during the year, the report said. That brought the total of journalists killed in that nearly three-year-old conflict to 76, more than the number killed during two decades of fighting in Vietnam.

In Latin America, the seven killings were down from 2004, as were physical attacks in general, but violence was still a major problem in drug trafficking areas.

In Mexico, drug cartels continued to pose a serious threat to the media. Almost all the 16 Mexican journalists killed since 2000 "were writing about highly sensitive issues such as drug-trafficking and police corruption," the report said.

In Haiti, where journalists hoped the ousting of President Jean-Bertrand Aristide in Feb. 2004 would bring more freedom, violence continued to engulf society. Radio reporter Laraque Robenson, 24, was killed during a gunfight in March, when U.N. peacekeepers moved to dislodge a gang of former soldiers from a police station in Petit Goave.

"The fatal shots were alleged to have been fired by peacekeepers," the report said. The U.N. Mission in Haiti ``carried out an internal investigation but never released its findings."

Jacques Roche, a columnist and editor at Le Matin, was kidnapped on July 10 and found dead four days later.

Haiti Business Leader Calls Protest Strike

By BEN FOX

Forbes.com

January, 5, 2006

The leader of Haiti's largest business association on Thursday called for a general strike next week to protest the wave of kidnappings that has sparked fear in the capital and contributed to the chaos that prompted authorities to postpone elections.

Reginald Boulos, the president of Haiti's Chamber of Commerce and Industry, urged businesses to stay closed and parents to keep their children out of school Monday to pressure the United Nations peacekeeping mission to take more aggressive measures against the gangs allegedly behind the kidnappings.

"We believe the political management of the U.N. has not decided yet to provide the security environment that they were meant to provide," Boulos said at a news conference.

"The general population is tired, very tired of this insecurity," he said. "Elections cannot take place in this kind of environment."

Most Haitian businesses are small, independent shops and it was unclear what, if any, effect the chamber president's call for a general strike would have on the economy of the poorest nation in the Western Hemisphere.

Boulos, a leading member of a coalition that supported the rebels in the February 2004 overthrow of President Jean Bertrand Aristide, has personal experience with kidnapping: His wife, Mouna, was abducted and held for nine days in November 2003.

Haitian police and an 9,000-strong U.N. peacekeeping force have pledged to restore security, which has deteriorated sharply with the approach of elections to replace the interim government imposed after Aristide's ouster.

Haitian interim Prime Minister Gerard Latortue said Thursday that he plans to step down as planned next month even though the repeated delays in national elections have made it unlikely that the country's new leader will be in place before his final day.

Haiti has an interim president, Boniface Alexandre. After general elections, a new president will be chosen.

They can't do it alone
International community needs to be involved for haiti to rebound
BY LETTA TAYLER
Newsday.com
January 3, 2006

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti -- One of the first things Haiti will need after electing a new president is massive aid to help establish law and order. But foreign policy experts fear the international community, and particularly the United States, is preparing a quick exit that could doom this troubled country to another round of chaos.

Though Nicholas Burns, the undersecretary for political affairs at the State Department, declared during a recent visit that "the United States is a good friend of Haiti," a U.S. diplomat told Newsday that a United Nations peacekeeping force here may be able to leave in "a couple of years."

"The capability is there" to build a Haitian police force in that time to replace the nearly 8,900 UN troops and police, said the diplomat, who spoke on condition of anonymity.

In contrast, most foreign policy experts believe Haiti needs a decade to rebuild its tiny and corrupt police force - the only security apparatus apart from the peacekeepers, who have barely kept a lid on violence since populist President Jean-Bertrand Aristide was ousted by rebels 23 months ago.

UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan also wants a lengthy commitment. "I hope this time the international community will go in for the long haul and not a quick turn-around," Annan said when the peacekeepers were deployed here in 2004. "It may take years."

The United States pays more than one-fourth the costs of the peacekeeping mission and holds enormous sway over its size and duration.

In further warning signals, Washington last summer rebuffed UN requests for a commando unit to help the Brazilian-led peacekeepers rout armed groups. And the Pentagon has yet to answer an SOS to loan the UN mission 10 helicopters for logistics during the presidential elections.

The United States has been the key outside player in Haiti since slaves ousted French colonists two centuries ago. Since Aristide's departure, the United States has pledged a half-billion dollars in aid here, a windfall to this impoverished, shattered nation.

But after three military interventions here in the past century, the White House wants to shift responsibility to a hemispheric coalition. "The reality is that the U.S. cannot be effective in Haiti if we're seen as the only interested power," said the U.S. diplomat. "We've done it before and it hasn't worked."

So far, however, the only country that's seriously stepped to the plate is Brazil, which has been criticized for its leadership of the peacekeeping force.

Many critics believe U.S. policy has failed because it was misguided. "The United States has oscillated between extremes of attention and neglect in Haiti," said James Dobbins, an envoy to Haiti under former President Bill Clinton. "The basic problem is that our focus has never been continuous."

That's partly because Haiti has no vital natural resources or ports to hold U.S. interest. But when it spins out of control, thousands of Haitian refugees board boats bound for U.S. shores. Already, nearly 1 million Haitians live in the United States - more than a third of them in the New York metropolitan area.

Instability also could increase drug traffickers' use of Haiti to transfer Colombian cocaine to the United States, drug experts warn.

"The United States can't ignore Haiti," said Jocelyn McCalla, executive director of the New York-based National Coalition for Haitian Rights, a leading Haitian advocacy group. "The two countries are stuck with each other."

Some Haitians would love to see the Yankees go home. "Why would we want the Americans back? To kick out our next president?" asked Ralph Azor, 29, an unemployed electrician from Bel Air, a neighborhood of Port-au-Prince loyal to Aristide, who claims the United States forced him out. Washington denies the allegation.

But many Haitians believe the world will forget about Haiti if the United States doesn't stay engaged.

"The main problem with U.S. involvement in Haiti has been paternalism," said Georges Michel, a political commentator on Haiti's Radio Metropole. "Treat us respectfully. Hold our hands and push us in the right direction. But don't impose solutions."

Haitian presidential candidate released
ALFRED de MONTESQUIOU
Associated Press
San Jose Mercury News
January 3, 2005

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti - A presidential candidate wanted for questioning in the 2000 slaying of a prominent journalist was detained for nine hours for allegedly carrying unregistered weapons in his car, a member of his political party said Tuesday.

Dany Toussaint, a former army major and senator running for president on a pledge to restore order to chaotic Haiti, was arrested Monday by U.N. peacekeepers at a checkpoint, said Ulrick Gabriel Fils-Aime, a senate candidate from Toussaint's Democratic Movement of Haiti Party.

Toussaint, 48, was arrested in the northern town of Cap Haitien and released nine hours later, Fils-Aime said.

Fils-Aime said the permits for the weapons had expired, "but it was an arbitrary act to hold him for nine hours. The police were being overzealous," he said.

Police Chief Mario Andresol said Toussaint was detained after peacekeepers found the weapons in his car.

"This is purely a police operation, there is no political undertone," Andresol said.

The U.N. mission was called to Haiti after a rebellion forced the ouster of former President Jean-Bertrand Aristide in February 2004.

Toussaint, one of 35 candidates for president, was a former ally and bodyguard of the ousted president. Toussaint runs a private security company in the impoverished country, which is plagued by kidnappings.

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

Toussaint had been summoned to appear before a judge for questioning as a suspect in the 2000 slaying of prominent radio journalist and Aristide opponent Jean Dominique. He refused, however, to respond to the summons and the Senate refused to lift his parliamentary immunity.

Haitian presidential candidate held on gun charge

Mon Jan 2, 2006

By Joseph Guylor Delva

Reuters

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti (Reuters) - A former Haitian police chief and ex-senator who is running for president was arrested by U.N. troops and Haitian police on weapons charges, police said on Monday.

Dany Toussaint was held for questioning by Chilean soldiers from the U.N. peacekeeping force after he was found with several illegal weapons during a visit to the northern city of Cap-Haitien, Haiti's second largest city, police sources said.

The weapons included firearms that Toussaint had obtained from Haiti's Parliament for his personal protection when he was a senator from 2000 to 2004, a police commissioner in Cap-Haitien, who asked not to be named, told Reuters on Monday. His authorization to carry those weapons ended when his senate term ended.

"Dany Toussaint was carrying several weapons for which he has no valid authorization," said the police official who added Toussaint would have to appear before a judge to defend himself.

Toussaint, who was police chief in 1995, was apparently visiting the northern region to campaign as part of his presidential bid. He was being held on Monday night at the police station in Cap-Haitien under special surveillance.

Toussaint is suspected of drug trafficking by U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration officials in Port-au-Prince but has never been charged with drug crimes by the United States and has denied involvement in criminal activities.

A recent opinion survey conducted by CID-Gallup for the U.S. Agency for International Development, showed Toussaint with support from only 2 percent of likely voters in the presidential election, while former President Rene Preval led with 32 percent.

Presidential and legislative elections were scheduled to take place on January 8 but the vote has been postponed for a fourth time because of technical problems.

Authorities still have to determine a new schedule for the vote, which would be the first elections since President Jean-Bertrand Aristide was forced into exile during an armed rebellion in February 2004. U.N. forces were sent in afterward to help stabilize the nation.

Controversial candidate found carrying illegal arms

A presidential candidate who has been a murder suspect was detained briefly by U.N. peacekeepers after unregistered weapons were found.

BY ALFRED de MONTESQUIOU

Associated Press

Miami Herald

Jan. 4, 2006

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Haiti elections may be in February
WebIndia123.com
January 06, 2006

Haitian elections could be rescheduled for early February following the fourth delay in the voting, Haitian radio reported Thursday.

The election was rescheduled for Jan. 8, but postponed due to what officials said was a lack of preparation.

The U.N. Security Council is preparing for emergency talks on the elections and the reasons for their delay.

Haiti has been ruled by an interim government since former President Jean-Bertrand Aristide left the country amid an armed rebellion in February 2004.

(UPI)

UN to debate Haiti election delay

BBC News

Jan. 5, 2006

The UN Security Council has called an urgent session to debate the continuing postponements of Haiti's elections.

When the fourth delay was confirmed last week, Haitian officials accused the UN and the OAS of failing to play their part in preparing the election.

Both the UN and the Organization of American States deny any failings.

The poll was due to have been held on Sunday. It would have been the first since President Jean-Bertrand Aristide was ousted in February 2004.

Haiti - one of the poorest countries in the world - has been plagued by political and criminal violence.

'No cards'

Haitian officials have not yet set a new date for the election, but they are reported to be considering 7 February.

Tanzania's UN envoy Augustine Mahiga said the Security Council would meet on Friday.

"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," he said.

"We were told it 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."

Haitian officials say a postponement is needed because many of the country's 3.5 million registered voters have not received their electoral identification cards.

But the head of the OAS mission in Haiti, Denneth Modeste, said the cards had been ready in September, but had asked the OAS to hold off distribution because polling stations had not yet been chosen.

The Electoral Council's Secretary-General, Rosemond Pradel, said last week he was sick of watching foreigners sit around spending money without achieving results.

**Haiti Action Committee Condemns Continued Incarceration of Ill Priest
by Haiti Action Committee Thursday, Jan. 05, 2006
San Francisco Bay Area Indymedia
Contact: Sasha Kramer, 503-807-3923, <sash@stanford.edu>**

The San Francisco Bay Area-based Haiti Action Committee today called on the Bush Administration to exert the pressure necessary to force the de facto Haitian government to release its most prominent political prisoner, Fr. Gerard Jean-Juste, so he can obtain medical treatment in the United States. The widely-respected priest has recently been diagnosed with leukemia.

On December 29 the Miami Herald reported that Fr. Gerard Jean-Juste has developed leukemia and needs immediate treatment. Dr. Paul Farmer, the U.S. doctor who drew Jean-Juste's blood, is a Harvard professor and expert in infectious diseases. Farmer commented that ``Father Gerry's in serious trouble if he isn't released from jail for proper work-up in the States."

Sasha Kramer of the Haiti Action Committee, who recently visited Fr. Jean-Juste in Haiti, said, "The Haitian government claims their doctors have found nothing wrong with Jean-Juste, but the coup regime has absolutely no credibility. The Bush Administration could easily pressure the Latortue government, which it helped put in place, to release Jean-Juste. It must now do so."

A Third Circuit US Court of Appeals decision earlier this year cited a source who likened the conditions in Haiti's prisons to a "scene reminiscent of a slave ship." A current State Department Consular Information Sheet for Haiti states, "Medical facilities in Haiti are scarce and for the most part sub-standard; outside the capital standards are even lower. Medical care in Port-au-Prince is limited, and the level of community sanitation is extremely low. Life-threatening emergencies may require evacuation by air ambulance at the patient's expense."

Fr. Jean-Juste has never been formally charged. Amnesty International calls him a "prisoner of conscience" and 42 members of the U.S. Congress signed a letter demanding his release.

More than one thousand Haitian political prisoners have been imprisoned since the February 29, 2004 coup which drove the democratically-elected government of Jean-Bertrand Aristide from office.

for more information:
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**Free Father Gerry!
Save the life of liberation theologian Jean-Juste so he can resume the fight to save Haitian
sovereignty
San Francisco Bay View
January 4, 2006
by POCC Minister of Information JR**

Bay View readers will remember JR's daily reports from Haiti in 2003 and his praise for the priest – Father Gerry Jean Juste – who regularly filled hundreds of children with food and with knowledge of their greatness.

I went to Haiti in 2003 with the help of the Haitian Action Committee and saw for myself the impoverished misery that the U.S. and other European powers were subjecting this country to. I also met Fr. Gérard “Gerry” Jean-Juste and spent some time with this revolutionary theologian, who, like Bishop Oscar Romero, was politically educating and mobilizing the masses of grassroots Haitians in the capital.

Under his leadership, I participated in what the Panthers called “survival programs pending revolution,” where we fed over 350 Haitians at a time. Just like our political prisoners in Amerikkka Mumia Abu Jamal, Seth Hayes and Leonard Peltier, Fr. Jean-Juste's health is deteriorating. He has recently been diagnosed with leukemia while he sits in a Haitian prison, which is not equipped to care for his condition.

The POCC asks that in 2006, we do more to fight for the release of our freedom fighters in this country and around the world. Also we ask that people take this year to educate themselves on imperialism and capitalism so that we can know who is on our side and who isn't on this international stage.

To say the least, we, as Black people from Amerikkka, have to do more to support Haiti, the first Black country to liberate itself from slavery. Free Fr. Jean-Juste and all the political prisoners in Haiti and in Amerikkka. Check out Haiti Action Committee founder Pierre Labossiere as he describes the history and what is going down in Haiti today.

JR: Can you speak to who Jean-Juste was even before the counter-revolution took Aristide out of power and stole the presidency?

PL: Fr. Jean-Juste is a really wonderful man. As a young priest in the '70s, he was in the struggle for the Haitian refugees, when our brothers and sisters were forced to flee the dictatorship of “Baby Doc” Duvalier and “Papa Doc” Duvalier before that. Jean-Juste was the guy who, in Florida, organized the brothers and sisters who were coming, really advocated for their rights and demanded political asylum for them. He put his body on the line.

In the mid-'70s when I met him, he was out there in front of the concentration camps, the prisons, demanding freedom for the brothers and sisters, organizing and making coalitions with brothers and sisters from the U.S., brothers and sisters in the Haitian community and in the various communities – the Carribean ... living in the U.S. – and really talked a lot about the conditions that were occurring in

Haiti. He's a man who would put himself in front of trucks that would be taking our brothers and sisters to jail and would lie down in front of those buses saying, "You will have to go over my dead body."

By 1990, he moved back to Haiti, where he started working with the people on the ground, providing all kinds of services for the kids – helping kids go to school, providing literacy centers, places where people could eat, and really preaching, because he is a priest, telling the people that God didn't intend for them to live as somebody's underling or slave and that they're full human beings endowed by the creator with their rights as human beings.

So that is why Fr. Jean-Juste is looked at by the current regime that was imposed on us by the U.S. government as a threat, as somebody who needs to be locked up because he preaches a message of liberation. In the tradition of Dr. King, in the tradition of Gandhi, in the tradition of Desmond Tutu and all of those beautiful brothers and sisters who've been in the struggle. So that is why they have him in jail today.

JR: Is it true that Lavalas is running him for president, and if so, why did they pick him to run for president?

PL: Well, what's happening is that on the ground there are many brothers and sisters at the base, what we call from the grassroots organizations, who love Fr. Jean-Juste because he provided many of those services similar to what Fr. Aristide did before he became president – and while he was president. (Fr. Jean-Juste) was providing and caring for the people when the Haitian police or the U.N. forces murdered our brothers and sisters in the streets, even at night. Fr. Jean-Juste is the guy who would go and do their funerals, minister to the families, provide for the kids to make sure that the kids can go to school.

So there was a movement by people in the base in Port-au-Prince to run him as a candidate, but as a Catholic priest the church places limitations on people running for office. But that was a movement by the base.

The position of the official Lavalas party is that they would not go through with elections unless the prisoners are freed, unless there was a stop to the repression and the massacres by the Haitian police and the U.N. troops. And there must be national dialogue, which has to go through the return of President Aristide. In other words, President Aristide must be returned to Haiti as president.

But clearly Fr. Jean-Juste was drafted by the people, by the base, to run as a candidate. But the party itself is not participating in elections, with which Fr. Jean-Juste himself agrees, unless the conditions are met – the freedom of the political prisoners, an end to the repression and that there must be national dialogue.

JR: Recently I heard that his health was deteriorating and that he was suspended from the church. Can you address both of these things?

PL: Well, his health is deteriorating because the conditions in the jails in Haiti are atrocious, and Fr. Jean-Juste received a terrible beating, right in a church while he was participating in the funeral of a

journalist who was kidnapped and murdered. So he was participating in the funeral, and the right wing and the Haitian police seized upon that to actually attack him in the church and beat him up.

So when he was beaten up, he spent close to a month in jail and didn't get any medical attention, and it's only been through mass mobilizations and demands by people like the International Friends of Haiti and by people on the ground themselves that he started getting some kind of medical attention. So he is not in good health.

The church's hierarchy in Haiti ... there is a big gap between the church and the masses of people. The church is definitely in line with the elite, the morally repugnant elite, those folks that feel that they're better than the majority of Haitians. They feel that they are the ones who should tell people what to do, and that the people are dumb, and that the people are only there to serve their interests.

So the church hierarchy serves the interests of that class, and many times the church hierarchy was handpicked by the Duvaliers, by the powers that be, really to serve the interests of that elite. And so that is why someone like Fr. Jean-Juste, who says "everybody is somebody," is a threat to that church hierarchy, and that is why they have seized upon that to get him out of his church and out of his parish and get rid of him.

However, as was pointed out, in the Dominican Republic, when there were two Belgian priests who took a stand with the poor, you had the church hierarchy, who because they're Belgian priests, stood with them. However in Haiti, when you have a Black man taking a stand with the poor, then all of sudden he is being crucified. He's being treated as a nobody and being forced out of the church.

So that is what's going on, that's the tragedy. And I appeal to the readers to support Fr. Jean-Juste. He is challenging this; he's not going to let it go. So at a time when he's in jail, and his life is in grave danger, instead of the church really rising up and the hierarchy saying you can't do that to one of our brothers, who is living the life of Christ, they're all going along with this man's crucifixion. This is an outrage.

JR: Last question: What is the status of the country of Haiti for those of us that don't know?

PL: Well, you know Haiti, ever since its founding Jan. 1, 1804, has always been looked at as a nation that must be destroyed by the slave-owning powers, and today many of those powers, even though slavery is supposed to have been abolished, have transformed themselves into what they call the G8 nations. It's the same tradition of enslaving people, taking over people's resources, as they did to the countries of Africa and Latin America. It's the same re-colonization that is going on.

Now there is a new colonization in progress, which people refer to as neo-colonialism. Basically they don't go there and take you over like they used to do, but they find new ways to get your resources, impoverish your people and take away your sovereignty. This is what is happening in Haiti.

And in Haiti, what they did in 2004, the bi-centennial of Haitian independence, France, the U.S., Canada, and with the help of the European Union, formed a coalition to kidnap the president of Haiti, beat back the popular movement for democracy and put the same elite that kept our people illiterate

and exploited back in power, took away the rights of our people to vote, the right to participate in determining their own affairs, their own destiny.

And our people are being killed. Over 10,000 people have been murdered in the past year and a half, since the coup d'état on Feb. 29, 2004. They're still trying, by killing the people, to force this beautiful movement for democracy – this movement to build schools, to build healthcare centers, to help people in cooperatives to better their lives economically, to have literacy programs so that our brothers and sisters can learn how to read and write – (to be) overthrown in a way to put us back under their boots, so that when they're crushing us, our people won't have the kind of education, or won't be in a position to challenge that kind of exploitation, that kind of domination. So that is what they're trying to do.

Right now the people are resisting. We continue to resist. They're trying to shove some sham elections down the people's throats, but the people of Haiti are resisting and are exposing it to the whole world. So that's where we are today.

To get more information about Haiti, hit up www.haitiaction.net. And read Bay View web exclusives at www.sfbayview.com for more stories from and about Father Jean Juste. Email JR at blockreportradio@yahoo.com.

Haiti elections may be in February

UPI

Jan. 5, 2006

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti-- Haitian elections could be rescheduled for early February following the fourth delay in the voting, Haitian radio reported Thursday.

Rice calls for fair, open Haiti elections (September 28, 2005) -- U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice called for fair and open presidential elections in Haiti later this year, Haitian radio reported Wednesday. ... > full story

The election was rescheduled for Jan. 8, but postponed due to what officials said was a lack of preparation.

The U.N. Security Council is preparing for emergency talks on the elections and the reasons for their delay.

