

HAITI NEWS ROUNDUP: JANUARY 4 – 15, 2007

Sen.: Drugs Smuggled to Haiti by Plane

By STEVENSON JACOBS

The Associated Press

Washington Post

Saturday, January 13, 2007

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti -- Drug traffickers are increasingly favoring planes over boats to smuggle U.S.-bound cocaine from South America into Haiti and the Dominican Republic, U.S. Sen. Bill Nelson said Saturday.

The Florida Democrat attributed the drop in sea smuggling to a 1998 agreement allowing U.S. drug agents to patrol Haitian waters for drug traffickers.

"It has been successful and the amount of drugs coming in by sea has been reduced," Nelson told reporters at the end of a two-day visit. "But the amount of drugs coming in by airplane has considerably increased."

Most of the small planes originate from southern and northwestern Venezuela, Nelson said. Venezuela is a major transit point for drugs _ primarily cocaine _ being smuggled out of Colombia for the United States and Europe.

In a speech this past week, Haitian President Rene Preval said U.S. anti-drug aid has not significantly stopped the flow of illegal drugs into his impoverished Caribbean country.

Nelson, who sits on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, said Washington's agreement with Haiti only allows U.S. authorities to stop drug traffickers at sea _ not by air _ "because obviously we cannot interdict the plane unless we shoot it down."

The senator said he agreed with Preval's call for more help fighting drug traffickers but stressed that Haiti's national police is the main defense against cocaine-smuggling flights.

"The main way of solving the drug problem coming by air into Haiti is to get the Haitian national police to where they can arrest them when they land," Nelson said.

Haiti's police is among the region's most corrupt, with only a few thousand officers to patrol the nation of 8 million.

Municipal Elections in Reserve in Haiti
Prensa Latina
January 14, 2007

Puerto Principe, Almost a month and a half after the celebration of the municipal, local and complementary legislative elections in Haiti, the results of the count are still in reserve.

Irregularities in the count prevented to know the name of the people that will direct 142 towns, 570 Municipal Councils of Administration, Mayor and delegations of city.

The President of the Provisional Electoral Council (CEP) Max Mathurin announced that the reports of the vote's center will be released before the end of January.

About the 10 deputies and three elected senators, he said that the legislator of Lachapelle municipality is unresolved and there was election fraud.

After an ultimatum of the president Rene Preval, the CEP representative said that the electoral decree is respected.

CARICOM could make vital contribution in training Haitian police, says OAS
Caribbean Net News
Thursday, January 11, 2007

WASHINGTON, USA:

Countries of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), and others such as the United States and Canada, could make a vital contribution to Haiti by helping to train the Haitian National Police, according to Assistant Secretary General Albert R. Ramdin of the Organization of American States (OAS).

Ramdin highlighted the value of such assistance during a panel discussion at the Woodrow Wilson Center in Washington, noting that security and governance issues are among the most pressing challenges facing Haiti.

Ambassador Ramdin stressed that for stability to prevail, the government must be able to deliver short-term results. He cited income generation and job creation, in an environment of less violence, as achievable objectives that could help create confidence in the political process.

Ramdin said that besides security, the OAS would also continue to focus its Haiti support program on democracy and governance as well as development issues such as tourism and reforestation.

The panel discussion – on “Governance and Security in Haiti: Can the International Community Make a Difference?” – also included as panelists Haiti’s Ambassador to the United States, Raymond Joseph, and the Ambassador of the Dominican Republic to the OAS, Roberto Alvarez. Johanna Mendelson Forman of the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) moderated.

Ambassador Ramdin also spoke about OAS technical assistance to Haiti to address human trafficking and illegal firearms issues, saying the OAS will also continue with its civil registry project and with its support to transform the Provisional Electoral Council into a permanent body.

Ramdin underscored the importance of involving civil society and the private sector in these endeavors and, noting the recently established Haiti Task Force that he chairs, further explained that the OAS was in the process of streamlining its Haiti program.

The Assistant Secretary General said the OAS was gratified at the unprecedented political momentum in the Western Hemisphere in support of Haiti, and urged a more constructive focus on the Caribbean country’s development needs.

Too often, he said, the international community’s support fails to adequately take into account Haiti’s needs, being more concerned with “what is available in terms of resources assistance and technical support, from their perspective. It is important to change that paradigm and bring Haiti into the forefront.”

Meanwhile, the Haitian Ambassador presented a detailed historical analysis of the major factors underlying Haiti's present problems, while the Dominican Ambassador addressed, among other issues, how his country is affected by the situation in Haiti.

Haiti Headed In The Right Direction?
The Bahama Journal
January 12, 2007

Disaster, defeat and despair have been with the Haitian people for quite a while now. On occasion, things have threatened to get out of control.

Happily, today we make no report about the bad news. We reference and remind all and sundry that Haiti is trying to pick itself up. As it does, it needs all the help it can get.

And so it is today that we have some good news to report concerning Haiti and the extent to which – with the help of many- it is pulling itself together.

This new information involves Assistant Secretary General Albert R. Ramdin of the Organization of American States. In this regard, we are told that this high level OAS official was gratified at the unprecedented political momentum in the Western Hemisphere in support of Haiti, and urged a more constructive focus on the Caribbean country's development needs.

He is of the view that "too often the international community's support fails to adequately take into account Haiti's needs, being more concerned with "what is available in terms of resources assistance and technical support, from their perspective. It is important to change that paradigm and bring Haiti into the forefront."

Meanwhile, the Haitian Ambassador presented a detailed historical analysis of the major factors underlying Haiti's present problems, while the Dominican Ambassador addressed, among other issues, how his country is affected by the situation in Haiti.

Developments in Haiti also have implications for our country. As such, we must always be aware of what is happening in Haiti and to Haiti.

So it is today that we take note of a story that suggests that "countries of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), and others such as the United States and Canada, could make a vital contribution to Haiti by helping to train the Haitian National Police.

Mr. Ramdin highlighted the value of such assistance during a panel discussion at the Woodrow Wilson Center in Washington, noting that security and governance issues are among the most pressing challenges facing Haiti.

Ambassador Ramdin stressed that for stability to prevail; the government must be able to deliver short-term results. He cited income generation and job creation, in an environment of less violence, as achievable objectives that could help create confidence in the political process.

We agree with him.

That is why we are also in full support of the role that The Bahamas is playing in this process.

As regards Ambassador Ramdin and some more of what he had to say about development assistance to Haiti, he is of the view that besides security, the OAS would also continue to focus its Haiti support program on democracy and governance as well as development issues such as tourism and reforestation.

Interestingly, the panel discussion – on "Governance and Security in Haiti: Can the International Community Make a Difference?" – also included as panelists Haiti's Ambassador to the United States, Raymond Joseph, and the Ambassador of the Dominican Republic to the OAS, Roberto Alvarez. Johanna Mendelson Forman of the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) moderated.

There were issues that are directly related to matters that are high on the Bahamian agenda. In this regard, Ambassador Ramdin also spoke about OAS technical assistance to Haiti to address human trafficking and illegal firearms issues, saying the OAS will also continue with its civil registry project and with its support to transform the Provisional Electoral Council into a permanent body.

Ambassador Ramdin also underscored the importance of involving civil society and the private sector in these endeavors and, noting the recently established Haiti Task Force that he chairs, further explained that the OAS was in the process of streamlining its Haiti program.

We are certain that it will make a real difference in the lives of very many Haitian people. It will do so in the same way as other assistance programs now do in that distressed country.

One such involves assistance to the Haitian Police force.

Happily, The Bahamas is lending a hand.

That help – as explained by the Hon. Cynthia Pratt- is being extended by the Royal Bahamas Police Force. It involves the training of a handful of Haitian police officers.

She emphasized that the visiting officers will be introduced to this country's community policing program. Like many people, she is convinced that as in the case of The Bahamas community policing in Haiti could play an instrumental role in the development of that country.

