

Freed Haiti priest in U.S. for treatment

By DENISE KALETTE

ASSOCIATED PRESS WRITER

Seattle Post Intelligencer

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Rev. Gerard Jean-Juste holds a religious image as he is taken into Canape Vert hospital in Port-au-Prince, Haiti, Saturday Jan. 28, 2006. Jean-Juste a jailed politically influential Catholic priest, whose supporters say is ill with leukemia, was transferred to a hospital on Saturday after an appeals court in Haiti approved the move, his lawyer said. (AP Photo/Ariana Cubillos)

MIAMI -- A politically influential Roman Catholic priest arrived in Miami on Sunday after Haiti's government granted him a temporary release from jail to be treated for leukemia and pneumonia.

The Rev. Gerard Jean-Juste will be treated at Jackson Memorial Hospital, said Ira Kurzban, an attorney who has worked with the cleric for years.

He has been in prison on suspicion of involvement in the killing of prominent Haitian journalist and poet Jacques Roche. The 59-year-old priest has always denied the allegations.

Kurzban said Haiti buckled under public pressure to allow Jean-Juste to seek treatment in the United States.

"They certainly did not do this willingly and on their own," Kurzban said.

Amnesty International has labeled Jean-Juste, who supports ousted President Jean-Bertrand Aristide, "a prisoner of conscience." He has drawn comparisons to Aristide for his impassioned sermons and advocacy for the poor and has emerged as a prominent figure in the ousted leader's Lavalas Family party.

The Haitian government granted Jean-Juste a provisional release from jail for humanitarian reasons, said Michel Brunache, chief of staff of interim President Boniface Alexandre.

"His leukemia cannot be treated in Haiti," Brunache told the Associated Press. "After his treatment, he has to return to face justice."

A judge cleared Jean-Juste of homicide, but he is charged with weapons possession and criminal conspiracy - charges that the priest denies.

His arrival in Miami pleased Haitian-American activists. A small group of people had gathered at a community center in the city's Little Haiti neighborhood Sunday afternoon.

"It is very good news because we did get the report last week that he was very critical," said Jean-Robert LaFortune, chairman of the Haitian-American Grassroots Coalition. "There has been a community outcry here in Miami to have the prime minister of Haiti free him so he could get adequate care."

In Washington, State Department spokesman Kurtis Cooper said "We welcome the interim Haitian government's humanitarian decision to release Gerard Jean-Juste for the purpose of receiving medical treatment in the United States."

U.S. Sen. Richard Lugar, R-Ind., chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee and a champion of Jean-Juste's, said he was delighted when he received a call from Haiti's interim Prime Minister Gerard Latortue telling him of the release.

The priest's supporters tried to register him as a presidential candidate last fall for the upcoming Feb. 7 elections, but authorities barred his candidacy because he was in prison.

Associated Press reporter Stevenson Jacobs in Port-au-Prince, Haiti, contributed to this report.

Jesse Jackson warned Haiti's coup government that he was coming soon
Haiti Action.net
Jan. 29, 2006

HaitiAction.net - Reverend Jesse Jackson warned Gerard Latortue that he would be on the next plane to Haiti if the seriously ill Father Gerard Jean Juste was not released immediately for medical care.

"... Time is running out for Fr. Gerry, and keeping him out of the hospital for a single day longer will lead to ending his life. I once again appeal to you to use your moral authority including instructing your Minister of Justice to instruct the Commissaire du gouvernement to release Fr. Jean-Juste immediately. Treatment has already been arranged for Fr. Gerry in a Miami hospital and the medics are just waiting for his arrival.

"I respectfully ask you to please instruct [Raymond] Joseph to make the arrangements for my immediate visit to Haiti..."

Rev. Jackson and his Rainbow/PUSH organization have been actively working behind the scenes for Fr. Gerry's release. In response to Rev. Jackson's appeals the coup government had tried to claim that the charade was the fault of Father Jean-Juste's defense team appealing the fabricated charges. The letter exposed the deceit of Gerard Latortue:

"[Raymond] Joseph explained your government's position that Fr. Jean-Juste's appeal of the ordonnance is the main impediment to his release. But the experts I have consulted inform me that the Commissaire du Gouvernement has the authority to provisionally release any prisoner immediately for medical treatment, regardless of the procedural status of the case. Fr. Jean-Juste has agreed to return to court if released, as he has done several times over the past fifteen months, therefore, his urgent release for a life saving medical treatment is very vital and should be acted on immediately.

"Although the matter of the appeal is secondary to saving Fr. Jean-Juste's life, I find it hard to substantiate your position that a criminal defendant facing serious charges should agree to a trial based on documents he considers defective. The stakes here are high- the association de malfaiteurs (criminal conspiracy) charge carries a 3-15 year term of hard labor, but also permanent forfeiture of civil rights, including the right to run for political office; and potential exclusion from the United States, which is essential given the leukemia ravaging his body. I find it disturbing that a defendant would be forced to abandon his rights as a pre-condition to receiving life-saving medical treatment.

"As you know, I know Father Jean-Juste personally and concur with the views of Amnesty International, Human Rights First, and many others including many United States Congressmen and clergy that Gerry is a prisoner of conscience. Indeed, Investigative Judge Peres' dismissal of the 2004 and 2005 murder, kidnapping, and other serious charges against him tend to support this conclusion. I note that Judge Peres found that no evidence of any kind had even been submitted in support of these serious charges."

Rainbow/PUSH Political Director, Butch Wing, stated that the organization remains committed with the People of Haiti and their struggle. "Rev. Jackson traveled with Father Jean-Juste to visit the Pope in

the early 90's. Last month, in December, Jesse visited President Aristide in South Africa." When President Aristide was kidnapped by the U.S. Marines and attempted to isolate him in the Central African Republic, Rev. Jackson was instrumental in getting President Aristide on CNN to tell his story of the forced "rendition."

Ailing priest released from jail in Haiti, must return to stand trial
BY JACQUELINE CHARLES, PABLO BACHELET AND TRENTON DANIEL
Knight Ridder Newspapers
Kansas City Star
January 29, 2006

MIAMI - The Rev. Gerard Jean-Juste is finally free.

Jailed for 192 days in his native Haiti, the influential Catholic priest and former Miami Haitian rights activist, walked into the arms of screaming supporters Sunday - 51 minutes after his flight touched down at Miami International Airport.

"Free at last, free at last," supporters shouted as an ailing Jean-Juste, who has leukemia, walked out of passport control and into the waiting area at MIA's international arrivals terminal.

An hour later, Jean-Juste, 59, was admitted into Jackson Memorial Hospital where he will undergo treatment and tests. Haitian Prime Minister Gerard Latortue told The Miami Herald on Sunday that Haitian and American doctors had confirmed that Jean-Juste is suffering from leukemia.

A staunch supporter of ousted Haitian President Jean-Bertrand Aristide, Jean-Juste is a harsh critic of Haiti's U.S.-backed interim government, which he accused Sunday of being "worse than" the Duvalier family dictatorship. Francois "Papa Doc" and his son Jean-Claude "Baby Doc" Duvalier ruled Haiti for 29 years.

Jean-Juste's imprisonment had become an international headache for the Latortue administration, which until late last week had refused to give in to pressure by Haitian activists, human rights advocates and others to free the priest. Jean-Juste, once viewed as a potential presidential candidate, became a cause celebre for Aristide's political allies who continue to demand his reinstatement as head of state.

Jean-Juste's release is considered provisional. Under a deal, he is required to return to Haiti to stand trial on illegal weapons and criminal conspiracy charges, although by the time he returns there might be a new government which could then decide to drop the charges.

His release comes just days before some 3.5 million registered Haitian voters are expected to head to the polls on Feb. 7 to choose a successor to formally replace Aristide, who fled Haiti in February 2004 in the face of an armed revolt.

Jean-Juste was arrested in July on suspicion of involvement in the abduction and slaying of a well-known Haitian journalist and plotting to assassinate Haitian police officers. The charges were dropped two weeks ago, but a Haitian judge indicted him on lesser charges of illegal weapons possession and criminal conspiracy.

Vowing to continue to fight the charges against him, Jean-Juste, looking thinner and with a swollen neck, told The Herald on Sunday he hopes his freedom will prompt the release of other detained Aristide supporters, including former Haitian Prime Minister Yvon Neptune.

"I feel happy and grateful but I cannot forget the other political prisoners left behind," he said as his sister, Yvette St. Hilaire, 58, and Haitian activists embraced him. "It's a very tough situation for them. I hope my release is the opening of the freedom door."

Under the deal, Jean-Juste was released to receive medical treatment but must return to Haiti to stand trial. Sen. Richard Lugar, R-Ind., chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, and the U.S. State Department negotiated the deal with the Haitian government last week.

Lugar urged Latortue in a letter to release Jean-Juste on humanitarian grounds. Thomas Shannon, the assistant secretary of state for Western Hemisphere Affairs, personally delivered the letter to Latortue in Haiti.

"As you know, Amnesty International designated Father Jean-Juste a prisoner of conscience, and several of my congressional colleagues in the U.S. House of Representatives have called for his release," Lugar said in the Jan. 19 letter.

During a trip to Washington, D.C., late last week, Latortue met with several top State Department officials to talk about Haiti's upcoming elections and Jean-Juste's rapidly deteriorating health.

On Sunday, Latortue called Lugar to inform him that Jean-Juste would be flown to Miami.

"The man is sick, and we do not have the necessary medical facilities in Haiti to treat him. We want to give him a chance to get proper medical care," Latortue told The Miami Herald. "The president (Boniface Alexandre) and I believe humanitarian laws are above national laws and we have to respect human rights. You cannot keep a man in jail without a chance to receive proper medical care."

The State Department along with several U.S. lawmakers, including Lugar and U.S. Rep. Kendrick Meek, D-Fla., issued statements welcoming Jean-Juste's release.

On the ride to Jackson, Fla., Jean-Juste recalled the past six months, detailing how a young woman saved his life when he was attacked by a mob just hours before his July arrest.

He also talked about how in all of his years of fighting against Haitian despots, he had never "experienced such a worse government, a cruel government; worse than Duvalier."

Still, Jean-Juste said he holds hope for Haiti as it approaches election.

"Definitely, things will change for the better. We have to get rid of these officials, de facto officials in power, that is the first thing," he said, as the SUV in which he was traveling pulled up to Jackson Memorial Hospital.

There he was greeted by two doctors, including Paul Farmer, a prominent Harvard infectious disease specialist who confirmed that Jean-Juste has leukemia. Farmer, a Jean-Juste supporter and friend, examined him in jail on Dec. 23.

Farmer told The Miami Herald that Jean-Juste will undergo extensive tests and be treated for pneumonia, which he recently developed.

As word spread through Little Haiti that Jean-Juste was free, supporters cheered.

"That's great, that's great," said Bernard Frederic, 40, a music mixer at Notre Dame d'Haiti Catholic Church in Little Haiti. "He helped a lot of Haitians in South Florida - to get a green card or asylum. Thank God he's been released."

Martin Luther King Jr. Day at Port-au-Prince prison with Father Jean-Juste
Mindanao Daily Mirror, Philippines
Sunday January 29, 2006

We ended our prison visit in Haiti on Martin Luther King Jr. Day with Father Gérard Jean-Juste by standing hand in hand and singing “We Shall Overcome.” Jean-Juste has been in prison since July on sham charges in order to silence his lifelong voice for justice for the poor and democracy for all. Amnesty International has designated him a prisoner of conscience. Many other human rights organizations have taken up his cause. Scores of congressional representatives have called for his release. Hundreds of religious leaders have signed letters to President Bush and to the unelected leaders of Haiti calling for his freedom.

This visit, we have brought an additional 2,000 letters from around the world to Jean-Juste. In the prison in Port-au-Prince, Jean-Juste was in great spirits, frequently laughing. His neck and underarms ached, he said, caused by the cancer threatening his life. He knows he is one serious infection away from death. But he remains unbowed.

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

“I am happy to continue living as a member of our great team of freedom and justice lovers worldwide,” Jean-Juste said. “But I am happy also in case I shall depart for the final voyage. I would happily enter, by the grace of God, enter heaven to see parents, friends, militants, ancestors, apostles, angels, archangels, and be part of the great dynamic mosaic that God has created. I thank all who have worked so hard on my behalf. There are so many supporters, friends, doctors, benefactors, and militants working for me and the rest of the political prisoners here.

Jean-Juste said it feels strange for him to be the one whose rights are being defended, when usually he is fighting for the freedom of others. “Even here [in prison] I try to work with the other prisoners to keep their spirits up and to get them in shape for freedom,” he said. “Freedom is coming, I tell them. We must be ready so we can help free the rest of the people who are unjustly in prison here and around the world.”

As it grew dark, it was time for us to leave. We stood up before the barred windows and joined hands in a circle. First a religious song in creole. Then he prayed for all the prisoners and all the people without food and shelter in Haiti and beyond, then led the Lord’s Prayer. Finally he led us in a loud and spirited rendition of “We Shall Overcome” that echoed off the concrete prison walls. After I hugged Jean-Juste, of his spirit of resistance infected me. And as I walked past the mounted machine guns on the U.N. jeep, I must admit, I do believe we shall overcome one day.

Bill Quigley is a professor at Loyola Law School in New Orleans. Bill is a volunteer lawyer for Father Jean-Juste, assisting attorney Mario Joseph and the Institute for Justice and Democracy in Haiti. This essay was first published in SojoMail, the online version of Sojourners Magazine.

Ambassador Supports Labour Accord With Haiti
Darrin Culmer
The Bahama Journal
Jan. 30, 2006

A proposal by the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) for The Bahamas and other countries in the region to sign labour migration accords with the Government of Haiti has won the support of a key Bahamian diplomat.

Bahamas Ambassador to Haiti Dr. Eugene Newry

According to Bahamas Ambassador to Haiti Dr. Eugene Newry, such agreements between countries like The Bahamas and the Dominican Republic – which have historically received large numbers of Haitian migrants seeking employment – and the Haitian government could help to improve the regulation and control of migration to those countries.

Additionally, a labour migration accord could generate other benefits for both The Bahamas and Haiti, Dr. Newry said.

"This could be economically good for both sides," he said.

"Don't leave the economics out of it because such an arrangement is about more than just improving the structure of the immigration framework. This could also improve the economic structuring. For example, under the old 'contract' arrangement between The Bahamas and the United States back in the 1940s and early 1950s the workers' salaries were actually controlled by the Government of The Bahamas."

Outlining other details of how labour migration accords could be mutually beneficial, Dr. Newry said a more structured approach to engaging Haitian labour could help to satisfy this country's demand for labour and also help with the development of Haiti, the Caribbean's most impoverished nation.

"With the 'contract' that operated back then the salaries of these people were divided into three," he said.

"One third went to the workers for their actual cost of living, a third sent back to the family back in The Bahamas and the rest was actually invested in The Bahamas by the Government of The Bahamas. Basically we could do the same thing and I am absolutely convinced that the authorities in Haiti would approve that."

Earlier this month, the IOM released a report in which it supported the idea of accords between the Government of Haiti and other countries in the region, and also stated that the lack of an appropriate regime for labour migration in Haiti has allowed the irregular flow of Haitian labour to those countries.

"The absence of a legal framework has served to worsen the conditions under which Haitian labour migrant workers are contracted, live and work in," the IOM's chief of mission in Haiti said at that time.

Drawing once again on the example of the 'contract' arrangement that was a prominent part of Bahamian history during the middle part of the last century, Dr. Newry said such a system could help to address some of the challenges identified by the IOM.

"A contract means exactly what it says. It says that the person would come in for example six months, a year or two years, they would come without their families and then they would go home on regularly scheduled vacation, etc," said the ambassador.

"They would get excellent healthcare while they're here and they would have the appropriate housing and all the other accoutrements that go with that kind of contract."

Turning to the Haitian elections which were recently postponed yet again – this time to February 7 – Dr. Newry said he does not expect that exercise will produce an immediate improvement in that country.

"The elections that are scheduled to go on in Haiti in the next two weeks are absolutely necessary for the internal regulation of things, but that will not have any economic effect for years to come," he said.

"It can't. The elections themselves aren't going to change anything except to give an encouragement to the processes of democratisation that will occur over the years to come."

Dr. Newry maintained that in order to help bring about economic improvement in Haiti, concerned parties will have to proceed with initiatives like labour migration accords.

He also indicated, however, that plans are proceeding "quite nicely" for the election in Haiti and cited a statement that the OAS released last Thursday which indicated that outside of Port-au-Prince major upheavals or episodes of violence are not expected in the run-up to the poll.

Jailed Haitian leader Rev. Jean-Juste arrives in Miami
By TRENTON DANIEL AND JACQUELINE CHARLES
Miami Herald
Jan. 29, 2006

Rev. Gérard Jean-Juste, a former Miami Haitian activist who is reportedly suffering from leukemia, arrived in Miami today to seek medical treatment according to his supporters, the Miami Herald has learned.

Jean-Juste set to arrive at 1:22 p.m. Sunday on an American Airlines flight from Port-au-Prince. Jean-Juste is being taken to Jackson Memorial Hospital for treatment.

His provisional release, which requires him to return to the Caribbean nation after treatment to face criminal charges still pending against him, comes six months after his second arrest by Haitian authorities.

An investigative Haitian judge recently dropped murder and government conspiracy charges against him, but indicted him on a lesser illegal weapons charge.

On Saturday, Jean-Juste went to a private hospital for treatment, but had to return to prison after no doctors showed up to admit him.

Haiti frees Aristide ally for US medical treatment

29 Jan 2006

Source: Reuters

By Joseph Guylor Delva

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti, Jan 29 (Reuters) - An ailing priest who was a popular ally of ousted Haitian President Jean-Bertrand Aristide was provisionally released from prison on Sunday and allowed to seek medical treatment in the United States.

Roman Catholic priest Gerard Jean-Juste, jailed on charges his supporters say are politically motivated, left Port-au-Prince and flew to Miami, where he was to be treated for leukemia at the Jackson Memorial hospital, said Michel Brunache, chief of staff of interim President Boniface Alexandre.

His release followed weeks of pressure from U.S. lawmakers and human rights groups on Haiti's unelected interim authorities to free Jean-Juste, who is considered a prisoner of conscience by Amnesty International.

"We had tried to find a medical center in Haiti that could treat him but we could not. We even contacted the U.N. hospital run by the Argentinians ... They did not answer," Brunache told Reuters.

"So we had no other choice. But that does not mean that the case is closed. When he comes back after the treatment, the judicial proceedings will resume."

Jean-Juste was originally accused of involvement in the murder of a journalist. Those charges were dropped, but he now faces charges of having illegal weapons and being involved in illegal gang activity.

Jean-Juste denies the charges, and his supporters say he was jailed by the interim government to prevent him from running for president in elections originally scheduled for November but repeatedly delayed due to violence, disorganization and logistical problems.

The poorest country in the Americas is now due to hold presidential and legislative elections on Feb. 7. Many believe Jean-Juste would have been the favorite had he chosen to run and his supporters tried to get him registered as a candidate but were rebuffed by the electoral authorities.

The interim government under Prime Minister Gerard Latortue was appointed by a council after Aristide fled the country in February 2004, chased from office by an armed revolt and U.S. and French pressure to quit.

Aristide, like Jean-Juste a priest and now in exile in South Africa, was initially regarded as a champion of Haitian democracy, but he faced growing accusations of despotism and corruption. He was also stiffly opposed by Haiti's small and wealthy elite and by U.S. conservatives.

Jailed Haiti priest hospitalized with pneumonia

28 Jan 2006

Reuters

By Joseph Guyler Delva

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti, Jan 28 (Reuters) - A popular ex-adviser to ousted Haitian President Jean-Bertrand Aristide whose imprisonment has drawn international criticism was hospitalized on Saturday with pneumonia, an official said.

Roman Catholic priest Gerard Jean-Juste, previously diagnosed with leukemia, was suffering from a fever and a cough, said Marc Wilkens Jean, commissioner of prisons in the unstable Caribbean country.

"Our doctor said his condition was very serious and recommended that we take him to a hospital to place him under medical supervision," Jean told Reuters after Jean-Juste was taken to a private medical center in Port-au-Prince.

Jean-Juste, imprisoned in July, clutched a picture of the Virgin Mary holding a baby Jesus as he was pushed into the hospital in a wheelchair.

"My heart is beating too fast," he told Reuters, adding that he had been having trouble breathing. Swelling caused by the leukemia was visible on his neck and under one arm.

The fiery priest was originally accused of involvement in the murder of a journalist. Those charges were dropped, but now he is accused of having illegal weapons and being involved in illegal gang activity.

Jean-Juste denies the charges and Amnesty International has called him a prisoner of conscience, punished for criticizing the interim authorities that took over after Aristide was removed in February 2004. Members of the U.S. Congress also have called for his release.

Haiti's interim authorities said they would consider allowing Jean-Juste to travel abroad for treatment -- the first time the government has opened up that possibility.

"We have no objection that he travel if ultimately this is what needs to be done for him to get treatment," said Michel Brunache, chief of staff for interim President Boniface Alexandre.

Jean-Juste and his supporters have called on the government to free him and allow him to seek treatment for his leukemia in the United States, where he lived for many years.

"This is a humanitarian matter. It's a big crime that the government wants to keep me here. They probably want me to die," Jean-Juste said.

Widely viewed as the natural successor to Aristide, Jean-Juste said the government had always wanted to put him behind bars because they believed he wanted to become president. He denies any presidential ambitions.

The first presidential election since Aristide was driven from office has been postponed repeatedly because of violence, disorganization and logistical problems. The vote is now set for Feb. 7.

Four Hostages Released Unharmed in Haiti
By STEVENSON JACOBS Associated Press Writer
2006 The Associated Press
Houston Chronicle
Jan. 29, 2006

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti — Three French citizens and a Haitian who were kidnapped near a volatile slum outside of the capital have been released unharmed, French and U.N. officials said Saturday.

A nun in her 80s was released Friday afternoon, while two French volunteers and their Haitian driver were released late Friday, said U.N. spokesman David Wimhurst. They were taken to the French Embassy in Port-au-Prince after their release.

"They're fine. They're OK," Wimhurst said, adding that an anti-kidnapping squad of U.N. civilian police and Haitian authorities had negotiated the group's release.

"No ransom was paid. The anti-kidnapping squad resolved it," he said, declining to give further details.