Haiti has been ruled by an interim government since former President Jean-Bertrand Aristide left the country amid an armed rebellion in February 2004.

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Abduction: Two mothers' living nightmare

Last week, two kidnapped Americans and their families struggled to pool ransom money, navigate heated negotiations and somehow maintain hope.

BY CARA BUCKLEY

Miami Herald

Jan. 3, 2006

This has to be a joke, she thought. A sick joke, sure, but a joke nonetheless.

It was two days before New Year's Eve and Leigh Somerville McMillan was standing in her home in Winston-Salem, N.C., listening to her 30-year old son's voice message, crackling from a distant phone in a fearsome land 1,280 miles away.

"I've been kidnapped," her son, Frank Eaton, a documentary filmmaker, said.

"It was too horrible to believe," McMillan, a freelance writer, recalled. But by the end of Eaton's somber message, she realized it was no joke. Her son had been snatched from the streets of Port-au-Prince with a friend. Trying to swallow back panic, MacMillan dialed the number he had left.

Abductions like the ones last Wednesday of Eaton and his friend, Alain Maximilien, 33, a DJ born in the U.S. and raised in Haiti who goes by the name the "Haitian Hillbilly," have become so routine in Haiti that a day doesn't go by without 10 people disappearing from its streets.

UNSEEN VICTIMS

But for parents and friends of kidnapping victims, and indeed the victims themselves, the entire ordeal is at once terrifyingly personal and deeply surreal.

If your loved one happens to be a U.S. citizen, you'll find yourself dealing with U.S. Embassy officials and the FBI. If you're not wealthy, you might have to drain your savings, accept donations from co-workers and max out credit cards, just like Alain's mother, Chris, did, to try to get the ransom money together in time.

"I think any stress, a parent can go through it," said Chris Maximilien from her Kendall home Monday, a day after her son's release. ``But when it comes to your child's life, there's no comparison. It's your worst fear."

Gunmen surrounded Maximilien and Eaton's car around 8 p.m. Wednesday, after the pair left a favorite bar, and drove them to a shanty in the violent Port-au-Prince slum of Cité Soleil. The captives were shoved into a 10-by-10-foot room that immediately filled with a dozen armed men, who shouted taunts, smoked plenty of joints and drew their fingers across their necks. Heady with glee and stoned, some of the kidnappers drifted to sleep, and others arrived to keep guard.

Curiously, Maximilien was allowed virtually unfettered access to his cell phone. He called his father, Leslie Maximilien, who he lives with in Port-au-Prince. Then he called his friends back at the bar.

Though rampant kidnappings have long gripped Port-au-Prince, Maximilien's friends were terrified that they too were targets. Some of them spent the night in the bar.

Chris Maximilien was at work Wednesday night, as an emergency room nurse in Jackson South Community Hospital, when her youngest son called with the news about Alain.

She would not sleep for the next four nights, or stop smoking Benson and Hedges mentholated cigarettes, or wander more than a few feet from the phone.

In Winston-Salem, after hearing her son's message Thursday morning, Leigh McMillan tried to call Leslie Maximilien, Alain's father and Chris' ex-husband, but couldn't get through. Her younger son called the FBI. An agent soon showed up at McMillan's door to help with negotiations.

In Port-au-Prince, Leslie Maximilien contacted a negotiator recommended by friends to get his son back. The abductors first demanded \$2 million, but by Thursday night agreed on \$20,000. Family members and friends pooled their savings. The negotiator set off into the night with the money, in cash, and disappeared. No trace of him, or the money, has surfaced yet.

In the shanty in Cité Soleil, Maximilien, who is fluent in Creole, tried to charm the kidnappers while Eaton, whose grip on Creole is shaky at best, mostly sat silent. Sometimes the kidnappers pointed empty pistols at the men, and pretended to shoot. They told Maximilien they might kill Eaton to prove how serious they were. Maximilien didn't tell Eaton what they'd said.

Friday dawned. A Miami Herald article about the abductions drew Maximilien's old friends out of the woodwork, people from his old Boca Raton boarding school, and they all called his mother en masse.

At Mac's Club Deuce, a gritty bar in South Beach, Maximilien's old drinking buddies raised a toast in his name. In Winston-Salem, the McMillan household bulged with stricken family members and friends.

Leslie Maximilien found another negotiator. The man arrived in Cité Soleil with the \$9,000 demanded by the kidnappers, but the person he handed it over to stole the loot. Maximilien and Eaton believed it would be their last night in captivity, and so did their kidnappers. They brought the hostages Haitian cigarettes, bottled water and seven beers, and spent the evening casually chatting and teaching Eaton Creole phrases like "si Dieu vlé," or "if God wills."

DOUBLE-CROSSED

Saturday. Leslie Maximilien found a third negotiator who arrived in Cité Soleil with \$10,000, as demanded. But the kidnappers, perhaps believing they could squeeze out more for Maximilien, only released Eaton, who was whisked out of Cité Soleil.

Chris Maximilien phoned Leigh McMillan to tell her how glad she was for her, but then any hope she had left for Alain evaporated. Then Alain called, lifting her spirits. Her other children were with her. New Year's Eve passed in silence.

Meanwhile, in Cité Soleil, a gang leader told Maximilien he would celebrate New Year's Eve with him by picking up girls, but ended up getting too drunk to go out. Maximilien also found out that one of the kidnapers had gone out joyriding and totaled his car.

Sunday. After learning -- erroneously, as it turned out -- that the kidnapers wanted another \$10,000, Chris Maximilien frantically reached out to her family in Pittsburgh, her friends and her co-workers at Jackson South to cobble together enough.

But it was New Year's Day, and nearly every wire transfer office was closed. She and her stepdaughter, Joanne, found an open Publix in Doral, but its Western Union office didn't have \$10,00 to send. A Western Union office at a Hialeah Publix could handle the transfer. But it was also New Year's Day in Haiti. Everything was closed. There was nowhere to wire the money to.

In Port-au-Prince, Leslie Maximilien again tapped friends and family for help. As it turned out, the kidnapers wanted another \$3,400. The negotiator went to Cité Soleil with the cash and, as demanded, a radio and ten pairs of running shoes. A fourth negotiator handled the final release.

As evening fell, Maximilien was lead from the shanty on foot. United Nation forces were exchanging machine gunfire with other armed men, uninvolved in his kidnapping, so the going was treacherous. Finally, he was ferried by a motorcycle taxi to the edge of Cité Soleil. A driver from his house met him, and took him home.

"It didn't really hit me until I was home in my own bathroom," said Maximilien. "I didn't believe it until I saw myself in the mirror."

Chris Maximilien shook when she got the news. Eaton, flooded with relief, congratulated Alain by phone, then arranged his own trip back to North Carolina. He was slated to arrive there Monday night but, to his family's deep dismay, wants to go back to Haiti in February.

Alain Maximilien doesn't plan to leave Port-au-Prince. Instead, he plans to return to his radio show and spread the word about the conditions in Cité Soleil. He's even been in touch already with one of the kidnapers, because he's trying to get back his laptop, which was in the car.

A friend of his, Ashley Swanson, designed two T-shirts to memorialize the ordeal. "Got ransom?" reads one, while the other reads, "My friend got kidnapped and all he got me was this lousy T-shirt." Their printing is already in the works.

Helping Haiti
Winston-Salem Journal
Jan. 4, 2006

Two Winston-Salem men who were kidnapped in Haiti and released in separate incidents, the latest of which ended last weekend, deserve praise for their courage in trying to help the people of that troubled country. Their fellow citizens should do what they can to help Haitians, or at least urge their representatives in Congress to do so.

The two city men, Wes Morgan and Frank Eaton, were trying to help in very different and unrelated ways when they were snatched and held for ransom. Morgan was doing missionary work in the Caribbean island country - in between treatments for cancer here. Eaton was making a documentary about the country. The documentary was to include, ironically enough, a segment about the wave of kidnappings there.

Morgan and a colleague were kidnapped in October and held for a day. Eaton and a friend were kidnapped last Wednesday and released last weekend. Both Morgan and Eaton are safe and sound and back home - at least for now. But Wes Morgan's wife, Barbie Morgan, told the Journal's Patrick Wilson that her husband "feels the Lord's calling to go back, and I am certainly not going to stand in the way."

Eaton said of his kidnapping: "This ordeal does not change my feelings for Haiti, and I will be back soon to report the situation here."

Quite understandably, his mother, Leigh Somerville McMillan, doesn't want him to go back. "I hope he's got what he needs to finish the film," she said.

But if it weren't for people like Morgan and Eaton, Haiti would be all but forgotten by many Americans and their leaders. It shouldn't be. The United States has a special interest in and obligation to Haiti because the country is in its backyard. Humanitarian concerns and our interest in promoting democracy abroad should mean that America stays closely involved with Haiti.

Yet the United States has a pattern of neglecting this impoverished neighbor until violence or a flood of illegal immigrants demands a response. Such events painfully underscore why America should concentrate more on helping Haiti become free and healthy. When things get bad in Haiti, refugees flee toward the United States.

And having stable neighbors in this hemisphere promotes national security.

Morgan and Eaton, no doubt, realize all that. And, in their separate ways, they both simply want to help the Haitian people.

Their bravery is admirable. But you don't have to go to Haiti to help. You can donate to charities helping the Haitians. And you can remind your representatives in Congress that forgetting Haiti is neither right nor practical.

Mother of kidnapped N.C. man not sure he should return to Haiti

1/3/2006 12:34

Associated Press

News 14 Carolina

(GREENSBORO) - The North Carolina man kidnapped in Haiti last week says he wants to go back to that country. His mother has a different idea.

Frank Eaton returned to Winston-Salem Monday night after being held for three days in a Port-au-Prince slum. He had gone to Haiti to work on a documentary film and was kidnapped along with a friend.

Eaton promises to return. His mother, Leigh Somerville McMillan, says the family reluctantly supported her son's first trip, but she doubts the family will think much of a return trip. She says she doesn't.

Eaton is an independent video producer who was in Haiti to get footage for a documentary about the country, including a segment on the wave of kidnappings. More than 25 Americans have been kidnapped for ransom in Haiti in the past year.

His kidnapers wanted \$40,000, but Eaton says they only got half that, ten pairs of sneakers and a radio, And Eaton says some of the ransom was stolen before it was delivered.

Two hats in Haiti: The case of Regine Alexandre
by Anthony Fenton and Dennis Bernstein
San Francisco Bay View
Jan. 4, 2006

Journalistic integrity continues to plummet in the U.S., as reporters and editors unabashedly jump into bed with government agencies and government officials, whose actions are meant not to inform or expand the public's knowledge on key issues, but rather to obscure and undermine it, in order to support the politics and policies of a particular administration.

In recent years, the Bush administration has paid journalists and commentators handsomely to write administration-friendly op-eds and to ask happy face questions during press conferences that allow officials from the president on down to reflect positively on administration policies.

Recent revelations that both the Associated Press and the New York Times have been using a stringer who appears to be on the payroll of not one, but two U.S. government agencies, both with a history of using disinformation and false propaganda to meddle in the sovereign affairs of foreign governments, demonstrates just how deep the problem goes.

Regine Alexandre, whose name appears as an Associated Press by-line at least a dozen times starting in May of 2004, and who appears as a contributor to two NY Times stories, is a part of a National Endowment for Democracy "experiment" to place a representative on the ground in countries where the NED has funded groups. Alexandre also shows up as a "sociologist" working for the United States Agency for International Development in Haiti in May of 2005.

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

Most recently, the NED has been accused by Venezuelan lawmakers of illegally funding Venezuelan opposition groups who are seeking to discredit the country's very popular and effective president, Hugo Chaves. The leader of the NED-funded Sumate, Maria Corina Machado, and three colleagues are facing trial on conspiracy charges stemming from their use of a \$31,000 contribution last year from the NED to force a recall vote in the country.

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

As a result of our repeated queries about Alexandre, Associated Press announced on Dec. 30 that it would sever ties with her after it had learned that she was on the payroll of NED. "Associated Press employees must avoid any behavior or activities that create a conflict of interest or compromise our ability to report the news fairly and accurately," said Mike Silverman, the news agency's managing

editor. “Alexandre, who freelances for other news organizations,” the same Associated Press story continued, “reported only one story for the Associated Press – on Dec. 24,” after being employed by NED in October.

New York Times Deputy Foreign Editor Ethan Bonner said in a Dec. 30 interview that a spokesperson for the NED confirmed that Regine Alexandre is an employee of the NED. But Bonner quickly asserted that it is his understanding that she was not an NED employee at the same time she was a stringer for the NY Times.

Bonner further stated that Alexandre has been freelancing for the NYT for some time going back into the 1990s. When asked if he knew whether Alexandre was receiving money indirectly through work with NED grantees before October, Bonner replied that “that is a deeper question” and that he would have to look into it further.

As of Friday, the Times had not cut ties with Alexandre but was still investigating. The following Monday, Jan. 2, however, we were called by New York Times reporter Ginger Thompson, whose June 6 cover story on Haiti listed Alexandre as a contributor. Thompson confirmed the Associated Press story that Alexandre went on the NED payroll in October, without telling her.

Because Alexandre “was less than honest” and because she was now on the NED dole, “I won’t be working with her the next time I travel to Haiti.” Thompson said she learned of Alexandre through another New York Times reporter, Lydia Polgreen.

But unlike the Associated Press, Thompson could not say the Times would never use Alexandre again in the future. The Times reporter said she had no information about any other U.S. funded government agency that Alexandre may have been working with while “fixing” for the Times. But, said Thompson, Alexandre definitely knew what she was doing, spoke three languages fluently and was “very well connected.”

Very well connected indeed, and apparently multi-talented. It appears that Alexandre was not only moonlighting for NED but also working in some capacity as a “sociologist” for another U.S. government entity, namely the United States Agency for International Development.

The USAID-specific September 2005 Hôpital Albert Schweitzer Alumni Association newsletter, which updates the HAS Partners program with USAID, states: “In May, Dr. Colette Vilgrain and sociologist Regine Alexandre traveled from Port au Prince to Deschapelles to test educational materials on infant nutrition with HAS (Hôpital Albert Schweitzer) health care workers and HIV positive mothers from the community. HAS serves as one of several test sites in Haiti for a USAID program.”

USAID has been an arm of U.S. foreign policy since the end of the Second World War. Its recently released Office of Transition Initiatives Haiti Field Report revealed that the role of USAID and its current work in Haiti, under the rubric of the Haiti Transition Initiative, is first and foremost to siphon off support for the widely popular Lavalas pro-democracy party, the party of President Jean Bertrand Aristide.

According to the report, OTI, a USAID funded program, effectively undermined a protest after the arrest and jailing of Fr. Gérard Jean-Juste, a leader in the Lavalas Party and a beloved priest of the poor in Haiti. “OTI initiated a Play for Peace summer camp in Petit Place Cazeau, the Port au Prince stronghold of Lavalas party presidential candidate Father Gérard Jean Juste,” the documented stated.

“The fruits of these efforts were seen during a recent demonstration attended by 200 people. At the same time that the demonstration was taking place, 300 people were enjoying the summer camp. It is believed that the camp prevented the demonstration from being larger and giving greater legitimacy to the protesters. The coming weeks will see a deepening of OTI activities in Petit Place Cazeau, where events like the summer camp will become increasingly important now that Fr. Jean Juste has been arrested. His imprisonment has inflamed pro-Lavalas fires in the area and made him a martyr to some Haitians.”

After this story broke, USAID actually went on to its official website and edited the controversial parts out.

The questions abound: Who is Regine Alexandre really working for when she's stringing for two of the most influential news outlets in the U.S.? How many newspapers and networks have published or broadcast the tainted reporting by someone taking money from the government while purporting to be a member of the “free press” and undermining Haitian sovereignty by using the NED and other U.S. government funded groups to infiltrate their ranks?

Associated Press's initial non-denial denial regarding Alexandre's obvious conflict of interest is very telling and troubling as well. “Regine Alexandre, a freelance reporter for AP, says that at no time has she been an employee of the National Endowment for Democracy,” stated Jack Stokes of Associated Press Corporate Communications in a curt email on Dec. 25, 2005. “Alexandre, who is also a development consultant in Haiti, says that at the request of NED she did meet briefly with some Haitian non-government organizations to provide them with contact information for NED and was reimbursed by NED for travel expenses.”

Well, right there, the journalistic line is already blurred: Yes, she did meet briefly with NED grantees. She was reimbursed by NED for travel expenses. Was she also paid for her consulting services by the NED grantee after the reporter/ development aide/ sociologist identified them to become a new grantee under NED's skyrocketing Haiti budget? Like Bonner of the Times acknowledged, “This does kinda smell bad.”

Indeed! And if this smells kinda on the fishy side, the next line in Stokes' email non-denial smells as fishy as the backside of a fish market at the end of a busy day. “(Alexandre) says she was unaware that NED had any U.S. government links,” writes Associated Press PR man Stokes.

Really! A “development consultant” in Haiti, by-lining for the Associated Press and contributing to cover stories for the New York Times, didn't know that the NED was a U.S. government funded agency – and didn't know that NED was given \$80 million by Congress for fiscal year 2006, an increase of about one third over 2005. And she didn't know that NED's Haiti budget has been on a meteoric rise ever since President Jean Bertrand Aristide was purged from Haiti by U.S. friendly forces

in February 2004, three months before Alexandre starts writing by-lined stories for the Associated Press. Ginger Thompson's "well connected" stringer didn't know the NED was funded by the USA?

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

For their part, NED maintains that they did not know that Alexandre was a stringer for Associated Press and the New York Times – or that she was even a reporter. And according to Associated Press, Alexandre maintains she didn't know the NED was U.S. government funded.

But part of NED's new filed "experiment" has Alexandre working with Maryse Balthazar, the coordinator of the Association of Haitian Women Journalists or AMIFEJH. The group received a \$16,815 NED grant for 2005. Balthazar said she last met with Regine Alexandre on Dec. 8. She says that she first started working with Alexandre in September 2005, a month before Associated Press maintains Alexandre started working with the NED.

AMIFEJH's work is to train Haitian journalists how to cover elections. In an interview on Dec. 29, 2005, Balthazar said, "I work with Alexandre" in all five departments of the country. She said the last meeting she had with Alexandre was "before the Session of the North Department" on Dec. 8.

The NED was developed to counteract any opposition to U.S. policy, no matter how misguided that policy may be. It stands in direct opposition to the free press.

"The NED was created in the highest echelons of the U.S. national security state," writes Professor William Robinson in "Promoting Polyarchy: Globalization, U.S. Intervention and Hegemony." "It is organically integrated into the overall execution of U.S. national security and foreign policy. In structure, organization and operation, it is closer to clandestine and national security organs such as the CIA than to apolitical or humanitarian endowments, as the name would suggest."

Apparently, the new "experiment" is working out well for the U.S. government funded NED and for the reporter who gets paychecks as a "freelancer" and a government agent at the same time. But it's a dismal failure when it comes to the so-called free press and the people's right to know and presents a fundamental challenge to a thriving independent press untainted by government influence.

Anthony Fenton, a Canadian political activist, writer and graduate student, can be reached at apfenton@ualberta.ca. Dennis Bernstein is host of Flashpoints, broadcast weekdays at 5 p.m. on KPFA 94.1 FM and dozens of other Pacifica network and affiliate stations. Email Dennis at dbernstein@igc.org. This story is a Flashpoints scoop.

DR supports initiatives to alleviate Haiti's crisis
The Dominican Today
Jan. 5, 2006

SANTO DOMINGO.- The Dominican Government supports all the initiatives aimed at solving Haitian crisis, including the meeting that will be held here on the 20th between Organization of American States Secretary General (O.A.S.) Jose Miguel Inzulsa, and the United Nations high commissioner for Haiti, Juan Gabriel Valdés.

Government spokesman Roberto Rodriguez Marchena said today that president Leonel Fernandez has stood out for being a man who favors dialogue and agreement as a way to look for solutions to problems.

The 20th of this month Inzulsa, Valdés and Haitian and Dominican representatives will meet here, in search of a solution to the Haitian crisis.

When asked if the Government supports that meeting, Rodriguez Marchena said that the official position corresponds to the Foreign Ministry.

"Then, in principle, I would say that the Government sympathizes with any initiative in that regard; now, concretely, in particular, the support from the Government so this (the meeting) is held, it is necessary to consult it with the Foreign Minister of the Republic, so that they state a position there," the official said.

Rodriguez Marchena made his statements in the dialogue that the Presidency's Press Office holds each morning, with the reporters accredited in the National Palace.

On Haiti, in addition to the migratory issue, the international organisms are concerned about the political situation, because the elections have been postponed in four occasions; the latest were set for January 8, but were postponed indefinitely.

Batay Ouvriye, Haiti Progres, Jeb Sprague and the War Against Haitian Workers
by Mario Pierre
Tuesday, Jan. 03, 2006
San Francisco Bay Area IndyMedia

Opportunists and reactionaries attempt to crush Haitian worker's movement

Kim Ives (Haiti Progres) has lost it! The real culprits came out nasty. We knew right from the start that the Haiti Progres/PPN current was behind the quack researcher (Jeb Sprague) and his sham research concerning Batay Ouvriye/SOKOWA. Where were the researcher, Haiti Progres, the International Action Center (IAC), the International Tribunal et al when the SOKOWA Workers were being bullied by the Dominican army soldiers and the so-called 'rebels' of Guy Philippe in February and March 2004? Where were they when 400 of those workers were sacked by Grupo M/CODEVI Free Trade Zone in Ouanaminthe, Haiti in June 2004? Where were they when Batay Ouvriye made the general appeal for national and international solidarity? Whose side were they on at that time? Where were they when Batay Ouvriye was denouncing the forced vaccinations of the workers by Dominican "doctors", among them pregnant women who later miscarried their babies and men who lost their erection? Where were they when Batay Ouvriye was fighting the De Facto Government of Latortue/Boniface to intervene in this case? In this and many other struggles the workers were waging and are continuing to wage today all over Haiti against the bourgeoisie, the multinationals/imperialism and neo-liberalism, Haiti Progres/PPN/Ben Dupuy/Kim Ives/Jeb Sprague/Chalo Jaklen/KAKOLA/Haiti: the struggle continues, an opportunist radio show at WBAI, are totally absent. They simply don't exist in any of those struggles. They have absolutely no base in Haiti.