We are optimistic.

Things in Haiti seem to be headed in the right direction.

Brazilian Takes Command of Haiti Troops
The Guardian Unlimited, UK
Friday January 12, 2007

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti (AP) - A Brazilian general took command of U.N. peacekeepers in Haiti on Thursday and said he plans no change in the strategy to stabilize the troubled Caribbean nation.

Maj. Gen. Carlos Alberto Dos Santos became the fourth U.N. commander since the international force arrived in July 2004 to quell unrest sparked by an uprising that ousted former president Jean-Bertrand Aristide.

Dos Santos assumes control as Haitian police and the 8,800-strong U.N. force fight a wave of killings and kidnappings blamed mostly on armed gangs that control several large Port-au-Prince slums.

Dos Santos, speaking after a brief ceremony at a Brazilian military base in a Port-au-Prince suburb, said he would not change any tactics implemented by Lt. Gen. Jose Elito Carvalho, another Brazilian who finished his one-year term as commander.

“We are going to work in the same way as we have worked before,” Dos Santos said. “Nothing has changed about our mission or our obligations.”

U.S. Defends Anti-Drug Efforts in Haiti

By STEVENSON JACOBS

The Associated Press

The Washington Post

Wednesday, January 10, 2007

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti -- The U.S. defended on Wednesday its anti-drug efforts in Haiti, two days after the Caribbean nation's president accused America and other major drug-consuming countries of failing to adequately fight the narcotics trade.

In a strongly worded speech to Parliament on Monday, President Rene Preval called drug trafficking the main cause of instability in his impoverished nation and said failed efforts by the United States and other countries to stop the trade had made Haiti a "victim."

U.S. Embassy spokeswoman Shaila B. Manyam said Wednesday the United States has undertaken a range of measures to defend Haiti against drug trafficking, including strengthening its weak justice system and training its coast guard.

The U.S. has also contributed more than \$40 million to Haiti's national police since 2004, Manyam said.

"The United States shares Haiti's concern about drug trafficking," Manyam said. "Our two countries have a long history of cooperation on combatting this scourge and that cooperation will continue."

Drug traffickers have long taken advantage of Haiti's weak defenses and vulnerable coastline to smuggle in cocaine bound for the United States, Canada and Europe.

Manyam said Preval's comments "indicate the government of Haiti shares our strong commitment to deal with the threats to stability and security posed by drug trafficking."

Preval's cash-strapped government has struggled to contain gang violence sparked by a bloody 2004 revolt that ousted former President Jean-Bertrand Aristide, Haiti's first democratically elected leader.

Ransom-seeking gangs have kidnapped dozens of people in recent weeks, prompting criticism that police and an 8,800-strong U.N. peacekeeping force are not doing enough to fight crime.

U.N. troops and police have stepped up patrols in recent days and arrested two suspected kidnappers.

U.S. Supports Extending U.N. Stabilization Mission in Haiti
New U.N. report calls for extending mission to February 2008
By Eric Green
US State Department
January 10, 2007

Washington -- The United States supports extending a U.N. stabilization mission in Haiti to February 2008, as called for in a new U.N. report, says Brian Nichols, director of the State Department's Office of Caribbean Affairs.

In a January 10 statement to USINFO, Nichols said the U.N. mission, known by the acronym MINUSTAH, has "played a vital role in the international community's efforts to help Haiti." The United States looks forward "to the U.N. Security Council renewing its mandate" for MINUSTAH in the coming weeks, he said.

Nichols added MINUSTAH is "working to facilitate a secure environment for good governance and economic development that is essential for Haiti's lasting stability and prosperity."

The report by former U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan says Haiti will continue to face "significant challenges" in 2007. Annan recommends in the report that the U.S.-backed MINUSTAH should continue with its current authorized troop and police ceilings. MINUSTAH's mandate will end on February 15, 2007, unless it is extended. The report by Annan, who was succeeded by Ban Ki-moon of South Korea January 1, covers MINUSTAH's work from July 2006 until December 2006.

Nichols said the United States "remains committed to helping the Haitian people build a stable, democratic, and prosperous nation." As the world's largest single country donor to Haiti and also the Caribbean nation's biggest trade partner, the United States has provided more than \$600 million in assistance to Haiti from 2004 to 2006, said Nichols.

MINUSTAH currently employs more than 6,600 military personnel and more than 1,700 police officers, as well as hundreds of civilian staff assisting the people of Haiti, the poorest nation in the Western Hemisphere. MINUSTAH is working to promote a secure and stable environment in Haiti, support the country's political process and monitor and uphold human rights.

The United States maintains a small military staff contingent in Haiti as part of MINUSTAH, which was created by a U.N. Security Council resolution on April 30, 2004. The resolution stated the mission would remain in Haiti for an initial six-month period. In November 2004, the Security Council renewed the mission for another six months, until June 1, 2005, with the announced intent to renew for additional periods, as needed.

Another official in the State Department's Office of Caribbean Affairs told USINFO January 9 the United States has been "on record" in favor of further extending MINUSTAH's mandate, when it voted in the Security Council in August 2006 for a six-month extension for MINUSTAH to February 2007.

In his call for extending MINUSTAH, Annan cited the potential for "destabilizing forces" to use violence to "attain their objectives" and argued that "the continued engagement" of the U.N. mission's military and police "will remain crucial in responding to significant threats at a time when Haiti's own security capacity is still at an early stage of development."

The challenges ahead for Haiti's government, Annan said, cover the areas of "security, institution-building and socio-economic development." He added that although primary responsibility for ensuring progress remains with Haiti's leadership and people, international aid to Haiti remains essential.

The United States has participated in recent years in international conferences of donors for Haiti designed to support democracy and restore stability in the Caribbean country.

One such event took place in November 2006 in Madrid, Spain, and discussed technical and coordination issues related to the financial aid being provided by the United States and other donor nations and multilateral groups. The conference focused on the "stocktaking" of progress being made to bring stability and security to Haiti.

At another donors' conference for Haiti, held in the capital of Port-au-Prince July 25, 2006, the United States pledged \$210 million for July 2006 to September 2007 to help in Haiti's economic recovery. (See related article.)

The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), in announcing in October 2006 it had signed a three-year agreement with Haiti to support the nation's progress toward stability and growth, said the United States "is committed to work with Haitian citizens and their government over the long term to address the country's many challenges and provide hope and opportunity to all Haitians."

Ban Ki-moon, the new U.N. secretary-general, announced January 9 he was naming Major General Carlos Alberto Dos Santos Cruz of Brazil as MINUSTAH's new force commander. He succeeds Lieutenant General José Elito Carvalho Siqueira, also of Brazil, who was appointed to the post in January 2006.

The full text of Annan's report (PDF, 18 pages) and the August 2006 resolution on MINUSTAH (PDF, 4 pages) are available on the U.N. Web site.

More information on the aid agreement with Haiti is available on the USAID Web site.

For more on U.S. policy, see *The Caribbean*.

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320 AFP troops off to Haiti, Liberia

GMANews.TV

01/12/2007

A total of 320 troops will be sent on peacekeeping missions in Haiti and Liberia in January, a military spokesman said Friday.

In a news briefing, Armed Forces information chief Lt. Col. Bartolome Bacarro said 165 soldiers headed by Col. Francisco Patrimonio will depart Manila for Liberia on January 24 while a 155-strong RP contingent led by Col. Romeo Gan will leave for Haiti five days later.

The troops were sent off in simple ceremonies at Camp Aguinaldo by ranking military officials headed by Lt. Gen. Antonio Romero, Armed Forces vice chief of staff.

"They are going to replace troops who are presently deployed in the said areas," said Bacarro, adding that the troops presently in Liberia and Haiti are being recalled because they have already completed their six-month tour of duty.