The four were abducted Wednesday on a road running between Haiti's international airport and Cite Soleil, a slum on the outskirts of Port-au-Prince used as a base by heavily armed gangs. U.N. officials had previously identified one of the hostages as a French priest but later said he was a volunteer.

The kidnapers initially demanded \$500,000 for the hostages' release, said French Embassy spokesman Eric Bosc. He said the hostages were held in Cite Soleil and were not harmed during the ordeal.

Wimhurst said the fact that one hostage was a nun may have contributed to the kidnapers' decision to release the group without a ransom.

"When you kidnap a nun who isn't hurting anybody and doesn't have a political agenda, that puts the kidnapers in a very bad light," he said.

A wave of kidnappings has plagued the Western Hemisphere's poorest nation, where criminal gangs have flourished in the aftermath of the rebellion that toppled President Jean-Bertrand Aristide in February 2004.

Last month, there were 162 reported kidnap cases in Haiti, compared to 37 so far in January, the U.N. reported. The actual number was probably much higher because victims' families often prefer to negotiate with kidnapers rather than notify police.

The abductions highlighted Haiti's shaky security ahead of the Feb. 7 elections, which have been repeatedly postponed due to poor organization and violence.

With elections approaching, 9,000 U.N. soldiers and police have increasingly tried to gain control of Cite Soleil, home to 200,000 people living in squalor and a stronghold of armed gangs allegedly linked to Aristide.

Ailing priest is back in jail

Former Miami Haitian activist and influential Catholic priest the Rev. Gérard Jean-Juste is back in jail after being unable to be admitted to a Port-au-Prince hospital.

BY JACQUELINE CHARLES

Miami Herald

Jan. 29, 2006

A pale and sickly Rev. Gérard Jean-Juste, who reportedly is suffering from leukemia, was transferred to a private hospital Saturday only to be returned hours later to his Port-au-Prince prison after doctors failed to examine him.

William Quigley, a U.S. lawyer and friend of the former Miami Haitian activist, said an ailing Jean-Juste waited for two hours at Canape Vert Hospital for two Haitian oncologists who never showed up. "No one could find the oncologists and no other doctors there wanted to admit him as a cancer patient," Quigley told The Miami Herald in a telephone interview.

Quigley said on Friday the Haitian appeals court hearing Jean-Juste's case, ordered that he be transported to the hospital so that two oncologists -- named in the order -- could determine if there was treatment for Jean-Juste in Haiti. He was escorted Saturday to the hospital by Haitian National Police and U.N. officials.

"There was some hope he might actually fly home to Florida today to receive treatment," said Quigley, who was at Jean-Juste's side all day. He said Jean-Juste, who earlier held up a peace sign and yellow beaded rosary to reporters from the jail's second story, was feverish and complaining of aches.

"Everyone knows serious radiation and chemotherapy is not available in Haiti. In a sense we are very disappointed he was sent back to jail now," Quigley said. "Tomorrow is a new day."

But every day that Jean-Juste doesn't receive treatment is critical, said Dr. Jennifer Furin, a Harvard infectious disease specialist who examined the priest two weeks ago and again this week while visiting Haiti.

"He has pneumonia and has signs that his leukemia is progressing rapidly at this point," Furin said from Boston, just an hour after arriving from Haiti. "He is very pale, and has bruising inside his mouth. There are signs that his bone marrow has been overtaken and it needs to be treated aggressively."

Furin said she was in Haiti on Jan. 10, when the interim government's doctors confirmed that Jean-Juste has leukemia.

Meanwhile Jean-Juste's supporters held a small vigil in downtown Miami on Saturday afternoon, vowing to keep the pressure on Haitian and U.S. authorities to release him.

An influential and charismatic Catholic priest, Jean-Juste has been jailed since July. An investigative Haitian judge recently dropped murder and government conspiracy charges against him, but indicted him on a lesser illegal weapons charge.

Jean-Juste has denied the charges against him, and recently turned down a Haitian government offer to waive his right to appeal on the lesser charges in exchange for going free, even if a court found him guilty.

"I didn't want to give the impression that I'm running away," he told The Associated Press on Friday, explaining why he wants to fight the charges. "If justice comes my way I would appreciate it."

Three French nationals kidnapped in Haiti

27 Jan 2006

Reuters

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti, Jan 27 (Reuters) - An 84-year-old nun and two other French citizens on a humanitarian mission to Haiti were kidnapped near a dangerous slum in the capital, police said on Friday.

Inspector-General Michael Lucius, head of Haiti's judicial police, said the missionaries were abducted at gunpoint on Tuesday on a notoriously dangerous road near Cite Soleil, a shantytown on the north side of Port-au-Prince, and may have been set up by their Haitian driver.

"As a Haitian, I think the driver knew there was almost a 100 percent chance someone would be kidnapped in that area," Lucius said. "Why did he choose it?"

Kidnapping for ransom is part of a plague of violence engulfing the poor Caribbean nation as it edges closer to its first election since former President Jean-Bertrand Aristide was forced from office in February 2004. The vote is set for Feb. 7.

More than 1,900 people have been kidnapped in Port-au-Prince in the last 10 months, police sources say.

Police said the abductors of the French missionaries demanded a ransom.

French officials in Port-au-Prince were involved in trying to secure the hostages' release, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Paris said.

Two Missionaries, Two Haitians Kidnapped

By STEVENSON JACOBS

The Associated Press

Thursday, January 26, 2006

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti -- Two French missionaries and two Haitians were kidnapped near a volatile slum in Haiti's capital, a U.N. official said Thursday.

The four were seized on Wednesday as they traveled on a road near Cite Soleil, a sprawling slum on the outskirts of Port-au-Prince used as a base by heavily armed gangs blamed for a wave of kidnappings and violence in the capital, said David Wimhurst, a U.N. spokesman.

The captors have demanded a ransom, and Haiti's anti-kidnapping squad was working to secure the hostages' release, said Wimhurst, who did not identify the two French nationals other than to say one was a priest and the other a nun. He said he had no information about the identities of the kidnapped Haitians.

A wave of kidnappings has plagued the Western Hemisphere's poorest nation, where criminal gangs have flourished in the aftermath of the rebellion that toppled President Jean-Bertrand Aristide in February 2004.

Last month, there were 162 reported kidnap cases in Haiti, and January has seen 37 so far, Wimhurst said.

The actual number is probably much higher because victims' families often prefer to negotiate with kidnappers rather than notify police.

With Feb. 7 national elections approaching, 9,000 U.N. soldiers and police have increasingly tried to gain control of Cite Soleil, home to 200,000 people living in squalor and a stronghold of armed gangs allegedly linked to Aristide.

Violence called a threat to Haiti elections

26 Jan 2006

Source: Reuters

By Joseph Guylar Delva

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti, Jan 26 (Reuters) - The greatest threat to elections next month in Haiti is a recent surge in violence that has plagued the country since former president Jean-Bertrand Aristide's ouster nearly two years ago, election officials say.

In the days before the Feb. 7 vote, a steady crackle of gunfire rings across teeming slums, Haitian police officers and U.N. peacekeepers come under frequent attack and anyone with money is vulnerable to kidnapers.

"If there is one threat to the holding of elections as scheduled, it is the security situation," Rosemond Pradel, secretary-general of Haiti's electoral council, told Reuters.

Three police officers were killed last week alone, two of whom were shot in the head. Nearly 300 civilians have been treated for gunshot wounds in the past few weeks. Thirteen U.N. peacekeepers have died since their mission in Haiti began in June 2004.

The violence has cast a pall on the coming election, in which former president and Aristide protege Rene Preval is the front-runner. But it has made some voters more determined.

"I know the bourgeoisie and its political allies don't want the elections because they know Preval is going to win," said Marline Jaboin, a 28-year-old Port-au-Prince resident. "I'm going to vote no matter what."

For others, the kidnappings and daily gunfire are reason to stay home.

"I don't think I am going to vote because the country is not prepared to hold elections," said Josue Bernard, 40. "It's going to be total chaos."

In all, political and gang violence which replaced the armed revolt that swept Aristide from power has taken around 2,000 lives since the former priest's departure on Feb. 29, 2004, according to human rights groups.

The violence comes despite what would appear to be Haiti's strongest security force in many years -- 6,000 Haitian police backed by 9,000 U.N. peacekeepers.

When Haiti organized legislative and local elections in May 2000 and a presidential ballot six months later, it had just 3,000 ill-equipped and poorly trained Haitian police.

Police do not attribute the violence just to criminals, drug smugglers or street gangs that critics say were recruited by Aristide as "enforcers." U.N. and Haitian officials believe some mainstream political groups plan to disrupt the Feb. 7 election because they have a financial interest in lawlessness or fear their side will lose.

But the U.N. peacekeepers insist they can keep Haiti safe for voters.

"It is clear there are elements who would choose to disrupt the elections. But our capacity to prevent them from stirring violence during the vote is really quite good," said the head of the U.N. police detachment, Graham Muir.

At least 1,900 people have been kidnapped in Port-au-Prince in the last 10 months, police sources said. Foreigners and Haitians alike, some of the victims say they are held for ransom in luxurious apartments. But many are whisked into the labyrinth of Cite Soleil, the capital's largest slum.

Critical of U.N. efforts to stabilize Haiti, elections officials have decided not to place polling stations inside the slum, citing the danger of voters being intimidated by gangs.

Many in Haiti remember a massacre that aborted an election in 1987, when thugs used machine guns and machetes to cut down voters at a school in Port-au-Prince. The school victims were among 34 people killed in the capital that day.

The president of the electoral council, Max Mathurin, said he needs a U.N. guarantee that voters will be safe.

"We are not going to lead the population into a bloodbath," he told a local radio station.

Haitian church official says violence decreasing

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CNS

Catholic Online

WASHINGTON (CNS) – In the weeks leading up to the presidential election, violence and insecurity have decreased in the Haitian capital of Port-au-Prince, said the permanent secretary of the Haitian bishops' conference.

"From what I see, from what I hear, the insecurity is still there" but the kidnapping and violence have decreased slightly, said Msgr. Andre Pierre. "I don't see as much violence on the streets."

Despite what Msgr. Pierre calls a "general cycle of fear," he said that from what he has seen on TV presidential campaigns have been peaceful.

Presidential elections, which have been canceled three times because of violence and insecurity, are scheduled for Feb. 7.

Despite the multiple postponements, Msgr. Pierre told Catholic News Service in a telephone interview Jan. 20 that some people still do not want the elections to take place.

"What I hear from one side: 'They shouldn't be held, so reconsider the whole process,'" he said. "There are problems of logistics, problems of organizing as a whole -- the planning of the election, planning the location for voting."

Democracy Undone
Mixed U.S. Signals Helped Tilt Haiti Toward Chaos
By WALT BOGDANICH and JENNY NORDBERG
New York Times
January 29, 2006

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti — As his plane lifted off the runway here in August 2003, Brian Dean Curran rewound his last, bleak days as the American ambassador in this tormented land.

LOOKING BACK, WITH REGRETS Brian Dean Curran, the American ambassador to Haiti from 2001 to 2003, told the Bush administration during his tenure that a democracy-building group close to the White House undercut him and the official American policy in Haiti.

Haiti, Mr. Curran feared, was headed toward a cataclysm, another violent uncoupling of its once jubilant embrace of democracy more than a decade before. He had come here hoping to help that tenuous democracy grow. Now he was leaving in anger and foreboding.

Seven months later, an accused death squad leader helped armed rebels topple the president, Jean-Bertrand Aristide. Haiti, never a model of stability, soon dissolved into a state so lawless it stunned even those who had pushed for the removal of Mr. Aristide, a former Roman Catholic priest who rose to power as the champion and hero of Haiti's poor.

Today, the capital, Port-au-Prince, is virtually paralyzed by kidnappings, spreading panic among rich and poor alike. Corrupt police officers in uniform have assassinated people on the streets in the light of day. The chaos is so extreme and the interim government so dysfunctional that voting to elect a new one has already been delayed four times. The latest date is Feb. 7.

Yet even as Haiti prepares to pick its first elected president since the rebellion two years ago, questions linger about the circumstances of Mr. Aristide's ouster — and especially why the Bush administration, which has made building democracy a centerpiece of its foreign policy in Iraq and around the world, did not do more to preserve it so close to its shores.

The Bush administration has said that while Mr. Aristide was deeply flawed, its policy was always to work with him as Haiti's democratically elected leader.

But the administration's actions in Haiti did not always match its words. Interviews and a review of government documents show that a democracy-building group close to the White House, and financed by American taxpayers, undercut the official United States policy and the ambassador assigned to carry it out.

As a result, the United States spoke with two sometimes contradictory voices in a country where its words carry enormous weight. That mixed message, the former American ambassador said, made efforts to foster political peace "immeasurably more difficult." Without a political agreement, a weak government was destabilized further, leaving it vulnerable to the rebels.

Mr. Curran accused the democracy-building group, the International Republican Institute, of trying to undermine the reconciliation process after disputed 2000 Senate elections threw Haiti into a violent political crisis. The group's leader in Haiti, Stanley Lucas, an avowed Aristide opponent from the Haitian elite, counseled the opposition to stand firm, and not work with Mr. Aristide, as a way to cripple his government and drive him from power, said Mr. Curran, whose account is supported in crucial parts by other diplomats and opposition figures. Many of these people spoke publicly about the events for the first time.

Mr. Curran, a 30-year Foreign Service veteran and a Clinton appointee retained by President Bush, also accused Mr. Lucas of telling the opposition that he, not the ambassador, represented the Bush administration's true intentions.

Records show that Mr. Curran warned his bosses in Washington that Mr. Lucas's behavior was contrary to American policy and "risked us being accused of attempting to destabilize the government." Yet when he asked for tighter controls over the I.R.I. in the summer of 2002, he hit a roadblock after high officials in the State Department and National Security Council expressed support for the pro-democracy group, an American aid official wrote at the time.

The International Republican Institute is one of several prominent nonprofit groups that receive federal funds to help countries develop the mechanisms of democracy, like campaigning and election monitoring. Of all the groups, though, the I.R.I. is closest to the administration. President Bush picked its president, Lorne W. Craner, to run his administration's democracy-building efforts. The institute, which works in more than 60 countries, has seen its federal financing nearly triple in three years, from \$26 million in 2003 to \$75 million in 2005. Last spring, at an I.R.I. fund-raiser, Mr. Bush called democracy-building "a growth industry."

These groups walk a fine line. Under federal guidelines, they are supposed to nurture democracy in a nonpartisan way, lest they be accused of meddling in the affairs of sovereign nations. But in Haiti, according to diplomats, Mr. Lucas actively worked against President Aristide.

Colin L. Powell, the secretary of state at the time, said that the American policy in Haiti was what Mr. Curran believed it to be, and that the United States stood by Mr. Aristide until the last few days of his presidency.

But in a recent interview, Otto J. Reich, who served under Mr. Powell as the State Department's top official on Latin America, said that a subtle shift in policy away from Mr. Aristide had taken place after Mr. Bush became president — as Mr. Curran and others had suspected.

"There was a change in policy that was perhaps not well perceived by some people in the embassy," Mr. Reich said, referring to Mr. Curran. "We wanted to change, to give the Haitians an opportunity to choose a democratic leader," said Mr. Reich, one of a group of newly ascendant policy makers who feared the rise of leftist governments in Latin America.

Told of that statement, Mr. Curran said, "That Reich would admit that a different policy was in effect totally vindicates my suspicions, as well as confirms what an amateur crowd was in charge in Washington."

Bridging the divide between Mr. Aristide and his opponents would have been difficult in even the best of circumstances. But what emerges from the events in Haiti is a portrait of how the effort to nurture democracy became entangled in the ideological wars and partisan rivalries of Washington.

"What you had was the constant undermining of the credibility of the negotiators," said Luigi R. Einaudi, a respected veteran diplomat who led the international effort to find a political settlement on behalf of the Organization of American States.

The I.R.I. did not permit The New York Times to interview Mr. Lucas, but in a response to written questions, he denied trying to undermine American policy. "I never told the opposition not to negotiate," Mr. Lucas said in an e-mail message.

Georges A. Fauriol, the I.R.I.'s senior vice president, said that his group faithfully tried to represent "the ideals of the American democratic system," and that he personally pressed the opposition to compromise. Mr. Fauriol blamed "innuendos and political interests" for the complaints of Mr. Curran and others. He also said Mr. Curran never gave him the specifics that he needed to act against Mr. Lucas, whom he called "one of our best political party trainers."

In Haiti, Mr. Lucas's partisan activities were well known. Evans Paul, a leader of the anti-Aristide movement and now a presidential candidate, said Mr. Lucas's stand against negotiating was "a bit too harsh" even for some in the opposition.

Jean-Max Bellerive, an official in three Haitian administrations, including Mr. Aristide's, added, "He said there was a big plan for Haiti that came from Washington, that Aristide would not finish his mandate." As for the ambassador, Mr. Bellerive said, "he told me that Curran was of no importance, that he did not fit in the big picture."

Micha Gaillard, a former spokesman for the main anti-Aristide coalition, the Democratic Convergence, said Mr. Lucas went so far as to act as its representative in Washington.

With Washington's approval, Mr. Lucas used taxpayer money to fly hundreds of opposition members — but no one from Mr. Aristide's Lavalas party — to a hotel in the Dominican Republic for political training that began in late 2002. Two leaders of the armed rebellion told The Times that they were in the same hotel during some of those meetings, but did not attend.

The I.R.I. said the sessions were held outside Haiti because Lavalas had physically threatened its staff, including Mr. Lucas. But another American democracy-building group, the National Democratic Institute, said it was able to work successfully with Mr. Aristide's party in Haiti.

Mr. Curran left Haiti in August 2003 for a new assignment, and by fall, Mr. Aristide's political opponents had decided there was little point in negotiating. Still, there was one last hope. Mr. Einaudi persuaded some opposition leaders to meet with Mr. Aristide at the home of the new American ambassador, James B. Foley. But while the president was prepared to give up much of his power, Mr. Einaudi said, American officials "pulled the rug out," abruptly canceling the meeting without consulting him.

Several months later, the rebels marched on Port-au-Prince and Mr. Aristide left Haiti on a plane provided by the American government. Since then, Haiti has become even more chaotic, said Marc L. Bazin, an elder statesman of Haitian politics.

Added Mr. Einaudi, "Building democracy in Haiti now is going to take a very long time."

A Voice for the Poor

After two centuries of foreign occupiers, dictators, generals, a self-appointed president for life and the overthrow of more than 30 governments, Haitians finally had the chance in 1990 to elect the leader they wanted. The people chose Mr. Aristide, a priest who had been expelled from his Roman Catholic order for his fiery orations of liberation theology.

"He was espousing change in Haiti, fundamental populist change," said Robert Maguire, a Haiti scholar who has criticized American policy as insufficiently concerned with Haiti's poor. "Right away, he was viewed as a threat by very powerful forces in Haiti."

President Aristide promised not only to give voice to the poor in the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere, but also to raise the minimum wage and force businesses to pay taxes. He rallied supporters with heated attacks on the United States, a tacit supporter of past dictatorships and a major influence in Haitian affairs since the Marines occupied the country from 1915 to 1934.

"He wasn't going to be beholden to the United States, and so he was going to be trouble," said Senator Christopher J. Dodd of Connecticut, a Democratic critic of Bush administration policy on Latin America. "We had interests and ties with some of the very strong financial interests in the country, and Aristide was threatening them." Those interests, mostly in the textile and electronic assembly businesses, sold many of their products cheap to the United States.

When the Haitian military, with the support of the business elite, overthrew Mr. Aristide after just shy of eight months in office, the administration of George H. W. Bush criticized the loss of Haiti's first democracy, but did not intervene militarily.

Raymond A. Joseph, the current interim government's ambassador to the United States, recalls a speech that Mr. Aristide gave in September 1991. "That's the speech," Mr. Joseph said, "that triggered the coup d'état against him, where he said, 'Whenever you feel the heat under your feet, turn your eyes to the mountains where the wealthy are, they're responsible for you. Go give them what they deserve.'"

After the coup came repression. In the first two years, the United States Coast Guard intercepted 41,000 Haitians at sea. Pressured by the Congressional Black Caucus, President Bill Clinton sent troops to help restore Mr. Aristide to power in 1994.

Mr. Aristide quickly disbanded the country's most powerful institution — the military. It did not help that Mr. Aristide — and for that matter, Haiti — had little experience with the give and take of democracy.

"He was not trained to be a politician, he was trained to be a priest," Mr. Einaudi said. "So that when he got involved heavily in politics, he didn't know very much about the games politicians play."

Mr. Aristide returned with only one year left in his term, and because the Haitian Constitution barred him from consecutive terms, his ally René Préval was voted into office.

But the international community believed that Mr. Aristide remained a real power, and it had grown frustrated with the government's shortcomings. That frustration built to the parliamentary elections of 2000. Mr. Aristide's party declared victory in 18 of 19 Senate races, even though international observers said runoffs were required in 8 of them because no one had won a clear majority. Angry Lavalas opponents, in turn, boycotted presidential elections in November; Mr. Aristide won overwhelmingly.

Tensions rose further as international lenders withheld aid from the Aristide government. "We could not deliver any goods, services to the people," said Leslie Voltaire, a former minister under Mr. Aristide.

Even Mr. Bazin, a former World Bank official who ran against Mr. Aristide in 1990, criticized the cutoff. "The poorer you are, the less democratic you are," he said.

Indeed, the combination of a strengthening opposition, a weaker government and an attempted coup drove Mr. Aristide deeper into the arms of his most fervent supporters in the slums. "The urban gangs received money, logistical support and weapons from the national police because the government saw them as a bulwark against a coup," the International Crisis Group, a conflict resolution organization that studies Haiti and other trouble spots, said in a 2005 report.

When some Aristide supporters engaged in criminal acts, including killings and drug trafficking, the president was often unwilling or unable to stop them. That eroded his popular support.

A simple dispute over a handful of Senate seats had now morphed into a showdown over the very legitimacy of Mr. Aristide's presidency.

It was in these months that two ingredients were added to the roiling Haitian stew: a new American ambassador, Brian Dean Curran, arrived in Port-au-Prince and a Republican administration was inaugurated in Washington.

An Ambassador's Mission

Mr. Curran began his assignment at the start of 2001. To understand the country better, he made a point of learning Creole, the language of the poor, even though diplomats and the ruling elite conversed in French.

"He was amazing to watch," one former government official said. "He would walk in a classroom with Haitian children and take over from the teacher."