Therefore, they are left to defend the indefensible: the corrupt, immoral, thieving, charlatan, incompetent, bankrupt, criminal, anti-worker, pro-imperialist and reactionary lavalas government who called for the occupation of Haiti together with its equally reactionary and pro-imperialist oppositionists. They claim they are defending the Constitutional Government. What Constitutional Government? What Constitution? The Bourgeois and Imperialist-imposed March 1987 Constitution? Is it the Constitution that all Genuine Progressives denounced back then as a "piece of paper" neither the bourgeoisie nor imperialism intended to respect in the first place? Only opportunists in the likes of the Ben Dupuy/Haiti-Progres/PPN current applauded it. The blood bath registered in the November 1987 elections proved us right. Again, the Coup D' Etat in September 1991 proved us right. Now are we being asked to take two steps backwards to embrace that constitution just because the putrid, pro-imperialist, and anti-worker lavalas government was not the beneficiary of the occupation Aristide himself called for? Please! What if Aristide with his gangs was the beneficiary of the occupation, it would not be an "occupation" anymore? Would it then be called euphemistically, "Upholding Constitutional Democracy" by Haiti-Progres, Jeb Sprague/Kim Ives/Kakola/Chalo Jaklen et al? In many of the labor conflicts that opposed the workers to the bourgeoisie and the big landowners, the Aristide government usually favored those reactionary ruling classes against the workers' rights (cf Cointreau/Guacimal, the Northern Soft Drink Brewery, the Industrial Park in Port-Au-Prince). In all those cases, the lavalas government carried out systematic repression against the workers. In Guacimal, Lavalas authorities beat and arrested a Haiti-Progres journalist alongside the Guacimal Workers of Batay Ouvriye who were protesting in an effort to claim their land. The Haiti-Progres journalist lost an eye in that conflict. Two members of Batay Ouvriye were lynched and buried on the spot by lavalas

goons. At the brewery, Lavalas SWAT teams went in to beat up workers who were asking for the implementation of a presidential decree to adjust the minimum salary at 70 gourdes. It is the same bad treatment for the workers from Lavalas authorities and the bosses at the Industrial Park in Port-Au-Prince.

Opportunists of all stripes must know that Batay Ouvriye (Workers' Struggle) is not a petty bourgeois movement set up to "lead" the workers in struggle. It is not simply an organization in the literal sense of the word. It is not a Political Party. Batay Ouvriye is an Exclusively Workers' Movement with an Exclusively Workers' Agenda/Platform and an Exclusively Workers' Viewpoint. Batay Ouvriye doesn't give a hoot who is in government because the workers know government and the state are in the pockets of the ruling classes and imperialism. In the 200 years of Haiti's existence, there has not been one government in Haiti that has made even one decision in the interest of workers or stood firm behind one. Even those opportunists who are exclaiming for the return of the so-called 'constitutional government' know it very well. The irony of it all also is that no one in their right mind could say that Aristide was voted overwhelmingly in a free and fair election in 2000. The fact is that less than 5% of the electorate participated then and most of the politicians boycotted those elections. Most of the electorate scorned those elections because they were rigged from the start. This is what those opportunists are putting before us as the "constitutional government".

Today, those opportunist/reactionary gangs in the name of Jeb Sprague/Haiti Progres/PPN/ Ben Dupuy/Kim Ives/Chalo Jaklen/Kakola want to question Batay Ouvriye's ethics in accepting \$3,500.00 from the Solidarity Center. What arrogance! As for ethics, naturally, the workers do not share their bourgeois or petty-bourgeois viewpoint on that issue. The Workers will do whatever is necessary to advance their struggles whether the bourgeoisie or their petty bourgeois stooges cry foul. As far as the opportunists are concerned, their bourgeois and petty bourgeois perspectives will never allow them to understand not even an inkling of the workers' viewpoint on this or any other issues, political or otherwise.

We must also understand that the CIA functions in many forms with its hands hidden in countless operations. These opportunists are proudly doing the work of the CIA with such extraordinary loyalty by providing names and addresses of people who are engaged in the Workers' struggles. They are enthusiastically providing the repressive forces with vital and necessary "intelligence" to prepare and plan an all-out attack and continued repression against the Workers. Knowing the nature of the repression and its fluidity especially in a country like Haiti, why in the world would any true progressive provide specific, personal and identifiable information about people in the labor movement in public forums such as the Internet and the Haiti-Progres Newspaper? Their actions on that score reveal their true nature of being real stooges and agents of imperialism and neo-liberalism.

The historical significance of SOCOWA, affiliated with the May First Batay Ouvriye (Workers' Struggle) Federation, lies in the fact that 1) it is the first Union in the very first of 14 Free Trade Zones to be built in Haiti along the lines of the neo-liberalist plans of the multinationals and imperialism 2) It is also the first time in the history of Haiti that workers and management agree on a Collective Contract Agreement 3) It is also the first time Grupo M had to deal with a struggle of such magnitude in its lifetime. It constitutes a dynamic and militant Precedent/Pattern for the rest of the Country and/or the whole Island including the Dominican Republic. The workers did it against great odds too: the absolute lawlessness in Haiti, the intimidation of the so-called Haitian "rebels", the harassment and

violence of the Dominican soldiers, and the intimidation of the CODEVI management itself. They also had to deal with great indifference from institutions such as the World Bank that provided Grupo M with the funds to build the FTZ, the indifference of the multinationals such as Sara Lee and Levi Strauss whose garments are made in factories in the Free Trade Zone, and the indifference of the De Facto Interim Latortue/Boniface Government.

Aristide's intention was to put the workers in this living hell. However, he pocketed millions of dollars in that Free Trade Zone transaction. In a meeting with Batay Ouvriye, Fernando Capellan, President of Grupo M/CODEVI, together with his General Director, Limbert Cruz, admitted that they gave the Lavalas Government Reparations Funds for the big landowners and the peasants who lost their land, homes and harvests. At the time, Jocelerme Privert, Aristide's Interior Minister, was in charge of the negotiations. Yes, the big landowners received their share of the funds. However, the peasants whose fertile lands were taken away from them got nothing from the Lavalas Government. Why don't the opportunists/moralists denounce this scandal of the Aristide Government? Why don't they denounce the stealing of the people's money in the so-called Economic Cooperatives by Aristide? Why don't they denounce the Rice scandal, the Metal sheet scandal in the Aristide Government?

Why then now, all of a sudden, Haiti Progres/PPN/Jeb Sprague/KAKOLA want to discover a "money trail" to SOKOWA to make it the "left opposition" that contributed to the ouster of Aristide? Why is the tentative to lump the militant and combative nature of Batay Ouvriye together with Aristide's oppositionists who are in essence his twins politically and ideologically? In fact, Haiti-Progres/Jeb Sprague/Kim Ives/International Action Center/ KAKOLA/Chalo Jaklen et al are cleverly combating Batay Ouvriye under that guise and pretext, to hide the fact that they are really part and parcel of a chain of reactionaries who are conspiring to destroy the Batay Ouvriye Movement/SOKOWA in very subtle and tacit coordination with Grupo M, CODEVI, the Haitian Bourgeoisie, the big landowners, the national and international yellow unions, the multinationals, the imperialists, the MINUSTAH, the reactionary opportunist-populist politicians and political parties, the Congressional Black Caucus, Fanmi Lavalas, and Aristide himself. They all congregate and target the Haitian Working Class with impunity. This is the ultra-reactionary camp the Working Class has to face in struggle today in Haiti and internationally.

The Jeb Sprague stunt at the international tribunal was only the beginning of this vile and shameful campaign against the Working Class of Haiti. Their strategy has been to bring Batay Ouvriye to its knees before the sham elections/selections take place. They are truly embracing and defending the interests of the Haitian ruling classes and imperialism by trying to tear down the most important and militant Workers' Movement that could really challenge the neo-liberalist policies of imperialism in Haiti today, particularly the Interim Cooperation Framework. These are the imperialist policies designed to make Haiti a Protectorate. The national and international supporters of the Working Class will not be swayed by so-called "discoveries" of nothing-better-to-do stooges of imperialism like Haiti Progres/PPN/Jeb Sprague/Kakola/Chalo Jaklen et al.

The imperialists and their media like to say that Haiti is the poorest nation in the Western Hemisphere. Unfortunately, they are right. However, they created and continue to create that generalized poverty in Haiti. In this vein, the Haitian bourgeoisie has been boasting for a long time now that Haiti's comparative advantage is its cheap labor. In real terms, it means that the Working Class is extremely poor. They are living in constant debt. They cannot afford to pay Union dues. It is really heroic that

these workers can actually organize themselves autonomously and move their struggles forward as they have in many places already throughout Haiti within the Batay Ouvriye Movement. It's an amazing feat. No wonder why this Workers' Movement is hated so much by its class enemies. And that is why Haiti-Progres/Jeb Sprague/Kim Ives/KAKOLA/Chalo Jaklen et al are trying to discredit it using some lousy castle-of-sand arguments. They wish to wipe out Batay Ouvriye's International Solidarity Base which has been very helpful and instrumental in many of the Workers' Struggles achieving important victories against Disney(U.S.), Cointreau-Guacimal (French), Marnier-Lapostolle(French), CODEVI-Free Trade Zone (U.S./Dominican), all of these multinationals that are chasing cheap labor on a race to the bottom around the world under the regime of imperialist globalization.

We must understand the predicament of the work of workers' organizing in a poor country like Haiti. They badly need political, ideological/moral, and financial solidarity nationally and internationally. Ben Dupuy and the other stool-pigeons know very well that the workers will not be able to take their struggles too far with 'corn seeds' and/or 'pebbles'. For instance, the CODEVI struggle required and called for solidarity. The Solidarity Center among others responded. Now, could the Solidarity Center have other intentions? Possibly. It's up to the workers to be vigilant in whatever relationship the Solidarity Center wants to have with them. It is not up to clumsy/flimsy bourgeois representatives like Haiti Progres/PPN/Ben Dupuy or a charlatan researcher like Jeb Sprague to dictate who the workers can have relations with or the extent of that relationship. If the Workers determine that the Solidarity Center is trying to influence their strategic line which is Autonomous Struggle, they will push it away for sure.

The workers, in their autonomy, will decide that, not Jeb Sprague/Haiti-Progres/Kim Ives/KAKOLA/Chalo Jaklen et al. Instead of battling the workers on the head for accepting money in a period of crisis from the Solidarity Center, honest leftists would of course criticize but also offer alternatives because they really care about the development of the Workers' Struggles. They would offer suggestions on how to do fundraising and participate in the fundraising effort. Unfortunately, that has not been the intent of the workers' detractors. Ben Dupuy and his flock are in the imperial bandwagon, determined to beat down the Working Class of Haiti, in the interests of the Haitian ruling classes, imperialism, and neo-liberalism's Free Trade Zones.

More and more, it's becoming clearer that the international tribunal on Haiti orchestrated by Ben Dupuy was used by him merely as a hair-dresser exercise and disingenuous smoke-screen to attack the Working Class of Haiti and not imperialism nor the occupation and its horrors as he claimed. That's usually how the Ben Dupuy/PPN/Haiti-Progres/Kim Ives current had used and continues to use people who honestly want to contribute something. That has been its chronicled history. These reactionary opportunists must know that international tribunal or not, only the Workers can wage real and genuine struggles against imperialism, the occupation, neo-liberalism, Free Trade Zones, exploitation, and repression in Haiti. On that score, the Workers will definitely call their bluff because the opportunists of all stripes are shining by their absence in their struggles throughout Haiti.

Yet, we know, and the opportunists know, the context in which the workers are fighting, the type of beasts they are facing, they can't afford to refuse financial assistance. They are robbed and exploited to their bones everyday, and every minute of their existence by the ruling classes and imperialism. They are already sucked dry in an impoverished country. As a largely democratic autonomous popular

movement with different levels that include but not limited to workers' rights issues, human rights issues, and civil rights issues, Batay Ouvriye should absolutely have the right to receive assistance from any organization that offers it regardless of their funding sources. The Workers of Haiti do have the right and the obligation, if they are to be able to lead the People's Camp in struggle today, to repatriate funds from individuals, organizations and institutions around the world in an organized way. The key issue for the Workers' Organizations and Movement here is what they use it for. For example, the international solidarity gave SOKOWA a good boost in its struggle against Grupo M/CODEVI/the World Bank/Levi Strauss/Sara Lee.

It's really "cute" for petty bourgeois opportunists on a vengeance to tell the workers you cannot get assistance here or there while they have absolutely no intention to support them in their struggles in any way, shape or form. What Hypocrisy!!! Obviously, this simple truth is not at all evident in the eyes of imperial lackeys/do-nothings/dried-fruits in the likes of Haiti Progres/Kim Ives/Jeb Sprague/KAKOLA/Chalo Jaklen. They merely want to sprinkle the path of the Workers' Struggles with poisonous spikes and enough obstacles to stop them on their tracks.

Therefore, we must let these ruminants continue to regurgitate and swallow the same rotten meal of opportunism-populism, anti-worker verbiage, bankrupt ideology and ideas, lazy and unintelligent/non-intelligible research, and so-called "constitutional democracy" under imperialist domination, occupation and tutelage. They are out-of-touch with the political, ideological, organizational, economic and social realities of the Working Class of Haiti. They have exposed themselves most definitely in the eyes of the Workers and Progressives as real stooges of imperialism even when they pretend to fight it.

The Workers simply need to continue to fight autonomously for their fundamental rights on the battlefield, always counting on the Internationalist Spirit of the Supporters of the Working Class Worldwide. Therefore, this is an appeal for all Supporters of the Working Class on our Planet to come to the Solidarity Congregation of the Haitian Working Class today. The Haitian Working Class is undergoing a tremendous transformation in Haitian Society. It is high time now for Progressives to display some level of curiosity to come to know it better. The negative splash-attacks of the Jeb Sprague/Haiti Progres/PPN/KAKOLA/Chalo Jaklen opportunist current against the Haitian Working Class is a wake-up call on all genuine progressive, militant, and political labor forces around the world.

Let's use this as an opportunity to come together and pose the major contradictions and challenges faced by the Working Class in the Age of Imperialist Globalization.

WORKERS OF THE WORLD, UNITE!!!

In Solidarity,

Mario Pierre

(Mario Pierre is a member of the Batay Ouvriye (Workers' Struggle) Solidarity Network and also the Grassroots Haiti Solidarity Committee in NYC)

Haiti's Elections Should Move Forward, Says U.S. Official
Elections would allow Haitians to move beyond an unhappy period, he says
US State Dept.
Jan. 4, 2006

Washington -- Haiti's presidential and legislative elections should move forward in a timely manner, according to the U.S. State Department.

The January 8 elections that originally were scheduled for November 2005 already have been postponed three times, and although there has been no official announcement, there is considerable speculation that elections might be postponed a fourth time. A possible postponement stems in part from logistical problems, particularly with distribution of voter registration cards.

The United States is in close contact with all involved parties regarding the Haitian elections, including Haiti's acting president, members of the electoral commission and the Organization of American States (OAS). In a January 4 briefing, State Department spokesman Sean McCormack said that it is "essential that the elections move forward."

"We're going to work very closely with our partners, with the representatives of the Haitian people, to see that there are good elections that the Haitian people can have confidence in," he said. "It's essential for Haiti in order to be able to turn the page on what has been an unhappy chapter in Haiti's history."

McCormack indicated that the United States expects Haitian officials will iron out the current logistical challenges, but did not suggest a timeline for them to do so.

The State Department official added that even though Haitian authorities ultimately must decide whether to postpone the upcoming elections, the United States will continue to work with all interested parties to move the election process forward.

"It is important that the elections happen in a timely manner," he said. "And we are going to be working with the Haitian authorities as well as others to see that that happens."

For additional information on U.S. policy, see Haiti.

(Distributed by the Bureau of International Information Programs, U.S. Department of State. Web site: <http://usinfo.state.gov>)

Mission to Haiti a life-changer
BY GEMMA MANGIONE
Durham Herald Sun
Jan 3, 2006

DURHAM -- April Perry never intended to write a book about her medical mission work in Haiti. But the last 15 months changed that.

"For over two years, we haven't been able to go there," said Perry, a pediatric cardiology nurse at Duke Medical Center. "We've canceled nine trips, literally within one or two days of leaving."

Travel into Haiti, a small country southeast of Cuba, has been nearly impossible in recent years because of security threats posed by political violence.

"Over this period, I've prayed to God, asking him what we could do to keep Haiti in the forefront of people's minds, how we could benefit the people there even if we couldn't physically be there," Perry said. "I thought, maybe I could put some of my experiences together in a way that would benefit people."

And so she did.

Perry will sign her book, "They Suffer in Faith," Saturday at Blacknall Presbyterian Church, the same church that hosted her first short-term mission to Haiti in 2001. The book poignantly chronicles Perry's work in Haiti and traces her founding of Luke's Mission, Inc., a Durham-based nonprofit group devoted to advancing public health initiatives in the country.

And, Perry hopes, the experiences and anecdotes in the book will show people just how much the Haitians care about the work being done there.

"I hope people take from this book the impact that the Haitian people have had on me and how they've changed my life," Perry said. "But most of all, I hope they realize there are people just off the border of the United States living in desperate situations, but they have the most giving hearts of anyone I've ever met in my life."

After a pause, she added, "There are many, many people in the world that are rich that have little to no material belongings, and that definitely describes the Haitian people."

As Perry writes in the opening lines of her book: "It is hard to find beauty here." In Haiti, the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere, 80 percent of its more than 8 million inhabitants live in abject poverty. Most rural areas have no sanitation system.

To aid the millions of Haitians with no access to health care, Luke's Mission developed the Health Care Provider Scholarship Fund. The fund provides scholarships for people in Haiti who want to pursue healthcare provider education. But as Perry pointed out, such initiatives are only a beginning. Increasing the awareness of those who are not already involved is crucial.

"Six years ago, I knew nothing about Haiti," Perry said. "It was just the place our church decided to go. I had no idea the change in my life that would happen as a result."

Several churches in Durham, including Ridgecrest Baptist Church, sponsor similar mission trips. Executive Pastor Shay Reyner has overseen the Haiti program at Ridgecrest since it began in 1999.

"People realize after they've returned how materially blessed we are here in the states," Reyner said. "They recognize how much we have and how much they don't. It leaves an impression on them."

Shelia Rittgers, who serves on the board of directors of Luke's Mission with Perry, agreed. As chair of Blacknall's Haiti Ministry Committee, she said she's seen how the mission experience "knocks people out of their comfort zone."

"If you have a kid with a cold, you can walk into the local pharmacy and purchase medicine to make that kid better," Rittgers said. "That's something we can take for granted here."

Rittgers said she believes the message of Perry's book should have a dual impact on its readers.

"The goal is not only to increase charitable attention to Haiti, but also to change things here at home," Rittgers said. "We need to focus on our own communities, to broaden our faith in action, not just in Haiti, but in Durham, as well."

Fighting Haiti's ills, one step at a time.
Mission Network News
January 4, 2006

Haiti (MNN)--Haiti's January 8th presidential elections have been postponed again. Haiti has struggled to keep a date for its first elections since former president Jean Bertrand Aristide was forced from office in early 2004.

Poverty and the resulting volatility present the greatest obstacles. Chaos surrounds the voting preparations, compounded by violence and kidnappings for ransom.

No new date for the first round polls has been set. Officials are still trying to deal with security concerns and many registered voters don't yet have their electoral identification cards.

As the threat of violence threatens to erupt, there are those who are fighting the tide. For Haiti With Love's Eva DeHart says their work is one small step toward building stability in the region.

A basic need is work. DeHart explains, "Construction is the key to economic recovery. So they need construction projects which, while improving the infrastructure itself, create jobs so that people can start getting money and the economy can start moving."

The evangelistic thrust comes through the practical application of meeting needs. She adds, "In addition to our clinic and food program, as funding has been available, we always build homes for homeless people. That not only creates jobs, it gives a shining example of God's love that stays there for the people to witness."

Annapolis firm uses extra care during turmoil in Haiti
By DAVID ABRAMS, Staff Writer
HometownAnnapolis.com
Jan. 4, 2006

Annapolis political consultant Don Lamb-Minor has worked on a lot of tough campaigns, but they were nothing compared to Haiti.

The assignment sounded straightforward enough: Conduct a public opinion poll in a country that has been mired in political instability for years, including the last two since armed rebels ousted democratically elected President Jean-Bertrand Aristide.

But in Haiti, where an estimated 1,600 people have been killed in Mr. Aristide's absence, nothing is easy.

"Politicians and people who work for politicians quickly can disappear in Haiti," said Mr. Minor, a partner in a West Street firm called the Democracy Group.

Normally the firm conducts polls from a 34-line phone center in Sykesville, working for candidates like Annapolis Mayor Ellen O. Moyer.

In Haiti, back in November, the terrain had to be canvassed on foot, the pollsters had to travel by armored vehicle, and one of the leading candidates was disqualified from the race after half of the Supreme Court was kicked off the bench.

Even the date of the election, which currently features no fewer than 34 candidates for president, has been a moving target.

Pro-democracy officials hoped the election would be held on Sunday. But reports that two election workers had been kidnapped delayed voting again.

"From what I can see, elections are being pushed without having a national dialogue," said Joseph Baptiste, founder of the National Organization for the Advancement of Haitians. "This election is doubtful. It's going to be hard for the winner to govern."