Bacarro said the peacekeepers would be receiving allowances from the United Nations, which is sanctioning the deployment, on top of the regular salaries that they are getting from Armed Forces.

Bacarro said they are deploying fresh peacekeepers to the troubled countries because "we (Philippines) belong to a bigger body like the United Nations and of course, being a member of that organization entails responsibilities."

"Taking part in such peacekeeping mission is an international obligation that we have to comply. So being part of that bigger organization, we have some responsibilities for that and one is sending our contingent to perform peacekeeping mission," he said. - GMANews.TV

Haitian resister inspires audience

Worker's World

By G. Dunkel

Brooklyn, N.Y.

January 11, 2007

Well over 300 Haitians came out Jan. 7 to hear Sò Ann bring her message of fighting for justice, both social and economic, as well as demanding the return of Jean-Bertrand Aristide to Haiti from his exile in South Africa.

Some longtime Haitian activists and militants felt that the recent big demonstrations inspired by the popular organizations in Cité Soleil had awakened the community and let them organize such a large meeting even though the press release announcing it only went out Jan. 4.

Sò Ann is the name under which Anne Auguste is better known. According to Fanfan Latour, a journalist and member of Fanmi Lavalas who chaired the evening meeting, Sò Ann is “a pillar of the resistance as well as the arts and culture in Haiti.”

Sò Ann was recently released from prison after over two years, when the Haitian courts found that no charges had ever been brought against her.

The collection during the meeting brought in \$1,200 for her work in Haiti.

Besides listening to Sò Ann, Joselyn Gay and some of her troupe, Ti Flute, Gerard the drummer and singer Rozna, some political presentations were made.

Bernier Archille from the Haiti Support Network talked about the significance of Jean-Jacques Dessalines, who declared Haiti independent in 1804, for the present struggle.

Roger Leduc from Kakola remarked that this meeting marked the end of the discouragement and demoralization of the Haitian community in New York.

Leduc analyzed how the U.S., French and Canadian imperialists used the U.N. and its MINUSTAH, the U.N. Mission to Stabilize Haiti, to occupy the poorest country in the western hemisphere.

Fanmi Lavalas, the Haiti Solidarity Network and Kakola organized the event. The International Action Center was thanked from the chair for supplying the sound.

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Digicel Haiti claims a million customers in eight months
Wednesday, 10 January 2007
Telegeography Research.com

Digicel Haiti, which launched in May last year and is part of the Digicel mobile group founded by Irish businessman Denis O'Brien, has announced that it ended 2006 with over a million GSM customers. Digicel says it has invested USD260 million in Haiti, which it claims is 'the largest investment ever made in the country by an international company'. It has already raced ahead of its rivals, TDMA/GSM operator Comcel and CDMA provider Haitel, despite both companies responding to their new competitor by cutting prices and launching new networks. Comcel hurriedly rolled out a GSM network under the Voila brand in early 2006, whilst Haitel is aiming to sign up data users to its CDMA2000 1x services, launched in late August 2006 (source: TeleGeography's GlobalComms database).

During 2006 Digicel Group launched services in additional Caribbean markets including Trinidad & Tobago, Turks & Caicos Islands and Bonaire, and acquired El Salvadorian mobile operator Digicel Holdings Ltd, U Mobile in Guyana, and Bouygues Telecom Caraibe, which extended its mobile footprint to Martinique, Guadeloupe and French Guiana. The group finished the year with over four million subscribers in 22 markets.

Jamaica pledges continued support towards Haiti's development
Caribbean Net News
Tuesday, January 9, 2007

KINGSTON, Jamaica (JIS): Prime Minister of Jamaica, Portia Simpson Miller, last week reaffirmed Jamaica and CARICOM's commitment to assist Haiti to achieve its development goals.

"As Jamaica participates in the regional assistance programme for Haiti, we seek to make our contribution to the reconstruction process currently underway for the economic and social development of our sister nation," she stated.

She further implored the wider international community to "stay the course with Haiti and provide the financial and technical support as this is crucial if the government is to succeed in its development plans".

The Prime Minister was addressing a press conference following bilateral talks with President of Haiti, René Préval, who arrived in the island for a four-day working visit.

She noted that President Preval's visit to the island was to be viewed as a critical step in strengthening bilateral relations between Jamaica and Haiti.

Outlining the outcome of the deliberations between herself and Préval, Simpson Miller said that high on the agenda was Haiti's technical preparation to accede to the revised treaty of Chaguaramas, a move that would allow the country to participate in the Caribbean Single Market.

"It is my hope that this process can be completed as soon as possible," she said, while commending the Haitian President for adopting an inclusive approach to governance with a view to ensuring that democracy took root in the country.

She noted further that the leaders discussed a number of initiatives covering tourism, agriculture, engagement with the Haitian Diaspora, education and training, institutional strengthening and improving the social infrastructure.

"We both recognized that cooperation in agriculture and reforestation would be beneficial to the Haitian economy and social infrastructure. The planting of trees and the sharing of best practices would not only provide greater agricultural yields, but would also serve to stem the risks of landslides and flooding," she stated.

For his part, Préval thanked Simpson Miller for sustaining Jamaica's ties to Haiti, underlining that he believed the process was beneficial to his country. He also updated the Prime Minister on the political and economic situation in Haiti, including the status of support from the international community.

A joint communiqué signed by both parties emphasized the importance of a sustainable democracy in Haiti, supported by the rule of law, a secure and stable environment and economic and social progress. The leaders also stated their resolve to continue their efforts within the regional framework to ensure that these objectives are met, while noting the importance of stability and security to both countries.

The President and the Prime Minister shared the view that the visit served to concretize many of the ideas put forward for enhanced cooperation between the two countries. Accordingly, the leaders anticipate a period of strengthened exchange, not only in terms of economic and social benefits, but for the people-to-people contact, which will contribute further to deepening the integration process.

Meanwhile, they stressed that security forces in both countries were taking strident moves to curtail the illegal gun and narcotics trade between Haiti and Jamaica. "We have a plan of action but we will not disclose it because I believe that those persons involved in such activities should be caught by surprise and be made to pay for their actions," said Simpson Miller.

The leaders are expected to hold further talks at the convening of the first Jamaica/Haiti Joint Commission in Jamaica, during the second quarter of 2007.

UN asks for US\$98m to assist stabilization efforts in Haiti
Mon Jan 8, 2007
Radio Jamaica

The United Nations asked for US\$98 million on Monday to help Haiti achieve stability.

In a statement released in Geneva the UN said the money would be used to help Haiti's humanitarian and development needs.

Some of the funds would also be used to improve governance standards in the country up until the end of 2007.

A UN Spokesperson said the appeal also aims to reduce vulnerability among the Haitian population and ensure that the authorities are better prepared in the event of natural disasters.

In the wake of its first election since 2004 Haiti has struggled to shake off decades of political violence despite the presence of a United Nations peacekeeping force.

The violence peaked two years ago when the bloody rebellion that ended the rule of ex-President Jean Bertrand Aristide.

Brutal armed gangs, corruption and poor infrastructure are among the many problems plaguing the country.

Rene Preval, Haiti's president from 1996 to 2001, was voted back into power in February of last year with the voters hoping that he would be able to bring about change.

Many are complaining that he is yet to build roads and that he has not freed political prisoners or rooted out corrupt officials.

In violence-racked Haiti, a push to spur tourism

Goal is to build resorts, attract cruise ships

By Amy Bracken,

The Boston Globe

January 8, 2007

JACMEL, Haiti -- On a sunny day in November, Haitian-American hip-hop star Wyclef Jean visited this mountain-fringed seaside town for the first time. Descending from a plane at the tiny airport, he said in Creole to a crowd of Haitian journalists that he could already see the country was more beautiful than Jamaica.

The comparison with Jamaica is a common one here, as people bemoan the fact that visitors flock to their Caribbean neighbor while tourism is virtually dead in Haiti because of years of unrest.