Mr. Curran said he wanted to believe in Mr. Aristide but slowly became disillusioned. "I had many conversations with him about the police, about human rights abuses," Mr. Curran said. "And in the end, he disappointed me."

Even so, Mr. Curran said, his mission was clear. "The promotion of democracy was at the very heart of what I was doing in Haiti," he said. Clear, too, was how to go about that: supporting Mr. Aristide's right to office while working to foster a compromise. "That was the officially stated policy," Mr. Curran said. "Those were my instructions."

Mr. Curran was supposed to have help from the I.R.I., which had been active in Haiti since 1990. Along with the National Democratic Institute, the I.R.I. was formed in the early 1980's after President Ronald Reagan called on Americans to fight totalitarianism.

Its board includes Republican foreign-policy heavyweights and lobbyists, and its chairman is Senator John McCain, the Arizona Republican, who did not answer requests for an interview. The group's financing comes from the Agency for International Development, as well as the State Department, foundations and corporations like Halliburton and Chevron.

More than its sister group, the International Republican Institute tends to work in countries "it views as being strategically important to U.S. national foreign policy interests," according to a 1999 report by the international development agency.

The I.R.I.'s Republican affiliations did not go unnoticed on the streets of Port-au-Prince. Graffiti condemning the I.R.I. had been showing up for some time, the work of Aristide supporters. "I think they distrusted I.R.I. as an organization because they were affiliated with the Republican Party, and Lavalas just felt the Republican Party was out to get them," said David Adams, a former A.I.D. mission director in Haiti.

And there was one more reason, he said: Stanley Lucas, the I.R.I.'s leader in Haiti.

Mr. Lucas, who said he grew up in the United States and Haiti and worked as a part-time Haitian civil servant, came from a land-owning family. That background, along with his politics, "sends a very provocative message, I think, to those supporting Aristide," said Mr. Maguire, who runs the international affairs program at Trinity University in Washington. Mr. Lucas joined the I.R.I. in 1993 and took over its Haiti program five years later.

With his good looks, sociability and fluency in Creole, French and English, he moved easily between Port-au-Prince and Capitol Hill. "He's the Denzel Washington of Haiti," one A.I.D. official said. That he was a karate champion only added to his aura.

The anti-Aristide message had currency around Washington. Mr. Einaudi, the veteran diplomat, recalled attending the I.R.I.'s 2001 fund-raising dinner and being surrounded by a half-dozen Haitian businessmen sounding a common cry: "We were foolish to think that we could do anything with Aristide. That it was impossible to negotiate with him. That it was necessary to get rid of him."

A year later, the I.R.I. created a stir when it issued a press release praising the attempted overthrow of Hugo Chávez, the elected president of Venezuela and a confrontational populist, who, like Mr. Aristide, was seen as a threat by some in Washington. The institute has since told The Times that praising the attempted coup was wrong.

Mr. Lucas had been to Venezuela seven times for the I.R.I., but he was not there at the time of the coup. Instead, he was focusing on Haiti, where his work was creating another stir for the institute.

No Negotiations, No Compromise

In early 2002, Mr. Curran said, he began receiving troubling reports about Mr. Lucas. As he urged the opposition in Haiti "to show flexibility," the ambassador said, Mr. Lucas was sending the opposite instructions: "Hang tough. Don't compromise. In the end, we'll get rid of Aristide."

As his concern mounted, Mr. Curran asked that Mr. Lucas be removed from the I.R.I.'s Haiti program. The institute resisted.

Mr. Fauriol, the institute's senior vice president, said Mr. Curran had not been forthcoming with information about Mr. Lucas. "Specifics we've never been given," he said, adding that Mr. Lucas's critics probably did not know him very well.

"We don't have any questions about the quality of his work," Mr. Fauriol said. "There is something of a cottage industry that's sort of built around what he has or hasn't done, perceptions, rumors, whisperings. And it has sort of created a profile of an individual that is, shall we say, greatly exaggerated — simply not true."

Mr. Curran countered that he had ample witnesses to Mr. Lucas's behavior. And opposition leaders said in interviews that Mr. Lucas had actively opposed a political settlement.

"Mr. Lucas was of the opinion negotiations would be a bad idea; I was of the opinion we should have negotiated to show our good faith," said Mr. Paul, a former mayor of Port-au-Prince, who nonetheless praised Mr. Lucas's support for the opposition against Mr. Aristide.

Mr. Gaillard, the former spokesman for the Democratic Convergence, the main anti-Aristide coalition, said he also did not like that Mr. Lucas was acting as the Haitian opposition's representative in Washington. "That really disturbed us, because we didn't know exactly what he was saying," he said.

Mr. Bazin added that Mr. Lucas "was prepared to act aggressively to get Aristide out of power."

Mr. Einaudi said he found Mr. Lucas's role disturbing.

"Stanley Lucas is a very bright man, very able man," he said. But, he said, "I thought it was a mistake the way Dean Curran did, I think, that he should become the person in charge of I.R.I.'s policies and activities."

At the A.I.D. office in Port-au-Prince, the agency's director, Mr. Adams, said he found Mr. Lucas difficult to deal with.

"When Stanley tells you something, it's kind of hard to know exactly what the kernel of truth is," Mr. Adams said.

With the I.R.I. standing behind Mr. Lucas, Mr. Curran complained to his superiors in Washington — through cables, e-mail messages and, he said, in meetings.

In a July 2002 cable, he wrote: "I continue to have grave misgivings about the participation of an individual whose questionable behavior could be to the detriment of U.S. interests. The USAID director shares my concerns."

Mr. Curran also cautioned that Mr. Lucas's continued participation "will, at best, lead to confusion as to U.S. policy objectives, which continue to eschew unconstitutional acts and favor negotiations and, at worst, contribute to political destabilization in Haiti."

The Old Policy Makers Return

Mr. Curran sent his cables to the Bush administration's Latin American policy team, records show. In addition to Mr. Reich, then assistant secretary of state for Latin American affairs, that group included Elliott L. Abrams, a special assistant to the president and senior director for democracy and human rights, and Daniel W. Fisk, a deputy to Mr. Reich.

These men were veteran fighters against the spread of leftist political ideology in Latin America, beginning with Fidel Castro and Cuba. Mr. Fisk's former boss, Jesse Helms, then a Republican senator from North Carolina, had once called Mr. Aristide a "psychopath," based on a C.I.A. report about his mental condition that turned out to be false.

In the 1980's, Mr. Reich and Mr. Abrams had become ensnared in investigations of Reagan administration activities opposing the socialist government of Nicaragua. The comptroller general determined in 1987 that a public diplomacy office run by the Cuban-born Mr. Reich had "engaged in prohibited, covert propaganda activities." In 1991, Mr. Abrams pleaded guilty to withholding information from Congress in connection with the Iran-contra affair. He was pardoned by the first President Bush.

Now, with the advent of the second Bush administration, Mr. Reich, Mr. Abrams and their colleagues were back in power. The Clinton era, they felt, had been a bad one for United States interests in Latin America.

"The United States had squandered a good deal of its credibility by its support for Aristide during the Clinton years," said Roger F. Noriega, a former senior Helms aide who replaced Mr. Reich at the State Department in 2003. "We essentially held his coat while stuffing millions of dollars in it while he terrorized the opposition."

At the time of Mr. Curran's complaints, the I.R.I.'s current president, Mr. Craner, was running the State Department's democracy and human rights program. He questioned the charges leveled by Mr. Curran, who goes by his middle name, Dean.

"I'm curious about why Dean has a very different opinion of Stanley from his bosses," Mr. Craner said. He added that neither Mr. Noriega nor Mr. Reich had come to him or the institute and complained, and he urged The Times to call them.

Mr. Noriega said Mr. Curran had not worked for him, but offered that he had seen no evidence of misconduct by the I.R.I. Mr. Reich was more specific about Mr. Curran.

"He never expressed any problems with Stanley Lucas to me, and I was his boss," Mr. Reich said. Asked why his name showed up on cables as having received Mr. Curran's complaints, and why Mr. Curran's cables detailed discussions with him, Mr. Reich replied: "I have absolutely no recollection of that. I'm not questioning it, I just have no recollection of that."

Mr. Reich said he could not understand why Mr. Curran would focus on "some low-level bureaucrat" at the I.R.I. rather than the misconduct of Mr. Aristide. That, he asserted, was why the United States had gradually backed away from Mr. Aristide. "The crime is the Clinton administration supported him as long as it did," Mr. Reich said.

Mr. Curran said it was "a patent lie" that he had never complained to Mr. Reich.

Records show that in the summer of 2002, Mr. Curran sought tighter control over the I.R.I. before signing off on a politically delicate program that Mr. Lucas had organized in the Dominican Republic to teach the opposition the art of campaigning.

Washington officials opposed Mr. Curran's request. Not only was there pressure from Congress, according to an e-mail message from Mr. Adams of A.I.D., but "there were senior State/N.S.C. officials who were sympathetic to I.R.I.'s position as well."

Mr. Curran did secure several concessions suggested by Mr. Reich, including that Mr. Lucas would be barred from participating in the program for 120 days and would be dismissed from the I.R.I.'s Haiti program if he misbehaved, records show. Even so, Mr. Curran thought the grant was a bad idea if Mr. Lucas remained involved.

The Training Next Door

Haiti has had a long, tense relationship with the Dominican Republic, its more affluent neighbor on the island of Hispaniola. Haitians who work there are often mistreated, human rights groups say, and the country has been a haven for those accused of trying to overthrow Haitian governments.

In December 2002, the I.R.I. began training Haitian political parties there, at the Hotel Santo Domingo, owned by the Fanjul family, which fled Cuba under Mr. Castro and now runs a giant sugar-cane business.

The training was unusual for more than its location: only Mr. Aristide's opponents, not members of his party, were invited.

Institute officials said this was because the opposition parties were less powerful and needed more help. The goal, Mr. Fauriol said, "was to broaden, if you will, the ability of various actors to participate in the political process."

They also said they were not required to work with Lavalas because its members condoned violence and the institute's workers were threatened, which was why the meetings were held outside Haiti. And they pointed out that no American officials had objected to excluding Lavalas.

There were perhaps a dozen sessions, spread over a year, the institute said. Hundreds of opposition members came.

"The training programs were really run-of-the-mill political party programs," Mr. Fauriol said. To the Dominican ambassador who issued the travelers' visas in Haiti, though, the meetings "clearly conveyed a confrontation, not a dialogue."

"For the opposition, it was interesting to know that the American government, or people from the American government, supported and validated its politics," the former ambassador, Alberto Despradel, said last fall at the Hotel Santo Domingo.

Among the trainers brought in was Brian Berry, who worked on George W. Bush's 1994 primary campaign for Texas governor.

Mr. Berry had an interest in the Caribbean. He said he had a small bag of sand from the Bay of Pigs; he said he looked forward to returning it to "a free Cuba beach" when Mr. Castro was gone. Mr. Berry said he volunteered for I.R.I., to further the cause of democracy.

Mr. Bazin, a moderate Aristide opponent, sent representatives to the Hotel Santo Domingo. They came away believing that more was going on than routine political training.

"The report I got from my people was that there were two meetings — open meetings where democracy would be discussed and closed meetings where other things would be discussed, and we are not invited to the other meetings," said Mr. Bazin, who is now running for president as the candidate of a faction of Lavalas.

Mr. Bazin said people who had attended the closed meetings told him that "there are things you don't know" — that Mr. Aristide would ultimately be removed and that he should stop calling for compromise.

Afterward, he said, he spoke with Mr. Curran. "I asked him, "How many policies do they have in the U.S.?" " Mr. Bazin said.

Mr. Lucas said Mr. Bazin's comments should be viewed in light of his alliance with some former Aristide supporters. And Mr. Fauriol denied that secret meetings had occurred. Also, A.I.D.'s inspector general said in a 2004 report that the training sessions did not violate government regulations.

But by attending the first training session, Mr. Lucas violated his 120-day prohibition.

Mr. Curran sent a blistering message to Washington. "I.R.I. has set us on a collision course today," he wrote, adding, "I am afraid this episode brings into question the good faith of I.R.I. in promising to control Stanley's renegade activities of the past."

He asked that the institute's program be canceled or Mr. Lucas dismissed. Neither happened.

Mr. Fauriol apologized, attributing the violation to a simple misunderstanding of when the exclusion period began. Besides, one American official said, Mr. Lucas had only a minor role in the meetings.

To Mr. Curran, however, any involvement was a problem. "How can we control what is said in private conversations?" he wrote to Washington, "Or what is conveyed by winks and nods?"

It turns out there was another matter, one that federal officials apparently did not know about: two leaders of the armed rebels told The Times they were spending time at the Hotel Santo Domingo while the training was under way.

Guy Philippe, a former police commander who had fled Haiti after two failed coup attempts, said in an interview that he had seen Mr. Lucas at the hotel.

"I was living in the hotel, sleeping in the hotel," Mr. Philippe said. "So I've seen him and his friends and those guys in the opposition, but we didn't talk politics." He said he had not attended any I.R.I. meetings.

Paul Arcelin, an architect of the rebellion, said he, too, had seen Mr. Lucas at the hotel during the training sessions. In an interview there last fall, Mr. Arcelin said, "I used to meet Stanley Lucas here in this hotel, alone, sitting down talking about the future of Haiti." But he said they had not discussed overthrowing Mr. Aristide.

Mr. Lucas said Mr. Arcelin showed up at an I.R.I. meeting and was told to leave. He also disputed Mr. Philippe's account.

Several opposition activists said they wanted nothing to do with the armed rebels. "Participation in our seminars was from a very restricted list of people," Mr. Fauriol said.

The seminars were still under way in September 2003 when the Bush administration sent a new ambassador to Haiti. Mr. Curran wanted to stay longer, Mr. Reich said. But he said Mr. Curran was replaced because "we did not think the ambassador was carrying out the new policy in the way we wanted it carried out."

Mr. Powell disputed that, saying he recalled that Mr. Curran was not removed because of a change in policy, but as part of a normal rotation.

Before leaving, Mr. Curran met with Haitian business leaders. "He made a remarkable speech," Mr. Bazin said, recalling that Mr. Curran admonished them not only for doing things "that are not acceptable, including dealing with drug dealers," but also for listening to people who only pretended to represent United States policy.

Mr. Curran called them "chimères of Washington" — invoking a word commonly used to describe gang members loyal to Mr. Aristide.

"The Haitians, in their marvelous language, which is so full of allusions and metaphor, have created this term for these people — the chimères, the ghosts," Mr. Curran explained. "Because they're there and they do things and they terrify you. And then they fade away."

Time Runs Out

The fall of 2003 was a perilous time for Haiti. In the north, the police fought gun battles with a gang called the Cannibal Army. In the capital, gangs professing loyalty to the Aristide government attacked journalists and protesting university students. Across the Dominican border, the rebels waited for the right moment to attack.

Over four years, Mr. Einaudi, a former acting secretary general of the Organization of American States, had made some 30 trips to Haiti trying to prevent such a moment. Yet he had failed. Mr. Aristide was finally willing to share power, Mr. Einaudi said, but the opposition, emboldened, felt no need to deal with him.

With time running out, Mr. Einaudi hit upon a new approach — one he hoped would take advantage of the arrival of the new American ambassador, Mr. Foley. Mr. Einaudi invited Mr. Aristide and his opponents to meet at the ambassador's home — a clear signal that the United States wanted negotiations, not regime change.

When members of both sides agreed to come, there was a glimmer of hope, Mr. Einaudi said.

Terence A. Todman, a retired American diplomat who also worked in Haiti for the O.A.S, said: "We knew there would be shouting. But at least they were together."

Then, suddenly, it was over. In a move that stunned Mr. Einaudi, the United States canceled the meeting, killing "what was in fact my last move," he said.

His colleague was more blunt. "That blew it," said Mr. Todman, who like Mr. Einaudi was speaking publicly about the scuttled meeting for the first time. "That was the end of any effort to get them together."

Mr. Noriega, who had replaced Mr. Reich at the State Department, said in an interview that the administration called off the meeting after talking to Aristide opponents. It was "going to be a failure for us and wreck our credibility," he said.

Representative Bill Delahunt, a Massachusetts Democrat who monitored Haitian elections in 2000, had a different reaction when told of the canceled meeting.

"If there was a last opportunity and it wasn't acted upon and we did not pursue it, then that would be a stain upon the United States," he said.

The Rebels' Final Push

Several months later, the rebels crossed into Haiti and began their final push. There were perhaps 200 in all, many of them former soldiers in the army Mr. Aristide had disbanded years before. Leading the final assault were Mr. Philippe and Louis-Jodel Chamblain.

Rights groups have identified Mr. Chamblain as the leader of death squads when the military ran Haiti after Mr. Aristide's first ouster in 1991. He had twice been convicted in absentia — for his role in a massacre in Gonaïves in 1994 and in connection with the 1993 killing of an Aristide supporter.

As for Mr. Philippe, Mr. Curran said he was suspected of having had ties to drug traffickers before leaving Haiti after a failed coup attempt.

Mr. Philippe, who is now running for president of Haiti, denies any connection to the drug trade, pointing out that he has never been charged with such a crime.

On Feb. 19, 2004, the rebels attacked the jail in Fort-Liberté, near the border. Without the military to defend the country, the government had to rely on the poorly equipped police, its ranks weakened by corruption. Jacques Édouard, the jail supervisor, said he was forced to release 73 prisoners, including convicted murderers.

Some prisoners joined the rebels, while others took over the city, robbing residents and burning homes until the United Nations arrived a month later, said Andrea Loi Valenzuela, a United Nations worker there.

When rebels reached the city of Cap Haitien on Feb. 22, the police chief, Hugues Gabriel, told his 28 officers to flee. "They had machine guns," he said. "We have little handguns with little ammunition."

In Washington, the Bush administration voiced its official policy. "We cannot buy into a proposition that says the elected president must be forced out of office by thugs and those who do not respect law and are bringing terrible violence to the Haitian people," Secretary of State Powell said.

But when Mr. Aristide asked for international troops, he did not get them.

Mr. Powell said he continued to press for a political settlement to keep Mr. Aristide in office. "We were doing everything we could to support his incumbency," he said in a recent interview. Only in the

last days, when Port-au-Prince appeared "on the verge of a serious blood bath," he said, did the United States explore other options. "There comes a point when you have to make a judgment as to whether you should continue to support President Aristide or whether it is better to try another route," he said.

On Feb. 29 — Mr. Philippe's birthday — the United States flew President Aristide to exile in South Africa.

Unanswered Questions

Almost immediately, Congressional Democrats and Caricom, the association of Caribbean nations, called for an independent inquiry into Mr. Aristide's ouster and why Haiti's neighbors had not come to its aid.

"It doesn't add up for the greatest country in the world to be fearful of 200 thugs, my goodness," said Senator Barbara Boxer, Democrat of California.

The State Department said there was nothing to investigate. "I think the U.S. role was clear," a spokesman, Richard A. Boucher, said at the time, adding, "The focus needs to be on moving forward."

Two years later, there has been no inquiry. Caricom refuses to recognize Haiti's interim government. And questions about Mr. Aristide's fall remain unanswered.

Among them is what the Bush administration knew about the rebels, who plotted in the Dominican Republic, a country friendly to the United States.

Their activities there had not gone unnoticed by Haitian authorities. Edwin M. Paraison, a former Haitian diplomat in the Dominican Republic, said his government contacted authorities there three times to express concern "about subversive actions that were being planned on the Dominican territory." But, he said, little was done.

American officials said they did not take the rebels terribly seriously. "Our sense was that they were not a large force, not a well-trained force, and not in any way a threat to the stability then in Haiti," said Mr. Foley, the American ambassador at the time. "Now that proved to be otherwise."

Mr. Despradel, the former Dominican ambassador, said American authorities had to have known what the rebels were doing.

"Given the intelligence the United States has in place throughout the Caribbean and their advanced technology that lets them hear a mosquito in outer space — I think Guy Philippe is bigger than that," he said.

At a Senate hearing in 2004, Mr. Noriega was asked if he knew of any ties between Mr. Philippe and the I.R.I. — specifically Mr. Lucas — during the training meetings in the Dominican Republic. He said he did not.

"If it were the case, we would certainly stop it," Mr. Noriega said. "We knew who Guy Philippe was and that he had a criminal background."

The inspector general of A.I.D. also said that, based on interviews with American officials and a review of federal records, it found no evidence of contacts between the men during the year or so the sessions were taking place, a view echoed by Mr. Fauriol. "If they occurred, they would have been against any sense of responsibility of the I.R.I. and any guidance from us," he said. "I don't think those meetings occurred."

And in his e-mail response, Mr. Lucas himself said, "To be clear, I do not know Guy Philippe." He added that he might have met him once in the 1990's when Mr. Philippe was a police commander in Port-au-Prince.

Mr. Philippe tells a different story. In interviews with The Times, he called Mr. Lucas "a good friend" whom he has known much of his life. "He used to be my teacher in Ping-Pong," Mr. Philippe said.

Not only did he say he saw Mr. Lucas during the training at the Hotel Santo Domingo; he said he met with him once or twice in 2000 or 2001, while in exile in Ecuador. "He was working for I.R.I.," Mr. Philippe said. "It was not a planned meeting." They did not discuss politics, he said, adding, "It's like someone I knew when I was young."

Mr. Voltaire, the former minister in the Aristide administration, recalled meeting Mr. Lucas at a diplomatic reception in Lima, Peru, in September 2001. He said Mr. Lucas told him he was headed to Ecuador to meet with a small group of former Haitian policemen who had trained there. Mr. Philippe was known to belong to that group.

Mr. Craner, the I.R.I. president, said Mr. Lucas might have been in a bar in Ecuador when Mr. Philippe was present, though Mr. Lucas could not be sure. Mr. Lucas said, "We dug down deep into scenarios where Guy Philippe was potentially present in the room, even if I could not confirm that." He did acknowledge being in Peru during the time frame cited by Mr. Voltaire.

Dashing Hopes for Calm

One day last August, Haiti's interim prime minister, Gérard Latortue, invited a Times reporter into a private cabinet meeting. With his ministers seated around a long wooden table, Mr. Latortue said he wanted to deliver a personal message: Haiti was safe to visit now.

"I really would like people to know now that there is an improvement," said the prime minister, a former Florida businessman and United Nations official. "Go where you want to go and after, report what you have seen — whatever it is." And he added, "We are living in very exceptional times."