The Democracy Group was initially approached by Dumarsais Simeus, a Texas millionaire and Haitian expatriate who wanted to run for president.

The Supreme Court allowed Mr. Simeus, who has regularly traveled to Haiti during his 44 years living outside the country, to run as a citizen, but two weeks ago the country's interim government dismissed five judges who declared him eligible.

"Regardless of the skepticism that we have for our own political process, working in a scenario like this really gives you a great appreciation for the security and freedoms we enjoy in our electoral process and in general," said Mr. Minor, whose firm was eventually hired by Mr. Baptiste. "We take a

lot of things for granted in the electoral process, and working within these conditions gives us a renewed belief in our own system."

The poll was taken with face-to-face interviews of 703 Haitians. Shawnta Watson Walcott, former director of communications for the polling firm Zogby International, organized the effort with teams of French Creole interviewers.

"This whole process needs to be treated very gingerly," Ms. Walcott said. "You have to use very sensitive means because people were cautious."

Citing standard practices of pollsters, she declined to offer more details of her experience in coordinating the 10-day survey that started on Nov. 6.

The poll found that if Mr. Simeus stayed in the race it would be a tight one: He was supported by 34 percent of the respondents, compared to 30 percent for former president Rene Preval.

Mr. Baptiste said that as the owner of Simeus Foods, a Fort Worth company that manufactures food products for chain restaurants, Mr. Simeus is uniquely qualified to deliver what voters surveyed overwhelmingly want: more jobs.

"We need to start over everything," Mr. Baptiste said. "We need to have good leadership, someone who has the know-how and the ability to implement this plan."

Unfortunately, it's not clear who that person will be. While Port-au-Prince isn't exactly Baghdad, the consultants agree that creating change is an uphill battle.

"My sense is that Haiti is again coming to the world's attention as a country that is fraught with political fraud and abuses," Mr. Lamb-Minor said. "Ultimately the western world will insist that Haiti live up to the promise of democracy in exchange for stability in its economy."

NED's Journalist in Haiti
Written by Cyril Mychalejko
Wednesday, 04 January 2006
Upside Down World

Regine Alexandre, a freelance reporter working in Haiti who has written for the AP and New York Times, was recently outed as a consultant for the controversial National Endowment for Democracy.

The AP terminated its relationship with Alexandre after learning of her second job with the U.S. government-sponsored organization.

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

Alexandre denies ever working for the NED. The NED maintains that she did in fact work for the organization, but that they were unaware of her job as a journalist.

It has also been reported that Alexandre worked with the Association of Haitian Women Journalists (AMIFEH), a group that receives NED funding. Part of AMIFEH's work is to train Haitian journalists how to cover elections.

Haiti Elections: Violence and Chaos Mounting
Democracy in Haiti is jeopardized by poverty, drug trafficking, greed and imperialism
OhmyNews International, South Korea
Jan. 2, 2006

The threat of violence hangs in the air as the Haiti presidential election draws closer. My wife and I canceled our June 2005 trip to Haiti due to the escalation of kidnappings and general insecurity. During April, May, and June, an average of 10 kidnappings had been reported in Port-au-Prince each day. But the rate went down considerably in the months that followed, and I was able to travel to Haiti in August and September without incident.

Unfortunately, kidnappings and violence are back up as the Jan. 8 elections approach. Much of the violence is attributed to drug trafficking. Sheer poverty and politics also play a part. It's estimated that 8 percent of the Colombian cocaine that enters the United States passes through Haiti, and Haiti has recently surpassed Colombia in kidnappings. Despite the presence in Haiti of 8,000 U.N. peacekeepers deployed after the rebellion that ousted President Jean-Bertrand Aristide in February 2004, the arrival of cocaine is "essentially unimpeded" according to the U.S. State Department's 2005 International Narcotics Control Strategy Report.

Analysts fear that traffickers are quietly working to subvert any return to an elected democracy in Haiti, either by backing candidates they can control or sowing chaos on the streets to delay the balloting. "At this point the entire transition is at risk," says Mark Schneider of the International Crisis Group, a nonprofit that analyzes conflict around the world. "Drug traffickers don't want a functioning, effective government with a functioning, effective police force and customs. They have their hooks in the police, and they have their hooks in parts of the transitional government."

During my recent visit, I spoke with some long-time friends, a Canadian couple who have lived in Haiti for more than 15 years. They told me about the recent kidnapping of the 16-year-old son of a family they know well. The parents are from Holland, but their son was born and raised in Haiti. When the parents contacted the United Nations for assistance, they learned it has three teams of experts that do nothing but negotiate with kidnappers. At least five new kidnappings are reported each day.

The ransom was set at \$300,000 but the kidnappers accepted just \$9,000 after three days of negotiating. Their son reported that he was treated well, and given three meals a day and a bed to sleep. Not all are as fortunate. Horrific accounts of torture, rape and murder are abound. The kidnappers told him white people had taken their president, and they would start a revolution, funding it with ransom money.

Whether Aristide's departure was forced or voluntary depends on whose account you believe. Years of experience in Haiti taught me not to trust the claims of the U.S. embassy nor of Aristide.

Aristide was clearly the people's choice when he was elected president in both 1990 and 2000. I first visited Haiti in February 1991 -- just days after Aristide was inaugurated -- and moved there three months later to work with a small nonprofit that supported Haitian-run schools and literacy programs. I remember well the enthusiasm and hope for a better future shared by Haiti's masses. They were in love with their new president.

But after just seven months in office, Aristide was overthrown by a violent coup d'etat financed and/or supported by members of Haiti's elite and right-wing U.S. groups including the CIA. He spent nearly three years in exile in Washington, D.C., before being restored to power in 1994 with the support of some 20,000 U.S. Marines. Aristide completed the remainder of his five-year term, before being succeeded in 1996 by his friend and close colleague, Rene Preval. The Haitian constitution does not allow a president to serve two consecutive terms.

Rene Preval served his five-year term, and Aristide was elected to a second term as president in 2000. There is no question that there was substantial corruption in Aristide's administration during his second term. Numerous high-level government officials are now serving prison terms in the United States for their involvement in drug trafficking, and many who spoke out against Aristide and his government were subject to violent repression.

Aristide's success was virtually impossible considering what he was up against. His messianic personality and tendency to compare himself with Toussaint L'Ouverture (who led the slave rebellion that gave way to Haiti's independence) helped to raise unrealistic expectations for quick improvement among Haiti's masses. Yet he faced an overwhelming combination of grinding poverty, a financially strapped government forced to borrow and agree to a structural adjustment program that limits spending on social improvements, and unrelenting pressures from the international community and Haiti's elite.

It's no wonder Aristide couldn't live up to the people's hopes. Yet it's also clear that his enemies -- in Haiti, the United States, and elsewhere -- used illegal and non-democratic measures to strip him of his power.

Many would argue that the interim government, which most Haitians believe was imposed by the United States, Canada, and other countries, has failed worse than Aristide's administration. It is responsible for death, injury and imprisonment of thousands of innocent Haitians.

Rene Preval, now running under a new political party called Lespwa (which translates "hope"), is the leading candidate for the presidency in 2006. Pictures of Preval and other presidential hopefuls are posted throughout Port-au-Prince, with each candidate's picture accompanied by a corresponding number, which is intended to make it easier for illiterate people to vote. Between 60 and 80 percent of Haiti's 8 million people do not read or write. In a televised lottery process, representatives drew numbers that would be assigned to the 35 candidates for the election. As fate would have it, the elderly gentleman representing Preval picked the piece of paper numbered "one."

There's talk that the election, which has already been postponed three times, may be delayed again. There's also controversy around the candidacy of a Haitian-American businessman from Texas, Dumarsais Simeus. The C.E.P. (Provisional Electoral Council) disqualified Simeus from running, basing their decision on Haiti's constitution, which states that a foreigner is not eligible to run.

However, Simeus' appealed the decision to Haiti's Supreme Court, which overruled the election watchdog's decision. Consequently, Prime Minister Gerard Latortue has ordered that five members of the Supreme Court be removed and replaced by others who support C.E.P.'s ruling against Simeus. The

five judges have refused to accept the president's decision to replace them, and the numbers of people standing in support of the judges and protesting their ouster is growing. Latortue was chosen by a council of elders after Aristide went into exile 22 months ago.

Out of curiosity, I asked various friends, "What if Aristide were running for president?"

"Aristide talks, Preval works. I'd be voting for Preval," declared my neighbor, a community leader who has long supported Aristide.

I asked the same question of another long-time Aristide supporter who is now running for a Parliament seat on the same ticket as Preval.

"Aristide would win an election right now if voting were limited to people who are illiterate," he said. "But he would not win if voting were restricted to people who are literate. He charms people who are uneducated."

Mario Joseph, an unemployed mason living outside Port-au-Prince, captured what I heard from many others: "The people are hungry. There are no jobs. The person who convinces the people that he's the key to their finding work and food will win. The people were for Aristide. But he failed us."

Since I lived in Haiti for most of the past 15 years, friends here in the States often ask for my thoughts about the country's political situation: "So what's happening in Haiti, John, and what's your take on it? What do you expect will happen in the upcoming elections? What about Aristide -- was he really kidnapped by the U.S. government as he says?"

People are eager for news, but often feel uncertain whom they can trust. I recently returned to Haiti from December 18-22, less than a month before elections are scheduled to begin. I spent part of my time in a rural community six miles south of Port-au-Prince, where I lived from 1995 to 2004. I also visited Carrefour, a sprawling poor suburb of Port-au-Prince. There, I was one of 26 people -- 22 Haitians and four North Americans, including two living in Haiti -- who convened at a guesthouse to plan and evaluate our work promoting participatory learning and leadership development. (To learn more about our work, visit www.circlesofchange.com.)

Pettigrew: Canada will stay the course in Haiti

Tue. Jan. 3 2006

CTV.ca News

Foreign Affairs Minister Pierre Pettigrew downplayed demands for a Canadian withdrawal from Haiti on Monday, labelling protesters outside his office as "a marginal group of Haitian Montrealers."

Saying the protesters were "fixated on the past and nostalgia," Pettigrew dashed any hopes of a Canadian pullout, expressing his belief that Canada is helping bring stability to the strife-torn Caribbean nation.

The group is among a growing movement in Canada demanding the return of Canadian police officers working to revamp the Haitian National Police. Their voices have become even louder since the December shooting death of retired RCMP officer Mark Bourque, part of the mission in Haiti.

Activists have accused members of the UN stability mission of contributing to the chaos by helping a corrupt Haitian police force support the Haitian elite while targeting the poor majority, many of whom oppose the interim government.

While those in power in Haiti and their North American supporters say President Jean-Bertrand Aristide left the country voluntarily in Feb. 2004, others -- including Caricom, the alliance of Caribbean nations, and the African Union -- say he was ousted by the United States and have called for an inquiry.

The 40 protesters outside Pettigrew's Montreal office echoed these statements, showing a documentary on a television set in the trunk of a car accusing the UN of direct contribution to popular repression. They chanted, waved flags, banged on a cymbal and called Pettigrew an "assassin," demanding a boycott of the Liberals in the upcoming election.

If such a boycott were to catch on with the larger public, an obvious benefactor would be Bloc Quebecois candidate Vivian Barbot. A Montrealer of Haitian origin, Barbot is running against Pettigrew in the Papineau riding.

While Barbot could not be immediately reached Tuesday when contacted about her views on Canada's role, the Bloc has sided with the Liberals on the issue and recently criticized the NDP for using the word "removal" to describe Aristide's exit from Haiti.

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

However, on Tuesday Bloc Press Secretary Eric Cote told CTV.ca that the Bloc has one very simple position on Haiti:

"We only wish for a transparent and fair election there, with a secure process and transport of power."

Brazil Says It's Creating a Safe Environment for Haitians to Vote

Written by Marcela Rebelo

Brazzil Magazine

Wednesday, 04 January 2006

The UN Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH), which is led by a Brazilian commander, remains on standby alert as another postponement of the country's elections is announced.

According to the Brazilian force spokesman, lieutenant colonel Fernando da Cunha Matos, it will not be possible to hold the elections on January 8, as scheduled, because of delays in the preparations for the balloting.

It is reported that at the moment out of 4.5 million eligible voters, around 70%, some 3.5 million, have registered. But there have been problems with getting voters the documents they need to cast ballots, defining polling locations and training personnel to assist with the balloting.

According to Cunha Matos, MINUSTAH is assisting in creating "a safe and stable environment where it will be possible for the population to vote."

At the moment, the Brazilian contingent is the second largest component of MINUSTAH, behind troops from Jordan which number 1,500.

Rights abuses overshadow elections

Haiti's government imprisons opposition; voters to go to polls Jan. 8

By CLAIRE SCHAEFFER-DUFFY

National Catholic Reporter

Jan. 6, 2006

Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice's stopover in Haiti last September was notably brief. The itinerary of her less than 24-hour visit included a cameo appearance at a voter registration site, a tour of the slums of Port-au-Prince, Haiti's capital, from the seat of a helicopter, and a news conference during which she expressed U.S. support for the Haitian people and the importance of voting in the country's upcoming elections.

She urged Haitians, "Please go and register and reclaim your right to choose a democratic leader for Haiti."

There was a bitter irony to the secretary's recommendation. Without any encouragement from Rice, Haitians had already claimed their "right to choose" during the presidential elections in 2000. They voted overwhelmingly for Jean-Bertrand Aristide. In February 2004, the democratically elected leader was forced to leave Haiti in the face of an armed rebellion that many believe was made possible with U.S. and French assistance.

The extent of U.S. involvement in Haiti's coup remains unexamined in the mainstream press. Rep. Barbara Lee, D-Calif., has requested a congressional investigation into the former president's precipitous departure. According to several reports, the U.S. Agency for International Development helped orchestrate political opposition to Aristide's government and the International Republican Institute, created during the Reagan-era to "advance democracy," funded and armed the rebels who overthrew him. Aristide says U.S. forces "kidnapped" him from his homeland; an allegation the State Department denies.

Undeniable, however, is the chaos that has followed Haiti's regime change. Approximately 1,600 people have been killed since the 2004 coup. Like Iraq, the sources of Haiti's violence -- political repression, militant resistance and lawlessness -- are multiple and fuel each other.

The United Nations' top human rights official in Haiti recently described the country's human rights situation as "catastrophic." Numerous human rights reports have documented abuses committed by the Haitian National Police that include beatings, illegal arrests and summary executions. On Aug. 20, members of the police accompanied a band of machete-wielding civilians who attacked a crowd at a soccer game in Port-au-Prince, killing at least 10 people. Sixteen police officers were disciplined but no civilian attackers have been charged, according to the human rights organization Institute for Justice and Democracy in Haiti.

Even U.N. peacekeeping troops have been implicated in some of the violence, accused of shielding the police from accountability or participating in assaults on poor neighborhoods. In mid-November, a dozen U.S. rights groups, attorneys and activists submitted petitions to the human rights arm of the

Organization of American States, requesting measures to protect Haitians from U.N. peacekeepers and the Haitian police.

Encumbered by the instability, election preparations have been neither swift nor fair. After changing the date four times in five months, Haiti's interim government has scheduled the first round of presidential and legislative elections for Jan. 8 with runoffs to be held Feb. 15. Haitians' "right to choose" their government comes a full two years after their president was removed.

It is hard to know how much of the election delay is due to corruption, incompetence or a deliberate effort to disenfranchise the poor, many of whom support Fanmi Lavalas, the country's largest political party. The voter registration center Rice visited was unavailable to most Haitians because these centers were not installed in poor urban and rural areas. Under pressure from the international community, the Provisional Electoral Council, the electoral agency responsible for running the elections, expanded voter registration opportunities. Seventy-five percent of Haitian voters have reportedly registered.

As one observer noted, Haiti's interim government, with much help from the international community, might overcome the remaining logistical obstacles to the electoral process and pull off "technically acceptable elections." But unless the country's political prisoners are freed, the 2006 vote cannot be considered a fully democratic event.

Among the incarcerated is Fr. Gérard Jean-Juste, the Catholic pastor of a large poor parish in Port-au-Prince. Arrested July 26, he is falsely accused of participating in the murder of journalist Jacques Roche. Jean-Juste is in fact a close friend of the Roche family. Like so many Haitian prisoners, Jean-Juste is being held without charge. He sits gravely ill in the annex of Port-au-Prince's National Penitentiary where many fear he will remain until the elections are over.

Thousands have called for his release, and even Rice urged that his case be dealt with quickly.

The first Haitian priest ordained in the United States, Jean-Juste has defined his priesthood by a courageous commitment to justice. In 1978, while living in Miami, he founded the Haitian Refugee Center, an organization that has fought for the rights of Haitian immigrants all the way to the U.S. Supreme Court. He is well-loved and well-remembered in Miami as the "gutsy" priest who spoke out against the repression of Haitian dictator Jean-Claude Duvalier and what many consider the discriminatory policies of the United States toward Haitian refugees.

A long-time friend and ally of Aristide, Jean-Juste is an outspoken critic of the interim government. He has repeatedly called for Aristide's return, the release of political prisoners, and respect for Haiti's Constitution. (The document grants democratically elected presidents a four-year term in office and requires the judiciary to charge prisoners within 48 hours of their arrest.) The price for preaching such a message has been high for Jean-Juste -- seven weeks of imprisonment in the fall of 2004 and now a second incarceration.

The Haitian Catholic hierarchy recently distanced themselves from the outspoken priest because of confusion over his decision to enter the presidential race. Jean-Juste pondered a try; last August he told The Associated Press he would run for president "if Aristide approved my candidacy." The following month, Fanmi Lavalas, without consulting the priest, named him as its presidential candidate. (Some

have speculated the announcement was little more than a tactic to draw attention to the plight of the imprisoned cleric and other political prisoners.) In response, the Haitian hierarchy suspended his faculties as a priest. A devoted and much-needed pastor, Jean-Juste decided not to enter the presidential race. He is appealing the suspension to the Vatican.

In a country where armed leaders abound and the gun is the most consulted tool for political conflict, Jean-Juste has remained unequivocally nonviolent. He counts Gandhi and Martin Luther King Jr. among his guides. In his cell at the penitentiary, he sleeps beneath a picture of Salvadoran martyr Archbishop Oscar Romero.

When pro-Aristide demonstrations erupted into violence in September 2004, he advocated repentance.

“Haiti has gone too far in being violent to our sisters and brothers,” he said. “We must kneel down, ask forgiveness, and start over.”

In November 2004, Haiti’s Catholic Justice and Peace Commission estimated that as many as 700 political prisoners filled the country’s jails. Grass-roots activists, local leaders for Fanmi Lavalas, were rounded up in the months immediately following Aristide’s removal. How many remain imprisoned is unknown but among those still incarcerated are folksinger Anne Sosin and former Prime Minister Yvon Neptune. Arrested May 2004, Neptune has yet to go to trial.

Some see Rice’s words for the Haitian people, however noble, as disingenuous. Too many questions remain about the U.S. role in Aristide’s overthrow for Haitians to take seriously her exhortation about voters’ rights. The interim government’s commitment to free and fair elections needs to be better demonstrated, say critics, who contend that passing out ballots while imprisoning the opposition is a meaningless expression of democracy.

Claire Schaeffer-Duffy is a longtime contributor to NCR.

Editor's Note: After this article was published, Haiti postponed elections for a fifth time. No new date had been set.

National Catholic Reporter, January 6, 2006

A grain of hope exists

Rice: Haiti's once and future cash crop is the key to its economic turnaround

BY LETTA TAYLER

Newsday

January 2, 2006

LA VERDUE, Haiti -- The scene couldn't have looked more idyllic. Men, women and teenagers waded slowly through verdant rice paddies, rhythmically plunging handfuls of seedlings into the warm mud. White egrets skimmed the surface of the wet fields. Here and there, a coconut palm swayed in the humid breeze.

But rice cultivation, a centuries-old ritual in La Verdue and other hamlets across the fertile Artibonite Valley in central Haiti, is becoming an endangered occupation.

Every year, more farmers leave their tiny plots of land, unable to cope with soaring production costs, clogged irrigation canals and armed bandits who steal the harvest and day workers' pay.

Most devastating of all, Haitians increasingly are eating what they call "Miami rice" - heavily subsidized U.S. rice that floods the market at half the price of local grain.

"It's misery and more misery," said Roland Toussaint, 35, a farmer in bare feet and a straw hat who started working in the paddies as a boy, alongside his father and grandfather. "We can't compete with the American rice. It's killing us."

Three decades ago, Haiti was almost self-sufficient in rice production, the mainstay of the rural economy. But since Haiti opened its markets to the United States in 1986 at the behest of lenders including the International Monetary Fund, rice production has halved, while rice imports, mainly from the United States, have increased 50-fold.

Haiti's rice problems are emblematic of the broader economic crisis facing this tiny island nation, which two centuries ago was the pearl of the Antilles, stuffing colonial France's coffers by producing much of the world's sugar, coffee and mahogany.

Now, Haiti is the poorest country in the hemisphere. Three-fourths of Haitians live on less than \$2 a day and 70 percent of the workforce is jobless or underemployed. More than half the country's children don't get enough to eat.

Most development experts believe that the new president whom Haitians will elect in balloting tentatively scheduled for later this month must start any economic turnaround here in the countryside, home to two-thirds of the country's 8 million people.

While tourism, light industry and handicrafts also can create jobs, "rural development is key to revitalizing Haiti's economy," said Volny Paultre, Haiti program director for the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization. "And central to that development is rice."

Otherwise, Paultre and other experts predict, peasants will continue leaving for the city in search of manufacturing jobs that no longer exist. Or migrating to neighboring Dominican Republic, where they often work under brutal conditions for almost no pay. Or boarding rickety boats bound for the United States, home to an estimated 1 million Haitians, half of them in the metropolitan area.