Jean had long planned to give a large, free "concert for peace" in Port-au-Prince, but the level of violence in the capital made such an event impossible. He switched venues to Jacmel's town beach, where tens of thousands of fans gathered to hear him play in December without incident.

The words "tourism" and "Haiti" once fit harmoniously together. But after the overthrow of the Duvalier dictatorship in the 1980s, the country's economy fell apart and instability reigned. In Port-au-Prince today, kidnappers and gangs humiliate Haiti's weak police force and the UN peacekeepers who support them.

The United States advises its citizens against visiting the country. And with few exceptions, travel guides to the Caribbean ignore the western half of Hispaniola, while giving extensive coverage of the resort-filled eastern side, the Dominican Republic.

But Jacmel is a different place from Port-au-Prince. Patrick Boucard, cofounder of Jacmel's annual film festival, is spearheading a music festival set for May. The music festival is part of an ongoing effort to make the outside world understand that his town is far removed from the Haiti that makes headlines overseas.

Most of Haiti "is not Port-au-Prince," Boucard said. "We should not be penalized by what happens [within] a tenth of the country."

Today, well-to-do Port-au-Prince residents visit Jacmel on weekends. They can stroll through the town, visit galleries, listen to live music, and eat grilled lobster and conch at nearby beaches. But few foreigners venture to Jacmel.

Boucard is looking for ways for tourists to visit Haiti without having to set foot in the capital. There are 15-minute flights from Port-au-Prince to Jacmel, but some visitors fear traveling on the half-mile strip of road that runs from the capital's international airport to its domestic airport -- never mind make the three-hour drive from Port-au-Prince to Jacmel, 25 miles to the south.

So Boucard is trying to get "boutique cruises," small sailing ships, to take 60 to 100 passengers from Santo Domingo, the Dominican capital, to Jacmel for the music festival.

Boucard and other advocates of "integrated," or cultural, tourism don't want Haiti to become just another Caribbean get away. When Boucard envisions tourism in Haiti, piña coladas on the white sands don't feature in.

"I would like us to grow gradually with ecotourism, artisan tourism, [with a] better quality of tourists, who can appreciate our culture and arts and crafts," he said.

But to others, especially self-described realists, the poorest and least-developed country in the Americas can hardly be picky about who lands on its shores and spends money.

"If you think you're just going to do without the international corporations, you're fooling yourself," said Philippe Armand, a Haitian businessman and vice president of the Regional American Chambers of Commerce.

Armand is pushing for enclosed, all-inclusive resorts and cruise ships to come to Jacmel, among other ports. "We have to create secured environments," he said, similar to those in the Dominican Republic and Jamaica.

Already, a Royal Caribbean cruise ship anchors off the north of Haiti two to three times a week, and thousands of tourists spend the day on jet skis, water slides, and lounge chairs at the enclosed beach of Labadee.

As recently as a year ago, passengers were told that they were debarking not in Haiti but onto a private island off the coast of Hispaniola. Since then, a sign has been built welcoming visitors to Haiti, and some are aware that they are on the mainland, but they are penned in by razor wire, with no option of leaving the grounds.

Royal Caribbean pays \$6 per passenger per day in taxes, which amounts to about \$3 million per year. And hundreds of Haitians are employed at the beach. But locals say the benefits are minuscule compared with what they would be if passengers were able to enter "the real Haiti."

Officials in Milot, a small town about 16 miles and more than an hour's drive from Labadee, want Royal Caribbean to help pave the rough dirt road that connects them and let the ship's passengers make the journey.

Milot was once a significant tourist destination. It is home to the Citadel, a massive 19th-century mountain-top fort built under "King" Henri Christophe to defend Haiti against France, its former colonizer and enslaver. The monument was declared a world heritage site by the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization and stands as a symbol of liberty and empowerment in the world's first black republic.

Milot's mayor-elect, Telfort Paul, said he has no problem with enclosure tourism, but he also believes there is a market for tourists who want exposure to Haiti's history, culture, art, and food. He calls it "djon-djon tourism," named after a black mushroom that Haitians use to flavor rice.

In October, a delegation of more than 50 mostly African-American affiliates of the US-based Haiti Support Project toured Haiti, including Milot and the Citadel. Led by the project's head, Ron Daniels , and Representative Sheila Jackson-Lee, a Texas Democrat, the group met with politicians, attended a Haitian vodou ceremony, and took an eight-hour bus ride across the country.

Upon his return, Daniels declared: "The participants on this extraordinary pilgrimage are returning to the United States with a commitment to be ambassadors of hope for Haiti. Their charge is to spread the word, that every person of African descent should visit the Citadel at least once in a lifetime."

Peace at a price in Haiti

Teen girl recounts alleged rape by peacekeeper, one of dozens of sex cases brought before the UN

BY REED LINDSAY

Special to Newsday

January 8, 2007

LEOGANE, Haiti - Natasha says she was walking home after school when the Sri Lankan soldier called to her.

Peacekeepers in this small town an hour west of Port-au-Prince often give candy and food to children, so 15-year-old Natasha, whose real name is being withheld to protect her, readily followed him into a sugarcane field behind the military base.

There, she says, he covered her mouth with his hand, forced her to the ground and raped her.

For Natasha, the nightmare had just begun. When her mother found her, bloody and covered in dirt, she beat Natasha savagely in the middle of the street. The girl's headmaster expelled her in order not to "stain" the school's reputation. Her classmates and neighbors taunted her, calling her "Madame Minustah." MINUSTAH is the acronym for the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti, the peacekeeping mission here.

The investigation begins

Natasha's mother forbade her to tell anyone about the attack until now - nearly two years later. The UN, which says it did not know about the rape allegation, has begun to investigate. "I thought they came for peace, not war," said Natasha, who speaks English moderately well and whose teacher said she was the top student in her class. "I thought they came to protect us. I never thought they could abuse me in this way."

Natasha is not alone. The peacekeeping mission in Haiti, which arrived in June 2004 to help stabilize the country after the ouster three months earlier of former President Jean-Bertrand Aristide, has investigated 34 other cases of alleged sexual abuse and exploitation. No case of rape and only one case of sexual exploitation by UN personnel has been substantiated by the mission, which has more than 6,600 soldiers, predominantly from Latin America, and 1,700 police officers from three dozen countries.

In the single case of exploitation, a UN investigation in March 2005 concluded that two Pakistani riot police officers had paid for sex with a woman in the city of Gonaives. They were removed from Haiti, dismissed from the police force and sentenced to 1 year in prison by the Pakistani government, according to UN spokesman David Wilmhurst.

The UN has been rocked by a series of abuse scandals in recent years, implicating peacekeepers from missions in 12 different regions - Burundi, Cyprus, Ivory Coast, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia/Eritrea, Georgia, Haiti, Liberia, Western Sahara, Sierra Leone, Sudan and East Timor. More

than 150 peacekeepers in the Congo were implicated in 2004 for raping women and paying for sex with food, jobs or as little as \$1.

Former UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan publicly admitted last month to the United Nations' failure to stop sexual misconduct and launched an internal effort to fight the problem. Since January 2004, the UN has investigated 319 peacekeepers for sexual abuse or exploitation, resulting in the repatriation of 144 military personnel, 17 police officers and 18 civilian officials serving in several countries. The UN has no authority to punish wrongdoers and can ask only that their home countries do so.

Disputed investigations

Some alleged victims dispute the conclusions of the UN Haiti probes - among them a 15-year-old girl who accused a Brazilian peacekeeper in September 2004 of raping her at a UN naval base. Wimhurst said three investigations were conducted, but no evidence was found substantiating the allegations. The girl's lawyer called the findings a whitewash and said the UN never gave him or his client a final report.

"We take it very seriously. We investigate everything that comes to our attention," Wimhurst said. "Clearly, the vast majority of our people are behaving themselves. And indeed, since some of these allegations don't pan out, I would say it's not a huge problem."