Several days later, in a Port-au-Prince neighborhood, uniformed riot police officers swept through a crowd at a soccer match, singling out people to kill — with guns and machetes — outside the stadium. Unable to leave, people screamed and huddled on the ground. An estimated 10 people were killed at the event, which had been financed by the United States to promote peace in the area.

Things have only deteriorated from there. Kidnapping gangs hungry for ransom money have waged an expanding war on the capital. Several months ago, the Haitian police chief, Mario Andrésol, said a quarter of his force was corrupt or tied to the kidnapers. Assassinations, mob violence, torture and arbitrary arrests have created a "catastrophic" human rights problem, a top United Nations official said in October.

After Mr. Aristide left, expressions of hope for a more stable, peaceful Haiti came from Haitian business leaders and officials in other countries, including the United States. "The Bush administration believes that if we all do our part and do it right, Haiti will have the democracy it deserves," Mr. Noriega told the American Enterprise Institute in April 2004.

Those hopes have fallen short at nearly every turn, and for reasons that go beyond Haiti's desperate poverty. The interim government is widely viewed as politicized and inept. The local and international security forces are undermanned and overmatched by the proliferation of guns and drugs. The United States, which sent in troops to help stabilize the country immediately after Mr. Aristide's ouster, pulled them out several months later, even though they command unparalleled respect in Haiti.

Mr. Latortue's government, set up as an unelected caretaker, dashed any hope of reconciliation when the prime minister praised the rebels as "freedom fighters." Then, Mr. Chamblain, the rebel convicted twice in absentia for his role in political killings, was acquitted of one murder in a retrial that rights groups called a sham. His other conviction was dismissed as well.

At the same time, Mr. Aristide's former prime minister, Yvon Neptune, was jailed for a year without charges, prompting an international outcry. Only after a hunger strike left him near death did the government bring murder-related charges. Another prominent Aristide supporter, the Rev. Gérard Jean-Juste, has been repeatedly arrested; Amnesty International calls Father Jean-Juste, who has leukemia, "a prisoner of conscience."

Still, the Latortue government cannot be blamed for all Haiti's immediate problems.

Juan Gabriel Valdés, a Chilean who leads the United Nations mission in Haiti, said the country needed 25,000 to 30,000 police officers, more than three times the current number. International aid — \$1.08 billion has been pledged — has been slow to arrive in the slums, where violence incubates.

"If Haiti underscored anything it is that security and development must go hand in hand," said Caroline Anstey, director of the World Bank's Caribbean unit. "Better security would have meant faster development results on the ground. Faster development would have contributed to better security."

The United States has played a diminished role since its troops left in mid-2004. It pledged \$230 million to Haiti from July 2004 to September 2006, A.I.D. said.

But Mark L. Schneider, senior vice president of the International Crisis Group, said the United States pulled its forces out too soon, turning the job over to United Nations peacekeepers while the country was still in the grip of armed conflict.

On Jan. 24, a State Department spokesman, Sean McCormack, said United Nations forces "are doing a good job," adding, "I take issue with this idea that somehow the United States has not been deeply involved."

Yet the violence in Haiti, especially the kidnappings, is eating away at society.

A reporter for The Times was with United Nations troops in Bel Air, a Port-au-Prince slum, when they found and freed André Boujour, 41, who said he had been kidnapped two weeks earlier and held in a 10-by-10-foot hut, accessible only by a narrow path through a warren of tightly packed shacks.

Mr. Boujour said he was abducted after delivering several thousand dollars he had raised from friends and family to free his kidnapped sister.

'A Tragedy of Partisanship'

When Mr. Curran and Mr. Einaudi went to Haiti, they said, they believed that working with the elected government, whatever its flaws, would help a young but already sputtering democracy take hold. They said they believed that the people making policy in Washington shared that hope. Then, they said, they ran into something larger.

"Haiti is a tragedy, and it is a tragedy of partisanship and hate and hostility," Mr. Einaudi said. "These were divides among Haitians and they are also divides among Americans, because Haiti came to symbolize within the United States a point of friction between Democrats and Republicans that did not facilitate bipartisanship or stable policy or communication."

Mr. Fauriol said that the I.R.I., too, was frustrated with the interim government. "We've got to deal with reality and the reality is rather imperfect," he said. Even so, he wrote last spring that "Haiti's democratic hopes have been given another chance." The institute's activities in Haiti no longer include Mr. Lucas. He now works for the group's Afghanistan program.

Both Mr. Reich and Mr. Noriega have left the government. Before Mr. Noriega departed, he said America "will continue to be a firm supporter of democracy in Haiti."

Mr. Maguire, the Haiti expert, is skeptical. "I don't see that the U.S. is exporting democracy," he said. "I think it's more exporting a kind of fear, that if we don't do the things the way the U.S. and powerful interests in our country want us to do them, then perhaps we'll be as expendable as Mr. Aristide was."

Mr. Curran has left the Foreign Service and is working for NATO. In the final analysis, Mr. Einaudi said, the former American ambassador was simply no match for the anti-Aristide lobby in Washington.

"The difficulty," Mr. Einaudi said, "is that he took on a battle that he couldn't win."

Violence, lawlessness rage in Haiti's slums

U.N. FORCES BATTLING GANGS LOYAL TO OUSTED PRESIDENT

By Letta Tayler

NEWSDAY

Jan. 29, 2006

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti -- Backed by whirring helicopters and 20 armored personnel carriers, the U.N. force descended on the waterfront slum of CitŽ Soleil looking like a battalion headed for the Iraqi town of Fallujah.

In the dead of night, some 400 Brazilian, Jordanian and Peruvian soldiers fanned through the maze of tin shacks and sewage canals to take out Emanuel "Dread" Wilme, a gang leader who had refused to surrender one of the most dangerous neighborhoods in the hemisphere.

When the sun rose after a five-hour battle, Wilme and at least five of his crew were dead. So were dozens of men, women and children caught in the gunfire, community leaders and residents said. U.N. officials hailed the July 6 raid as a turning point in ridding this shantytown of gangs loyal to President Jean-Bertrand Aristide, a populist former priest who was ousted by armed rebels 23 months ago.

But Operation Iron Fist, as the raid was called, became an Operation Band-Aid. A new gang leader quickly replaced Wilme. And weeks before presidential elections scheduled for Feb. 7 to replace Aristide, bandits and U.N. peacekeepers trade gunfire in the slum almost daily, injuring or killing civilians in the process.

"CitŽ Soleil is a sore on the body of Haiti, a problem for both Haitians and the international community," said Juan Gabriel Valdes, chief of the U.N. mission here.

CitŽ Soleil is the most visible symbol of the lawlessness that has raged since Aristide's ouster, posing the greatest single challenge to planting democracy in the poorest and one of the most troubled countries in the hemisphere.

Unless someone restores law and order, no amount of effort and money will create jobs, rebuild institutions and restore hope, foreign policy analysts say.

More insecurity also could increase the flow of refugees and cocaine from this country to U.S. shores and make Haiti a potential haven for terrorists.

Though he's exiled in South Africa, Aristide remains a key reason a U.N. force of nearly 8,900 soldiers and police has quelled but failed to stop the political violence that has killed an estimated 1,600 people since his departure. Aristide retains strong loyalty among the poor and is widely thought to have armed the gangs in slums such as CitŽ Soleil during his final years in power, using them as his private militia. Adding to peacekeepers' worries, the only legal security force in Haiti is the 5,600-member national police, which is so poorly trained and so corrupt it is widely considered part of the problem.

Even if it were effective, the Haitian police force is woefully undersized for this Maryland-size nation of 8 million. The Dominican Republic, which shares the island of Hispaniola with Haiti, has nearly 40,000 police and 50,000 troops to protect an equivalent population.

Moreover, the pro-Aristide gangs are far from the only armed groups the U.N. peacekeepers confront. Others include:

- Gangs that rule slums elsewhere, many with a ruthlessness befitting their names -- the Little Machete Army, the Cannibal Army, the Vampires and Clean Sweep.
- Police involved in crimes including kidnapping and murder. Police frequently fire straight into demonstrations, human rights groups say.
- Former death-squad members and ex-soldiers from Haiti's decommissioned army who remain armed and ready to fight if elections don't go their way.

The former military has a long history of toppling leaders, including Aristide, whom it unseated during his first term in 1991. He was returned to power by the United States in 1994 and dissolved the military soon after. But many former soldiers rose up again and helped lead the armed revolt that unseated him a second time in February 2004.

Though he became mired in alleged corruption, Aristide was the only modern Haitian leader to champion a largely illiterate, marginalized and desperately poor majority. Many supporters, even today, are demanding his return, seeing his ouster as the latest chapter in a long battle between haves and have-nots.

"Aristide must come back," declared Amaral Duclona, the baby-faced gang leader who succeeded Wilme in CitŽ Soleil. If Haiti's elite tries to stop his return after elections or to fix the vote, "the people will take to the streets," Duclona warned.

Exacerbating the violence, the justice system barely functions, creating a situation that Thierry Fagart, a French lawyer who heads the human rights office of the U.N. mission here, calls "catastrophic." Given Haiti's history of political violence -- only one elected president has peacefully transferred power to another -- many international experts are calling for a more effective U.N. force.

But to many impoverished Haitians and grass-roots organizations, the U.N. forces are part of the problem, underscoring the complexities in quelling violence here.

In slums like CitŽ Soleil, where jobs are non-existent and people are lucky to eat one meal a day, residents and community leaders accuse the U.N. forces of indiscriminately firing on crowds. They say peacekeepers have killed scores of children, old people and pregnant women in their hunt for bandits.

The UN's amnesia in Haiti
Por Haiti Information Project (HIP)
28/01/2006
CMI Brasil

Graffiti attacking presidential candidate Rene Preval has begun showing up throughout the wealthy suburb of Petion-Ville. A woman walks past graffiti that reads: "Preval is the #1 thief."

Graffiti in Petion-Ville attacking Preval

A commentary by Kevin Pina, founding editor of the Haiti Information Project (HIP)

Wednesday, January 26, 2006

HIP, Haiti - There has been much hand wringing and posturing by the international community since the fourth delay of elections by their Haitian surrogates who took power after the forced ouster of democratically elected President Aristide in Feb. 2004. Clinging to the illusion of Haitian sovereignty, they now claim to be waking up to the fact that the U.S.-installed interim government and the so-called opposition to Aristide- carefully selected, cultivated and funded by Washington, Paris and Ottawa- has always represented the interests of Haiti's traditional reactionary elite. Throughout Haiti, many find it difficult to believe that U.N. Envoy Juan Gabriel Valdes didn't know from the beginning of his mission exactly which sector of Haitian society he was propping up to the tune of a reported \$584 million dollars per year. This is especially difficult for the majority of Haitians to swallow given that Valdes has served as the chief apologist for the U.S.-installed regime of Gerard Latortue. A regime that continues to enjoy the support of the international community after committing gross human rights violations including summary executions, killing of unarmed demonstrators and the false incarceration of countless victims in Haiti for their political beliefs and affiliations.

This purported awakening to reality by Valdes and other U.N. officials was transmitted on Jan. 24 in a recent article written by Ginger Thompson in the New York Times, "Fear and Death Ensnare U.N.'s Soldiers in Haiti." In the article Thompson writes, "But he [Valdes] and several other United Nations officials, as well as two high-ranking Western diplomats, rejected assertions that the mission had failed. They charge that Haiti's tiny elite, along with interim Prime Minister Gérard Latortue, have orchestrated a campaign to undermine the mission and delay the elections, because the Haitian leadership is nervous about what opinion polls indicate are likely to be the results." The international community's current revelations can only be seen as disingenuous given that they were the ones who followed the lead of the Bush/Martin/Chirac cabal in handing over the keys to Haiti's future to the very sector they now charge with obstruction of the elections.

Thompson's N.Y. Times article adds a backhanded recognition by the U.N. that the movement to oust Aristide, and the formation of the subsequent client government, was always a project to return Haiti's elite to power, "They thought they could get rid of one government and have the country to themselves and their friends," a United Nations officials said, asking not to be identified out of fear that his comments could hurt his position in Haiti. "But Preval has come and ruined the party."

Rene Garcia Preval was the former prime minister under Aristide's first administration in 1991 before the brutal military coup and was the former president of Haiti from 1996-2001. Preval is sailing in the polls to win a second term as president in the upcoming elections. Preval's closest rival, Charles Henry Baker, is a wealthy sweatshop owner and a co-founder of the Group 184, a so-called civil society organization that helped to overthrow Aristide and was heavily funded by the United States, France and Canada through an intriguing web of foreign non-governmental organizations (NGO's).

In recent polls Preval is set to capture at least 34% of the vote while Baker falls a distant second with a mere 10%. If neither of them wins with a clear majority, a run-off is scheduled in early March that holds the potential for creating more violence as Haiti's elite plays its last losing hand in a final bid to control the presidential palace as a trophy for having ousted Aristide.

Preval's position in the polls comes as no surprise to Haitians with a television set who see images each night of hundreds of thousands of people thronging to spirited Preval campaign rallies throughout the country on Tele-Ginen, a local television station in the capital. The state-run television station Television Nationale d' Haiti (TNH) rarely reports on Preval's campaign and then only in passing. The few truly independent radio stations such as Radio Solidarite, Radio Melody FM and Radio Ginen also capture the excitement of Preval campaign rallies in their broadcasts while the elite-run radio stations that helped to oust Aristide give little coverage. Stations such as Radio Metropole, Radio Vision 2000 and Radio Kiskeya mostly play interviews with nervous officials of the government or lengthy interviews of Baker or his wife. Madame Baker is usually cast as an expectant first lady parroting the positions of her husband in attacking the evils of Aristide and his violent partisans. In most of the interviews on the elite-run stations the cause of violence is almost always linked back to Aristide and his mythical gun-toting minions called Chimeres with the subtext that it will not end and only get worse with the election of Preval.

As the first round of elections scheduled for Feb. 7 approach, the U.S.-installed interim government and Haiti's elite are poised to create more problems in realizing the process to fruition. The rising fear among Preval supporters is that they may ultimately resort to fraud or provoke more violence during campaign rallies in an effort to forestall his victory.

This fear of an escalation in violence is not unfounded. A campaign bandstand and vehicle were recently set ablaze in the northern town of St. Marc by a nefarious group named RAMICOSM that is associated with armed gangs that helped to oust Aristide. RAMISCOSM is also implicated in the slaughter of Lavalas supporters in St. Marc, the political party of Aristide, which ultimately led to a siege by government forces in Feb. 2004 in an effort to restore order.

Memories of the assassination attempt against Aristide on December 5, 1990, during a campaign rally in the wealthy-elite bastion of Petion-Ville, are also not forgotten. Four people were killed and scores maimed after a bomb went off under the bandstand. There is also the collective memory of masked gunmen on motorcycles indiscriminately strafing the population with automatic gunfire and planting pipe bombs that killed school children in the weeks leading up to Aristide's second election victory in Nov. 2000.

The few remaining leaders of Aristide's Lavalas movement, those who were not killed or jailed, have publicly condemned the elections as an exercise to legitimize the coup of Feb. 2004. Many wonder out

loud exactly what Preval and his supporters expect since it is the same base of voters supporting him now that elected him president in 1995 and re-elected Aristide in 2000. They reason those two elections were never really about Preval or Aristide. It was always about the electoral base of the majority of poor Haitians and their struggle to wrest control from the country's tiny elite who have traditionally seen political power as their entitlement and privilege. That is why there was a corresponding level of violence to thwart them. A fact the self-deluding apologists of the international community, the U.N. mission and the mainstream press in Haiti are about to be reminded of once again.

A neighbor in need
Globe Editorial
The Boston Globe
January 29, 2006

HAITI, THE hemisphere's second oldest democracy, is about to elect a new leader once again. Whether this election, unlike others, will bring stability and growth to the hemisphere's poorest nation depends much on the help the international community can provide after the votes are counted.

There is little doubt that on Feb. 7 Haitians will elect as their next president René Preval, a former president and close associate of the president who was deposed two years ago, Jean-Bertrand Aristide. Aristide, the former slum priest, left Haiti under murky circumstances in the midst of a revolt by disgruntled former members of the nation's military, which he had dismantled. The insurrection had the support of much of the Haitian economic elite. The United States and others tried to get Aristide and the opposition to cooperate, but the opposition balked. Aristide's US-engineered flight out of Haiti might have saved his life, but it is seen by critics of US actions as complicity with rebels whom Secretary of State Colin Powell had previously characterized as "thugs."

The popularity of Preval in the coming election is a grass-roots verdict on the interim government installed by the international community after Aristide's departure. No figure in that government has stepped forward as a leader who could bridge the nation's bitter class gulf and mobilize a consensus for creating the kind of social, educational, and public-works infrastructure that would make progress possible.

Neither Preval nor any other winner will succeed in that crucial task without a more effective system of law enforcement. One major failing during Aristide's time in office was his inability to create and train a large, effective, and professional police force. At the time of the revolt in 2004, there were just 5,000 police officers in a country of 8 million.

A United Nations force of 9,000 has tried to maintain order since 2004, but the capital, Port-au-Prince, has been plagued by shootings and kidnappings. Problems in training poll workers and securing balloting materials have forced four delays in the election. Even now, UN officials say that violence might make it impossible to have polling stations in Cité Soleil, one of the capital's largest poor neighborhoods. Officials should take every step to ensure that the area's more than 200,000 residents are not disenfranchised.

After the election, Haiti, not unlike Iraq, will badly need assistance in training new security forces and building infrastructure. Canada, with its large French-speaking population, could be instrumental in taking on this task at a time when the United States is deeply involved elsewhere.

U.S. Haitians warily watch elections process in troubled homeland

By JENNIFER KAY

Associated Press Writer

MIAMI BEACH, Fla.

The Ledger

January 29, 2006

When James Henfield's mother turned 105 in Haiti last year, the Miami Beach chef wasn't there to celebrate.

He'd like to go home for her birthday this May, but he remains worried about the violence that increasingly has decayed Haiti's security since the ouster of President Jean-Bertrand Aristide nearly two years ago.

The prospect of presidential elections next month does little to comfort Henfield, who like many of the half-million Haitians living in the United States is eyeing the upcoming vote with skepticism.

"Election is not the solution, but we need it," said Henfield, as he took a break from the dinner crowd at Tap Tap, a Haitian restaurant. "We need to see new people ... somebody who can do something for the country, not for his pocket."

The vote currently is scheduled for Feb. 7, and many hope it will happen: So far, Haiti has postponed elections four times due to organizational problems and escalating violence.

Despite the presence of 9,000 U.N. peacekeepers, the nation of 8 million people has seen some 1,500 civilians killed since Aristide fled in February 2004 amid a bloody rebellion and accusations of corruption. A wave of kidnappings and killings has been blamed on well-armed street gangs, some allegedly allied with the exiled former president.

The French humanitarian group Doctors Without Borders has said that in the last year, one trauma center in Port-au-Prince, home to 2 million people, treated 2,500 patients for violence-related injuries, including rapes, beatings, gunshot or stab wounds.

Haiti also has been wracked by devastating natural disasters, with thousands of people killed in recent years in massive landslides triggered by hurricanes and floods.

Henfield, 52, like other Haitians living abroad cannot vote, but he said his sisters, nieces and nephews in Haiti plan to do so. He declined to divulge which of the 35 presidential candidates they'll support for fear it could make them targets of violence. Earlier this month, he said, two former neighbors in Port-au-Prince were kidnapped and the family is leery.

"I want elections to happen because I don't want a country like that when I go home. I want to be safe," he said.

Haitians living abroad sent home more than \$1 billion in 2004 to help relatives survive Haiti's crushing poverty, according to the Inter-American Development Bank.

But the insecurity there means the financial assistance is only a short-term fix, says Garry Pierre-Pierre, publisher of The Haitian Times, a bilingual weekly newspaper based in New York.

"They keep sending money to the country and it's like throwing money away," Pierre-Pierre said. "What good is a place if you can't invest in it? How silly can you be to ostracize your intelligentsia, your backbone?"

Some say the elections, too, will do little to help Haiti. Many expatriates instead said it's more important to establish a free press and an effective police force, and to improve schools and hospitals.

"We have a country plagued by kidnapping, by political killings, under foreign occupation. Setting an election as a priority is missing the mark," said Jean-Robert Lafortune, chairman of the Haitian-American Grassroots Coalition in Miami.

Simply holding elections does not guarantee security, said Lafortune, recalling the election-day violence in November 1987 that killed 34 voters.

"It still is a ghost in the collective mind, so there is apprehension" surrounding the upcoming elections, Lafortune said.

There is also a wide perception that whoever wins the vote will merely become a puppet for the international community.

Manno Charlemagne was mayor of Port-au-Prince from 1995 to 1999, but he said he lost interest in Haitian politics as the United States, France and Canada gained influence over the country. A folk singer, Charlemagne now performs with his band at Tap Tap.

"Everybody is for sale in Haiti right now. We can do nothing," Charlemagne said.

His bandmates echoed his cynicism and criticism of foreign involvement.

"There is election and selection. I think they're going to do selection," bassist Richard LaGuerre, 40, of North Miami said.

Saxophonist Jocelyn Gourdet, 29, of Miami, declined to say which candidate he favored, but he was emphatic that change in Haiti must come without foreign interference.

"Any of them who love Haiti can do it by themselves. We don't need the United Nations, the United States, any of those people," he said.

Listeners calling Herntz Phanord's daily talk show on Planet 17, a Haitian radio station in Miami, have called the elections a farce financed by countries who historically are tied to Haiti's colonial past.

"They feel they're being punished for having the audacity to liberate themselves in 1804. Why else would so many great powers form an alliance against the poorest country in the hemisphere?" Phanord said. "It's like killing an ant with a cannon. It's overkill, so they must really be sending out a message."

Some U.S. Haitians said front-runner Rene Preval was only the most likely to win, not the most likely to succeed in solving Haiti's crisis.

Many members of Aristide's Lavalas Family party plan to vote for Preval, who was Haiti's president from 1995 to 2001, but he will have to earn their trust, said Jean Yvon Kernizan, who hosts a weekly show for the New York-based pro-Lavalas Radio Soleil.

"Aristide, he was a priest, and that made him very tolerant. Preval is not a priest, so Preval will not hesitate to take the necessary steps in order to have the law obeyed," Kernizan said.

**Mission impossible for peacekeepers
UN commander denies claims that troops are killing civilians in slum
Jan. 29, 2006
REED LINDSAY
The Toronto Star**

By noon, the gunfire had stopped and residents of the cinderblock slum known as Cité Soleil cautiously gathered around the lifeless body of Jackson Mombege.