Haiti still has the capacity to be almost self-sufficient in rice, many agronomists believe.

Rice was among a flood of foreign imports that Haiti's then-military government accepted in exchange for international loans in the 1980s. The rice imports sparked such an uproar that the government dispatched armed convoys to escort the first rice shipments through the Artibonite Valley.

Further protective barriers against U.S. rice were dismantled in 1994 by then-President Jean-Bertrand Aristide as part of the agreement with Washington to restore him to power after he had been ousted in a military coup three years earlier.

Haiti's tariffs on rice imports fell from 35 percent to 3 percent, the lowest in the region. In contrast, rice tariffs in the Dominican Republic, which shares the island of Hispaniola with Haiti, are 40 percent.

International lenders forbade Haiti from subsidizing its rice farmers; the aim was to cultivate Haitian industries that could survive without props. Yet U.S. rice farmers are massively subsidized by the U.S. government, receiving \$1.3 billion last year alone to support a crop that cost \$1.8 billion to grow, according to a report issued in April by Oxfam International, a nonprofit organization dedicated to poverty eradication.

"This is an example of rigged rules and double standards at their baldest," said Phil Bloomer, head of Oxfam International's Make Trade Fair campaign, who called the practice "scandalous."

Today, three out of four platefuls of rice eaten here were grown in the United States. Rice has gradually edged out other staples such as cassava, cornmeal and millet.

U.S. products have hurt other farm sectors as well. Haiti's once-thriving poultry industry is in ruins, thanks to a flood of chicken parts.

"They keep the breast meat in the United States and sell us the gizzards and necks and claws just before they are about to rot," said Jean Pierre-Louis, a rice farmer in Petite Riviere, a market town near La Verdue. "We've become a U.S. dumping ground."

Defenders, including U.S. food exporters, note that the imports have helped consumers by lowering food prices in a nation where half the children are malnourished. They also have provided Haiti's cash-strapped government with revenue through import taxes, though two executives at one U.S. company were convicted last year of bribing Haitian customs officials to illegally reduce those tax payments.

But the flood of U.S. goods has "proved disastrous in the long term," said Jean-Claude Paulvin, president of the Haiti Economists Association. Like many developing nations that accepted the International Monetary Fund's position that free trade would jump-start the economy, he said, "We're left with a country with a destroyed economic base that's dependent on imports."

Paulvin said the blame falls not just on international lenders but also on this country's leaders, who traditionally have ignored the peasant class in the countryside and inherited their old colonizers' habit of plundering the country's wealth.

"Here in Haiti we have a pirate mentality. We've had a series of predatory governments whose mentality is suck out the resources rather than reinvest," Paulvin said. "I only hope the next government is strong enough and has clear enough vision to sit down with the international community and say, 'This is what I want.'"

"Miami Rice" is not the only threat to rice farmers. The transitional government - installed after Aristide was ousted from office a second time in February 2004 - has ended fertilizer subsidies despite soaring costs for fuel, a fertilizer component. A 100-pound bag of fertilizer now costs up to \$35, double the price a year ago.

With credit almost nonexistent, many farmers are forced to sell a pig or a cow to buy fertilizer.

But farmers have fewer pigs to sell, thanks in part to a U.S.-backed international aid program in 1981 to replace Creole pigs slaughtered during an African Swine Fever epidemic.

Instead of replacing the Creole swine, which were hardy and easy to feed, the aid agencies sent in Iowa porkers that required special feed and pens. The imports were too costly for many farmers, who dubbed them "four-footed princes."

So, many farmers plant less rice. Others make ends meet by not sending their children to school, contributing to the country's illiteracy rate of 55 percent.

"What choice do I have?" asked rice farmer Jasnel Charles, 29, of La Verdue, explaining that annual tuition for his young daughter would cost about the same as a bag of fertilizer.

With fertilizer costs so high, most farmers can't even think about renting or buying a tractor or other machinery to improve production. Most rice is harvested with machetes and threshed by hand: the men whacking the bundles against the ground, the women spreading the grains into dazzling gold carpets that dry in front of tiny, pink-and-turquoise cottages with no running water or electricity that families here call home.

With Haiti sliding toward anarchy in the past several years, the government has failed to maintain irrigation canals, causing many paddies to dry up. Deforestation in the mountains overlooking the Artibonite has contributed to massive flooding during the rainy season in lower-lying paddies.

Then there are the armed bandits, some paid by large landowners seeking to squeeze out subsistence farmers, others acting on their own. They whiz through back roads on motor scooters, extracting illegal taxes or bags of rice worth only a few dollars each to "authorize" peasants to work the land.

"Every day we're more scared to go out and work," said Toussaint, who has been robbed three times in less than two years, as he waded through his paddy under a broiling sun. Like most farmers in the

Artibonite, he wishes his three young children could continue to cultivate rice. But if things continue as they are, he wants them to leave, as so many young people already have.

Some sneak into neighboring Caribbean countries or the United States. Others head to burgeoning slums in Port-au-Prince, hoping to find work in assembly plants that sprouted in the 1980s.

But most of the factory jobs have moved to China, leaving 92 percent of the Port-au-Prince workforce with no regular employment.

Some unemployed join armed gangs. Others scrounge enough to buy a wheelbarrow and sell whatever they can at street markets: used clothes, spaghetti, soap, sugarcane or U.S. rice.

"Haitian rice tastes better, but it costs too much," explained Natalie Gilmon, a mother of six, as she paid 15 gourdes (37 cents) for a two-cup scoop of U.S. rice from a sack emblazoned with a red, white and blue flag at a Port-au-Prince street market. It was exactly half the cost of Haitian rice. "As it is, we don't get enough to eat."

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Haitian literary circles flourish in South Florida
Chauncey Mabe
South Florida Sun-Sentinel
January 2, 2006

MIAMI -- Like many Haitians, Max Pierre came to the United States illegally.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"In French, I can reach only a few readers," Pierre says. "My poetry is about love for a country and a people, and I want to share that love with my new countrymen."

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

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

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

She is, Hyppolite says, "the voice for the Haitian-American generation, with one foot here and one foot in Haiti."

Chauncey Mabe is a reporter for the South Florida Sun-Sentinel, a Tribune Publishing newspaper.

Brazil says to keep UN leadership in Haiti**Source: Reuters****Jan. 10, 2006**

By Raymond Colitt

BRASILIA, Brazil, Jan 9 (Reuters) - Brazil said on Monday it was determined to keep leading the U.N. peacekeeping force in Haiti despite the death of the Brazilian commander and said its partners in the force agreed it should carry on.

"I have no doubt Brazil ought to maintain the command," Vice-President Jose Alencar told journalists in Brasilia. "We should not, under any circumstance, even question the mission. We cannot retreat."

Lt. Gen. Urano Bacellar, who had commanded the 9,000-strong U.N. force in Haiti since the end of August, was found shot dead on Saturday at his hotel room in the capital Port-au-Prince. He is suspected to have committed suicide.

The general's casket, draped in a Brazilian and a U.N. flag, was laid out in the parade ground of the headquarters of the U.N. mission in Haiti on Monday. An honor guard fired a salute. The general's body was due to be flown back to Brazil.

"I was most surprised because during our four months of working together here I never imagined that a man of his caliber could do what most people think he did," said Brazil's ambassador to Haiti, Paulo Cordeiro de Andrade Pinto.

"I am not a psychologist, I am not a psychiatrist. I know the human mind is a very complex thing, but I leave it to the professionals to say exactly what happened."

Countries taking part in the force agreed in a teleconference on Monday to support replacing Bacellar with another Brazilian commander, a Brazilian foreign ministry spokesman said. The U.N. force is made up of Brazil, Chile, Argentina, the United States and France.

At the United Nations, Jean-Marie Guehenno, undersecretary-general for peacekeeping, said, "Brazil has made a very strong commitment to Haiti and we will certainly welcome having another Brazilian to lead the force."

The Foreign Ministry spokesman said Brazil would propose that Gen. Jose Elito Carvalho Siqueira, currently commander of Brazil's sixth military region, replace Bacellar.

Haiti is struggling to organize its first presidential election since a month-long armed revolt ousted President Jean-Bertrand Aristide in February 2004.

With political violence and kidnappings raging, critics in Brazil are questioning the effectiveness of the U.N. mission.

"The moment has come to withdraw Brazilian troops," said Maria Jose Maninha, a congresswoman who has led Brazilian parliamentary missions to Haiti. She blamed a lack of international financial support for the mission.

Brazil's efforts in Haiti are in line with President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva's ambition to establish his country's regional leadership and buttress its bid for a permanent seat on the U.N. Security Council.

(Additional reporting by Andrew Hay in Brasilia, Evelyn Leopold at the United Nations and Joseph Guyler Delva in Port-au-Prince)

Haiti Election Date Set

By Amelia Shaw

Port-au-Prince

VOA News

09 January 2006

Haitian officials have announced Monday a new date for national elections. The troubled country has been battling violence and insecurity, as it struggles to prepare for the vote. The announcement comes just two days after the United Nation's top military commander was found dead in his hotel room.

This is the fifth time that Haiti has attempted to organize a date for national elections.

According to a presidential decree, the first round of voting will be held on February 7, and a runoff will be held, if needed, on March 19. The new government is to take office by March 29.

The vote was formerly to be held January 8, but in late December, officials postponed elections for the fourth time due to logistical problems. Haitian election officials said that national identity cards had not been fully distributed, and there were not enough polling centers in rural areas.

U.N. ambassador to Haiti Juan Valdez has welcomed the new date, and he said the U.N. would not accept that the date be postponed again.

The U.N. has been criticized by Haitian officials for the repeated election delays. They
A Brazilian UN peacekeeper chats with a teenager while on patrol at the volatile neighborhood of Bel-Air in Port-au-Prince
say the U.N. and the Organization of American States have not done enough to help the country prepare.

The Haitian population is also critical of the apparent failure of U.N. troops to provide security in the crime-ridden capital, Port-au-Prince. Kidnappings have skyrocketed, generating millions-of-dollars in ransom for the gangs who control the slums in downtown Port-au-Prince. Haitian national police estimate that 1,900 people were kidnapped between March and December of 2005.

The capital was largely shut down Monday, after a general strike was called by the chairman of the Chamber of Commerce, Reginald Boulos. Boulos says he called the strike to protest the rash of kidnappings, and urge U.N. troops, known locally as MINUSTAH, to do more to provide security.

"I think the role of MINUSTAH was to bring peace and security - to bring security back, and help the government to carry elections. Elections cannot take place in such an insecure environment. So, therefore, we think there are enough troops in this country, 7,400 international troops. There is enough know-how and technical expertise in MINUSTAH to basically get in with the minimum casualty in the civilian society, and get rid of the gangs, disarm the gangs," said Mr. Boulos.

The U.N. mission is still trying to regroup after the death of its top military commander, General Urano Bacellar. Mr. Bacellar was found dead in his hotel room on Saturday morning in what one senior U.N.

official has called "a self-inflicted gunshot wound." So far, the U.N. has not confirmed the death as a suicide, and has launched an investigation.

The U.N. began its peacekeeping operation in Haiti in June of 2004, just three months after then President Jean Bertrand Aristide was forced into exile, following a violent uprising. The February 7 poll would be the first democratic election since Mr. Aristide was forced from power.

Strike in Haiti brings commerce to a halt

USA Today

Jan. 9, 2006

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti (AP) — Businesses ground to a halt Monday in a general strike called to protest a wave of kidnappings that has terrified people and cast a shadow over already troubled efforts to restore democracy in Haiti.

The Haitian Chamber of Commerce and Industry called the strike to pressure U.N. peacekeepers to move against gangs — allegedly loyal to ousted President Jean-Bertrand Aristide — who have carried out many of the kidnappings.

But leaders of the peacekeeping force were preoccupied with their own tragedy — the weekend death of their most senior commander, Brazilian Lt. Gen. Urano Teixeira da Matta Bacellar, in an apparent suicide.

Several hundred Brazilian peacekeepers stood in formation Monday outside a military hospital and saluted Bacellar's coffin, draped in Brazilian and U.N. flags. Diplomats and military officials praised Bacellar as a compassionate soldier deeply committed to restoring order to Haiti after the rebellion that toppled Aristide nearly two years ago.

Chilean Gen. Eduardo Aldunate Herman, interim commander of the 7,400 peacekeeping troops in the country, said Bacellar's death would not undermine efforts to stabilize Haiti for a presidential election scheduled to take place Feb. 7, after four postponements.

"Be certain, Gen. Bacellar, that we continue to accomplish the mission and our best proof of loyalty to you will be to ensure that peace and security reach every corner of this country," Aldunate said.

Bacellar was found dead of a gunshot wound Saturday, slumped against the balcony of his room in the upscale Hotel Montana. A senior U.N. official has confirmed to The Associated Press that the general shot himself in the head. Authorities have not yet officially disclosed the cause of death, citing the ongoing investigation.

Brazilian Ambassador Paulo Cordeiro de Andrade Pinto told the AP on Monday that he saw a gun next to the general's body but that Brazilian investigators want to probe other possibilities before confirming it was a suicide. He declined to specify what those possibilities were.

Pinto said the general was a longtime friend and he did not detect any change in Bacellar's normally "serious" personality in a conversation they had Friday night.

"I never imagined that a man of his caliber could do what most people think he did," Pinto said.

Difficulties in distributing voter registration cards and setting up polling stations contributed to postponements in elections, in which 35 candidates are running for president and hundreds more for 129 legislative seats.

But kidnappings for ransom have added to the uncertainty. International election workers and journalists were among those taken hostage by gangs and stashed in the sprawling slums while ransom payments were negotiated. Ordinary Haitians also have been targeted.

The one-day strike left people sitting idly on street corners or waiting hopelessly for a bus, an economic blow in a country where most people are unemployed. Gas stations, supermarkets and banks all closed.

On the trash-strewn streets of downtown Port-au-Prince, Rodrig Paul was angry after he closed his stall where he sells batteries. "This is a rich person's strike," he said.

But others noted the kidnappings have targeted people from all walks of life.

"The violence has threatened everyone, poor or rich, Haitian or non-Haitian," the pricey Hotel Villa Creole said in a letter to guests after it cut back on services for the day.

Mystery Surrounds Death of U.N. Official in Haiti
Brazilian general found dead in his Port Au Prince apartment
OhmyNews International
Jan. 9, 2006

Could he have committed suicide? Could he have been killed? Or it was an accident with a gun?

These questions perplex Brazilian authorities about the death of General Urano Teixeira da Matta Bacellar, the head of the United Nations peace forces in Haiti. Bacellar, a 58-year-old Brazilian, had assumed the control of the international mission in August 2005, replacing his colleague, also a Brazilian, General Augusto Heleno Pereira.

His body was found in his apartment in Port Au Prince, the Haitian capital, Jan. 7, with a gunshot wound to the head. According to Lieutenant-colonel Fernando da Cunha Matos of the Brazilian Forces in Haiti, Bacellar was the victim of an accident. International news agencies were reporting the next morning that Bacellar committed suicide, though he did not display any signs of depression during his last days.

Damian Onses-Cardona, the spokesman of U.N. forces in Haiti, refused to give any explanation about the circumstances of Bacellar's death.

Signs of depression -- or even a hypothesis of a murder -- can be considered credible because since assuming the leadership of the military troops in Haiti, Bacellar had been uncovering accusations against his forces, who were supposedly responsible for the murders of many civilians in poor regions of Port Au Prince.

In November 2005, reports appeared in the international press of a "systematic model of extra-judicial murders," but Bacellar confessed that he only learned of these accusations through the media.

Bacellar's death happened some days after the elections in Haiti were postponed for the fourth time since president Jean-Bertrand Aristide left the country in Feb. 2004.

According to a press statement by the Foreign Ministry in Brazil, Bacellar was known for his competence and "he has been conducting the difficult task of commanding the international mission in Haiti with excellence and responsibility."

The same night, Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva affirmed in a press statement that the Brazilian government would carry on supporting the Haitian people to build peace and to normalize national politics.

Foreign Minister Paulo Celso Amorim expressed the desire of Brazil to stay in command of the operation. He asked U.N. General-Secretary Kofi Annan to immediately conduct an investigation into this case.

A group of Brazilian officials went to Haiti to observe the investigation into the general's death. They will return with Bacellar's body. The Brazilian Army is also observing the case.

The military force of Minustah is an initiative of the U.N. to recuperate democracy and peace in Haiti, a country that suffers constantly from gang violence and political instability. Minustah encompasses more than 7,000 people from 20 countries. Brazil is the biggest contributor to the mission, with 1,050 soldiers.

Urano Teixeira da Matta Bacellar was born in Rio Grando do Sul, Bage city, in the extreme south of Brazil. He was married and leaves behind two children. He served the army for 39 years. He was parachutist and served missions in Brazil and abroad. He was awarded with several medals from both Brazil and other countries.

Between his most important functions, Bacellar was also chief of many departments in the Brazilian army and a teacher of Geography and of Brazilian Studies in military schools.

When he learned about Bacellar's death, the mayor of Bage, Luiz Fernando Mainardi, decreed official mourning in the region.

UN's chief peacekeeper is found dead in Haiti hotel

**By Phil Davison
Independent Online
09 January 2006**

The Brazilian general in charge of United Nations peacekeepers in Haiti has been found dead on the balcony of his hotel suite with a bullet through his head. He was found wearing only underpants and a white vest with his pistol in his hand.

The general had been alone in his suite and suicide is presumed, according to UN officials and Haitian police. But in the land of voodoo spells and zombies, and more recently violent political and gang killings, the death of General Urano Texeira da Matta Bacellar, 58, has rattled the international community. He was described by colleagues as a very religious, happily married man with two children he adored, and a soldier used, in 39 years of service, to pressure far worse than he had seen in his four months in Haiti.

He apparently put his gun to his mouth, in the luxury hilltop Montana hotel used by senior UN officials, diplomats and international media, on the eve of what was supposed to be Haiti's crucial presidential and legislative election. A few days before he died, the elections had been postponed for the fourth time amid daily killings and kidnappings which have spiralled since President Jean-Bertrand Aristide was forced into exile under US pressure nearly two years ago.

General Bacellar commanded 7,265 troops of the UN Stabilisation Mission, known by its French acronym, Minustah, and comprising soldiers from 20 nations, the majority from Brazil and Jordan. They were deployed to restore security as supporters and opponents of Mr Aristide fought street battles in the wake of the ousted president's departure.

But General Bacellar and previous heads of the mission had been criticised by many Haitians for restricting the role of the UN troops, failing to root out corrupt Haitian police and demobbed Haitian soldiers, and declining to go into the seething slum areas of Port-au-Prince to flush out armed gangs behind the spate of kidnappings.

The slums are no-go areas for Haitian police. When UN troops have gone in, and even when they have not, they have suffered casualties - six dead last year alone, the last of them a Canadian soldier near the Cité Soleil slum, a pro-Aristide stronghold, just before Christmas.

Police say there are now 10 to 12 kidnappings a day on average, meaning Haiti has overtaken Colombia in the statistics. They usually involve ransom demands which may seem relatively small - thousands or tens of thousands of dollars - but those figures are a fortune in the poor Caribbean nation where most people earn less than 60p a day. Few people venture out of their neighbourhoods after dark.

As he sat on his hotel balcony at dawn on Saturday, General Bacellar may also have been pondering a general strike scheduled for today, in protest against what some political leaders call the "inactivity" of the UN mission and calling on the blue-helmeted troops to take tougher action against gunmen and

kidnappers. The general had insisted that his job was to defend the Haitian constitution, but not to fight crime.

Yesterday, Brazil's President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva said his troops would remain in Haiti despite General Bacellar's death. The UN appointed the general's deputy, General Eduardo Aldunate Herman of Chile, to take over.

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Head of UN mission in Haiti is found dead
Officials say death apparent suicide
By Associated Press
Boston Globe
January 8, 2006

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti -- The Brazilian commander of UN peacekeepers in Haiti was found dead on the balcony of his hotel room yesterday in an apparent suicide, authorities said, a blow to the 9,000-strong force and efforts to restore democracy in Haiti.

United Nations officials and Haitian police swarmed the hotel where 58-year-old Lieutenant General Urano Teixeira da Matta Bacellar was slumped on a tile floor against the balcony.

A force from more than 40 countries force is attempting to restore democracy to the impoverished Caribbean nation two years after a rebellion overthrew President Jean-Bertrand Aristide, fighting gangs that still hold sway in the nation's sprawling slums.

Security has been unraveling in past weeks, with a rash of kidnappings hitting the capital. International election workers, journalists, and ordinary Haitians have been among the victims.

Days before Bacellar's death, officials postponed national elections for the fourth time, blaming security problems and delays in distributing voter registration cards and setting up polling stations.

The elections had been planned for Jan. 8. No new date has been set, and it was not immediately clear what effect Bacellar's death would have on a new election timetable.

The United Nations named Chilean General Eduardo Aldunate Herman as the interim commander.

A senior UN official confirmed that Bacellar suffered a self-inflicted gunshot wound to the head. He spoke on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to disclose the information.

Secretary General Kofi Annan "was shocked and saddened" by Bacellar's death and a full investigation was under way, the United Nations said in a statement.

Haiti's largest business association this week called for a general strike on Monday to pressure the UN mission to aggressively move against the gangs in the seaside slum of Cite Soleil. The gangs control Cite Soleil and stash their hostages there while seeking ransoms.

Bacellar succeeded Brazilian Lieutenant General Augusto Heleno Ribeiro, who had led the force since its deployment to Haiti, in September. Seven peacekeepers have been killed in action since the force deployed in June 2004. A Jordanian captain, the most recent victim, was shot on December 24.

General's apparent suicide rocks UN Haiti peace effort
The Age, Australia
January 9, 2006

THE apparent suicide of the commander of the United Nations peacekeeping force in Haiti will complicate the world body's long-thwarted efforts to bring stability to the violence-racked country and organise presidential elections.