But some human rights activists say many victims are either too afraid or too intimidated by the UN bureaucracy to come forward. "There are likely many more cases," said Polin Aleandre, a social worker who claims peacekeepers offered five girls he helps, aged 9 to 13, \$20 for oral sex in front of the national palace. The girls, usually barefoot street children who wash windows and beg for change, told Aleandre they refused. "Sex has a huge stigma in Haiti and rape even more so. People don't talk about it at all," he said.

In Haiti, incoming peacekeepers are instructed about the UN's "zero-tolerance" policy for sexual abuse and exploitation, which includes exchanging money for sex and having consensual sex with a minor.

"We have a very strong deterrent program in place and that's really where we have to put all our effort," Wimhurst said. "Some people might do this anyway, but the very few who do, tarnish the rest who behave correctly." In July 2005, the UN assigned a civilian official to Port-au-Prince, the capital, to receive sexual misconduct complaints brought by the population.

But many Haitians say they haven't heard about the UN's efforts to stem sexual misconduct. While the UN has organized large-scale publicity campaigns in Haiti that promote elections and disarmament, there has been no visible effort to educate or inform the population about their rights regarding sexual abuse and exploitation.

Unheard complaints

In Leogane, a relatively peaceful city that has not seen armed conflict since the peacekeepers arrived, there are no civilian officials to hear complaints about possible abuses by Sri Lankan forces. And in

Port-au-Prince, the office dealing with sexual abuse complaints was not established until several months after Natasha claims she was raped.

Last month in New York, Annan lamented "an overall climate that makes it difficult to report and expose abuses" and proposed a new strategy to help victims.

Natasha, now 17, says she hopes the UN mission will help her return to school and leave Leogane, where she continues to be tormented by name-calling and the sight of the peacekeepers. "Even now, whenever I see a Minustah soldier I feel uncomfortable," she said. "I fear them and at the same time I hate them."

But Wimhurst said the United Nations is unlikely to be able to substantiate her allegations and, as such, would not be able to help her.

"The longer time goes by in these cases, the more difficult it is to get the evidence," he said.

Fire destroys large street market in Haiti's capital
The Associated Press
International Herald Tribune
January 8, 2007

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti: A fire ripped through a large indoor food market in Haiti's capital Monday, destroying merchandise but causing no injuries.

The blaze began before dawn and quickly consumed the La Couple market in the Port-au-Prince suburb of Petionville. The normally bustling market was closed at the time and no vendors or shoppers were inside, witnesses said.

The cause wasn't immediately clear, but some bystanders accused political militants of torching the market in a feud over last month's disputed local elections. Police did not immediately comment on the fire.

Firefighters arrived hours later and extinguished the flames, which destroyed thousands of dollars worth of vegetables, fruit, rice, flour and oil.

Vendors wept as they sifted through smoldering mounds of corrugated tin and charred vegetables to salvage anything of value.

The market is a vital economic hub for hundreds of landless peasants who make long treks from the countryside each morning to sell their wares.

Dishing the dirt - Disasters in Iraq, Haiti and Jamaica

Common Sense

John Maxwell

The Jamaica Observer

Sunday, January 07, 2007

As some of us predicted several years ago, Mr George W Bush's policies have now hit the fan. It may be instructive to go back and read what Wayne Brown and I were saying four years, three years and two years ago. You may not have to do that, because what we said then is now being echoed in some sections of the American press.

John Maxwell

The murder of Saddam Hussein was a given. According to Mr Bush the US was engaged in a crusade which correctly defined, is Christian action against unbelievers. He withdrew the word, but the policy lingers on.

As a president appointed not by the voters but by God, according to one of his generals (Boykin), Mr Bush is clearly not answerable to any earthly authority, his Shia allies in Iraq are similarly unencumbered by human considerations of justice or law.

According to Mr Bush and his obedient poodles in the British government, Hussein got 'justice' and it is not for ordinary mortals to consider the parameters of that justice. After all, Saddam 'even tried to kill my Dad!' which justifies junior in all his excesses.

American presidents since Reagan have all been accomplices of Saddam Hussein in the crimes for which he was charged, the crimes against humanity in Jubail, Kurdistan and Iraq.

The Americans, British, French and Germans supplied the apparatus of death, the tactical information, the materials to make the poison gas and even the opportunity for Saddam to do his dirty work.

Additionally, there is no qualitative difference between the US and UK-led sanctions regime which killed more than half a million Iraqi children, the present war which has killed nearly a million Iraqi adults and the bulldozers which buried thousands of Iraqi soldiers alive towards the end of the Gulf War. Messrs George Bush Sr and Clinton are in eminent retirement as is Mr Rumsfeld, while Messrs Cheney and Bush Jr are still at the head of American affairs, doing their damndest for the sake of American corporations and oil. And Mr Blair? Well, what can anyone say of Mr Blair?

The millions of demonstrators like me, who carried signs reading 'No Blood for Oil' and found ourselves described by the New York Times as the world's other superpower 'Public Opinion', knew then, as we know now, that the real world of 'realpolitik' pays no attention to the messages of the people whether delivered in English, Arabic, Urdu or any other language.

PREVAL .paid official visit to Jamaica

All that is left to us is the power to try to shame the malefactors, not the power to try them for their crimes. Pinochet died in his bed as have most of the western sponsored "Sons of Bitches" to use Franklin Roosevelt's language.

It is savagely ironic that a majority of Iraqis now consider the regime of Saddam to have represented the 'Good Old Days' when they could go safely to the supermarket, when their women were in Parliament and free to walk abroad and work without the threat of murder and rape because of the manner of their dress.

For Saddam, whatever one thought of him, one can say that he met his end with dignity and even, perhaps, nobility. He refused to be humiliated from the day he was captured, examined for American TV by American veterinarians or so it seemed for the delectation of corpse-chasers like Larry King, whose itchy-fingered deathwatch in Baghdad did more to disgrace the profession of journalism than anything since the Judith Miller scandals.

In all of this it is the behaviour of the American press that has been most disgraceful. They have acted as the Judas Goats leading a substantial proportion of Americans into nothing less than disaster and they, as much as Mr Bush, Mr Rumsfeld and Mr Cheney, are responsible for the 50 thousand Americans maimed and 3,000 killed in Iraq and the looting and desecration of 8,000 years of human history and the resurgence of the theory that might makes right, as Adolph Hitler used to say.

DISASTER IN HAITI

The visit of the Haitian president, Mr Rene Preval to Jamaica is a poignant reminder of the failure of Haiti's closest neighbour, Jamaica, to do anything over more than a decade, to come to the assistance of eight million of our brothers and sisters who inherited the hatred and revanchism and racism directed against the slaves who abolished slavery.

It was in Haiti that plantation slavery in the western world was destroyed. It was Haiti which caused the doubling of the size of the United States by forcing the nearly bankrupt France of Napoleon Bonaparte to sell off most of what has since become the south-eastern and Gulf States of the United States.

And it was France and the United States, chiefly, who beggared Haiti into insolvency by, trade embargoes and extortionate blackmail. The United States refused to relax its embargo on Haiti until France had re-established relations with its once enslaved colony. France, as a condition of recognising Haiti's blood-won independence, demanded and got the modern equivalent of \$25 billion in blood money extracted from the ex-slaves.

When the Haitians couldn't pay, United States' banks lent them the money, and when they couldn't repay that, the United States invaded Haiti and imposed a regime as bad as slavery and which, in addition, devastated Haitian forests and agriculture, leaving the proud Haitians reduced to the destitution and misery which they suffer today.

At this moment, the Haitian people have managed to elect a president who is tolerated by the United States as long as his predecessor, Jean Bertrand Aristide remains in South Africa.

The United States is acting in protection of the elite interest, the 'high-yallers' and other mainly mulatto ruling class and its Middle Eastern proselytes who have been given the franchise to run Haiti on behalf of the United States.