The body lay face down in a pool of blood in the middle of the street. A man shouted in anger, women wailed and Mombege's 3-year-old son burst into tears.

Mombege's neighbours said United Nations peacekeepers gunned down the 33-year-old day labourer as he stepped out of an alley.

"The tank stopped in front of him," said Guiva Mombrun, 48. "They shot him, and he fell."

As they heard the rumble of an approaching UN armoured personnel carrier, Mombrun and the others scattered into nearby alleys.

In this sprawling seaside slum, where police do not dare enter and young men armed with automatic rifles zip around in stolen SUVs, United Nations peacekeepers have come to be feared and resented by the very people they were sent to protect.

More than 9,000 peacemakers have managed to stabilize nearly every part of this country, stamping out rebellions by former soldiers and pacifying the defiant Port-au-Prince slum of Bel Air, once a stronghold for armed supporters of Jean-Bertrand Aristide, the former president who was forced into exile during an armed revolt in February 2004.

But with often-delayed national elections now little more than a week away, the poorest neighbourhood in the poorest nation in the Western Hemisphere remains beyond the UN's control.

"Cité Soleil is the most serious challenge of our mission," says Juan Gabriel Valdes, a Chilean diplomat who is chief of the UN stabilization mission, known as MINUSTAH.

Two Jordanian battalions, with 1,500 troops and more than 50 armoured vehicles, have been unable to root out armed groups that prowl the neighbourhood's immense warren of alleyways and precarious hovels.

In the last month, four peacekeepers — a Canadian police officer and three Jordanian soldiers — were killed in the outskirts of the neighbourhood.

Jordanian checkpoints have sustained heavy fire of up to 1,000 rounds a day, according to a UN official who asked to remain anonymous.

But many Cité Soleil residents blame the UN peacekeepers, not the armed groups, for the violence. They accuse the blue helmets of shooting indiscriminately, routinely firing rounds from the cannons mounted on their vehicles and killing innocent civilians, including women and children.

"Every day, the MINUSTAH is shooting people," says Wilner Pierre, lying on a hospital cot with a large bandage covering his lower torso.

The 35-year-old mechanic says UN troops shot him in the back on the afternoon of Jan. 1 while he was walking down the main avenue in Cité Soleil. The bullet exited through his lower abdomen, ripping through his intestines.

"They stay inside their tanks and stick their guns out," says Pierre. "They shoot in any direction and at any person, even babies, it doesn't matter.

"They shouldn't do their job like that."

This month, the local hospital has treated nearly 70 gunshot victims, more than half of them women, children or elderly.

During a recent visit to the hospital, all six people being treated for bullet wounds said they were shot by UN peacekeepers.

The hospital itself was hit by gunfire twice in two weeks.

One bullet broke a window in the pediatric ward and hit a wall inches from a boy.

The other, fired from a high-powered weapon with a calibre of between 16 and 20 millimetres, blasted holes through two walls of the hospital's administrative offices, according to Sergio Cecchini of Doctors Without Borders, which helps run the hospital. He could not say where the bullets came from.

`The government is

not willing to solve the problem of Cité Soleil and they want us to go there and destroy it, to kill all the people there. We will not do this'

BRIG.-Gen.

Mahmoud Al-Husban Jordanian commander

Jordanian Brig.-Gen. Mahmoud Al-Husban, commander of the UN troops in Port-au-Prince, denies that the peacekeepers fired on the hospital.

He says the Jordanian soldiers shoot only when fired upon and even then only when they can clearly target the attacking gunman.

But he concedes that he cannot know the extent of any potential "collateral damage" because the peacekeepers rarely leave the safety of their vehicles.

"Inside Cité Soleil, we never see a dead body or wounded person because the gangs will take away the bodies of gang members, and civilians stay inside their houses," says Al-Husban.

"The problem is that most people living in Cité Soleil are with the gangs.

"If they are not fighting with the gangs, they are supporting the gangs."

Cité Soleil is controlled by numerous armed groups, some of which remain aligned with Aristide's Lavalas party, the country's largest political force, and are now supporting former president René Preval, considered the frontrunner in first-round presidential elections slated for Feb. 7.

The two former presidents have become estranged, but both are hugely popular in Cité Soleil and other poor neighbourhoods.

Leading members of Haiti's fiercely anti-Aristide business elite blame the armed groups in Cité Soleil for the kidnappings that have sowed panic among the capital's small middle and upper classes, although UN and police officials say many of the criminal masterminds live elsewhere.

In recent weeks, conservative business leaders have organized protests demanding a UN-led crackdown "to cleanse Cité Soleil of the criminals."

Lavalas accuses the business leaders, who include factory owner and anti-Aristide activist Andre Apaid and his brother-in-law, presidential candidate Charles Henri Baker, of trying to use the UN to further clamp down on the party and its supporters.

"They don't want elections," says René Monplaisir, a Lavalas leader in Cité Soleil who is campaigning for Preval.

"Ninety per cent of the Haitian people want elections because they are supporting René Preval for president. That's why (they) want to kill people living here."

So far, the UN has not ceded to demands for a large-scale offensive. Nor have the peacekeepers attempted to negotiate with the armed groups, hampered by the U.S.-backed interim government's refusal to grant an amnesty.

"There is no military solution to Cité Soleil," says Al-Husban, the Jordanian general.

"The solution could be giving the gangs amnesty and giving more social help. Medicine, food, development projects

"It seems the government is not willing to solve the problem of Cité Soleil and they want us to go there and destroy it, to kill all the people there. We will not do this."

Peacekeepers typically enter a country after the United Nations has brokered a peace agreement between opposing sides in an armed conflict that provides a framework for UN-sponsored disarmament and elections. But in Haiti, MINUSTAH was charged with backing an interim government that has shown little interest in reconciliation.

The UN's quagmire in Cité Soleil is rooted in the absence of a peace agreement, says Todd Howland, director of the Robert F. Kennedy Memorial's Center for Human Rights.

"The UN has not been allowed to do what it traditionally does," says Howland, who worked in UN peacekeeping missions in Rwanda and Angola.

"This is the only country in the world where you have a significant United Nations' operation without a peace accord.

"Instead, the member states have told the UN to take sides in Haiti.

"You'd be hard-pressed to find a case where marginalizing a significant segment of society and failing to make any structural changes resulted in peace."

In Haiti, U.N. force mired in violence and resentment
Election planned for Feb. 7, but it is unclear whether a fair vote is possible
By GINGER THOMPSON
New York Times
Jan. 28, 2006

PORT-AU-PRINCE, HAITI - Nearly 20 months after the United Nations arrived to stabilize the hemisphere's poorest country and avert a civil war, there is still no cease-fire in this violent city on the sea.

Blasts from tanks and machine guns go on for hours almost every day around Cite Soleil, a steamy slum at the capital's northern edge.

No one knows for sure how many civilians have been killed, because the bodies of the slum-dwellers and local gangsters rarely make it to morgues.

But on Jan. 17, two Jordanian soldiers were shot to death in skirmishes with local gangs, and another was wounded.

It was the third fatal strike against U.N. personnel since December, a month when relations between the international peacekeeping mission and the local people began to unravel.

The \$584 million-a-year mission has failed to bring peace to Haiti, and the caretaker government has failed to bring elections.

Profiteering alleged

The interim government, appointed with the support of the United States after the downfall of former President Jean-Bertrand Aristide in March 2004, postponed new elections to Feb. 7 from Jan. 8.

The interim government blames the international community for four delays in four months, saying it failed to deliver voter cards and train enough poll workers.

The United Nations blames the interim government, accusing its leaders, lavished in international assistance, of profiting from their time in power.

Cite Soleil is among the most desperate corners of a desperately poor country. Fifty-five percent of Haiti's 8.5 million people live on less than a dollar a day, according to the U.N.

Uphill battle

Ambassador Juan Gabriel Valdes, chief of the U.N. Stabilization Mission in Haiti, acknowledged the uphill battle in Cite Soleil.

"This is a ghetto," he said, "where gangs, which are not different from the gangs found in Central America, have managed to isolate the area from state control."

But he and several other U.N. officials, as well as two high-ranking Western diplomats, rejected assertions that the mission had failed.

They charge that Haiti's tiny elite, along with interim Prime Minister Gerard Latortue, have orchestrated a campaign to undermine the mission and delay the elections, because the Haitian leadership is nervous about what opinion polls indicate are likely to be the results.

Latortue refused repeated requests for an interview.

A recent poll sponsored by the U.S. government indicated the leading candidate is former President René Preval, considered a protege to Aristide.

UN Mission practices election security in Haiti
Australian Broadcasting Corporation
Jan. 29, 2006

United Nations peacekeepers in Haiti are today conducting a large-scale voting simulation exercise to determine their readiness for next week's presidential election.

After being delayed four times, the first stage of the poll will take place on February 7.

Lawlessness has been one of the major issues surrounding preparations for the vote - the first since Jean Bertrand Aristide fled as president in February 2004.

The 7,500-strong UN peacekeeping force has struggled to impose order and has been criticised for the tactics it has used.

Civil Action suits for Haiti
by IJJH Saturday, Jan. 28, 2006
justusforhaiti@yahoo.com
San Francisco Independent Media

International law provides for justice on behalf of those whose human rights have been trampled upon. This includes Haitians.

International Jurists for Justice in Haiti (IJJH)

We, the IJJH, are committed to seeking justice in Haiti. The prolonged detainment without charges of countless victims of this witch-hunt against Lavalas in Haiti is no longer acceptable. All of the accusers that justified these acts should seek legal representation in anticipation of civil action suits against you. We will work in our respective countries to file civil actions and at minimum will force you to answer before local and national judiciaries in these cases. This includes secondary actors who gave false accusations and testimony.

The time for thinking above the law is past. It is now time to take action and stand up for what is just in the world according to international law. We do not believe in violence or vengeance but we believe wholeheartedly in justice.

We hereby declare that we will seek every legal means and contribute all of our resources to incarcerate those who gave orders or were associated with the political persecution of anyone affiliated with Jean-Bertrand Aristide's Lavalas Party after the coup of Feb. 29, 2004. We have already begun the process of taking testimony to document the veracity of the claims of the victims.

We affirm that we shall pool financial resources internationally to identify, seek and otherwise expose to civil damages, on behalf of the victims of human rights violations in Haiti, anyone responsible for creating the climate contributing to the political persecution of individuals as well as those directly responsible for human rights abuses. We shall work tirelessly on behalf of all those who are victims in Haiti to insure that the rule of international law is met in a timely manner. Damages shall be sought on behalf of the victims for all persons wrongfully detained and incarcerated as well as those killed, injured and tortured as a result of political and/or personal motives under international law.

International Jurists for Justice in Haiti

Signers for this declaration:

U.S.
France
Canada
Great Britain
Chile
Argentina
Uruguay
Paraguay

Brazil
Ecuador
Dominican Republic
Jordan
Chad

Mission spokesman, David Wimhurst said he's was confident the elections will run smoothly, claiming acts of disruption or sabotage will not be tolerated.

The UN's lethal role in Haiti, Ivory Coast

By G. Dunkel

WorkersWorld.org

Jan 28, 2006

Occupying United Nations troops in both the Ivory Coast and Haiti have been meeting growing resistance. These popular struggles have dispersed, but not dissipated, the smokescreen that the troops provide for the imperialist powers' maneuverings.

UN troops are authorized by resolutions passed by the Security Council, a body where the United States, along with France and Great Britain, call most of the shots.

In Haiti, U.S. Special Forces seized President Jean-Bertrand Aristide and put him on a U.S. plane into exile in the Central African Republic, and French troops were quickly sent to clamp down on the people's protests over the coup-napping. UN troops from Brazil have replaced them. Aristide is now in South Africa.

There are also substantial UN contingents in Haiti from Chile and Argentina, and smaller ones from Jordan, Ecuador, Guatemala, Peru and Uruguay, as well as cops from China and Canada operating under UN direction.

When two UN soldiers from Jordan were killed Jan. 17 at a checkpoint leading into Cité Soleil, and Chilean soldiers, firing from armored cars, exacted revenge that left one person dead and at least 17 wounded, they were wearing UN uniforms, not U.S. or French. (CNN.com)

A Brazilian general runs the military side of the UN operation and the Brazilian government has to pay for its troops in Haiti and also face demands from its people that the troops be withdrawn.

According to the Haitian Press Agency (AHP), the Sao Paulo daily Folha has called for Brazilian troops to be brought home, a call echoed by Socialist parliamentarian Orlando Fantazzini and Green Party deputy Fernando Bageiras. Brazil is seeking a seat on the UN Security Council.

The UN presence provides a buffer for the Bush administration from criticisms like that of the U.S. Congressional Black Caucus and other Black leaders demanding U.S. withdrawal from Haiti, and making the obvious connection to the occupation and war in Iraq.

But the U.S. is not totally off the hook even as the situation in Haiti becomes more lethal.

Since the beginning of December, violence has grown more widespread and intense in Haiti. Doctors Without Borders, which runs a clinic in Port-au-Prince that treats gunshot wounds, reported 68 cases in October 2005 and 122 in December. And many people who are injured by the cops or the UN do not go to a clinic or a hospital for treatment out of fear they will be arrested and "disappeared" from their hospital beds.

In a Jan. 19 coordinated action, 200 lawyers in Boston, Washington D.C., New York, Miami and Philadelphia filed

motions in dozens of deportation cases, demanding that the Department of Home land Security grant temporary protected status to Haitians living in the United States.

In multiple press conferences the lawyers asserted: “The DHS has failed to act, despite full awareness of the horrors being suffered by the civilian population in Haiti. The majority of the population now teeters on the brink of death from hunger, disease and displacement. With out [temporary protected status], nationals of Haiti are subject to forced repatriation into a country where the government cannot prevent immediate threats to their lives, freedom, and welfare.” (New York Times, Jan. 20)

Attorney Thomas M. Griffin of Philadelphia, author of a widely circulated report on human rights in Haiti, is coordinating this effort along with Paromita Shah, a lawyer at the National Immigration Project in Boston.

Resistance in the Ivory Coast

In the Ivory Coast, 4,000 UN-controlled soldiers are present, as well as 7,000 French troops operating outside UN control but under a grant of authority from the Security Council.

Strenuous popular protests broke out Jan. 15 when the UN-backed International Working Group (whose French initials are GTI) decided to dissolve the parliament controlled by the Popular Ivoirian Front (FPI), the party of President Laurent Gbagbo. (Bloomberg.com)

Since the Ivoirian army staged an uprising in 2002, the country has been split in two, with the military rebels holding the north, the Gbagbo government holding the south, and the French, the former colonial power in the Ivory Coast, maneuvering to preserve France’s interests, which are substantial.

Thousands of Gbagbo supporters, known as “Young Patriots,” filled the streets of Abidjan, the commercial center of the Ivory Coast, and other large cities. They threw Molotov cocktails and rocks at French diplomatic and military installations as well as UN facilities. Most U.S. papers presented the protests as “riots.”

In Guiglo, a city in the western part of the Ivory Coast near Liberia, UN troops opened fire on the protesters, killing five. As these soldiers then withdrew to an area controlled by the French army, the 200 to 300 UN troops and civilian employees came under fire. (AP-French)

Kofi Annan, the secretary general of the UN, condemned this as “orchestrated violence directed against the United Nations.” The UN also threatened “individual sanctions” against prominent leaders in the protests. (CNN.com)

But Annan’s remarks served to hide France’s role in promoting and maintaining neocolonial control of the Ivory Coast. The head of the FPI, Pascal Affi N’Guessan, has characterized the UN presence as part of “recolonization of the Ivory Coast.” (CNN.com)

Only the intervention of Olusegun Obasanjo, current head of the African Union, led the FPI to call off the protests and rejoin the government.

Obasanjo, president of Nigeria, came to Abidjan to meet with Gbagbo and other Ivoirian leaders, jointly issuing a statement that the UN-backed GTI did not have the authority to dissolve the Ivoirian parliament. (TheAge.com)

The immediate crisis in the Ivory Coast has been defused, but the UN's role in hiding France's effort to recolonize the country has only been checked, not defeated.

Hip Hop and Konpa
By Jacqueline Charles
The Miami Herald
Sun, Jan. 29, 2006

Hip hop and konpa in an intimate setting

Booking Haitian-born hip hop artist Wyclef Jean, and Sweet Micky -- the Haitian konpa music king whom Jean declared an MVP on his Masquerade album -- usually runs in the tens of thousands. Friday night, several hundred Haitian-American professionals got to experience the jam session for free.

Jean, who was in Miami working with Latin music sensation Shakira on a reggaeton-inspired single, joined Sweet Micky on stage in a ballroom at the James L. Knight Center. The konpa artist was headlining a reception to kick off a three-day conference by the Haitian-American Leadership Organization, a newly formed group hoping to promote a different kind of image of Haitians by tapping Haitian-American professionals to become more involved in their community.

"This is important with what we are trying to do with the next phase of Haiti," Jean told The Miami Herald. He is becoming increasingly involved with the issues affecting his troubled Caribbean homeland.

Wearing a black T-shirt declaring "We are all Refugees," the star of one of the biggest-selling hip-hop acts ever, the Fugees, came to the reception at the invitation of Sweet Micky, who donated his talent to the affair. Before his arrival he was at North Miami's Hit Factory recording studio with Shakira and at Little Haiti's Sant La Neighborhood Center, where he spent the afternoon hanging out with executive director Gepsie Metellus.

"Micky is my political advisor, and he tells me what to say . . . so there will be no discussions of [former Haitian President Jean-Bertrand] Aristide on the podium tonight," Jean told the crowd, to the sound of laughter.

Then addressing the crowd in Haitian-Creole, he said, "If we want to advance [as Haitians] we need to have HALO. . . . If they want the Haitian vote, we are the ones they are going to have to come to." During the evening, Jean posed for photos, signed autographs and showed off his best konpa moves as Micky worked the crowd into a frenzy. Jean even showed an admiring group of youngsters his latest flips and hip hop moves before taking the guitar and microphone to belt out Bob Marley's No Woman No Cry, and 911, the duet he made with soul singer Mary J. Blige.

Haitian American professionals kick off conference today

BY JACQUELINE CHARLES

Miami Herald

Jan. 27, 2006

South Florida's striving Haitian-American community -- 245,000-plus strong -- has its growing share of professionals, but they have not been at the forefront of issues affecting the struggling majority. That's about to change.

A group of Haitian professionals is putting up its own money -- raising more than \$60,000 so far -- to bankroll a conference that as many as 3,000 Haitian-American professionals are expected to attend starting today.

It comes as a politically chaotic Haiti prepares to hold elections in less than two weeks. This new generation of South Florida's Haitian-American professionals -- comfortable in both worlds -- hopes to make a difference there and here, but with a twist. They are challenging the notion that the only way to help Haiti is by immersing oneself in bruising Haiti politics.

"We are in a critical situation in our country and in our community. It's not a game anymore," said Angelo Gousse, a Haitian-born Yale educated urologist who has brought together a diverse group of professionals under the banner of the Haitian-American Leadership Organization.

"Once we gain political power in the United States, it will translate into political power in Haiti." That's a tall order for a community whose previous attempts to unite around a common agenda haven't always succeeded.

"How can it be, all of us accomplished all of these great things in a foreign country in a different language and we can't get our act together?" said Gousse, 42, who lives in Miramar and works at Jackson Memorial Hospital. "We could be so powerful as a community if we get organized and contribute more."

A 2004 study released by the Brookings Institution, a public policy think tank, found that while Broward County cities like Miramar boast the wealthiest Haitian communities, the community overall still remains relatively poor, especially in Miami-Dade County where Haitians are the second-largest immigrant group after Cubans.

The study, based on the 2000 Census, was done at the request of the Sant La Haitian Neighborhood Center, one of several local groups working to address the community's needs, which are many. They include understanding individuals' rights as immigrants, no matter their legal status; accessing healthcare; how to get into postgraduate programs like law or medical school; how to start a business or invest in real estate.

By addressing these issues over the next three days, and through year-long seminars and mentoring programs, the professionals' group hopes to not only educate the community but to build bridges.

"We need to forge a community agenda that all Haitians can agree upon," said Gérard Philippeaux, a Miami-Dade County Commission aide. "It is the only way to create sustainable progress and maintain a common identity."

Herold Merisier, a North Miami Beach family doctor, agrees. Merisier and his wife, also a physician, moved to South Florida 10 years ago after living in France and Canada. His motivation, he said, for joining the group is not just the goal of linking up the different Haitian organizations that already exist, but the opportunity to serve as a role model for Haitian-Americans youths.

Karen André understands the importance of role models. As the daughter of a Haitian cultural icon, André never had to look very far when she was a child to find professional artists, doctors, teachers -- all Haitian -- routinely visiting her Miami home.

Hers was more the exception than the norm in a community known more for its boatloads of refugees than its bankers, lawyers or computer programmers.

"We are out there," said André, an attorney who worked for former U.S. Rep. Peter Deutsch, D-Fla. "I know there is this oasis of Haitian professionals, but I might meet one or two at a time."

Census figures show that at least 10 percent of Haitians in Miami-Dade and Broward counties are college educated.

"Plenty of qualified professionals have made significant strides in the community, but that is all left in the shadows" by decades-old stereotypes that do not hold true for Haitians, Merisier said.

"After being here for 10 years, the message I see being projected of Haitians is still the same as 10 years ago. Most are boat people, not educated, although they are hardworking."

This is not the first time groups of Haitian-American professionals have come together in hopes of devising a community blueprint. One of the most recent efforts involved the Society of Haitian-American Professionals and Entrepreneurs. It had about 100 active members before it dissolved in 2004.

Learning from that group's past experience will be important for the venture's success. Also key will be its image as a nonpartisan group where Haitians of various political persuasions can hammer out a plan.

Such a test will occur Sunday afternoon, when several Haitian community activists with very different views about Haiti and the upcoming election will meet in a roundtable discussion on how best to empower the community here politically.

Some of those involved have in the past been criticized for dividing, instead of uniting the community. It will be one of many tests of the community's maturation, and of the group's sustainability.

"We are trying our best not to endorse political agendas," Merisier said. "We want to remain open to everybody."

The conference begins at noon today at the third floor of the James L. Knight Center, 400 S.E. Second Ave. Tickets are \$25 for the three-day event and free for students with valid ID. A reception tonight begins at 8 p.m. and cost is \$50, featuring Haitian konpa music king, Sweet Micky.