Brazilian Lieutenant-General Urano Teixeira Da Matta Bacellar was found dead at an upmarket hotel in the country's capital on Saturday with an apparently self-inflicted gunshot wound to the head, officials in Port-au-Prince said.

Haiti has been without an elected leader since then president Jean-Bertrand Aristide fled an armed rebellion in February 2004.

Presidential and parliamentary elections were to have been held in November but have been delayed repeatedly by the US-backed interim leadership.

General Bacellar, 58, was found in his suite at the Hotel Montana with a gunshot wound to the head and his service revolver nearby, according to Radio Metropole and other news agencies at the scene.

In a dispatch from Sao Paulo, the Brazilian army initially termed the general's death the result of a "firearms accident".

In a later statement, the army said Brazilians "profoundly lamented" his death and that army investigators would travel to Haiti to conduct a review of the shooting.

Chilean General Eduardo Aldunate has been put in charge of the military mission until Brazil replaces the commander of its 1200 troops in Haiti, the largest contingent of the now 7265-strong UN military deployment.

The first presidential elections since Mr Aristide's regime fell have been postponed repeatedly partly because of the precarious security conditions. Most recently scheduled for last Saturday, the election has now been planned for February 7.

LOS ANGELES TIMES, REUTERS

Brazil hopes for immediate probe into commander's death
People's Daily Online, China
Jan. 8, 2006

Brazilian President Luis Inacio Lula da Silva on Saturday lamented the death of Brazilian commander of UN peacekeepers in Haiti, hoping that UN could launch a full investigation immediately into the cause of his death.

Brazilian Lt. Gen. Urano Teixeira Da Matta Bacellar, commander of the UN peacekeeping force in Haiti, was found dead on the balcony of his hotel room on Saturday morning.

A spokesman for UN Secretary General Kofi Annan said Annan was "shocked and saddened" to learn of the incident and that an investigation was under way.

Expressing his condolences over the death of Da Matta Bacellar, Lula ordered Foreign Ministry and national security officials to follow up the investigation and provide necessary cooperation, said a statement from the presidential office.

A team of experts in foreign and judicial affairs and criminal investigations will be sent to Haiti to join the probe, Lula said.

The president also expressed full confidence in the work of Brazilian peacekeeping troops in Haiti. He reiterated Brazil's commitment to helping people of the Caribbean country to restore peace and achieve political normalization.

Da Matta Bacellar, 57, had served in Brazil's armed forces for almost four decades. He became commander of the UN mission last September, replacing Brazilian Lt. Gen. Augusto Heleno Ribeiro who had led the force since its deployment to Haiti in June 2004.

His death came as Haiti is struggling to prepare for its first presidential election since an armed revolt ousted then-President Jean-Bertrand Aristide in February 2004.

Initial reports said Da Matta Bacellar committed suicide. The Brazilian peacekeeping force later referred to the incident as a "firearm accident," while other reports said Da Matta Bacellar may have been murdered.

Chilean Gen. Eduardo Aldunate Herman has been named by the UN as interim commander.

Source: Xinhua

New Date for Haiti Vote
New York Times
By REUTERS
January 9, 2006

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti, Jan. 8 (Reuters) - Haiti's electoral authorities on Sunday set a new date for its postponed presidential election, saying that the first round of voting will take place Feb. 7, as the United Nations has demanded, with a runoff, if needed, on March 19.

The announcement came a day after the commander of the United Nations peacekeeping forces in the country was found dead. He appeared to have committed suicide, investigators said Sunday.

The election was supposed to take place on Sunday after having been repeatedly delayed since November. But the country's Provisional Electoral Council canceled the vote a week ago without announcing a new date, leading to a rebuke from the United Nations and the Organization of American States.

U.N., Inter-American Body Call for Haiti Elections by February 7

Both groups join United States in urging vote to move forward

By Eric Green

Washington File Staff Writer

US State Dept.

Jan. 9, 2006

Washington -- Presidential and legislative elections in Haiti, which have been postponed four times, should be held no later than February 7, say the U.N. Security Council and the Organization of American States (OAS).

In separate January 6 statements, both groups expressed concern about the repeated postponements. The Security Council said the holding of elections is a "fundamental step towards the restoration of democracy and stability in Haiti." The OAS said that there are no "valid technical reasons to continue postponing the elections and that problems pending can shortly be solved. Ongoing operational and security issues in no way justify further delay."

News reports said Haitian electoral authorities would propose the February 7 date for elections, with a runoff, if needed, on March 19.

The OAS and U.N. statements follow a statement issued January 4 by the U.S. State Department that said Haiti's elections should move forward "in a timely manner." The State Department said the United States is in close contact with all involved parties regarding the Haitian elections, including Haiti's acting president, members of the Haitian electoral commission and the OAS. (See related article.)

The U.N. Security Council said Haitian authorities should ensure that the elections take place in "accordance with international democratic standards and under conditions conducive to the widest possible participation."

The council said it recognizes that elections are not the "sole means of addressing" Haiti's longer-term security problems and restoration of the rule of law, "both of which are critical to stability and sustainable development."

The Security Council statement expressed U.N. concern over the deterioration of security in Haiti's capital city of Port-au-Prince. It urged the Haitian National Police and the peacekeeping U.N. Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) to continue "intensifying their cooperation to improve security" in the capital.

The United Nations also said investigators had begun probing the death of the senior military official leading MINUSTAH, Brazilian Lieutenant-General Urano Teixeira Da Matta Bacellar. He was found dead January 7 in Port-au-Prince. U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan said Bacellar had worked "tirelessly to support the Haitian people and their hope for peace," adding: "His unexpected death leaves us all bereft."

The U.N. said Bacellar had assumed command of MINUSTAH's military component in September 2005, while serving Brazil with "honor and distinction for almost 40 years."

Meanwhile, a declaration by the OAS Permanent Council said elections in Haiti would allow the Haitian people "to make a final decision regarding the end of the process of transition" and pave the way to "full democracy."

The declaration also condemned the "acts of violence and kidnappings perpetrated by criminal groups" in Haiti, and expressed the OAS's "certainty that the people of Haiti will be able to forge their own destiny in a peaceful and democratic manner."

The declaration urged the Haitian National Police and MINUSTAH "to continue to do their utmost to prevent and control the insecurity that now prevails" in Haiti. The declaration is available on the OAS Web site.

For further information on U.S. policy, see Haiti.

(The Washington File is a product of the Bureau of International Information Programs, U.S. Department of State. Web site: <http://usinfo.state.gov>)

UN admits civilians may have died in Haiti peacekeeping raid
By Andrew Buncombe in Washington
Independent Online, UK
10 January 2006

The UN has for the first time admitted that a number of innocent civilians may have become "collateral victims" and killed during a controversial raid by peacekeeping forces in Haiti. The admission will likely add to the tension inside the capital city, Port-au-Prince, already wracked by violence and chaos – and the recent suicide of the UN military commander - as it prepares for a crucial election.

The summary of an internal inquiry, passed to The Independent, says a number of people may have been caught in crossfire between UN peacekeepers and armed gang members, headed by a well-known leader, Emanuel "Dread" Wilme. The report claims that UN troops fired only in self-defence.

The raid involving 400 peacekeepers took place last July in the Cite Soleil slum with the stated intention of cracking-down on gangs responsible for ongoing violence and kidnappings in the capital.

Many of the gangs are supporters of former president, Jean-Bertrand Aristide. Mr Aristide, democratically elected and with overwhelming support among the poor, was ousted two years ago following an uprising organised mainly by members of the business elite who had received support from the US.

Video footage taken after the raid showed the bodies of numerous apparently unarmed victims. Independent witnesses said up to 23 people were killed – among them the wife and two young sons of Fredi Romelus, a Cite Soleil resident who told reporters that UN troops opened fire on his home. " They surrounded our house... and I ran thinking my wife and the children were behind me. They couldn't get out and the [UN] fired into the house," he said.

The admission by the UN mission (MINUSTAH) that civilians may have been killed "given the length of the operation and the violence of the clashes" will do nothing to ease the fraught situation in Haiti, where a presidential election has been repeatedly delayed. The delays have been blamed on the violence and problems with distributing voter identification cards.

The business community has called on the UN to do more to stop the violence and yesterday a national strike was held in protest. But supporters of Mr Aristide say this is nothing more than excuse to clamp down further on members of his Lavalas party. Human rights campaigners have detailed widespread suppression of Lavalas members by the interim government and the Haitian National Police.

Among the cases highlighted by Amnesty International is that of Father Gerard Jean-Juste, a Catholic priest and friend of Mr Aristide, who has been held without charge since last summer. Officials say Mr Jean-Juste, 59, recently diagnosed with leukemia, is being held on suspicion of involvement in a murder but AI said "he is a prisoner of conscience detained solely for the peaceful exercise of his right to freedom of expression".

Despite its admission that civilians may have been shot, the UN claims the majority of those died last July were actually killed by other gang members in reprisal for collaborating with the UN or else

celebrating the death of Mr Wilme. It described the video footage a "manifest example" of disinformation.

Kevin Pina, the Haitian-based journalist who heads a team that shot the footage, dismissed the UN's claims. "I personally handed a copy of that video to [the UN special envoy, Juan] Valdes at JFK airport. He described it as propaganda and lies without even looking at it. They are predisposed to saying this. They do not want to look at the evidence."

He said he met recently with Mr Romelus, whose family was killed. "His life has been destroyed. If I can find him, why can't the UN find him and interview him?"

Mr Pina said the UN had now established a system of embedding journalists with peacekeeping forces. He also said the US and Canada were funding programmes to train Haitian journalists. "They are the ones trying to control the media and yet they accuse us of disinformation."

Meanwhile, officials are investigating the apparent suicide of MINUSTAH's military commander, General Urano Teixeira da Matta Bacella, whose body was discovered in his hotel room on Saturday. Mr Bacella, a Brazilian, took charge of the UN force in September and was not involved in July's raid.

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Source: International Action Network on Small Arms (IANSA)

ReliefWeb

09 Jan 2006

The call for tough arms controls: Voices from Haiti

‘When there are guns, there are more victims. Before it was the macoutes [paramilitaries led by former dictators Francois and Jean-Claude Duvalier] and former [demobilised] soldiers who had the guns. Now, it’s the people who live in your own neighbourhood who commit the violence.’ — Malya, a woman living in Martissant, a Port-au-Prince neighbourhood, November 2005

Armed violence continues to ravage the lives of many people in Port-au-Prince, the capital of Haiti, despite the presence of the UN Stabilisation Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH). 1 Armed groups in the poor areas — some loyal to former President Aristide, some loyal to rival political factions, and some criminal gangs — have battled against the Haitian National Police (HNP) and UN military, and against each other.

In just one medical mission in Port-au-Prince, some 1,400 people were admitted with gunshot wounds between December 2004 and October 2005. ‘We’re still receiving three gunshot victims a day. And there are more who go to the general [university] hospital — or who are killed,’ said the mission’s head, Ali Besnaci of Médecins sans Frontières. ‘This is like a war. There are always confrontations between the gangs and the UN peacekeeping force, MINUSTAH’. Many, if not most, of the victims have been innocent civilians.

Human-rights groups have documented murders and kidnappings committed by the many armed groups, extrajudicial executions carried out by the HNP, and deaths resulting from the alleged indiscriminate shooting by UN troops. 2 The scale of rape in Port-au-Prince is also believed to be directly linked to the proliferation of arms.

The Control Arms campaign carried out several interviews in Haiti in November 2005 and records here the voices of at least some of the people who bear the cost of the world’s continuing failure to control the arms trade.

Haiti’s armed violence is not new. After years of dictatorship by the Duvalier family, in 1990 Jean-Bertrand Aristide became Haiti’s first democratically elected leader. Within months, he fled to the USA after being overthrown by a bloody military coup. Some 3,000 people were killed during the ensuing military dictatorship which lasted until 1994. After he was reinstated by a US military operation, it was alleged that former President Aristide himself was supporting armed gangs in the poor areas for his own political ends. In February 2004, former President Aristide was forced out of Haiti amid an armed revolt staged by gangs formerly loyal to Aristide, and by demobilised soldiers.

The interim government lacks the strong political commitment to implement a comprehensive disarmament, demobilisation, and reintegration (DDR) programme targeting all illegally armed groups, individuals, and communities. In the meantime, the proliferation of small arms continues to cost the lives of many innocent men, women, and children. Development is also hindered by the violence generated by the presence and proliferation of arms.

Outside Port-au-Prince, Haiti has been relatively peaceful since spring 2005, when UN military rooted out armed former soldiers who had controlled several important towns and large areas of the countryside. UN military personnel have also managed to establish a permanent presence in some of the poor areas of Port-au-Prince, bringing a degree of calm. Otherwise, the rule of the gun dominates Port-au-Prince, not only killing and injuring poor people, but devastating their lives. Violence by armed groups continues, while deep-rooted concerns remain about unlawful killings by the Haitian police.

Haiti produces no firearms itself except for home-made 'Creole' guns which are usually crude handguns or rifles made from old ones. Most arms are smuggled into Haiti from neighbouring countries in the region, including from the USA. Over the past decade several countries including Brazil, France, Italy, the UK, and the USA have licensed the transfer of arms to Haiti, according to customs data in the UN commodity trade database.

Since the 1980s, the USA has been the largest supplier of arms to Haiti. However, following the military coup in 1991 the US government imposed an arms embargo on Haiti but allows for exceptions to be made for the authorisation of transfers of some US arms on 'a case-by-case-basis'. Since the appointment of Prime Minister Latortue in March 2004, there have been several of these transfers, including the supply in 2004 of 2,600 weapons to the HNP, which has been implicated in human rights violations. An additional sale to the HNP of pistols, rifles, and tear gas worth US\$1.9m was also approved in 2005.

The first elections in Haiti since President Aristide was ousted in February 2004 were due to take place on 8 January 2006. They have now been postponed amidst continuing insecurity. Given the fragile security situation and tense political climate in Haiti it is likely that, when they do take place, these elections will be accompanied by incidents of armed violence.

Foreign governments must act to stem the flow of weapons from Latin America, the USA, and elsewhere. The rest of the world must take responsibility for the arms that it supplies. There is still no comprehensive, legally binding international treaty to regulate the conventional arms trade, despite the suffering and poverty that international arms transfers continue to fuel.

In January 2006, a series of debates on disarmament are due to begin at the United Nations. There will be technical arguments and diplomatic negotiations between states.

A new international Arms Trade Treaty (ATT), based on the principles of international law, would create minimum global standards for arms transfers. It would reduce the human cost of irresponsible arms transfers and prevent unscrupulous arms dealers finding the weakest point in the supply chain. 2006 presents a major political opportunity to begin to do this:

- The Review Conference for the UN Programme of Action on Small Arms and Light Weapons, in June and July 2006, must agree clear principles for the international transfer of these arms, based on existing international law, to prevent them getting into the hands of human rights abusers.
- The Conference's Preparatory Committee, taking place in New York in January 2006, must set the stage for this.

- Then the UN General Assembly's First Committee (that looks at disarmament and security issues) meeting in October 2006, must finally initiate a process to negotiate an Arms Trade Treaty.

Irresponsible arms transfers still fuel atrocities in Haiti and in many other countries. Responsible arms exporters and arms-affected states must not be held back by the few states that want to impede progress. In 2006, they must begin negotiations to agree an ATT.

**No one is safe from abduction
Nation is now kidnap capital of Americas
By Alfred De Montesquiou
The Associated Press
South Florida Sun Sentinel
January 8 2006**

PORT-AU-PRINCE · Quesnel Durosier walked out of a bank with \$3,500 tucked into his sock, buoyed by thoughts of his upcoming wedding. Seconds later, a car cut him off, and gunmen sprang out and shoved him into the car along with a woman passer-by.

What followed was a nightmare of torture and death threats for these latest victims of a wave of attacks that has made impoverished Haiti the kidnapping capital of the Americas.

Everyone is a target: schoolchildren, foreign aid workers and pedestrians in the upscale and heavily guarded Petionville district of the capital, where Durosier and the unidentified woman were snatched.

Tourists are not targets because they are virtually nonexistent.

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

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

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

Recent victims include 14 schoolchildren abducted on their school bus in December, and Emmanuel Cantave, a prominent leader of Aristide's Lavalas Family party.

Another was Phillip Snyder, an American missionary shot in an ambush and seized along with a Haitian boy he was taking to Michigan for eye surgery.

All were eventually released after ransoms were paid.

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

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

"In the last year or so, it's just exploded down there," Dick Hildreth, a security consultant, said in a telephone interview from his office at Corporate Risk International in Fairfax, Va.

The company advises its clients to hire bodyguards while visiting Haiti, or avoid it altogether.

A South Korean factory manager was recently kidnapped, held in Cite Soleil and released for \$10,000.

Some freed victims have said that what they heard while being held captive suggests the kidnappings may be connected, at least loosely, to the coming Haitian elections and to U.N. efforts to gain control of Cite Soleil, where 200,000 people live in squalor. It is a stronghold of armed gangs, reportedly close to Aristide, that are threatening to disrupt the elections.

All Durosier knows is that his abductors wanted money.

Forced to crouch in his seat and choking from a plastic bag placed over his head, Durosier was brought to a house outside Port-au-Prince and tied to a chair. The kidnappers quickly found his wedding savings.

Durosier could hear the woman scream in another room as the kidnappers poured hot water onto her to make her say who could pay her ransom. The two hostages never got a chance to talk to each other, and the woman's identity and fate remain unknown.

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

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

Faulty fire warning causes Haiti-bound flight to return to MIA

BY THERESA BRADLEY

Miami Herald

Jan. 9, 2006

A faulty fire warning light caused an American Airlines flight bound for Port-au-Prince to return to Miami International Airport about 30 minutes after takeoff, airline and fire officials said.

The 114 passengers and nine crew members aboard waited more than three hours for a replacement plane to continue on to Haiti around 2:30 p.m., airline officials said.

American Airlines flight 1291 departed Miami at 10:27 a.m., nearly an hour-and-a-half after its regularly scheduled departure.

A warning light flashed in the cockpit of the Airbus A300, indicating that one of the rear cargo compartments was filling with smoke and possibly with fire, an airline spokesman said.

The two pilots turned the plane around and declared an emergency. But the plane made a normal landing and taxied to a gate at 11:15 a.m. There were no flames or smoke on the aircraft.

"The majority of times of that you get a warning light, more often than not, it's a warning light malfunction," said Tim Smith, a spokesman for American Airlines.

"Obviously, we regret the inconvenience, although I think most people would prefer us to be a little conservative," he said.

Ground teams at the airport called for backup from Miami-Dade Fire Rescue, which sent 45 units to the runway -- including four foam trucks to combat fuel fires, fire officials said.

The aircraft, which had arrived in Miami earlier today from New York's John F. Kennedy International Airport, was taken out of service for repairs, Smith said.

From Haiti: No place to run from violence

OUR OPINION: U.S. POLICY UNJUST TO HAITIANS FLEEING VIOLENCE

Miami Herald

January 9, 2006

For all his travails, Theodore Fritz is a fortunate man. His wife, Bergel Mirléne, isn't so lucky. Their story shows how gang violence and lack of security drive so many to flee Haiti. Their situation also is an indictment of the U.S. interdiction policy that denies Haitian asylum seekers a fair chance to make their case.

Awaiting settlement

Mr. Fritz, a radio journalist who easily could have been killed by gang members in Port-au-Prince, fled by sea. He was the only Haitian to be granted refugee status out of 1,850 Haitians interdicted by the U.S. Coast Guard last year. When the gangsters couldn't find him, they beat his wife unconscious. Ms. Mirléne lost the baby she was carrying and has a metal plate in one leg because of her injuries.

More than a year later, Mr. Fritz is at the U.S. Naval Base in Guantánamo Bay, Cuba, awaiting resettlement to a third country, hopefully Canada. His wife remains in Port-au-Prince, in need of medical attention and hiding from the gangsters. In Haiti, there is no foreign embassy where she might seek protection.

With all the violence in Haiti, it's inconceivable to think that Mr. Fritz was the only person with a bona-fide asylum claim. Yet he was among only nine Haitians who showed enough of a "fear" of repatriation to warrant screening by immigration authorities while aboard cutters. Of those nine, he was the only one taken to the naval base, where he persuaded a U.S. asylum officer that his claim was legitimate. His case was helped by documentation: Mr. Fritz carried a press pass and a note, translated into English by a U.S. reporter, that said he feared danger in Haiti.

U.S. policy dictates that Coast Guard officers, most of whom speak no Creole and aren't refugee specialists, can refer interdicted Haitians for asylum screening only when they have documents suggesting their life is endangered or have physical evidence of torture or persecution -- a tough standard for people on the run. Even when a Haitian passes the "shout test" by aggressively expressing fear, he may end up screened via phone. All this, including body searches and crowding, chills Haitians from making a claim.

No safe haven

This interdiction policy denies the rights of persecuted Haitians to seek safe haven, violates international refugee law and risks sending people to face persecution or death.

The State Department should speed Mr. Fritz's resettlement and find a way to reunite him with his wife, who has as good a claim to refugee status as he does. State also should join the Department of Homeland Security and other U.S. agencies to reform this unjustifiable policy.

Haiti is Paralyzed
Prensa Latina
Jan. 9, 2006

Port-au-Prince, Haiti woke up Monday with a general strike convened less than 72 hours back by the Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

Brazil to Replace Gen Killed in Haiti

The country is virtually paralyzed with the aim of urging the provisional government to adopt urgent measures to end insecurity, violence, corruption and impunity.

Few vendors are seen around a street normally packed with passer-by, crows, carts and vehicles, especially at the suburbs.