This means, for instance, that president Preval and the Haitian people are not masters in their own house, and mercenaries from Brazil, Jordan and other non-Caribbean states are the armed forces of Haiti.

They are the real rulers, free to go into the poorest areas and murder and arrest whoever they think supports Aristide and wants him back. These mercenaries are also free to rape and murder Haitian women and children under the benign auspices of the United Nations, as decreed by three eminent 'Uncle Toms' - Kofi Annan, Colin Powell and Condoleezza Rice.

It is time for Jamaica and Caricom to awake to its sibling responsibilities and duties. If it weren't for Haiti and the Jamaican Maroons, the slave trade and slavery might never have been abolished on the West Indian plantations. It would have continued at least until slavery was abolished in the United States, Brazil and Cuba, decades after it was abolished here and more than half a century after the people of Haiti asserted their wish to be free and made that freedom real or so they thought.

Our brotherly responsibilities go further, because the flag of Haitian revolution was raised by none other than the Jamaican Maroon Bouckman, a survivor of the Taki rebellion.

THE LAND OF LOOK BEHIND

On Thursday I was the keynote speaker at an assemblage of Maroons convened by the Council of Overseas Maroons com. The conference was attended by Maroons from here and abroad and by distinguished scholars, foremost among them Dr June Besson, a 'brown? Jamaican, Reader in Anthropology at Goldsmith's College in London.

Dr Besson has been studying Accompong Maroon culture for nearly two decades and she has written and is writing about what she has found. She is a fierce defender of Maroon autonomy and the principle that they have a culture which should be respected and made known to the world.

Also heard at the conference was the solemn pledge by the Colonel, Mr Peddie and from his deputy, Harris Cawley, who may not see eye to eye on everything but are united in the resolve that no mining will be allowed in the Cockpit Country.

This resolve was also brought to the meeting by representatives of the 75, 000 people whose livelihoods depend on or are situated in and around the Cockpit Country.

On their behalf, I would like to suggest that those who wish to rape the Cockpit Country for bauxite, limestone and bituminous coal, should come out and openly state their intentions, if they believe that they are honorable and would survive public exposure.

The Cockpit Country is the last refuge for the Jamaican soul, the last clean, un-messed up part of Jamaica, and millions of us, some who have never been there, regard the Land of Look Behind as a sacred and intrinsic part of our patrimony and heritage.

Since the government wants to know what our objections are to the despoliation of this biological, anthropological, geological and environmental treasure we would suggest that in fairness to the Jamaican people, the prospective predators must be asked to present all the information they have available so that the real owners of the Cockpit Country, the people of Jamaica, can decide in open discourse, what we want done.

And, with due respect to the unions and their 5,000 bauxite workers, I would suggest that emotion, feeling, sensibility and respect, are the key elements of any decision to be made about a sacred place. And I won't even remind them of their part in ensuring that Jamaica exacted a smaller take from the aluminum companies, even as those companies were and are planning to give us, free of everything but cancer, asthma and polluted water, the gift of three million tons of red mud every year for the next twenty.

What is contemplated is an indecent assault on our heritage and our Jamaican soul, and it must be resisted at all costs.

Come on chaps! You too have the right to be heard in dis yah democracy.

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jankunnu@yahoo.com

Florida's Pierre-Louis, from Haiti, has wild journey to BCS game

By Mike Phillips and Louis Anastasis

McClatchy Newspapers

San Jose Mercury News

January 6, 2007

SCOTTSDALE, Ariz. - Most Gators fans remember the play that turned Florida's season around and helped lead the Gators into the Bowl Championship Series title game against Ohio State.

Florida trailed 21-17 against Arkansas, which had stormed back to take the lead and all the momentum. That's when Reggie Fish fumbled a punt into the end zone. And that's where most of Gator Nation discovered Wondy Pierre-Louis, scrambling at the bottom of the frantic pile and recovering the biggest fumble of the year to give UF a 24-21 lead.

That play might be the snapshot that embodies Florida's season and its wild and improbable ride to the title game.

But Pierre-Louis' journey from dirt-covered poverty-ridden streets in Haiti to the end zone is one for the ages - a road littered with doubt and gunfire, abandonment and resurrection.

He was left alone in a shack in Naples, Fla., left stranded in Haiti without a visa and left doubting if he would play college football. But somehow, Pierre-Louis made it to Gainesville, where he forged his way onto the Gators, and where his future could be as bright as any.

"Deion Sanders has nothing on Wondy. I'm telling you that right now," said Buddy Quarles, who was the defensive backs coach at Naples Lely High, where Pierre-Louis was a star athlete. "He could be in the pros in three years. In fact, he could be one of the best defensive backs to ever play football. It's his fault if he isn't."

It was Quarles who found Pierre-Louis living alone in a tiny shanty in Naples. Quarles couldn't believe it when he saw the way his best player was living.

Quarles said the door hung off its hinges. Pierre-Louis' clothes were in a plastic bag. His refrigerator had spoiled food. His kitchen was devoid of any pots, pans or cups. He had one plate and one fork. His shower lacked a curtain. There was no TV, table, chairs or couch. Pierre-Louis slept on a mattress with no sheets and just a blanket, by the bugs that roamed his floor, which was strewn with trophies.

"I thought it was (fine) because I was the only one living in there," said Pierre-Louis, who compared the space of the shack to someone's living room. "I didn't prefer anything better. It was all good."

Quarles disagreed.

`I asked him, `What do you have to eat in there?' " Quarles said. `He said, `I've got nothing to eat.' It was pretty sad. It was gross. It should have been torn down. The place was falling to pieces. It was very primal. I said, `You can't live here - no way. You've got to go.' "

Quarles succeeded in convincing his wife to take in Pierre-Louis, who found himself alone because his older brother left Naples for New York.

They came from Haiti two years earlier, running from the gunfire and violence that ripped the island. His mother feared for his safety, and Dessece Pierre-Louis sent her two sons to Naples.

"When I was growing up in Haiti, you would go outside and you never know what could happen to you," Pierre-Louis said. "I would just sleep and eat. If you walk down the street, people just start running and shooting. You don't know who's shooting, so it's bad. If you go outside, you better know where you're going."

Things got worse at home, and during a 2004 uprising, rebels burned down the store their mother owned in Port-au-Prince, Pierre-Louis said.

"They would go walking around burning everything they would find," Pierre-Louis said. "They didn't only burn our store, but other places, too. They were just doing bad things just because they didn't want the president."

Pierre-Louis found sanctuary with the Quarles family, and found freedom on the football field, where he was a wide receiver, kick returner, defensive back, kicker and punter.

As a junior, Pierre-Louis returned both of his interceptions for touchdowns. He recovered two fumbles, had 36 tackles, kicked field goals and punts, and also played receiver. He won the Class 4A state titles in the long jump and triple jump.

"I would do everything," Pierre-Louis said. "I would do kickoffs, then I would punt the ball like 55 yards."

Florida coach Urban Meyer took notice, and swayed Pierre-Louis away from West Virginia. Then Haiti intervened. The country demanded Pierre-Louis return after his graduation. Haiti wouldn't grant him a visa.

"I didn't want to let my son go," Quarles said. "I told him, 'Don't give up. You've gotten this far. What you've done to get here - that's not a normal person.' Then I told him, 'If something happens and you get stuck there, I'm coming after you. I promise.'"

Pierre-Louis left in June with about a 10 percent chance of obtaining the visa to return. The Gators sent secondary coach Chuck Heater to rescue their prize recruit. Heater pleaded with the U.S. Embassy and the Haitian government. He left the country cautiously optimistic. Then Haiti granted Pierre-Louis the visa, and he joined the team for two-a-days.

Now he's one of the reasons the Gators are in the title game - stronger, wiser and tougher for his journey.