Every penny counts in pupils' project
St. Margaret collects 1 million cents to help a school in Haiti
By Cassandra A. Fortin
The Baltimore Sun
January 29, 2006

Several years ago, Maureen Yantz gave her husband a bag of pennies and asked him to deposit them at the bank. The bag remained in the back of his car for years.

Lisa Sheehan had two jars in her house used as piggy banks and when they got full, her husband put them into coin rolls. They used the extra money on family vacations.

But when St. Margaret School in Bel Air announced its Million Penny Project to benefit a sister school in Haiti, Yantz and Sheehan, who both have children at the school, knew where to go for their initial contributions.

"I see this project as a way to show kids that even pennies that people leave in their cars, throw away or don't bother to pick up off the ground can make a difference," Yantz said.

The idea to collect 1 million pennies came during a school math department meeting. A teacher said she wanted to create a project that would enable the pupils to comprehend 1 million. Another teacher suggested collecting 1 million pennies to raise money for the St. Rose of Lima School in Haiti, which St. Margaret School has supported since 2001.

After two years of gathering coins, the project will reach its culmination tomorrow, when about 800 pupils attending the school will parade in pairs across Hickory Avenue to HAR-CO Maryland Federal Credit Union to take pennies they collected in addition to the 1 million to be weighed. On Wednesday and Thursday, parent volunteers and students from the John Carroll School will help bag the pennies, which will be picked up by an armored vehicle.

"The logistics for getting the pennies bagged, weighed and removed, and then getting the money delivered, has been an incredible task," said Kathleen Spaeth, development director at St. Margaret and coordinator of this week's events.

For example, the coordinators had to figure out where to store the pennies. They started with 20 plastic pretzel containers donated by Utz Quality Foods Inc. in Hanover, Pa.

"We filled up those containers, and that's when we realized how heavy pennies are," Principal Jane Dean said. "No one in the building could pick them up."

As an alternative, the organizers asked a parent to build a container. John Kelble constructed a tank using 3/4 -inch-thick sheets of a polycarbonate called Makrolon - which is said to be 30 times stronger than Plexiglas - to hold the more than 3 tons of pennies, Spaeth said.

"We had to consult engineers to make sure the floor could withstand the weight of the pennies," Spaeth said.

When pennies were donated, they were counted in the classrooms and poured into the tank by the children.

Megan Rink, 10, of Bel Air was selected to put the 1 millionth penny into the container.

"I went home and told my Mom it was my lucky day," Rink said.

While pupils have been dazzled by the large sum accumulating in their view, they say they feel good about using it to benefit less fortunate children.

"If I could buy what I wanted, I'd get a new laptop and an iPod," said Becky Hottle, a 10-year-old Bel Air resident. "But I feel good that the money will be used to buy the kids school books, uniforms and desks and other stuff they don't have. They need a lot of stuff at that school."

St. Margaret established ties with St. Rose in the late 1990s. Assistant Principal Carol Delss learned of the Haitian school from her college-age son, who visited the impoverished country with a Catholic relief group. Delss, who was an eighth-grade teacher at the time, motivated her class to sponsor a St. Rose student for \$100.

"They have one building that doesn't have a bathroom because there's no running water," Delss said.

In 2000, after she became assistant principal, Delss approached Dean about launching schoolwide projects to support St. Rose, including donating 120 backpacks filled with school supplies and getting St. Margaret families to sponsor students at St. Rose. The \$100 sponsorships cover tuition, uniforms and hot lunches for the school year.

Now that the pupils have reached the goal of their latest project, their parents and teachers must figure out how to get the pennies out of the tank to bag them.

Kyle Travers, 10, of Abingdon contemplated the dilemma and concluded that the easiest way would be to climb into the tank and shovel the pennies out.

"I could get to all the pennies if I climbed in," he said. "Or we can use shovels and fill pails with the pennies."

Spaeth concluded that the most effective way to remove the pennies is to use scoops, shovels and a heavy-duty vacuum. The volunteers plan to scoop up the pennies, pour them into a wheelbarrow, and take them to an area to be bagged. When the level of pennies in the tank gets too low to scoop, they will use the vacuum to gather the remaining coins.

The bags, expected to total 200 upon completion, must be filled until they weigh between 29 and 34.5 pounds.

"The Federal Reserve [System] doesn't count each and every penny. They weigh the bags to determine how much is in them," Spaeth said. "As long as we stay within that weight range, we will have \$50 in the bag."

The bagged pennies will be secured until parent volunteers carry the bags to the armored truck to be deposited.

In addition to figuring out the logistics, several teachers have implemented the project into classroom instruction. The teachers were creative with lesson plans and in motivating pupils to donate, Dean said.

For example, anyone who donated 200 or more pennies was entered into a raffle. At Halloween, teachers dressed up and pupils voted by putting pennies in a container, and the teacher with the most pennies won, Dean said.

"What we wanted the kids to learn from this project is that you begin with an idea, and you have to have the courage to pursue it, work with others and stick with it until you reach your goal," Dean said. "We want to plant the seed of generosity and the sense of responsibility that they need to give back to the community."

Haiti ready, wants Caricom involved
Radio Jamaica
Jan. 26, 2006

Haiti's interim Prime Minister, Gerard Latortue, says his country is ready for the upcoming elections on February 7.

Mr. Latortue wants the Caribbean Community (Caricom) to send observers to the elections which have been postponed four times.

He is in Trinidad for meetings with Caricom's current Chairman, Trinidad and Tobago Prime Minister Patrick Manning.

His visit, two weeks before general elections, is at the invitation of Mr. Manning, who has just taken over as chairman of Caricom.

The Caricom grouping has remained split over recognition of the Latortue interim administration following the February 2004 ousting of elected President Jean-Bertrand Aristide from the country.

Doing Jack for Haiti
by Derrick O'Keefe, Seven Oaks
January 27, 2006

What would have had to happen in Haiti over the course of the election campaign to have compelled NDP leader Jack Layton to bring up Canada's shameful involvement in the plight of the western hemisphere's poorest country?

A brief summary of critical events in Haiti over the course of the long winter race for Parliament would indicate a foreign policy situation worthy of debate, if not strident denunciation. Haiti's slated January 8 elections were postponed, for the fourth time; the Brazilian commander of the United Nations mission died of an apparent suicide and was replaced by a Chilean general who participated in the overthrow of Allende and was trained at the notorious School of the Americas; Father Gerard Jean-Juste, along with hundreds of other political prisoners held by the de facto Haitian regime, languished in prison even after being diagnosed with leukemia.

Solidarity activists made a concerted effort, in particular, to encourage Jack Layton to use the election spotlight to call for the release of Father Jean-Juste, whom Amnesty International has declared a 'prisoner of conscience'. It is, incidentally, widely believed that Jean-Juste, if he were to be released and allowed to run under the exiled Jean-Bertrand Aristide's Lavalas banner, would win anything resembling a 'free and fair' election in Haiti today. At the same time as many progressive and concerned people looked to Layton and the NDP to raise the issue, an energetic campaign was being waged to punish Foreign Affairs Minister Pierre Pettigrew for Canada's support of the coup in Haiti. (Pettigrew was indeed defeated by Bloc Quebecois candidate, Vivian Barbot).

Despite all of this, Haiti did not warrant a mention from the national NDP communications team. Nor did, in fact, the issue of U.S. war resisters seeking sanctuary in the United States – another issue the NDP could have featured in order to both highlight a just cause and expose the hypocrisy of the Liberals' rhetoric against the war in Iraq. Until the last week of the campaign, when Layton made an important call for a debate in the House of Commons about Canada's new, more aggressive role in Afghanistan, the only thing resembling 'foreign policy' on the NDP website was a letter of condolence to the Israeli people regarding Ariel Sharon's failing health.

None of this to say that there are not a number of NDP candidates, members, and supporters who took the issue seriously, with some even joining in challenging Liberal incumbents at all-candidates meetings. Alexa McDonough, as the party's foreign affairs critic, and a handful of Members of Parliament, including the re-elected Libby Davies (Vancouver-East) and Bill Siksay (Burnaby-Douglas), have written letters critical of Canada's involvement in Haiti. With a minority Conservative government that will only, if anything, be more overtly supportive of suppressing Haitian democracy and self-determination, the 10 additional New Democrat MPs elected Monday can hopefully contribute to efforts to raise this and other vital foreign policy issues.

But there's no time like an election campaign to bring matters to public attention, and Layton and his handlers failed to bring up Haiti. And that failure represents a disservice to the people of Canada, a life-threatening disservice to political prisoners like the ailing Father Jean-Juste, and a disservice to the long tradition of movements against war and empire in this country.

Years ago, Tommy Douglas passionately denounced Canadian complicity in the war in Vietnam – which included arms sales and the development of the chemical weapon Agent Orange – and called that conflict “the greatest moral issue of our time.”

Jack Layton often said he would hold Paul Martin’s ‘feet to the fire’ on foreign policy matters. The feet may now be Stephen Harper’s, but Canada’s policy in Haiti remains one of the great issues of our time.

Ordinary people across this country, whose morality – in the real sense of the word, not in the nominal “God Bless Canada” sense of our PM-elect -- includes the principal that all human lives, no matter where they are lived, should matter equally, are voicing their outrage at Canada’s involvement in the misery of ordinary Haitians. And, as people continue to learn the grim truth about Canada in Haiti, many more will join in saying loud and clear: Not in our name. One can only hope, perhaps in vain, that Jack Layton will be among them.

Baby Doc returning to Haiti?
by Lynn Duff, SF Bay View (reposted)
Saturday, Jan. 28, 2006

Twenty years after his ouster on Feb. 7, 1986, dictator Jean Claude Duvalier could be returning to Haiti. Observers predict that the former president, who is known as Baby Doc, may be returning to the country in an effort to restrain the effectiveness of René Préval, leader of the Lespwa party, who is expected to win the Feb. 7 presidential elections. Préval, who served one term as president while a member of the Fanmi Lavalas party, has pledged to release the thousands of Lavalas members currently held as political prisoners when he is elected.

Memories of Baby Doc are strong, and Bay View correspondent Lyn Duff got the reaction on the ground in Haiti to Duvalier's possible return.

Thelma, 39, market woman: I remember those days, when I was a child. You couldn't speak out about your political beliefs. The time of Duvalier was just as bad as now. There was no freedom, and the people had no hope.

Jean Louis, 19, carpenter: I'm lucky to have been raised in an era when people could vote. I heard stories from my parents about Baby Doc. My father was a trade unionist. The union leaders were kidnapped by Baby Doc's macoutes (death squads), and their bodies were never found.

William, 67, shoemaker: The days of Baby Doc and his father were dark times. I pray that he will never return to our country. The Lord should strike him down; if he gets in a plane to come here, that airplane should be struck by lightning. Haiti has been cursed with enough violence and bloodshed already. With Jesus' help, Duvalier and his evil will not return to Haiti.

Sierra Marie, 60, market woman: When I went to vote for the first time, that was the beginning of the time of the Lavalas [flood] when we were marching for democracy. The men who worked for Duvalier, they came with guns and shot at the people who were lined up to vote. We thought we would never be able to elect a president. When we finally elected Aristide, those same armed men with their sunglasses and guns, they came to strangle democracy again Jean Claude Duvalier should be in a prison. The United Nations should put him in jail for his crimes against the Haitian people.

Alexander, 22, student: I want you to write this down. If Baby Doc comes back to live in Haiti, there will be no peace. Our generation, we are revolutionaries, and we won't put up with that. He will not be allowed to stay in Haiti.

Lyn Duff, LynDuff@aol.com, is a reporter currently based in Port-au-Prince. She first traveled to Haiti in 1995 to help establish a children's radio station and has since covered Haiti extensively for the Bay View, Pacifica Radio's Flashpoints, heard on KPFA 94.1 FM weekdays at 5 p.m., and other local and national media.

U.N. troops accused of attacking hospital in Haiti
San Francisco Bay Area Indymedia
by HIP (reposted) Saturday, Jan. 28, 2006

It was about 11 p.m. Wednesday night. Exhausted doctors and nurses at St. Catherine's Hospital in Cité Soleil were treating numerous victims of gunshots and filling out paperwork for the four unfortunate ones whose lives they could not save.

"There had been a rush of gunshot victims, and those who would talk told us it was the result of the U.N. opening fire on them. All of a sudden we heard loud booms and glass breaking, and then we realized the hospital was being fired upon.

"At first we couldn't tell where it was coming from, but then we saw the tracers coming from the direction of the old Boulos market that is now an armed encampment for the Jordanians (U.N. forces) in Cité Soleil. There was panic as a bullet struck a window in the Children's Ward and everyone went diving for cover," explained a hospital worker who asked to remain anonymous.

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

Jeanette Lager, a 38-year-old mother clutching her ailing 2-month-old son, described the attack: "My friends who were on the street said they saw the U.N. firing at the hospital. I was inside with my sick baby when all of sudden glass started breaking and we could hear the gunfire from across the road where the U.N. controls the street.

"Look at the size of the bullet holes. Look at the damage they caused. These were not small weapons. The U.N. is killing us in the streets, and now they are attacking the only hospital we have in Cité Soleil. It's criminal and it must be stopped."

Benis Benjamin, whose 8-year-old daughter, Valancia, was shot in their home by U.N. forces the same night, described his fear as gunfire struck the hospital. "My little girl was shot in our home by MINUSTAH last night, and I had to rush her here to save her life.

"The only reason she is alive is because of this hospital. Then I had to worry she might be killed a second time when they began firing on the hospital. Thank God the hospital is still here," Mr. Benjamin stated.

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

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

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

Dr. Reginald Boulos, president of the Haitian Chamber of Commerce, is implicated in the deaths of at least 60 children since his company, Pharval Pharmaceuticals, produced a poisonous cough syrup distributed throughout poor neighborhoods of the capital.

Boulos had also pushed the U.N. to make armed incursions into pro-Aristide neighborhoods last May. Survivors and members of the community charge this led to a massacre committed by U.N. forces in Cité Soleil on July 6, 2005.

Charles Henry Baker, another sweatshop owner, helped to create Group 184 and is currently a presidential candidate seen as the preferred choice of Haiti's wealthy elite and business community.

Jordanian forces in Cité Soleil attempted to block the access of journalists into another area of the community where more reported killings of unarmed civilians occurred yesterday. After finding another route around the Jordanians, journalists saw evidence of at least two more persons residents said were gunned down by MINUSTAH forces Thursday morning.

John Erickson's body lay less than 30 feet from a wide street named Bwa Neuf that is patrolled by Jordanian soldiers in armored personnel vehicles 24 hours a day. Residents claimed he was shot along with several others at about 9 a.m. when gunfire erupted from U.N. forces.

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

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

A man described by residents as being a member of a group called the GNB hid his identity behind a mask made of camouflage cloth as he led Brazilian soldiers through the area in search of what he

described as “bandits.” He stopped and questioned a woman using a cellular telephone on the street and then took the phone away from her and began searching through the directory for numbers. He called a number with no apparent luck, returned the phone and told her that if he saw her again he would have her arrested.

When questioned by a reporter, the masked man stated he was a private citizen who had “volunteered to help the Brazilians rid Haiti of bandits” and said he was not being paid for the service. When asked if he was otherwise gainfully employed, he retorted: “This is my job. I am going to find the bandits for these guys, and they have given me my authority. I don’t need money to eat.”

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

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Suffering more visible than hope in Haiti

By Gwen Watson

GUEST COMMENTARY

Contra Costa Times

Jan. 28, 2006

WE WENT TO Haiti last week to rescue a falsely imprisoned priest who is gravely ill with leukemia and ended up finding a country needing to be rescued.

I was part of a human rights trip led by Catholic Bishop Tom Gumbleton and Human Rights Attorney Bill Quigley. Our delegation had two major goals: One, free Father Gerard Jean-Juste and arrange for medical treatment for him outside Haiti, and two, help the parishioners establish health care at St. Claire's Parish in Port-au-Prince.

We stormed heaven and earth -- Archbishop Miot, Papal Nuncio Mario Giordina, the U.S. Embassy, television and print media -- for the release of Father Gerard. As an advocate for the poor and a voice for justice, he was jailed on trumped up charges.

In spite of verbal support from the U.S. Embassy, a visit of the Papal Nuncio with the prime minister, and thousands of letters from around the world requesting Father Gerard's release from prison on humanitarian grounds, he remained imprisoned as we departed Port-au-Prince. We were partially consoled that the charges against him were dropped and replaced with a superficial reason for keeping him locked up -- associating with malefactors. (The malefactors were not named.)

During our stay in Port-au-Prince, we had a chance to observe much of what the Haitian citizens are suffering. Hunger is the greatest problem. With the rate of unemployment at 70 per cent, many people are starving. A lack of health care for the poor is another problem. We visited a clinic with equipment so old it would be only found in medical museums in the states. And there was neither a CT Scan machine nor equipment for cancer radiation at the hospital we toured. We heard story after story of poor people being refused hospital care because they couldn't afford the charges.

Throughout our visit I wondered, where's the hope for the long-suffering people of Haiti?

As the Feb. 7 election approaches, instability, insecurity and violence are increasing. I have concluded that in the short term, the hope for Haiti is a fair election. Long-term hope will come when social programs are organized to obliterate hunger, reach full employment, and provide health care and education. That's when Haiti will lose its record as the hungriest nation in the world.

Watson is co-chairwoman of the Social Justice Alliance of the Interfaith Council of Contra Costa County. She lives in Lafayette.

UN Troops in Haiti to Reinforce Security
Prensa Latina
Jan. 28, 2006

The United Nations troops in Haiti will start Monday a strong security plan that "will not put up with any sabotage or act that disturb elections."

The objective of the initiative is to cover the presidential and legislative elections called for February 7, said the leadership of the United Nations Stabilizing Mission (MINUSTAH).

The operation will be adapted and readjusted according to the place and the reality of the moment" warned the military representation in which more than 9000 soldiers and police from 40 countries are subordinated.

About 4000 Haitian agents, mainly in Port of Prince will join this force.

The total budget expense for the process is now almost 80 million dollars, according to the United Nations Development Program local office.

From the Funds total about 20 million dollars were provided by the European Union, 17 million by United States, 16 million by Canada, one million by Brazil and 2.9 millions by the Haitian government.

According to the Provisional Electoral Council (CEP) about 80 percent of the voting papers have already been given.

MINUSTAH ex chief of the troops, the Brazilian general Urano Teixeira da Malta Bacellar was found death on January 7 in the balcony of the room he was in a hotel in this capital.

The new commander of those forces, the also Brazilian general Jose Elito Carvalho Siquiera said, when he took the post last Monday, those men were not sent to fight but to stabilize the situation.

The civilian chief of the UN representation here the Chilean Juan Gabriel Valdes warned a few days ago that a new military operation of a great magnitude is arranged for early in February in Cite Soleil.

The OAS called for the Foreign Ministers meeting next Monday and Tuesday in Washington in which Haiti will be the main issue of the agenda again.

The inertia in which the Haitian electoral process was involved at the end of 2005 gave way to rumors on possible manoeuvres against the candidate and former president Rene Preval.

In different national circles is assumed that Preval does not have opponent since he accumulated 37 percent of the vote intention at this moment.

The only contender of certain importance is the millionaire Henri Baker, Leslie Manigat and Evans Paul which are well-known by the Haitians.

A second round will take place Sunday Feb. 19 if necessary.

Haiti - Elections : A precarious calm following trouble in Ouanaminthe
Alter Presse, Haiti
Friday 27 January 2006

Port-au-Prince--- A precarious calm has returned to Ouanaminthe, the border town in North-East Haiti, after two days of tension as René Préval, the Lespwa presidential candidate, continued his campaign in the north of the country.

The situation remains volatile in the town, where two armed groups, one supporting Préval, the other hostile to him, could clash at any moment, according to sources on the ground.

According to the information received by AlterPresse, the risk of armed confrontation casts doubt on the possibility of holding elections in Ouanaminthe and other parts of the North-East, if the UN are unable to neutralise the armed gangs.

A number of people were wounded during the last two days of violence that took place on the fringes of Préval's visit, reports the Dominican agency, Espacinsular.

According to this agency, Préval made a short visit to Ouanaminthe on 25 January where he briefly addressed his supporters.

The former president who is campaigning for a second stint, was accompanied by a number of security guards and police officers. [gp ca apr 26/01/06]

Chile, EU agree to trade talks on agricultural products

China View News

Jan. 28, 2006

SANTIAGO, Jan. 27 (Xinhuanet) -- Chile and the European Union (EU) have agreed to begin talks on liberalizing trade in agricultural products, according to Chile's foreign ministry.

In a statement published on Friday, the ministry said this step was originally outlined in the political and trade cooperation agreement signed in 2002.

The EU has pledged to provide Chile with 34.4 million euros (about 40 million U.S. dollars) from 2002 to 2006 to help boost Chile's modernization drive, business promotion and implementation of the accord.

The EU and Chile have also agreed to cooperate on the issue of Haiti, with both supporting for an electoral process in that country.

The two sides have also discussed a summit to be attended by Latin American, Caribbean and European leaders in Vienna in May.

The crisis in Haiti
International nation building is failing
Newsday.com
Editorial
January 26, 2006

Haiti, the poorest and most disordered country in the hemisphere, has had its elections postponed by its interim government for the fourth time in four months. Even if the vote is held as now scheduled, on Feb. 7, few of the thousands of Haitian immigrants in our area hold much hope that this exercise in democracy will reverse their Caribbean homeland's steep descent into chaos.

Democracy, however desirable a goal, can do little for a country without security and a viable economy. Haiti has become a dismaying object lesson in the failure of international peacekeeping and nation building.

Many Haitians here on Long Island and elsewhere in metropolitan New York fear their families might become targets. The random violence of street gangs and armed political factions has claimed more than 1,500 lives since the previously elected president, Jean-Bertrand Aristide, quit and left after a bloody revolt nearly two years ago. The proliferation of kidnappings, averaging 10 a day - including the seizure of a presidential candidate - has terrorized the capital, Port-au-Prince.

The presence of 9,000 United Nations troops has done little to deter the well-armed street gangs. Foreign investment has vanished, leaving the economy moribund. The deforestation of the island, an environmental disaster, has led to lethal mudslides in the hurricane season. Since the first international donor's conference in 2004, less than 10 percent of the \$1.2 billion pledged to Haiti's reconstruction has been disbursed, with fear of violence discouraging prospective contractors.