The Chamber and the National Council of Political Parties convened a demonstration to demand the withdrawal of the UN troops that occupy Haiti since 2004.

They also call for the exit of the OAS and resignation of the Provisional Election Council and the authorities imposed after President Jean Bertrand Aristide was ousted February that year.

The TV also called the National Police "to prevent excesses" during the protest.

CNPP President Dejean Belizaire claimed that "national interest can not be submitted to a government that has not been able to settle key state issues."

Things grew worse when the transition government decided to postpone, for the fourth consecutive time, the presidential and legislative elections slated for Jan 8 claiming logistic problems.

Different circles claim maneuvers against presidential candidate and ex President Rene Preval, from Espoir Movement.

A recent inquiry by Gallup-USA said Preval is on the lead with 32 per cent support.

And UN Under Secretary for Politics Hedi Annabi said some political sectors try to undermine the elections because they dislike some candidates they view as potential winners."

Chile expresses sorrow over death of Brazilian general in Haiti
People's Daily Online, China
January 9, 2006

The Chilean government expressed its sorrow on Sunday over the death of Brazilian general Urano Teixeira da Matta Bacellar, head of the UN peacekeeping mission in Haiti.

Government spokesman Osvaldo Puccio said Chile felt "profound sorrow" for the death of the Brazilian general, whom he described as a general with "magnificent career."

The general was found dead on the balcony of his hotel room on Saturday morning. First reports said he had committed suicide by shooting himself in the head. But Brazil had urged a full investigation into the cause of his death.

He was replaced by Chilean general Eduadro Aldunate, deputy head of the peace-keeping mission.

Puccio said that it was up to Brazil to decide who takes over from the dead general, but that "Chile always takes on its international responsibilities and so it will take on the command of the UN troops for the moment."

Some 600 Chilean troops have been part of the mission since the beginning of 2004, looking after the security of Cap Haitien, the second largest city of Haiti.

Source: Xinhua

Deputy suggests withdrawal of Brazilian soldiers from Haiti
Agencia Brasil
Jan. 9, 2006

Cecília Jorge
Reporter - Agencia Brasil

Brasilia – Deputy Orlando Fantazzini (Socialism and Liberty Party – PSOL), member of the Commission of Foreign Relations of the Chamber of Deputies, suggested the withdrawal of Brazilian soldiers from Haiti. Last Saturday (7), the commander of the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH), Brazilian General Urano Teixeira da Matta Bacellar, was found dead with a gunshot wound, in the hotel he lived, in Port-au-Prince, the Haitian capital.

The Deputy believes Brazil should not keep playing this "stressful role" without counting with the financial support of the remaining countries that integrate the peace force. According to him, when Brazil agreed on heading the mission, there was a pact among these countries that they would contribute financially with Haiti's recovery, but they did not keep the promise.

Fantazzini said that this investment would be important not only for enabling security measures, but also for restructuring the country. "Haiti's insecurity is caused by the lack of public policies in the social area, as well as adequate family and people care."

The deputy recalled that Brazil and other countries have already put some pressure on the money commitment issue. Fantazzini says that the situation tends to get worse if investments in the economic and social recuperation of the country are not made.

Translation: Andréa Alves

Christian Science Monitor
Reporters on the Job
January 10, 2006

• **A World Apart:** The Montana Hotel in Haiti is a small, serene hideaway in Port-au-Prince. There is an elegant pool, an outside patio restaurant overlooking the city, and the hotel itself is filled with lush trees and plants. "It's an oasis, and everyone in need of a little quiet passes through here at some point," says staff writer Danna Harman, who is reporting on Haiti's on-again, off-again elections (see story).

"You can hear gunfire from your balcony in the late afternoons, and see smoldering of fires down in Cité Soleil, the poorest part of the capital. But it all seems like another world."

At least, until Saturday. Danna says that she got up early and went down for a swim at about 6:30 a.m. She didn't hear anything, but she soon learned that the Brazilian commander of the UN peacekeeping force shot himself in his hotel room down the hall.

"When I returned to my room, I still didn't know it had taken place just a few doors away. For the rest of the day, the place was swarming with UN soldiers, police, and reporters. It was a chilling experience and left me feeling sad about his family, this country, and its prospects for progress," she says.

By evening, the UN soldiers and police were gone. "It felt like the hotel was stubbornly trying to once again re-create the feeling of a world apart. A young couple held a wedding reception downstairs, and the music played late into the night," says Danna.

David Clark Scott
World editor

Digicel Expansion to Continue in 2006
Caribbean's Fastest Growing Mobile Telecom Provider Gains Significant Ground in 2005, New Licenses and Operations Extend Reach of Pan-Caribbean Wireless Network
Market Wire
Jan 9, 2006

KINGSTON, JAMAICA --Digicel Group, the fastest growing mobile telecommunications operator in the Caribbean, announced today its intention to aggressively grow and expand in 2006 to broaden its Pan-Caribbean wireless network into new regions and services.

"Our growth strategy for next year is built on the tremendous success and momentum developed during 2005," said Mr. Colm Delves, CEO of Digicel Group. "From our employees' ability to provide the best customer service to our investments in our networks, new licenses and operations, we have created one of the Caribbean's best-known brands and we have changed the face of telecommunications across the region."

With operations in 15 countries, covering a population of 14 million people, Digicel ended the year with the company's total investment in the region reaching US\$1 billion, a new tag-line "Expect More, Get More," and the initial launch of WiMAX broadband service in the Cayman Islands. As part of Digicel's portfolio of innovative products, the WiMax offering will roll-out to other regions in the New Year supported by Digicel's top-rated customer service and support, an area of strength that grew in 2005 and reinforced Digicel's position as the largest GSM mobile provider in the region.

With a unique combination of bold deal making, intense customer focus, attention to detail, and speed to market -- Digicel achieved a number of milestones in 2005 which lay the platform for sustained growth in 2006 and beyond. These include:

- Significant New Licenses and Acquisitions: In the second and third quarters of 2005, Digicel secured licenses to operate in Haiti and Trinidad & Tobago. In addition, Digicel acquired Curaçao Telecom and the assets and licenses of Cingular Wireless in Bermuda and the Caribbean. The Cingular acquisition in the region expanded Digicel's network to Bermuda, Anguilla, St. Kitts and Nevis, Antigua and Barbuda, and Dominica and provided licenses in the French West Indies of Martinique, Guadeloupe, St Martin and St Barths. It also strengthened Digicel's presence in areas with existing operations including The Cayman Islands, Grenada, St. Lucia, Barbados and St. Vincent & the Grenadines. Digicel expects to launch services in both Trinidad & Tobago and Haiti in early 2006.
- Major Bond Offering: Digicel raised US\$300 million in one of the most successful bond offerings of the year. The deal, led by Citigroup and JP Morgan was oversubscribed and attracted more than US\$3 billion in orders. The use of proceeds from the offering include financing the company's major expansion plans.

- Sponsorship Activation: As the title sponsor of the West Indies Cricket team, this year marked the first ever Digicel Home Series and the Digicel sponsorship of the West Indies Cricket "A" Team tour to Sri Lanka. Digicel also completed its first year as the title sponsor of the region's football tournament, the Digicel Caribbean Cup.
- Employee Growth: The backbone of Digicel's valued offerings is its customer service which ranked number one for four consecutive quarters in 2005 driven by a dedicated staff, which grew nearly 50 percent this year to more than 1,500 employees. The employee growth has kept pace with new territories and an increase in subscribers throughout the region, most notably in Jamaica, which reached 1.4 million subscribers in December 2005.
- Community Involvement: As a non-profit organization developed in 2004, the Digicel Foundation (www.digicelfoundation.org) continued its mission of building communities through education, social and cultural initiatives. This year, the foundation was responsible for significant school, park and community center renovations throughout several Jamaican communities. This year, Digicel was also responsible for flood relief donations in Guyana and Haiti.

"2005 had several major achievements and milestones for Digicel including winning 'Entrepreneurial Company of the Year' in Jamaica. I'm very proud of our entire staff, who embody Digicel's values and enable us to be a great company that is both successful, and a responsible corporate citizen focused on our customers' needs," stated Delves. "In 2006, our commitment and contributions to the people and vibrant communities of this region will continue because it is the fabric of our corporate culture at Digicel."

ABOUT DIGICEL

Since its launch in 2001, Digicel has become the fastest growing wireless telecommunications operator in the Caribbean. In four years, Digicel has become renowned for competitive rates, unbeatable coverage, superior customer care, a wide variety of products and services, and state-of-the-art handsets. It is the largest GSM operator in the region.

By offering innovative wireless services and community support, Digicel has become a leading brand in the Caribbean and has placed the region at the cutting edge of wireless communications.

Digicel is incorporated in Bermuda and has operations in fifteen countries including Anguilla, Antigua & Barbuda, Aruba, Barbados, Bermuda, Curaçao, The Cayman Islands, Dominica, Grenada, Haiti, Jamaica, St Kitts & Nevis, St. Lucia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines and Trinidad & Tobago. Digicel will also acquire license through the Cingular Acquisition in the French West Indies of Martinique, Guadeloupe, St Martin and St Barths.

The company is the lead sponsor of Caribbean sports teams including the West Indies Cricket Team, Special Olympics teams across the Caribbean and is title sponsor of the Digicel Caribbean Football

Union Cup, which involves over 30 Caribbean countries and is an important qualifier towards the CONCACAF Gold Cup.

Visit www.digicelgroup.com for more information on Digicel.

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SOURCE: Digicel

**Haiti: UN Commander dead in Haiti amid pressure from elite
by Haiti Action
San Francisco Bay Area IndyMedia
Sunday, Jan. 08, 2006**

Haiti Information Project - HIP-Haiti - Amid tremendous controversy over Haiti's security situation and the on-again, off-again elections, the military commander of UN forces in this beleaguered nation apparently took his own life early Saturday morning. After having assumed command of the UN military mission less than four months ago, the body of Brazilian officer Lt. Gen. Urano Teixeira da Matta Bacellar was found sprawled out on the balcony of the Hotel Montana, the apparent victim of a self-inflicted gunshot wound to the head. According to several sources in the Haitian press, Bacellar had participated in a tense meeting with the president of Haiti's Chamber of Commerce, Dr. Reginald Boulos, and Group 184 leader Andy Apaid the night before.

UN commander dead in Haiti amid pressure from elite

General Bacellar's death exposes contradictions of UN mission

Haiti Information Project - HIP-Haiti - Amid tremendous controversy over Haiti's security situation and the on-again, off-again elections, the military commander of UN forces in this beleaguered nation apparently took his own life early Saturday morning. After having assumed command of the UN military mission less than four months ago, the body of Brazilian officer Lt. Gen. Urano Teixeira da Matta Bacellar was found sprawled out on the balcony of the Hotel Montana, the apparent victim of a self-inflicted gunshot wound to the head. According to several sources in the Haitian press, Bacellar had participated in a tense meeting with the president of Haiti's Chamber of Commerce, Dr. Reginald Boulos, and Group 184 leader Andy Apaid the night before.

Bacellar's death comes on the heels of Boulos's announcement of a nationwide general strike on Monday aimed at forcing the UN mission to get tough with bandits in Cite Soleil. The term "Bandits" is often seen as a code word for Lavalas supporters, and Cite Soleil has served as a launching site for massive demonstrations demanding the return of ousted president Jean-Bertrand Aristide. Mario Andresol, the current Chief of Police, representing the US-installed government of Gerard Latortue, recently alleged that the community was also being used by Columbian drug traffickers and "certain political forces" to hide victims of a recent spate of kidnappings in the capital.

This is not the first time Dr. Boulos and Haiti's business elite had pressured the UN to act against supposed bandits in the capital. Last May, Boulos and the ultra-right Haitian Chamber of Commerce had sought to cover-up accusations of human rights violations committed by the Haitian police using similar tactics. An HIP article dated June 12, 2005 entitled, "There is no political persecution in Haiti" reported:

In the absence of holding the police accountable, the only thing lacking was an official justification for the U.N.'s continuing collaboration with the police and turning a blind-eye to their human rights record. On May 27, this justification was provided by the Haitian elite and delivered by the President of the Haitian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Dr. Reginald Boulos. During this meeting between the business community and Haiti's Chief of Police Leon Charles, Boulos demanded the U.S.-installed

government of Gerard Latortue allow the business community to form their own private security firms and arm them with automatic weapons. This was clearly a demand to legalize the business community's own private militias to kill what Boulos, and others in his circle, have referred to as "Lavalas bandits." Boulos also suggested the Latortue regime allow businesses to withhold taxes for one month and use the money to buy more powerful weapons for the police on the international market. These statements served the dual purpose of pressuring the U.N. with the image of government sanctioned private militias killing off Lavalas supporters while providing another pretext for the Bush administration to lift the 14 year-old arms embargo against Haiti. "If they don't allow us to do this then we'll take on our own initiative and do it anyway" Boulos threatened.

Following Boulos statements, Chief of Police Leon Charles addressed the business leaders and further politicized the issue of violence and insecurity casting it as a "war against urban guerillas" bent on destabilizing the Haitian government. Without saying Lavalas, Charles used the code word that has come to describe Aristide's political party among Haiti's entrenched elites, "bandits."

In the days following May 27, other members of Haiti's business elite began to criticize the U.N. for being too soft on the "bandits" demanding they take harsher action. Industrialist and virulent Aristide opponent, Charles Henry Baker, took to the airwaves on May 30 and pushed it one step further by accusing U.N. forces of providing protection to the "bandits." Baker stated on Radio Metropole, "Yesterday morning, when I saw MINUSTAH [UN Stabilization Mission in Haiti] troops positioned on the Airport Road, I told myself we were in big trouble. Because the presence of MINUSTAH troops is, I believe, a form of protection for the armed bandits and nothing more. The bandits are indeed at work in these places. As for the police [pauses] and as for the MINUSTAH troops, once they hear shooting, they just get inside their tanks for protection and do nothing. Meanwhile, the bandits do whatever they want."

Charles Henry Baker, a wealthy sweatshop owner and prominent member of the Group 184, is currently running for Haiti's presidency and is seen as the preferred choice of the business community. The Group 184 is the so-called civil society initiative that organized to destabilize the government of Aristide with funding from United States, France and Canada. The last pressure campaign mounted by the business community against the UN resulted in several high-profile raids into poor neighborhoods including a massacre of civilians on July 6 in Cite Soleil.

Following the death of Lt. Gen. Bacellar, the U.N. named controversial Chilean Gen. Eduardo Aldunate Herman as the interim commander. A brief history of Aldunate is available from the following article from the School of the Americas Watch:

SOA Grad and Former Pinochet Operative Leading Forces in Haiti

On October 17th, the Chilean Government admitted that Gen. Eduardo Aldunate, second in command of its military forces in Haiti, was linked to the disbanded National Intelligence Central (CNI), oppressive military forces that operated under the dictatorship of Augusto Pinochet (1973-1990). The charge was initially denied by the Minister of Defense and the Army Chief.

SOA Watch records show that "Aldunate Herman Eduardo" took the Basic Officer Orientation at the School of the Americas in 1974. To date, there are at least 10 other former high-ranking officials under

Pinochet who attended or taught at the SOA. Among them are the former heads of the CNI and DINA secret police, the officers who tortured and murdered a U.N. official, those who participated in the assault on the residence of president Salvador Allende, and who operated the Villa Grimaldi, Tres Alamos and Cuatro Alamos concentration camps for political prisoners.

The associations are made more grave in light comments by rebel leader turned Haitian Police force top, Guy Philippe, stating his admiration of the former dictator, adding, "Pinochet made Chile what it is." A 1994 report by the National Commission on Political Imprisonment and Torture (known as the Valech Commission) catalogued more than 27,000 confirmed cases of imprisonment and the most grotesque forms of torture under Pinochet.

There is no word yet regarding whether the general will continue in Chile's military intervention in Haiti, in the wake of the ouster of Constitutional President Jean Bertrand Aristide in 2004. Carmen Soria, daughter of a Spanish diplomat who was tortured and killed in 1976, who first made the Aldunate accusation, plans to appeal to UN Secretary General Kofi Annan to have Aldunate replaced, and demanded the resignation of Chilean Minister of Defense Jaime Rabinet.

Guy Philippe, who led para-military forces from the Dominican Republic to force the ouster of Aristide on February 29, 2004, is currently a candidate for president in Haiti's upcoming elections. Elections have been postponed four times over the past four months and a new date has yet to be announced.

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NGOs call on UN members to banish sale of arms

Tuesday, 10 January 2006

By Zimbeat Zimbeat

African News Dimension, South Africa

The Control Arms Campaign, an organisation fighting arms proliferation has called on UN member states to govern the sale of weapons which have led to bloody conflicts across the world. This comes ahead of a UN meeting this week to prepare the ground for a conference on small arms controls in June. Control Arms Campaign argues that existing arms controls are powerless to protect innocent civilians. There is no international agreement governing the transfer of arms.

"In 2006, the world has a choice. Either it continues to ignore the massive human cost of arms proliferation or it finally acts to control the arms trade," says Colin Roche, Advocacy Executive of Oxfam Ireland.

"Governments must kick start negotiations on an international Arms Trade Treaty this year," the Control Arms Campaign said yesterday as the UN launched its first major review of small arms controls in five years.

Existing arms controls are powerless to protect innocent civilians, according to three reports on the human cost of arms transfers to Haiti, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and Sierra Leone launched yesterday by the Campaign. Amnesty International has documented the involvement of an Irish registered company in the shipment of weapons to both DRC and Sierra Leone.

"No one but a criminal would knowingly sell a gun to a murderer, yet governments can sell weapons to regimes with a history of human rights violations or to countries where weapons will go to war criminals," added Roche.

There is no international agreement governing the transfer of arms. Amnesty International argues that by contrast, there is a legally-binding global treaty governing the transfer between countries of items such as dinosaur bones and old postage stamps.

"Haiti, Democratic Republic of Congo and Sierra Leone manufacture very few arms, yet they have been flooded with weapons, which have been used to kill, maim, displace and impoverish hundreds of thousands of people," said Jim Loughran, Amnesty International's Campaigns and Communications Manager.

"Time and again, peacekeeping efforts have been undermined by the failure of governments to introduce effective arms controls. For the sake of millions of men, women and children who live in continual fear of armed violence, world leaders must seize this historic opportunity to begin negotiations on an Arms Trade Treaty," added Loughran.

The Control Arms campaign is a joint initiative by Amnesty International, Oxfam International and the International Action Network on Small Arms (IANSA). It aims to reduce arms proliferation and misuse and to convince governments to introduce a binding arms trade treaty.

UN must act to control arms trade - campaigners

09 Jan 2006

Reuters

LONDON, Jan 9 - The United Nations must this week pave the way for a treaty to control the sale of small arms that were behind the deaths of one million people since member states last discussed the issue in 2001, campaigners said on Monday.

Delegates from U.N. member states hold a preparatory meeting in New York on Monday ahead of a June conference on small arms.

"In 2006, the world has a choice. Either it continues to ignore the massive human cost of arms proliferation or it finally acts to control the arms trade," Barbara Stocking, director of Oxfam, said in a statement.

Oxfam International, Amnesty International and the International Action Network on Small Arms, which make up the Control Arms Campaign, urged U.N. delegates to prepare the ground for a set of global principles on arms sales that could be bound into an international treaty.

The U.N. is undertaking a major review of small arms controls and is due to meet on June 26.

The sale of small arms leads to the killing and maiming of hundreds of thousands of innocent people, said the Control Arms Campaign, as it published reports on the impact of arms trade on Haiti, the Democratic Republic of Congo and Sierra Leone.

Campaigners argue there are international treaties controlling the transfer of dinosaur bones and old postage stamps but no comprehensive agreement on arms.

Arms sales have undermined peace keeping efforts in Sierra Leone while, in Haiti, armed violence in the capital Port-au-Prince has increased uncertainty that credible and peaceful elections can be held in coming months, the group said.

"Haiti, Democratic Republic of Congo and Sierra Leone manufacture very few arms, yet they have been flooded with weapons, which have been used to kill, maim, displace and impoverish hundreds of thousands of people," said Denise Searle, Amnesty International's Senior Campaigns Director.

The European Union in October backed the idea of creating an international treaty on the sale of small arms. The bloc agreed the U.N. was the only forum capable of overseeing the move.

Green Party calls for emergency review of Haiti policy

CCM Matthews

Jan. 8, 2006

OTTAWA, ONTARIO--- The Canadian government must put an end to its unconstitutional actions in Haiti, said Green Party leader Jim Harris. "Canada must respect the inherent right of the Haitian people to self-determination and democratic processes," Harris added.

Paul Martin's Liberals have been sinking deeper into this human rights debacle since their cooperation with France and the United States to depose Haiti's democratically elected President on February 29, 2004 and install an interim government that has since been responsible for brutal repression and gross violations of human rights.

The Green Party believes that Canada's disgraceful involvement must be reversed, and Canada must halt all aid, as well as training being provided by the RCMP to the Haitian National Police, who have been responsible for massacres and assassinations of civilians since the coup in 2004. The detention of political prisoners in Haiti must also be condemned.

As the political and human rights situation in Haiti worsens, the Green Party of Canada is calling for an immediate independent review and re-orientation of Canadian foreign policy activity towards that troubled nation. "A full and independent review will prove that Canada's recent Haiti policy was and is a stunning series of miscalculations and mistakes," said Green Party Foreign Affairs Critic Eric Walton.

The Haiti policy review should consider whether the United States, Canada, and France were openly and strategically involved in supporting the process that led to the coup and exile of a democratically elected president.

The ongoing attempts to cover over the flagrant violation of the Haitian Constitution with new elections, now delayed for a fifth time, have been plagued with brutal violence and abuse of fundamental democratic principles.

"The continued imprisonment of opposition party leaders on politically motivated charges makes a mockery of the elections. "Canada and the U.N. should be demanding the immediate release of all political prisoners in Haiti", said Walton.