"It's kind of normal to see people get shot," Pierre-Louis said of his days in Haiti. "But I'm not going to be afraid of anything."

Jamaica and Haiti to deepen diplomatic relations

Saturday, January 6, 2007

Caribbean Net News

KINGSTON, Jamaica (JIS): Jamaican Prime Minister, Portia Simpson Miller, has described her recent talks with Haitian president Rene Preval as a further step in deepening the diplomatic relations between Jamaica and Haiti.

She said both leaders applauded the establishment of the Caribbean Single Market (CSM) and that the Haitian president has indicated that his country was now proceeding with technical preparations that would allow it to ratify the Revised Treaty of Chaguaramas and eventually participate in the Single Market.

Simpson Miller was speaking at a press conference held on Wednesday, following bilateral talks with the Haitian president who arrived in Jamaica for a four-day working visit.

Both leaders and their respective delegations explored a number of avenues for greater cooperation in areas such as tourism, agriculture, education and training, as well as institutional strengthening and improvement in social infrastructure. Simpson Miller said the first meeting of the Joint Jamaica/Haiti Commission would be convened in Jamaica during the second quarter of the calendar year to pursue and follow-up on the various proposals.

In the meantime, Haitian president Rene Preval expressed gratitude for the assistance provided to his country in a number of areas including Haiti's participation as a member of the Caribbean Community. He said Jamaica has always been a friend of Haiti and he welcomed the assurance from Simpson Miller that this would be strengthened.

On the matter of the CSM, Preval said measures were being taken to have Haiti join the single market and that these included the establishment of a CARICOM office in that country. He however pointed out that Haiti was the last country to gain full membership status in CARICOM and that given recent developments, there would be a delay in the completion of the process that would enable his country to participate in the CSM.

Turning to the issue of democracy and stability in Haiti, Preval said a broad unity government had been implemented in that country following the recent elections and that all Parliamentary representatives recognized that they were automatically a part of the process of governance. He said this had been accepted by the people of Haiti and the county was doing everything to move forward.

Other activities on the first day of the President's visit included a courtesy call on Governor General Professor Kenneth Hall. He was also scheduled to plant a tree at Emancipation Park, as well as meet with the Leader of the Opposition.

Suspect arrested in slaying of two Jordanian peacekeepers in Haiti
San Diego Union Tribune
ASSOCIATED PRESS
January 5, 2007

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti – U.N. troops and local police raided a slum in Haiti's capital Friday and arrested an alleged gang member wanted in the slaying of two Jordanian peacekeepers, the U.N. mission said.

No shots were fired during the pre-dawn operation in Port-au-Prince's Cite Soleil slum, a base for well-armed gangs blamed for a spate of kidnappings and shooting deaths, the mission said in a statement.

An alleged gang member identified only as Zachari was captured and turned over to Haitian police for the Nov. 10 killing of the Jordanians, who were driving back to base when their jeep came under heavy gunfire.

A suspected kidnapper also was arrested in the raid.

The U.N. mission said Zachari directed kidnappings for the feared Beloney gang, which authorities allege is behind a wave of recent abductions for ransom.

In December, U.N. troops and Haitian police raided Cite Soleil and killed five people in the peacekeeping mission's bloodiest crackdown in months.

U.N. troops have announced plans to increase patrols next week to prevent kidnappers from targeting children returning to school after the Christmas holiday.

The 8,800-strong U.N. force arrived in July 2004 to restore order in the Caribbean nation after a chaotic uprising toppled former President Jean-Bertrand Aristide, Haiti's first democratically elected leader.

Fourteen peacekeepers have died since the mission began, including six Jordanians.

Prisoners take turns sleeping in Haiti's overflowing jails

Saturday, January 6, 2007

Caribbean Net News

by Joseph Guyler Delva

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti (Reuters): Haiti's prisons have grown so crowded prisoners must take turns sleeping as police step up arrests of alleged gangsters blamed for a wave of violence and kidnappings, government and human rights officials said on Friday.

"We're facing a critical situation with our prisons which have no more room to hold prisoners," Haiti's Secretary of State for Public Safety Eucher Luc Joseph told Reuters.

The national penitentiary in the capital, Port-au-Prince, was built to hold 800 prisoners and now houses over 2,000.

"We're experiencing the same situation in all the other prisons and police custodies around the country," Joseph said.

Haitian police have intensified operations against criminal gangs and the number of arrests has increased considerably in the past few months.

The United States has also increased the number of Haitian criminals deported to their homeland to about 100 a month, from 25. Haitian officials said many of those deportees have long criminal records and will be held even though they have not been charged with crimes in Haiti and have already served their sentences in the United States.

"We have to detain those deportees because they pose a threat to the country's national security," said Joseph.

In many prisons, detainees sleep in turn on the floor, live in inhumane conditions and are deprived of adequate medical care, said Renan Hedouville, head of the Haitian Lawyers Committee for Human Rights.

"Some prisoners have to stand up, while others sleep for one or two hours before giving up their place to other inmates," Hedouville told Reuters.

"The living conditions in those prisons are in total violation of the principles of human rights."

Government officials acknowledged that the situation in the country's detention centers is critical, but argue that they have an obligation to hold prisoners while they work to change conditions.

Jamaica to provide training to Haiti
Radio Jamaica
January 6, 2007

Jamaica is to provide training in a number of areas to its impoverished regional neighbour. The move follows a visit to Jamaica this week by a Haitian delegation led by President Rene Preval.

According to Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade Minister Anthony Hylton, Jamaica recognises Haiti's need to build capacity and can help in areas like tourism and vocational training.

Mr. Hylton notes that such training is critical for Haiti to be able to take advantage of international aid.

RP Peacekeeper hurt in Haiti demonstration
The Manila Mail
January 6, 2006

MANILA – The Department of Foreign Affairs on Monday identified the injured Filipino peacekeeper who was attacked on November 18 by a group of student demonstrators opposed to the continued presence of United Nations peacekeepers in Haiti.

In a report to Foreign Affairs Secretary Alberto Romulo, Baja noted that the attack on Ergo was actually one of two incidents involving Filipino peacekeepers on that same day. It also marked the second attack in three weeks in which a Filipino police officer was injured.

The DFA said Ergo is a member of the 45-man Philippine National Police contingent serving with the UN Stabilization Mission in Haiti (Minustah).

Baja reported that besides attacking Ergo, who was in a UN police vehicle with a Nigerian police officer, Andrea Renault, Haitian demonstrators later that day also harassed members of the Philippine military contingent guarding a UN housing facility in the Haitian capital, Port-au-Prince.

Ergo was treated for a glass splinter in the left eye after the police car he was riding in was attacked by students demonstrating at the Champs de Mars area near the Presidential Palace.

The report from Senior Supt. Lester Camba, the PNP contingent commander in Haiti, said Ergo and Renault were escorting another UN car carrying election materials when they encountered demonstrators from the University of Haiti protesting against UN presence in the country.

Baja said the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) reported that a group of demonstrators also attacked Filipino peacekeepers providing security at the Le Plaza Hotel also in Port-au-Prince.

Army Lt. Col. Johnny Bergado, commander of the 4th Philippine Peacekeeping Contingent in Haiti, confirmed the DPKO report.

The attacks came almost three weeks after another PNP officer was slightly hurt in a similar incident.

**Office of the Prime Minister
Jamaica Pledges Continued Support Towards Haiti's Development
Jamaica Information Service
KINGSTON(JIS)
Friday, January 05, 2007**

Prime Minister, the Most Hon. Portia Simpson Miller and Haitian President, René Prével sign a joint communiqué after extensive bilateral talks at Jamaica House.

Prime Minister, Portia Simpson Miller, yesterday (Jan. 3) reaffirmed Jamaica and CARICOM's commitment to assist Haiti to achieve its development goals.

"As Jamaica participates in the regional assistance programme for Haiti, we seek to make our contribution to the reconstruction process currently underway for the economic and social development of our sister nation," she stated.