What's the solution? More troops? More money? Unless there is the political will and a concerted effort to help - with the United States firmly behind it - Haiti can only rely on prayer to lift it from its hell.

**No voting stations planned inside Haiti's largest slum
Security issue raised, but bias is alleged
By Joseph Guylor Delva, Reuters
The Boston Globe
January 26, 2006**

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti -- Haiti's election authorities have decided not to put voting stations inside the nation's largest slum, drawing accusations they are discriminating against the troubled nation's poorest citizens.

The teeming Cite Soleil slum, with between 300,000 and 600,000 residents, and other shantytowns in the capital were the bedrock of support for former president Jean-Bertrand Aristide, who was ousted in February 2004 after an armed revolt.

They may now be a significant source of support for front-runner Rene Preval, an Aristide protege who served as president from 1996 to 2001, as the Caribbean country staggers toward a new presidential election on Feb. 7.

The ability of slum residents -- who complained of being disenfranchised by Aristide's ouster nearly two years ago -- to vote in the presidential and legislative elections has become an important issue, with critics denouncing what they see as an absence of voting stations near poor areas.

But Rosemond Pradel, secretary general of Haiti's Provisional Electoral Council, said officials decided to relocate voting centers to help election workers and to avoid intimidation of voters by criminal gangs.

"We don't think the security conditions are met to organize a vote inside Cite Soleil," Pradel told Reuters this week.

The long-delayed election will replace an interim government appointed after Aristide was pushed from power in February 2004 by an armed rebellion and under pressure from the United States and France.

A Haitian council of elders appointed an interim government under Gerard Latortue, a Florida business consultant and former UN official who became prime minister and has ruled without a parliament.

Aristide, who was accused of despotism and corruption in his second term and forced into exile in South Africa, is not running in the election but remains a potent figure in Haitian politics.

A UN peacekeeping force of 9,000 soldiers and police has been unable to control gang violence in Cite Soleil, a sprawl of tin shacks and open sewers on the edge of the capital.

A top official with the UN peacekeeping force, General Mahmoud Al-Husban of the Jordanian contingent, said voter registration took place inside Cite Soleil without incident.

"It is feasible and we are ready to secure the people of Cite Soleil to go to vote in Cite Soleil," said Husban, whose troops are deployed in the slum. Two Jordanian peacekeepers were killed and a third wounded by gunfire in a clash with one of the gangs in the slum last week.

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Haiti: Hopes for a Peaceful Alternative as the UN Plans to Invade Cité Soleil
An Interview with Frank Eaton, Filmmaker and Kidnapping Victim
By Jeb Sprague
Special to The Narco News Bulletin
January 26, 2006

“I think they are going to kill a lot of innocent people when they [the UN MINUSTAH forces] go into Cité Soleil. It’s going to be like Fallujah. They are going to kill a lot of innocent people. I remember being in there, I realized, wow a lot of people are going to die in here. I realized I was a survivor.”

-Frank Eaton

Documentary filmmaker Frank Eaton, 30, of Winston-Salem, North Carolina, was kidnapped and held for three days in Cité Soleil, a slum in Port-Au-Prince, Haiti. Along with his friend, Alain Maximilien, a Haitian radio disc jockey, they were freed after his captors received \$20,000, 10 pairs of shoes and a radio on December 31, 2005. The story of his experience was repeated across the media. News coverage of kidnappings in Haiti has continuously focused on fear and brutality, or what Eaton calls “the pornography of violence,” and has rarely shown the context behind the ongoing conflict and kidnappings.

The United Nations MINUSTAH (French abbreviation for United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti) force, under the Security Council adopted resolution 1529 (2004), entered Haiti following the overthrow of the democratically elected government of Jean-Bertrand Aristide in Feb. 2004. MINUSTAH includes military and police contingents of more than 9,000 people from over 40 countries under the leadership of Brazil and Canada.

While being involved in numerous running gun battles with groups of young men in Cité Soleil, MINUSTAH has been implicated in and admitted to the killing of numerous innocent civilians – what the UN on January 9, 2006 called “collateral victims.” Hundreds of Haitians interviewed claimed to have been shot by the United Nations and in a recent report allegations have emerged that UN forces have attacked the only hospital in Cité Soleil. Cité Soleil is home to somewhere between 250,000 and 400,000 people living in abject poverty. Leslie Bagg and Aaron Lakoff write in their recent article, “Haiti’s Deadly Class Divide”:

According to Jean-Joseph Joel, the Secretary General of the local branch of Fanmi Lavalas, the area’s residents are virtual prisoners, and their movements restricted by armed police at checkpoints. Vilified as bandits or chimeres by the elite-run press, he says they face persecution if they do manage to escape the neighborhood. There is no work and signs of malnutrition are obvious in the children.

Following the events of February 2004 (preceded by four years of a Bush administration-backed embargo and foreign-funded “democracy promotion” destabilization programs) Haiti’s public institutions were gutted, its elected government and many of its public employees ousted, jailed, and persecuted. Thousands are dead in Haiti following the 2004 coup d’état and many more are in hiding or under daily persecution. Under UN protection and with little mainstream press criticism, the interim coup government has continued its methodical campaign of persecution and imprisonment of political

activists. Under the U.S. installed regime, in late 2004, human rights investigators discovered hospitals in which Lavalas supporters were being allowed to bleed to death, maggot infested morgues in which bodies were being eaten away at with no refrigeration, and mass graves in which pigs devoured the remains of victims.

Edline Pierre-Louis, a Cité Soleil resident, was hit in the stomach by gunfire from UN forces, causing her to lose her unborn baby on July 6, 2005. In a recent interview with journalists she stated, “They killed so many people and I praise God that I am alive to call them liars.”

Some MINUSTAH contingents, outside of Port-au-Prince, primarily in the north of Haiti, have reportedly behaved in a more professional manner, communicating better with local popular organizers and representatives. Meanwhile, a lawyers’ organization, AUMOHD, has come forward attempting to negotiate a peaceful alternative for Cité Soleil and other poor areas of Haiti.

Following the 2004 coup and a fatal wave of persecution targeting Lavalas demonstrations and communities, kidnapping has increasingly plagued Haiti’s capital, Port-au-Prince. In recent weeks the United Nations has come under rising pressure from both the Haitian elite and the foreign press to take over the slum of Cité Soleil, which today, nearly two years after the U.S. Marine led kidnapping of President Jean-Bertrand Aristide, still remains a no-go-zone for the Canadian and U.S.-trained Haitian National Police (HNP) and the UN MINUSTAH force. The wide-scale persecution of the poor and politically motivated layoffs of public sector employees by the U.S.-installed interim government, have further provoked the situation.

The mainstream media has continuously ignored visible examples of Haitians being killed by the United Nations and massacres carried out by the infamous Haitian National Police, the HNP forces often wear masks, and their hooded “machete army” attaches, have been well documented by journalists from the Haiti Information Project (www.haitiaction.net). Human rights and immigration lawyer Thomas Griffin documented the dire situation in Cité Soleil in an investigation by researchers at Miami University. Ignoring the war against the poor in Haiti, the press has focused on the kidnappings, disregarding the numerous crimes against humanity at the hands of the HNP and MINUSTAH.

Meanwhile, increasing pressure has come not only from the media, but also from Haitian elite to intensify the MINUSTAH occupation of Cité Soleil. In early January 2006 a group called Group 184, including many prominent sweatshop and radio station owners and which was partially responsible for the overthrow of democracy in February 2004, began a campaign, which included a business strike (http://www.haitiaction.net/News/HIP/1_18_6/1_18_6.html) to pressure MINUSTAH towards increasing its activities in Cité Soleil. Following alleged tense negotiations with the leadership of the Haitian elite Group 184, MINUSTAH commander Brazilian Lt. General Urano Teixeira da Matta Bacellar committed suicide. He was found dead the following morning, lying on the balcony of his Port-au-Prince hotel room in the upscale Hotel Montana (<http://www.indybay.org/news/2006/01/1794502.php>).

Recent reports have also uncovered a mysterious U.S. black ops company that has been working with MINUSTAH to gain “intelligence” on Cité Soleil. On January 18, 2006 Kathryn Cramer, a writer investigating pentagon contractor Top Cat Marine Security (<http://www.topcatmarinesecurity.com/>),

released details (http://www.kathryncramer.com/kathryn_cramer/top_cat_marine_security/index.html) on the role of a mysterious company called the Consultants Advisory Group (CAG), run by ex-CIA and U.S. military employees living in Panama City, Florida, with a representative in Haiti (living also in Pétion-Ville's Hotel Montana). According to Cramer, CAG has placed spies disguised as journalists in the audiences of Haitian presidential candidate debates, arranged for Top Cat patrol boats off the coast of Cité Soleil, and arranged for the unlawful detention of people inside Haiti who have complained about CAG's involvement in human rights violations in Haiti.

Many kidnappings have occurred outside of Cite Soleil, something the Haitian Chamber of Commerce, under Reginal Bolous, and the Group 184, under Andre Apaid, refused to address in the recent business-led strike. While companies such as "Texaco, Shell, Scotia Bank, and upscale grocery stores remained shut" during the strike, the "informal economy – street vendors, runners, tap-tap (taxi) operators – lined the streets, unable to skip a day's work just because the island's wealthiest said so" explain Leslie Bagg and Aaron Lakoff in their recent article.

Kidnappings have come not only from the "gangs" described by the international press but by criminals and members of the Haitian National Police. Police Officers Wilfrid Francois, Sony Lambert, Réналd Cinéus, and an accomplice of theirs named Stantley Handal have all been implicated in a kidnapping ring. The Haiti Information Project reports:

Handal is a member of one of Haiti's wealthiest families that supported the ouster of Aristide in 1991 and 2004. He was initially arrested along with eight members of Haiti's police force for running a kidnapping ring after he attempted to use a stolen credit card taken from one of his victims. The judge that released them, Jean Pérs Paul, is responsible for keeping Father Gerard Jean-Juste behind bars and for the arrest of journalists Kevin Pina and Jean Ristil on September 9, 2005. The police officer responsible for the initial investigation into Handal's case has reportedly been forced into hiding. The U.N. and the Canadian government have not commented on the case since Jean Pérs Paul ordered the suspects released.

Recent reports have also shown that many kidnappings are in fact taking place not in Cite Soleil, but in the most upscale quarters in Port-au-Prince, Pétion-Ville:

The Central Directorate of the Judicial Police (DCPJ) informed Friday that it has broken up this week an important kidnapping network in Pétion-Ville, a residential district of Port-au-Prince. According to DCPJ General Inspector Michaël Lucius, this is the gang which had kidnapped on December 30, 2005 Carine Rouzier, the wife of a businessman of Port-au-Prince, who was released on January 8th. The 11 persons abducted by this gang were held in a luxurious home evaluated to hundreds of thousands of dollars, M. Lucius declared. He says he regrets that the bandits had time to run away. The discovery of this hiding place in the heart of Pétion-Ville proves that important groups are involved in kidnapping activities, the DCPJ director declared.

Michael Lucius calls the population to remain careful and to beware of well-dressed people, saying that the shantytown of Cité Soleil is not the only hiding place for kidnappers. "Appearances are sometimes deceptive", he warned, affirming that besides Cité Soleil and Pétion-Ville, acts of kidnapping are committed in other non-populist districts of the capital, including Pernier, Meyer, Delmas, Frères, Canapé-Vert as well as in the second largest city of the country, Cap-Haïtien... Chief

of the Haitian police Mario Andresol and Head of MINUSTAH Juan Gabriel Valdès indicated recently that there are candidates to presidency who use kidnapping money for their campaign and to try to destabilize the electoral process underway.

(AHP News, English Translation, January 13, 2006)

While kidnappings have received the limelight of international press coverage in Haiti, the violence against the poor has continually been obscured. On June 11, 2005, Juan Gabriel Valdes, the Chilean head of the U.N. mission in Haiti, made a statement on Haitian radio stations declaring he had lived through the Pinochet dictatorship and, “compared to that experience, there is no political persecution in Haiti.” Time correspondent Kathie Klarreich, cited numerous “unnamed sources” in a recent article who used the term “wussies” to describe the UN force in Haiti, not once mentioning the well documented HNP and MINUSTAH slayings of innocent civilians. Another TIME correspondent and former employee of the U.S. State Department, Edward M. Gomez, explaining the violence in Cite Soleil, cited a Le Monde statement that the “kids” in Cite Soleil are fighting because they are on “crack”.

Over the last year, footage has emerged showing the deadly results of UN raids into Cité Soleil, including journalist Kevin Pina’s film, Haiti: The Untold Story. Pina told Democracy Now! that “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.”

By ignoring the systematic repression being carried out by the U.S., Canadian, and UN-backed coup regime while focusing attention on alleged gang members “high on crack,” the media provide a disingenuous examination of events in Haiti.

Interview with Frank Eaton

What follows are excerpts from an interview with Frank Eaton, a kidnapping victim. Eaton speaks about Cité Soleil, his experience being kidnapped, and the U.S. media coverage of his experience. Below are excerpts from the interview.

Jeb Sprague: Tell me about your experience being kidnapped.

Frank Eaton: Every one of the ten-or-so young men who held me bore bullet wounds and scars on their bodies from MINUSTAH guns. As I sat there, more bored than terrified, I had the profound realization that I would almost certainly outlive each of them. Now, with the political branch of the UN ascendant [the United Nations Office for Project Services, or UNOPS, has had an increasingly expanding role in Haiti], and an occupation of Cité Soleil apparently in the works, I’m afraid that the end is near for many of these young guys, women, and kids. It’s a horrible, horrible thing that’s about to happen there...

One night it rained and the night was pretty quiet. The other nights, it was a shooting gallery. We are sitting listening to this. It is unreal. We were in Blecort, the southernmost part of Cité Soleil. You can hear MINUSTAH guns; they are very regular, high caliber, heavy, heavy arms. And then you can hear

the local guns, which are smaller; pistols and rifles. And that's where people get hurt... To give the UN a little bit of credit, with this UN guy [Brazilian Lt. Gen Bacellar] that shot himself the other day, there is a certain reticence to occupying Cité Soleil [among sectors of the UN]. They have knowledge to the fact that this "collateral damage" will happen as soon as they do this. It is dangerous for everybody... The victims are the people who are trapped here. They can't do anything. They are human shields between both sides. I see no way into these neighborhoods. We were in a small house that is isolated, in a blind alley. No way in. No way out. Women, children, and people everywhere.

Jeb Sprague: How were you treated; what type of food did you eat when you were in captivity?

Frank Eaton: Every Haitian I met was very generous, very hospitable, including these guys. The Haitian hospitality that you hear of is true. We probably ate better than anybody in the entire neighborhood. We ate locally prepared food. We had plantains, scrambled eggs the first morning, and then we had the traditional spaghetti and hot dog. Then we had rice and beans. The best thing I had was when one guy made a pâté, a little pastry with eggs or chicken on it. It was absolutely incredible. We had Prestige Beer, which is really good. They were really hospitable, in light of the circumstances. There was definitely a level of concern there. They hate the UN. They had a brand new toothbrush, water, soap for us. We slept on a bed. We could wander around. I could go around the room and if I wanted to go outside and pour water on my head. It was pretty laid back. They were mostly lying down. They had guns but they weren't pointing them at us. It wasn't like this macho thing. There was an understanding that we weren't going to run away or take anyone's gun.

For the majority of the time, the M-14 and the other guns remained loaded. The room we were kept in served as an ammo dump for this group. Young men were coming in constantly to retrieve ammo from a duffel bag.

The guys that kidnapped me, I didn't feel they were capable of hurting me. They weren't cruel. I kept thinking, it's tough; it's physically tough to hurt a human being. Your body rejects that on a physical level. I honestly felt they didn't want to attack me. I was certainly not giving them any trouble. They were content with letting the process take its course. It was boring for all of us. During negotiations things would get tense. I was released and Alain stayed behind. But he was released afterward; they felt sorry for him. They really got along well with him. We were all frustrated for the time it took the money to get there. For two days we just sat doing nothing and on the third day I finally said, bring the cash. I used my bank account.

We were picked up far out from Cité Soleil. Now I've got all these overdraft fees from my bank. I wrote a check for \$5,000 and after a few other charges passed, I was bounced into the red.

Jeb Sprague: What can you say about the context behind the kidnappings?

Frank Eaton: I'm not sure... It's so tough for me to understand. Since it's me and my money I can't just say "that's okay." But the ten guys who watched us were humble guys, and this was just sort of the deal at the moment. Like a job. This could be a situation where this is the only thing that they are able to do. This is their community involvement to help facilitate this transfer of money back into the community.

So many innocent people are dying. It's insane fighting right in the middle of all those people. The whole situation is the result of a pretty heinous socio-political economic environment. This is where they live. These people don't conceal themselves; we were not concealed. I know they have a lot of support. People would come around — women and children, old people, moms.

It's very important for me not to be the poster child for Haitian kidnapping or to be a warning to stay out of Haiti. I hold no hard feelings. I understand that this something that is much bigger than me. I don't feel sorry for myself. I had so many good experiences and met wonderful people.

Jeb Sprague: I've noticed that in all the articles (Miami Herald, Forbes, ABC News, etc.) about you, they focus on the guns and the kidnapers having guns around you..

Frank Eaton: Yes, and that's true. It's the pornography of violence, and I mention that every single time to all of the reporters that have interviewed me. They gave us food, they gave us water, they treated us well. I think that's one of the most interesting things about it all. Complicated things like that are more interesting than just saying they put guns on us. I always say we were treated well and that I have really no hard feelings, besides the fact that I am financially destitute. I'm \$15,000 in debt. I also make the distinction that I am no more financially destitute than these guys. I got out of Cité Soleil. These guys didn't. I was very interested in this whole thing on the human scale.

I don't come from money, which makes it tough for me to operate down there. But they are treated terribly. These neighborhoods are underrepresented in every way. I'm sure that the crime is a natural way to try to regain balance. Use the money the way they can.... We just didn't want our ransom money used for weapons.

Jeb Sprague: Why do you think the UN/HNP attacks are rarely mentioned in the mainstream press, while the kidnappings receive so much coverage?

Frank Eaton: Lots of reporters are in Haiti because of the election. But with that postponed unfortunately they are all just writing about the kidnapping and focusing on that. I just don't know if there is any interest in knowing why these things happen.

It's a lot of peoples' faults. The international community demands something be done about this. The rich community demands something being done about this. Poor people want something done about the kidnapping; kids are in danger. A lot of people are being kidnapped, across all sectors, and I don't know how politically motivated all of it is.

Jeb Sprague: Are you worried about what's going to happen to the people in Cité Soleil and the people you saw in the neighborhoods around where you were being held?

Frank Eaton: All roads are leading to Cité Soleil right now for the occupying force. I think half the reason [Lt. Gen.] Bacellar was trying to keep that from happening is because he didn't want to lose his own guys [Interview's note: nine MINUSTAH soldiers have died as of this date]. He's dead now. And I think the political wing of the UN has taken over in Haiti, and these are guys that are more directly pressured by the camps that want to have Cité Soleil occupied and have the whole thing shut down. I am expecting them to make a move against the neighborhood.

Yes, I think the UN troops are going to kill a lot of innocent people when they go into Cité Soleil. It's going to be like Fallujah. They are going to kill a lot of innocent people. I remember being in there, I realized, Wow a lot of people are going to die in here. I realized I was a survivor....

Jeb Sprague: Do you think the UN can be convinced of an alternative to going into Cité Soleil with military force? The President of the AUMOHD lawyers organization, Evel Fanfan, has presented a peaceful alternative. Fanfan has asked to meet with interim commander Gen. Herman, of MINUSTAH, to review "the work toward self-managed disarmament in the poor communities of Grande Ravine, St. Bernadette, and Lafwa and to consider a totally new approach there and in Cité Soleil." Also, the peace process could also be better achieved if a democratically elected government was put into place. What do you think about all that?

Frank Eaton: There are definitely people out there with solutions that should be tried. There are a lot of guns on both sides. With the strike that the chamber of commerce held it seems the elites are adamant that the UN go into Cité Soleil.

I am trying to handle this without anger... I would hope that they examine the angle of grace before going in and blasting their way through a neighborhood that is home to a lot of women and children. I think that there needs to be a discussion, an alternative. I know it wasn't impossible to put negotiators on the ground in Cité Soleil to communicate the terms of our release. So I know there are ways to open channels to talk about a resolution to this thing.

When you go in to try to move money and human beings in Cité Soleil it's easy to find someone to talk to. But there is not a lot of communication going on. Every night they are fighting. On both sides are these young guys, 18 to 35 years old, looking to kill each other. Both are armed to the teeth. Innocent people are being killed. Kids are being killed. Children, women. Innocent people are put into this situation. It's just such an insane situation. I don't know if I had any business being in Haiti in the first place.

Jeb Sprague is a freelance journalist and a graduate student in History at California State University of Long Beach. He is currently writing his masters degree thesis on the destabilization and overthrow of democracy in Haiti, 2000-2004. Contact him at [JebSprague@\[nospam\]mac.com](mailto:JebSprague@[nospam]mac.com) (removing the word "nospam") or visit his blog at <http://www.freehaiti.net>

Haiti's interim Prime Minister calls for his country to be reinstated into CARICOM
by Stephen Cummings
Caribbean Net News Trinidad Correspondent
January 26, 2006

PORT OF SPAIN, Trinidad: Haiti's interim Prime Minister, Gerard Latortue, who is on a three-day visit to Trinidad for meetings with Prime Minister Patrick Manning has called for Haiti to be reinstated as a CARICOM member country.

Mr Latortue, speaking at a news conference, said he had open discussions with Prime Minister Manning, who wanted to know what was happening in Haiti.

The Haitian leader said he remains baffled as to why his country had been suspended from CARICOM following the ousting of President Jean Bertrand-Aristide in February 2004. He said Haiti should be reinstated into the Caribbean family of nations.

"Haiti is truly a Caribbean nation, we are a Caribbean nation by geography I don't believe anybody could declare that Haiti is not from the Caribbean. We were a member, we consider ourselves as a member of CARICOM. A decision was made to suspend; we want to clarify that and I discussed the issue with Prime Minister Manning. I hope the issue will be clarified and hopefully by the next meeting of the heads in July enough work will be done to get the truth and the next government will be able to be reintroduced into the Caribbean family," said Latortue as he spoke with reporters in Port of Spain.

On the issue of presidential and parliamentary elections, he made the call for CARICOM to play a key role as part of the international observer team expected to oversee the elections.