As an alternative to the upcoming elections in Haiti, the Green Party believes the Canadian government should promote a broadly representative Haitian Peace and Renewal Process in a safe third country, ensuring the security of all participants.

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**Haiti protests in Montreal
Global National, Canada
Sunday, January 08, 2006**

MONTREAL -- Following the shocking suicide this weekend of the Commander of the UN Mission to Haiti, hundreds of people protested through the streets of Montreal today. They were calling for more international help to stop the chaotic cycle of violence, still plaguing the Caribbean island.

Almost two years ago, Haitian President Jean Bertrand Aristide was driven from office - sending the Caribbean nation into chaos.

The island was plagued by rampant violence, criminal gangs and corruption.

UN Peace keepers, including Canadians, have so far failed to bring stability back to Haiti.

Now that mission is in crisis, after the suicide this weekend of the mission's commander - but Ottawa is vowing to stay the course.

**Haiti: On the January 9 (2006) Strike
by BO - Batay Ouvriyé
anarkismo.net
Sunday, Jan 8 2006**

January 6th, 2006

For us of Batay Ouvriye, this is a call that is directly and openly against our interests, we of the popular masses. In the solution they are requesting – and building -, the strike is a first step. The next will be against us, since already in the first one, they don't take into account the true nature and true forms of OUR problems in the question of insecurity. In truth, broadly shooting down residents of the popular neighborhoods (the strike heads might as well ask for bombs to be dropped massively on them) solves the gang problem, for all they are concerned.

Batay Ouvriye firmly opposes the strike call put out for January 9th, 2006. Yes, we realize the MINUSTAH politicians are mocking the population, while supposedly “stabilizing”, they're actually reinforcing their domination day after day. Yes, we clearly know the MINUSTAH soldiers are establishing all sorts of rackets with the very gangs they're supposed to be fighting. Yes, we clearly think that the directionless violence these gangs are operating should be completely eliminated from the country (it isn't in favor of the workers, it is against the masses themselves, as we just denounced it and demonstrated it in our last January 2nd communiqué).

But we also clearly know also that:

1. The group which sent out this appeal has never been in solidarity in the least with all the mobilization of worker and popular organizations who've been attempting to fight against the rising cost of living and gas prices, or in support of the small merchants and cooperative members whose money was stolen, etc... Quite the contrary, they benefited from the misery spreading out over all the popular masses from day to day. They're the big businessmen establishing the prices of all the products and as long as their own profits were guaranteed by the government, then they were all set.
2. The group who called out for the strike is settling its own business, period. It's solving its minor disagreements with the MINUSTAH. It's not that it is against the presence of foreign troops occupying the country. On the contrary, it wishes to reinforce the troops' presence and thinks, works, in order for this to occur.
3. Actually, this group supports the blind massacres the MINUSTAH is carrying out in our neighborhoods, since it even asks for them to happen more, openly declaring there should be a pre-existing fund to “help” the number of innocent victims destined to be killed in our neighborhoods!

For us of Batay Ouvriye, this is a call that is directly and openly against our interests, we of the popular masses. In the solution they are requesting – and building -, the strike is a first step. The next will be against us, since already in the first one, they don't take into account the true nature and true forms of OUR problems in the question of insecurity. In truth, broadly shooting down residents of the popular

neighborhoods (the strike heads might as well ask for bombs to be dropped massively on them) solves the gang problem, for all they are concerned.

This is why we don't support this call in the least. Even if, for us in the popular masses, the problem of gang and MINUSTAH widespread violence has to find a solution, it is not in the form the bourgeois are seeking to ram it down our throats that we should accept it to be solved. Our problem doesn't have the same nature as theirs and the solution they're suggesting, while appearing to have common immediate interests with ours, will immediately turn against us.

OUR solution is in our struggle and independent organization, in which the true nature and form of the problem are clear and guiding our action. In our neighborhoods, we can find the way to vanquish the terror and repression both the gangs and the MINUSTAH are leading against us in the context of a truly popular resistance with the workers in central position. The solution certainly isn't in lending our strength to the bourgeois who immediately intend to have these forces come annihilate us blindly!

DOWN WITH THE STRIKE ORDER THAT'S PREPARING A BLOODBATH AGAINST US!

FORWARD THE STRUGGLE AND INDEPENDENT ORGANIZATION OF THE POPULAR MASSES, WITH THE WORKERS IN CENTRAL POSITION!

<http://www.batayouvriye.org/>

UN urges speedy Haiti elections

BBC News

Jan 6, 2006

Many voters have not received election cards, say Haiti officials

The UN Security Council has called on Haiti's interim government to hold elections by 7 February. It made the announcement after holding an emergency session to debate the continuing postponement of elections.

When a fourth delay was confirmed last week, Haitian officials accused the UN and the Organization of American States (OAS) of failing to play their part in preparing the election.

Both the UN and the OAS deny that they have failed in their task.

The poll was due to have been held on Sunday. It would have been the first since President Jean-Bertrand Aristide was ousted in February 2004.

The Security Council called on Haiti to "expeditiously announce new and definitive dates for the elections, the first round to be held within weeks, but no later than February 7, 2006".

Reading a statement, the current council president, Tanzania's UN envoy Augustine Mahiga, said the elections should take place in accordance "with international democratic standards, and other conditions conducive to the widest possible participation".

Plagued by violence

"The Security Council reiterates that the future holding of elections is a fundamental step towards the restoration of democracy and stability in Haiti," he went on.

The statement expressed concern "over the deterioration of security" in the Haitian capital, Port-au-Prince, and called on Haitian police and the UN mission in Haiti to "intensify their co-operation to improve security and to restore and maintain the rule of law".

Haiti - one of the poorest countries in the world - has been plagued by political and criminal violence.

In announcing the election's fourth postponement, Haiti officials said many of the country's 3.5 million registered voters had not received their electoral identification cards.

But the head of the OAS mission in Haiti, Denneth Modeste, said the cards had been ready in September, but election officials had asked the OAS to hold off distribution because polling stations had not yet been chosen.

The Electoral Council's Secretary-General, Rosemond Pradel, said last week he was sick of watching foreigners sit around spending money without achieving results.

Haiti blames kidnappings on Colombians, politics

Fri Jan 6, 2006

By Joseph Guylor Delva

Reuters

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti -- Haiti's police chief blames Colombian drug dealers and political groups for a wave of pre-election kidnappings that has turned the Haitian capital into one of the region's most lawless cities.

Police chief Mario Andresol said the violence was aimed at destabilizing the government as the troubled Caribbean country struggles to hold its first election since former President Jean-Bertrand Aristide was ousted in an armed revolt in February 2004.

Haiti's presidential election, originally scheduled for November, has been postponed several times because of disorganization, logistical problems and general instability. It is now likely to take place in February.

"It is clear that the increase in violence and kidnappings is in part politically motivated," Andresol told Reuters in an interview on Thursday. He promised to arrest the masterminds but did not identify any suspects.

At the same time, he said Colombian drug traffickers had taken refuge in Cite Soleil, Haiti's largest and most dangerous slum and the place where most kidnapping victims appear to be taken and held until their relatives pay out money.

Police sources and business leaders estimate at least 1,900 people were held for ransom between March and December -- snatched from the streets and held in Port-au-Prince slums under the nose of a 9,000-member U.N. peacekeeping force.

"Since it has become more difficult to conduct their drug activities, Colombian traffickers have turned to the kidnapping activity in Cite Soleil where they took refuge," Andresol said, accusing the Colombians of running the shacks where kidnapping victims are held.

The Haitian police do not give out any official statistics on the number of kidnappings. But a police inspector-general said on condition he not be identified that around 1,900 people had been held for ransom in the last 10 months.

The police official said dozens of officers from Haiti's notoriously corrupt police force were involved.

The president of Haiti's Chamber of Commerce, Reginald Boulos, said about 400 people, including several businessmen, were kidnapped in December alone.

The business community planned a general strike on Monday to protest the lack of public security and to denounce what it views as inaction by the Brazilian-led U.N. force and the U.N. mission head, Juan Gabriel Valdes.

"Mr. Valdes and the U.N. force delight in doing nothing to solve the problem," Boulos said.

A U.N. spokesman in Port-au-Prince, David Wimhurst, rejected the charges and said U.N. troops were increasing the number of checkpoints in the city to try to restore security.

"These accusations are not justified," Wimhurst said.

Officials of the interim government that was appointed after Aristide fled into exile have long urged the U.N. force to be more muscular in going after street gangs and gunmen.

Police chief Andresol said his force, which now numbers 6,000 police, did not have the weapons, training or expertise needed to go after gangs in no-go zones like Cite Soleil.

"You cannot ask the police to intervene in situations which require military action," he said. "They could be massacred."

Argentina Concerned with Haiti Elections

Prensa Latina

Jan. 6, 2006

Buenos Aires, Jan 6 (Prensa Latina) Argentina voiced its unease with the new postponement of elections in Haiti and urged the institutions involved to act as soon as possible.

It also convened a meeting for Jan 17 of the countries militarily involved, to assess the situation and redesign future actions as well as to hold immediate elections without further delay.

Foreign Ministry sources said Minister Jorge Taiana instructed its ambassadors to the UN and the Organization of American States to transmit these views.

Deputy Foreign Minister Roberto Garcia Moritan briefed the OAS general secretary, stressing that neighbor countries are setting February as the final deadline.

Taiana recalled that his country joined international efforts by integrating the UN Stabilization Mission in Haiti set up by the UN Security Council.

To coordinate actions in Haiti, the Foreign and Defense Ministries of Argentina, Brazil, Chile and Uruguay have arranged a mechanism called "2x4 on Haiti", also integrated by Ecuador, Guatemala and Peru.

**Coup payoff in Haiti:
BO's "smoking gun," the \$100,000 NED grant
THIS WEEK IN HAITI
January 4 - 10, 2006 Vol. 23, No. 43
by Jeb Sprague
Haïti Progres**

Both before and after the Feb. 29, 2004 coup d'État in Haiti, Washington infiltrated "democracy promotion" programs (also known as "democracy enhancement") into almost every sector of Haitian civil society: political parties, media, human rights groups, student groups, vote monitoring organizations, business associations, and labor organizations.

Recently declassified National Endowment for Democracy (NED) documents reveal that a "leftist" workers' organization, Batay Ouvriye (BO), which promoted and called for the overthrow of the constitutionally elected government of President Jean-Bertrand Aristide, was the targeted beneficiary of a US \$99,965 NED grant routed through the AFL-CIO's American Center for International Solidarity (ACILS). Listed in NED's "Summary of Projects Approved in FY 2005" for Haiti, the grant states, "ACILS will work with the May 1st Union Federation- Batay Ouvriye [ESPM-BO] to train workers to organize and educate fellow workers."

The NED, which is funded through the U.S. State Department, provided the grant to ACILS, also known as the Solidarity Center. The grant money is then to be used by the Solidarity Center to fund and aid Batay Ouvriye's labor organizing activities for 2005-2006.

Statements made by both Batay Ouvriye and Solidarity Center officials suggest that there is further funding of the former by the latter. In a recent telephone interview with Canadian freelance journalist Anthony Fenton, a Batay Ouvriye leader Paul Philomé admitted that his organization had received US \$20,000 from the Solidarity Center. A Solidarity Center official also recently said at a Dec. 22 public meeting in San Francisco that ACILS provided approximately US \$13,000 to the Batay Ouvriye this past year. This funding appears to be in addition to the NED grant, since Solidarity Center officials have stated that the NED grant will not be spent until 2006.

Batay Ouvriye has been waging a successful campaign to gain high-level support from labor federations like the AFL-CIO, which shuns trade unionists who supported Haiti's constitutional democracy and are today arrested, persecuted, and harassed. The NED grant explains that NGOs and trade unions from the U.S. and Canada will meet with Batay Ouvriye to discuss working conditions in Haiti.

The Solidarity Center-administered NED support for Batay Ouvriye fits neatly into the U.S. State Department's "democracy promotion" strategy of undermining and destabilizing Haitian self-determination. Instead of supporting unions which did not call for the overthrow of the elected government of Jean-Bertrand Aristide, the AFL-CIO, along with mainstream international labor centers, such as the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU) and its Latin American regional affiliate the Organización Regional Interamericana de Trabajadores (ORIT), has sought to strengthen marginal groups like Batay Ouvriye and the Coordination Syndicale Haïtienne (CSH), which taxed the Aristide government as "anti-worker" and "criminal."

Workers affiliated with public sector unions, often seen as supporters of the elected government, have been fired and persecuted by the thousands. In a recent radio interview, Isabel Macdonald, a Canadian journalist conducting interviews in Port-au-Prince, explained that between 2,000 and 3,000 unionized workers of the state phone company TELECO have been laid off since the 2004 coup, with many of those fired placed arbitrarily on the Haitian National Police's "Wanted" lists (Listen to the Interview with Isabel Macdonald at www.wakeupwithcoop.org).

When questioned why the AFL-CIO was not supporting or funding unions whose membership supported the overthrown government, a high level Solidarity Center official, in June 2005, referred to pro-Lavalas trade unionists as "revolutionary ideologues."

Batay Ouvriye, like other organizations heavily dependent on foreign "democracy promotion" funding, has failed to stand up and organize against the massacres being carried out by the Haitian National Police and the United Nations MINUSTAH force. The Pacifica Radio network's Flashpoints News correspondent Kevin Pina writes: "Is it not patently obvious that, for Batay [Ouvriye] and their supporters, the killing, jailing, and forced exile of thousands since Feb. 29, 2004 are not acknowledged nor condemned by them? Can their politics be so sectarian and insular as to pretend none of this ever happened?... Members of Batay [Ouvriye] are not under fire in their communities nor the objects of this campaign of repression for the simple reason that they are not seen as a threat by the US-installed government."

Pina goes on to write: "We can get trapped into a false dialogue with pretty words like bourgeois, proletariat and vanguard, but it will never excuse their silence in the wake of this human tragedy."

Pierre Labossiere of the Haiti Action Committee sees the U.S. government grants to Batay Ouvriye as a "pay-off for their voicing no opposition to the 2004 coup."

Channeling "democracy promotion" funds through labor unions is just one of the ways that the U.S. government has sought to subvert popular democracy in Haiti. "Democracy promotion" has facilitated, what William Robinson, the author of *Promoting Polyarchy: Globalization, US intervention, and Hegemony*, calls a "consensual mechanism of transnational social control," by which a small minority elite can manipulate civil society and government. Through co-opting labor unions, human rights groups and political organizations, "democracy promotion" casts a wide net of social and political influence.

Recently the Washington, D.C.-based think-tank, the Haiti Democracy Project, financed in large part by members of Group 184 and board-membered by ex-State Department officials, put up a link on its website to Batay Ouvriye's "grassroots" support group.

Batay Ouvriye and its supporters have continually denied that the organization has received large-scale funding from the U.S. government via the Solidarity Center. Prior to the opening session of the International Tribunal on Haiti on Sep. 23, 2005 in Washington, DC (see *HaVti ProgrPs*, Vol. 23, No. 37, 11/23/2005), Batay Ouvriye's relationship with the Solidarity Center was not public knowledge. Since then, the organization has only admitted that it received from the Solidarity Center US \$3,500.

Batay Ouvriye and its supporters have sought to minimize the importance of the grant, saying it was a small sum of money. That argument will not be possible following these latest revelations.

Here is a summary of some of the defenses that Batay Ouvriye and its supporters have offered to revelations about its State Department funding:

On December 9, 2005, Mario Pierre, a representative of the Batay Ouvriye in New York City, claimed his organization received only "\$3,500 from the Solidarity Center," while charging that those individuals and organizations criticizing his organization for accepting U.S. State Department funding were "doing the work of the CIA."

On November 25, 2005, Charles Arthur, the head organizer of the Haiti Support Group in England, wrote, "I think that the fact that Batay Ouvriye received US\$3,500 from the Solidarity Center to help the 350 workers should not distract anyone from appreciating the organization's fantastic work."

On November 28, 2005, Batay Ouvriye supporter Daniel Simidor wrote: "All [this author] can 'prove' is that the workers' organization accepted a \$3,500 contribution to their strike fund from the AFL-CIO Solidarity Center in Haiti. Sprague's contention that Batay Ouvriye accepted 'monetary aid and oversight' from the US government is based not on facts."

On November 29, 2005, Batay Ouvriye supporter Mitchell Cohen of the Brooklyn Greens wrote: "Organizations and individuals who are spreading this lie need to retract it immediately and apologize for their reckless, sectarian behavior. If it turns out that you actually document that a particular group, in this case Batay Ouvriye, has received funds from the CIA or State Department, then I'll listen..Wow, what a smoking gun! (I say sarcastically)."

In late November, 2005, a supporter of Batay Ouvriye, Cort Greene, posted on the internet: "Just from looking at documents provided by J. Sprague and others, I have not seen any proof that Batay Ouvriye is a creation or in the service of U.S. imperialism."

On December 14, 2005, Yanick Etienne, a Batay Ouvriye leader, speaking at a New York City gathering, in regards to the criticism leveled against her organization, failed to mention the NED's \$100,000 grant via the AFL-CIO's Solidarity Center.

In December 2005, the Solidarity Center updated its website on Haiti (see <http://www.solidaritycenter.org/content.asp?contentid=531>). "With funds provided by the AFL-CIO, the Solidarity Center immediately forwarded \$3,500 to Ouanaminthe, where ESPM-BO and the [subsidiary union] SOKOWA Executive Board distributed these funds," the site reports, but once again it does not reveal the much larger funding of Batay Ouvriye.

The Solidarity Center continues to refuse to open its books to show its full funding relationship with Batay Ouvriye. In September 2005, Samantha Tate, a Senior Program Officer for the Americas at the Solidarity Center, contacted my academic department chair at California State University of Long Beach, attempting to isolate and discredit this research.

Jeb Sprague is a researcher, freelance journalist, and a graduate student at California State University of Long Beach. To read more on the AFL-CIO's support for anti-democracy labor in Haiti, see his article **Supporting a Leftist Opposition to Lavalas: The AFL-CIO's Solidarity Center and Batay Ouvriye** both in *Haiti Progrés* (see Vol. 23, No. 37, 11/23/2005) and *Monthly Review* (mrzine.monthlyreview.org/sprague211105.html) Contact him at Jebsprague@mac.com or visit his blog at <http://www.freehaiti.net>.

THIS WEEK IN HAITI * January 4 - 10, 2006 Vol. 23, No. 43

Dyer: Haitian old order cannot be restored

Gwynne Dyer

The Salt Lake Tribune

January 9, 2006

"We are not going to participate (in the election) without Aristide," said Father Gérard Jean-Juste, whom many Haitians see as the natural successor to Jean-Bertrand Aristide, the priest-president who was overthrown by the United States in 2004. "It's going to be like the election in Iraq. It will be futile."

That was last February, and as part of the process of trying to break Aristide's support among the Haitian poor, the "interim government" installed by the U.S., France and Canada jailed Jean-Juste in July on the implausible charge that he murdered a journalist. But the elections that might finally give the foreign intervention some legitimacy have just been postponed for the fourth time.

They said they were canceling the vote on Jan. 8 because of problems with the new electronic voting system, but the real problem is that they still don't control a lot of the country. In particular, they still don't control Cité Soleil, the seething shanty-town that dominates Port-au-Prince, the ramshackle capital where a third of the 8.5 million Haitians live.

In Cité Soleil, Aristide is still the president. When United Nations troops in Haiti conducted a pre-dawn raid there last July, it turned into a five-hour firefight. The U.N. troops killed the five "gang members" they were allegedly after, but local residents saw the dead men as martyrs for Aristide and placed photos of the exiled president on their bodies. They did the same for 20 other residents of the slum who they claim were killed by the "blue helmets" - and since then, U.N. troops have rarely dared to enter Cité Soleil.

Haiti is responding badly to foreign intervention because it is a real country with a tragic history. Haitians may have no money, little education and few prospects, but they actually know who they are.

They are a whole country descended from people who were kidnapped from Africa, heirs of the greatest slave rebellion in history two centuries ago. They are the survivors of an attempted genocide by Napoleon, whose strategy for reconquering France's richest colony involved exterminating every black over 12 and restocking Haiti with more docile slaves imported from Africa. They are also the victims of the long, sad aftermath of Haiti's victory and independence.

With all the whites dead or fled, the enslaved former peasants from Africa inevitably ended up being dominated in independent Haiti by the so-called "mulattos," locally born ex-slaves, many of them mixed-race, who spoke good French and understood how business, government and diplomacy worked. The new mulatto elite created an army, recruited mostly from the black majority, whose main job was to keep other blacks under control, and generation after generation they cooperated with foreigners to exploit their countrymen.

Jean-Bertrand Aristide, a Catholic priest nurtured on liberation theology, became the hero of the poor black masses because he promised to end all that. He was elected president by a landslide in Haiti's first free election in 1990, after the reigning dictator, "Baby Doc" Duvalier, was forced into exile, but the unreformed army overthrew him the next year with the warm approval of the elder Bush administration.

The Clinton administration used 24,000 American troops to put Aristide back in power in 1994, but discovered too late that he was a real revolutionary. He disbanded the army on his return, and when the old elite started using gangs of ex-soldiers to defend their privileges, he used similar gangs recruited

from amongst the poor to cow them. His policies were incoherent, he was more a demagogue than a democrat, and Haiti remained the poorest country in the Americas - but the poor still loved him. Especially after the U.S. overthrew him again.

Aristide, in exile in South Africa, still sees himself as the legitimate president of Haiti, and so do a lot of Haitians. They will not be allowed to vote for him even if the "interim government" does eventually manage to stage an election, but that means that nothing will be settled and the violence will not abate. Aristide may never return, but the old order cannot be restored.

Gwynne Dyer is a London-based independent journalist.