He said about 90 percent of the electoral problems which have forced several postponements of the elections have been rectified and that a transfer of power to a new government will take place on March 29.

He also stressed that the first run off of elections will be held as planned on February 7.

The Haitian leader however said many problems still persist in Haiti, which in time will be addressed.

"The biggest problem we have is security, the situation with a lot of armed gangs in the country. There are two main groups. The first group are the people that President Aristide in the last few months of his government when he felt threatened by the opposition, he (President Aristide) distributed big guns to his supporters and those persons are today still in Haiti. The national police in Haiti have no guns so they cannot disarm them," said Prime Minister Latortue.

"They are not the only gangs. We have armed gangs coming from the drug traffickers in Haiti," Latortue added as he spoke with the Trinidad press.

Meanwhile, Prime Minister Patrick Manning, having met with the Haitian leader, is now expected to present Haiti's position to CARICOM Heads when they meet on February 9 to 10. It is expected that a decision will then be taken on Haiti's status within the region.

Mission to Haiti
Caribbean Broadcasting Corporation
Wednesday, 25 January 2006

A high-level mission to Haiti is assuring that the international community will continue to support the process of stability and democracy in the former French colony.

But Assistant Secretary General of the Organization of American States, Ambassador Albert R. Ramdin says it is "Haitians themselves who will have the responsibility and authority to decide how their democracy and governance can be strengthened".

Ramdin was reporting to the OAS permanent council on the results of the high-level mission, in which he participated over the weekend.

The mission met with several Haitian authorities including President Boniface Alexandre and Prime Minister Gerard Latortue, as well as presidential candidates, civil society and other groups.

According to the Assistant Secretary General, Haitian political leaders must agree now among themselves that the outcome of the elections needs to be accepted and respected.

He also says a new president will have to commit to an inclusive approach and national reconciliation.

Haiti Seeks Return to Caricom Fold

Peter Richards

Inter Press Service News Agency

Jan. 27, 2006

PORT OF SPAIN- Two years after he was sworn in as Haiti's prime minister with the backing of the United States, Gerard Latortue is confident that the groundwork has been laid for Haiti's re-entry into the regional integration grouping Caricom.

He argues that there is no need to deny Haiti, which is currently struggling to organise national elections amid an upsurge of violence and insecurity, the right to resume its place at the Caribbean Community (Caricom) table when regional leaders meet in July for their annual summit.

Caricom has refused to recognise the interim government in Haiti led by Latortue, who came to power following the controversial departure of President Jean-Bertrand Aristide in February 2004.

Latortue arrived in Trinidad and Tobago late Tuesday at the invitation of Prime Minister Patrick Manning, who is also the current Caricom chairman, for what an official statement had billed as "a new intervention on the part of Caricom for the advancement of the interest of Haiti and the rest of the Community".

By the time he left Port of Spain on Thursday night, Latortue, who says he plans to write a book on the Haitian experience when he steps down, had invited regional governments, particularly the prime ministers of St. Vincent and the Grenadines and St. Lucia, to mount a fact-finding mission to "see how things have changed" in Haiti.

St. Vincent and the Grenadines Prime Minister Ralph Gonsalves and his St. Lucia counterpart, Kenny Anthony, who has lead responsibility for justice and governance in the Caribbean, have not embraced Latortue. These two countries, along with Guyana, have held up plans by Caricom to re-engage Haiti, a member of the 15-nation grouping.

Gonsalves is on record as saying that he would not be seen sitting in any room with Latortue, and his re-election last December ensures that there would be opposition to Latortue's initiatives, which will surely be discussed in Jamaica when the regional leaders meet to sign the agreement establishing the Caricom Single Market (CSM) on Monday and at the Feb. 9-10 Caricom summit in Trinidad.

"The only souvenir I have of Mr. Gonsalves was in the early 1960s when I used to participate in meetings of Caribbean scholars. Of course he was in one line, a Maoist in those days, maybe he has not changed since, but I am in a different line," Latortue told reporters.

"I will be there to defend Haiti's interest against who ever is trying to jeopardise the chance of the country," he added. "As a student of Caribbean, as a student of development, I believe Haiti cannot stay and remain isolated from the rest of the Caribbean, that should be the first stage before we think about cooperation with other regions."

Latortue's invitation to regional leaders, if accepted, would allow them a second visit as a bloc to the country, now preparing to hold presidential elections on Feb. 7 after repeated delays and escalating violence in the capital among U.N. peacekeepers, Haitian police and armed civilians.

Two years ago, Caricom sent a delegation of foreign ministers, headed by Barbados' Foreign Minister Dame Billie Miller, to gain a first-hand view of the situation in Haiti following the departure of Aristide.

"It is not because you fail the first time, you don't try again. Politics is like that. They came the first time and many of them understood that they could not go towards the obstacles they found, so that is why they need a second try," Latortue said.

"So I am trying a second time. If it fails, I will try a third time, because the final objective is to see Haiti rejoin the Caricom family," he added.

Earlier this year, Grenada's Prime Minister Keith Mitchell, who is known to support interaction with Haiti, reminded his Caricom colleagues that they had a "moral, regional and indeed a family obligation to engage Haiti more, rather than remain on the sidelines as it appears to be".

"I am compelled to record my disappointment at our inability to preside over the return of Haiti to the fold of democratic governments as is provided in the Caricom Charter on Civil Society," he said.

It is a point that has not been lost on Latortue. He said while he understood the "emotional reaction" that followed Aristide's departure, two years on, with the country about to hold democratic elections that will be observed by the international community, he is at a loss as to why Haiti has not been invited to partake in the activities of Caricom.

Latortue insists that after the presidential elections, when an elected government is installed, there would be no reason for Caribbean countries to use the argument of illegitimacy to keep Haiti out.

"Now if there is another reason, we will have to know," he said.

The joint communiqué issued at the end of the discussions between the two prime ministers quoted Latortue as saying that invitations to the Mar. 29 inauguration of the new president and government would be sent to all Caricom heads of state, and "emphasised the importance of Haiti's continuing membership of Caricom, which (Latortue) feels is vital as Haiti seeks to follow the path of democracy and development".

Latortue told reporters that judging by Manning's position during their discussions, "I think he understood" Haiti's dilemma.

"What he has to do does not depend on him only. He is the chairperson. You are not making decisions, you have to get consensus and the role of Caricom is unanimity. So if he could get unanimity, okay," he added.

But there is likely to be hard bargaining in the coming months regarding Haiti's re-entry into Caricom. Reports of human rights abuses, including the arrest of leading supporters of Aristide's Lavalas Family Party, are bound to surface during the discussions.

Latortue likely anticipated such a debate when he told reporters that his administration would grant a pardon to the Roman Catholic priest and activist Gerard Jean-Juste, who has been in jail since last year amid allegations of his role in the Jul. 21, 2005 murder of prominent journalist Jacques Roche.

Jean-Juste is a vocal supporter of Aristide, and his supporters say the criminal charges against him are politically motivated.

Latortue said that while the legal process would be allowed to take its course, "I want and I still want Jean-Juste to be out of the jail as soon as possible."

"We have no interest to get Jean-Juste in jail," he said, arguing that efforts to keep him in jail "at all costs" are part of an opposition strategy to embarrass the government. (END/2006)

Violence keeping group out of Haiti

By Ronnie Bull

The Daily Collegian, Florida

Jan. 26, 2006

Project Haiti, a group that goes to Haiti every spring break to help poor Haitians, is changing its plans this year because of political chaos in the country.

Dan Beachler, president of Project Haiti, said the group decided not to go to Haiti this year because of the violence and mass kidnappings of Americans.

On Nov. 22, 2005, the U.S. Department of State posted travel warnings telling Americans not go to Haiti, citing violent armed groups, looting and assault. The warning said more than 25 Americans had been kidnapped during the past year.

"It's just not safe enough for us to go," Beachler said.

Last year, Penn State did not give official support or funding to the group traveling to Haiti because of the danger. However, the group went to Haiti anyway, despite the lack of support.

Beachler said Project Haiti would instead be going to the Dominican Republic to help out a group of Haitian immigrants through Crossroads, www.dominicancrossroads.com, an organization dedicated to missionary work.

Beachler added that the participants would do the same activities as they have in the past years -- fundraising for a community and then traveling to help the citizens.

He said they usually raise \$10,000, which goes to help the community build hospitals, houses and other critical buildings.

Andrew Demers, a member of Project Haiti since 2001, said forming an opinion on the current political situation is tough.

Former President Jean-Bertrand Aristide, who was ousted from his position in early 2004, left the country for political asylum.

Since then, elections for a new president have been delayed four times and the country has witnessed security issues and voter registration problems.

"There's bad guys and good guys. It depends on whose angle you're looking at," Demers said.

Demers, who is writing an honors thesis on Haiti, said he had good experiences helping Haitians in the past.

"It's important that we don't forget about it," he said.

Katie Meier, vice president of Project Haiti, said that even though they couldn't go to Haiti this year because of violence, they are still planning on going next year and the years after.

"The Haitians are a great people with a ton of determination," Meier said. "They're very giving and generous."

Trinidad : Haiti's interim Prime Minister invites Manning to Haiti

Latortue : "Why do the European people and the African Union want to send observers and not the Caricom people?"

Thursday 26 January 2006

By Exilus Deceyon

AlterPresse, Haiti

Port of Spain--- Haiti's interim Prime Minister Gerard Latortue has invited Prime Minister Patrick Manning and several other regional government heads to the state to observe the troubled country's electoral process.

Latortue met with Manning in his capacity as the Caricom chairman at Whitehall in Port-of-Spain yesterday. His main purpose of the meeting was to request election observers to monitor Haiti's presidential election on February 7, after being postponed from January 8.

Haiti was scheduled to hold municipal elections on October 9, 2004, legislative elections on November 13, 2004 and presidential elections on December 18, 2004.

Amidst an unstable political and security environment, Latortue said Caricom leaders may be misinformed about the electoral process in his country.

During a press conference at Hilton Trinidad in St Ann's yesterday, Latortue said he invited Manning and other Caricom leaders to observe what was happening in Haiti for themselves.

"I said send a group to Haiti and send them to see the process before the election or after the election," Latortue said.

"The problem has been the communication between Haiti and Caricom."

Latortue extended the invitation as Caricom leaders are scheduled to hold their next intercessional meeting in Port-of-Spain on February 8 and 9.

"I want the moral support," Latortue said.

"Why do the European people and the African Union want to send observers and not the Caricom people?" he asked.

Latortue went to the Hilton immediately after his meeting with Manning, accompanied by Foreign Affairs Minister Knowlson Gift, and Haiti's ambassador to the Organisation of American States Duly Brutus.

On Monday, OAS secretary general Albert Ramdin, renewed the call by the international community for the country's February 7 presidential elections to be held on schedule.

Latortue conceded the security situation in Haiti "remains a big problem" and the nation needs to establish the proper political stability which requires long-term planning.

“We are not yet at that stage,” he said.

“We have had too many political disturbances in the past.”

He said there are 35 presidential candidates in the election and only five of them have a realistic chance of winning.

Latortue did not just meet with Manning to request election observers. He also lobbied support for Haiti to be regain membership within Caricom.

Caricom has refused to recognise the US-appointed interim government in Haiti since the controversial departure of its exiled president Jean Bertrand-Aristide in February, 2004.

Aristide was granted asylum in South Africa.

Caricom has maintained Aristide departed Haiti under suspicious circumstances and at its 15th intercessional meeting in St Kitts, on March 27, 2004, the regional body’s leaders decided not to recognise the US-backed interim government.

But Latortue said the country’s upcoming general elections should change that since Caricom would be dealing with a duly elected government. [ed gp apr 26/01/2006 09:00]

Fear and Death Ensnare U.N.'s Soldiers in Haiti

By GINGER THOMPSON

New York Times

January 24, 2006

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti, Jan. 21 - Nearly 20 months after the United Nations arrived to stabilize the hemisphere's poorest country and avert a civil war, there is still no cease-fire in this violent city on the sea.

Blasts from tanks and machine guns go on for hours almost every day around Cité Soleil, a steamy slum of concrete hovels and canals of raw sewage at the capital's northern edge. No one knows for sure how many civilians have been killed inside because the bodies of the slum-dwellers and local gangsters rarely make it to morgues.

But last Tuesday, two Jordanian soldiers were shot to death in skirmishes with local gangs, and another was seriously wounded. It was the third fatal strike against United Nations personnel since December, a month when relations between the international peacekeeping mission and local people worsened.

The violence has raised demands in capitals from Brasília to Washington to Ottawa for an explanation of what has gone wrong with Haiti's transition to democracy. What is clear is that the \$584 million a year mission has failed to bring peace to Haiti, and the caretaker government has failed to bring elections.

The interim government, appointed with the support of the United States after the downfall of former President Jean-Bertrand Aristide in March 2004, postponed the first round of new elections to Feb. 7 from Jan. 8, the fourth delay in four months. A second round is scheduled for March.

Uncertainty remains among the highest level organizers of the elections about whether a fair vote is possible in the corrupt and deeply polarized political atmosphere here.

The postponement has led to finger-pointing all around. The interim government blames the international community for the delays, saying it failed to deliver voter cards and train enough poll workers. The United Nations blames the interim government, accusing its leaders of stalling in fear of losing power.

Cité Soleil is among the most desperate corners of a desperately poor country. Fifty-five percent of Haiti's 8.5 million people live on less than a dollar a day, according to United Nations estimates.

The continuing insecurity has not helped. Just after the United Nations mission finally reached its full complement of 9,000 troops and police officers in December, incidents of kidnappings increased to more than 14 a day, bringing protests by this country's middle and working classes for the peacekeepers to get serious about fighting street gangs, or get out of Haiti.

"They need to do better than what is going on to make a dent in the fear that is affecting a million people in the Port-au-Prince area," said Andy Apaid, a wealthy Haitian businessmen who runs textile

factories outside Cité Soleil. "We don't want them to kill anyone. But we want them to do strategic operations to get the criminals out."

Indeed, everyone here seems to have a finger on the trigger.

The nervous Jordanian soldiers assigned to patrol the streets of Cité Soleil rarely get out of their tanks to speak to the people they are assigned to protect.

"Go away!" the soldiers shouted one day last week in English at a woman who only spoke Creole, and who was pleading for help to find her missing husband. "We cannot tell you anything."

Neighborhood gunmen, who call themselves militants, hide from the soldiers among men and women too afraid to report crime.

"We are here to accompany the people in peace," said 24-year-old William Baptiste, who calls himself Tiblan. "The problem is the United Nations is trying to annihilate us. Times are critical. We have to be ready, and willing to die."

Ambassador Juan Gabriel Valdés, the chief of the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti, known as Minustah, acknowledged the uphill battle in an interview. "This is a ghetto," he said of Cité Soleil, "where gangs, which are not different from the gangs found in Central America, have managed to isolate the area from state control. And in a place where the state is as weak as here, you cannot ask Minustah to perform the role of the state."

But he and several other United Nations officials, as well as two high-ranking Western diplomats, rejected assertions that the mission had failed. They charge that Haiti's tiny elite, along with interim Prime Minister Gérard Latortue, have orchestrated a campaign to undermine the mission and delay the elections, because the Haitian leadership is nervous about what opinion polls indicate are likely to be the results.

Prime Minister Latortue refused repeated requests for an interview, but he has said that after Feb. 7, his government would not begin any new initiatives, only fulfill necessary administrative duties until the new president is sworn in. "If he could, my boss would leave tomorrow," said a spokesman for Mr. Latortue, Jean-Junior Joseph. "There is no joy in leading this country."

A recent poll sponsored by the United States government indicated that the leading candidate is former President René Préval, considered a protégé of Mr. Aristide. The Aristide government was undone by a protest movement, led by people like the businessman Mr. Apaid, a revolt by former soldiers and police officers and American pressure.

"They thought they could get rid of one government and have the country to themselves and their friends," a United Nations official said, asking not to be identified out of fear that his comments could hurt his position in Haiti. "But Préval has come and ruined the party."

Maj. Gen. Eduardo Aldunate, deputy force commander for the United Nations troops, agreed that kidnapping was a serious problem, but not one that justified delaying elections.

He has taken charge of the mission since, in another setback, the commander of the United Nations troops here, Gen. Urano Teixeira de Matta Bacellar, was found dead in his hotel room just after New Year's from what officials have described as a self-inflicted gunshot wound.

General Aldunate said that while violence continues to plague much of the capital, there are few serious incidents in the rest of the country. He conceded that Cité Soleil was under the control of street gangs loyal to Mr. Aristide. He said the gangs use kidnapping as a way to make money and to attack the rich and middle classes they feel are responsible for forcing Mr. Aristide into exile.

Critics say that the Jordanian forces are, culturally, a bad fit in the slum and have been unable to mix with the local population as their Brazilian counterparts have managed to do elsewhere.

When the Brazilians first said they would lead the mission here, it was seen as an opportunity for Latin American nations to step up and fill a gap that the United States, after supporting Mr. Aristide's departure, was reluctant to fill.

But the Brazilian effort here has been plagued by many of the same problems that have faced peacekeepers in other conflicted corners of the globe, namely, a lack of money and political backing, and questions over use of lethal force.

Not least among the reasons that it has been hard to attack the gangs in Cité Soleil, said Mr. Valdés, the diplomatic chief of the mission, is that the area is flush with weapons.

Mr. Valdés said the gang members have used money and intimidation to enlist a broad network of support among residents here. Most kidnapping victims, he said, are brought to the homes of average families in Cité Soleil and held there. If the families cooperate with the gangs, Mr. Valdés said, they eat. If they don't, they die.

Disarming anyone has been all but impossible. "I have always said that this mission is completely different from any other mission of the United Nations in that sense because disarmament is not a collective problem," he said. "We are not facing armies, irregular armies or guerrilla groups. We are facing individuals who are armed, and who do not want to lose their weapons, either to defend themselves, or to attack others, or simply to eat."

In response to mounting criticism against the United Nations work in Cité Soleil, Mr. Valdés said, troops would increase patrols and implement stricter controls at checkpoints. But he and ranking military leaders of the mission said soldiers would not move to occupy Cité Soleil because of the risk of "collateral damage," the killing of innocent men, women and children.

"What would happen with a massive operation?" asked Maj. Gen. Eduardo Aldunate, the deputy commander. "Maybe we would catch some bandits, but for sure many innocent people will die.

"Our role is not to kill innocent people," he added. "It is to help them."

Innocent people are dying all the time. Last August, the international aid group Doctors Without Borders reopened Sainte Catherine Hospital in Cité Soleil. The hospital had been closed for a year. Dr.

Loris De Filippi, head of the medical unit, said that the numbers of gunshot victims treated at the hospital had been steadily declining but peaked again in December, as elections neared. Things only got worse, he said, after the New Year.

In the first 10 days of this year, doctors treated more than 47 gunshot victims, half of them women and children. One recent patient was hit by a bullet as she slept in bed.

"It's appropriate," said Dr. De Filippi, "to describe what's going on out there as war."

It certainly looked and sounded like war last Tuesday. Gunfire erupted just before 8 a.m. when a Jordanian battalion started work on fortifying a guard post at a main entrance to Cité Soleil.

"They don't care about how much they are firing or shooting rounds," Brig. Gen. Mahmoud al-Husban said of the gunmen. "In the beginning they used to fire three or four shots in maybe one hour, but now they are firing hundreds and sometimes a thousand."

Indeed gunfire crackled through the air until well past noon, leaving two soldiers dead. Capt. Tariq Abed Alfatta Aljaafreh, 30, was engaged to be married at the end of his six-month assignment here. Sgt. Jalal Rabi Merei, also 30, was a husband and father of two.

Their bodies were sent home Friday, after a ceremony of somber prayers and defiant speeches. Not a single representative of Haiti's interim government was there. Still, the speakers took the opportunity to send a message.

General Aldunate said the United Nations mission would not be forced to surrender its work by the "tiny elite that does not want to understand our mission."

Col. Mohammed Sabayleh, the dead soldiers' commanding officer, also spoke. "We remain committed to preserving peace against those who have lost the taste for it," he said. "These bodies you see before you are proof of our honesty, and our determination."

Imprisoned Jean-Juste rejects deal

A popular Roman Catholic priest and former Miami activist, sick with cancer in a Port-au-Prince jail, turned down a Haitian government offer that would have set him free.

BY JACQUELINE CHARLES

Miami Herald

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Lawyers for the Rev. Gérard Jean-Juste, a Catholic priest jailed in Haiti who is reportedly suffering from leukemia, have turned down a government offer that could have allowed the former Miami activist to go free, both sides said Tuesday.

Interim Prime Minister Gérard Latortue told The Miami Herald the government offered the deal last week after a judge dropped murder and conspiracy charges against Jean-Juste but upheld a lesser charge of illegal weapons possession.

The deal, Latortue added, required Jean-Juste to agree to skip an appeal of the weapons indictment and submit to a fair and speedy trial. If convicted, the government would have commuted Jean-Juste's sentence.

But Jean-Juste and his lawyers refused, and on Friday appealed the indictment. The appeals process could take months, Latortue said.

"Now things are more complicated," Latortue said. "Now it has to go to the appeals court; we wanted to avoid that."

Supporters for Jean-Juste say it would have been "preposterous" for him to run the risk of trial under Haiti's decrepit judicial system.

"To go to trial would be a huge mistake," said Brian Concannon, a human rights lawyer who is leading an Internet campaign pushing for Jean-Juste's release.

"Why would he trust the government to do something difficult when they won't do something simple: The prosecutor only needs to write an order that says he's allowed to get out of jail to go to the United States for treatment."

During a news conference in which Miami supporters announced plans to hold a Saturday vigil in support of Jean-Juste's release, several activists broke down in tears as the latest prison letter from Jean-Juste was read. For the first time, the always seemingly upbeat priest spoke of dying from leukemia.

"Unfortunately I will leave more work for you," Jean-Juste wrote. "However, I believe God always arises new workers for his vineyard. Plus, from above, I'll be so busy meeting God's family members who enter heaven, so do not worry about me."

Jack Lieberman, a Miami activist, said Jean-Juste's death would be "at the hands of the Haitian government, and I am sad to say, the Bush administration. . . . They all are aware of the situation."

But Latortue said the priest and his supporters had passed up a good opportunity to get him medical care.

"They want to make people believe we are trying to do something against him, and we just want to help the man," Latortue said.

"We have no interest, no willingness to keep that man in jail. We are actively looking for a solution to have him go free and get medical care."