She further implored the wider international community to "stay the course with Haiti and provide the financial and technical support as this is crucial if the government is to succeed in its development plans".

The Prime Minister was addressing a press conference at Jamaica House following bilateral talks with President of the Republic of Haiti, René Prével, who arrived in the island yesterday for a four-day working visit.

She noted that President Preval's visit to the island was to be viewed as a critical step in strengthening bilateral relations between Jamaica and Haiti.

Outlining the outcome of the deliberations between herself and President Prével, Mrs. Simpson Miller said that high on the agenda was Haiti's technical preparation to accede to the revised treaty of Chaguaramas, a move that would allow the country to participate in the Caribbean Single Market.

"It is my hope that this process can be completed as soon as possible," she said, while commending the Haitian President for adopting an inclusive approach to governance with a view to ensuring that democracy took root in the country.

She noted further that the leaders discussed a number of initiatives covering tourism, agriculture, engagement with the Haitian Diaspora, education and training, institutional strengthening and improving the social infrastructure.

"We both recognized that cooperation in agriculture and reforestation would be beneficial to the Haitian economy and social infrastructure. The planting of trees and the sharing of best practices would not only provide greater agricultural yields, but would also serve to stem the risks of landslides and flooding," she stated.

For his part, President Prével thanked Prime Minister Simpson Miller for sustaining Jamaica's ties to Haiti, underlining that he believed the process was beneficial to his country. He also updated the Prime

Minister on the political and economic situation in Haiti, including the status of support from the international community.

A joint communiqué signed by both parties emphasized the importance of a sustainable democracy in Haiti, supported by the rule of law, a secure and stable environment and economic and social progress. The leaders also stated their resolve to continue their efforts within the regional framework to ensure that these objectives are met, while noting the importance of stability and security to both countries.

The President and the Prime Minister shared the view that the visit served to concretize many of the ideas put forward for enhanced cooperation between the two countries. Accordingly, the leaders anticipate a period of strengthened exchange, not only in terms of economic and social benefits, but for the people-to-people contact, which will contribute further to deepening the integration process.

Meanwhile, they stressed that security forces in both countries were taking strident moves to curtail the illegal gun and narcotics trade between Haiti and Jamaica. "We have a plan of action but we will not disclose it because I believe that those persons involved in such activities should be caught by surprise and be made to pay for their actions," said Prime Minister Simpson Miller.

The leaders are expected to hold further talks at the convening of the first Jamaica/Haiti Joint Commission in Jamaica, during the second quarter of 2007.

Haiti names Wyclef Jean as roving ambassador
Friday, January 5, 2007
CBC.ca

U.S. rapper Wyclef Jean, who created a 2004 album in Haitian Creole, has been named a roving ambassador for Haiti.

President René Préval has given Jean the new role in an attempt to bring investors and tourists back to a country ravaged by internal violence and civil disturbance.

He made the announcement Wednesday as he and Jean made a three-day trip to Jamaica together.

Jean was born in Haiti but moved with his family to Brooklyn, N.Y., when he was nine years old.

He runs a foundation, Yele Haiti, to provide humanitarian aid and assistance in the poorest country in the Americas.

His foundation sponsored a cultural festival in Haiti in December that included a performance by Jean, his first in the country for eight years.

Haiti's government says Jean helped lobby the U.S. Congress for a trade bill expected to help bring textile manufacturing jobs in Haiti.

As roving ambassador, his role will be to boost tourism and promote development in Haiti at international events.

"We wish we could have several Wyclefs because the country could have gained so much," Foreign Affairs Minister Rénaud Clérismé told Reuters.

Préval won office last year after many postponed elections following the ousting of former president Jean-Paul Aristide.

UN forces trying to keep peace in the country have been met with violence and protest.

Jean, 34, gained fame as a member of the hip hop trio The Fugees, winning Grammys in 1996 for their album *The Score* and single *Killing Me Softly*.

He has been nominated for a best pop collaboration Grammy this year for his performance with Shakira on the hit *Hips Don't Lie*.

His 2004 album, *Sak Pasé Presents: Welcome to Haiti (Creole 101)* is entirely in the Haitian dialect.

Suspect arrested in slaying of two Jordanian peacekeepers in Haiti
Canadian Press, AP
Sunday, January 07, 2007

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti (AP) - UN troops and local police raided a slum in Haiti's capital Friday and arrested an alleged gang member wanted in the slaying of two Jordanian peacekeepers, the UN mission said.

No shots were fired during the pre-dawn operation in Port-au-Prince's Cite Soleil slum, a base for well-armed gangs blamed for a spate of kidnappings and shooting deaths, the mission said in a statement.

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Fourteen peacekeepers have died since the mission began, including six Jordanians.

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Pinoy cops in Haiti praised
Philippine News
January 11, 2006

The Philippine mission to the United Nations has praised two Filipino police officers in Haiti for capturing a member of a kidnap-for-ransom gang who had earlier figured in a shootout with Haiti police.

Ambassador Lauro Baja, Permanent Philippine Representative to the United Nations, cited Insp. Godofredo Ergo and Daniel Rosete for their role in the suspect's capture on Jan. 2.

"I wish to commend Mr. Ergo and Mr. Rosete for a job well done," Baja said.

"Their actions on Jan. 2 demonstrate the kind of professionalism and commitment we expect to see in every Filipino police officer we send out to take part in a United Nations peacekeeping mission," he said.

Senior Supt. Lester Camba, commander of the Filipino contingent in Haiti, said Ergo personally captured Frantz Cajuste, 22, after leading Haitian police in room-to-room clearing operations at the Digicel Compound along Rue Jean Paul II near College Canadu-Haitene, Port-au-Prince.

Rosete led another team of Haitian policemen in sealing off the area to prevent the suspect's escape.

The suspect was bleeding from a bullet wound in the chest from the earlier shootout when he was captured in one of the rooms, Camba said.

Ergo and Rosete serve as technical advisers to the Haitian National Police, and are among the 41 policemen deployed by the Philippines to help the UN rebuild the local police force.

Ergo was the same man who was injured last November when anti-UN demonstrators attacked him and another UN police officer in Port-au-Prince.

It was not immediately known if Cajuste was a member of the same gang that kidnapped two Filipinos in Port-au-Prince last year.

The Filipinos were abducted near Cite Soleil, but were released after the kidnappers were paid an undetermined amount of money.

Their abduction came a year after another Filipino was kidnapped and later also freed after ransom was paid. Michael Caber

UN Peacekeepers to Boost Patrols in Haiti
By VOA News
05 January 2007

United Nations peacekeepers in Haiti say they will increase patrols to prevent possible kidnappings when schools reopen next week.

In a statement, U.N. officials said troops and Haitian police will conduct vehicle searches and other security measures.

A U.N. spokesman told the Associated Press that officials fear that kidnappers may seek new victims as students return to class.

The U.N. Children's Fund has condemned recent abductions of children in and around the Haitian capital, Port-au-Prince.

Since 2004, the U.N. force in Haiti has been working to restore security and battle impunity in the impoverished nation.

Some information for this report was provided by AP

Suspected killer of two blue helmets in Haiti arrested by UN mission, national police
UN News Centre
January 5, 2007

The United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) and the country's national police today announced the arrest of a gang member wanted in connection with the killing last November of two blue helmets serving with the peacekeeping operation.

The arrest of 'Zachari' took place following a joint operation which began at dawn in the Drouillard quarter of Cité Soleil, MINUSTAH said in a press release on Thursday. No shots were fired.

The suspect is wanted in connection with the assassination of two Jordanian peacekeepers from MINUSTAH in November 2006. He is "is thought to be the chief of the cell responsible for kidnappings" within the Belony gang.

Another presumed kidnapper was also arrested, according to MINUSTAH, and both suspects are being detailed by the Haitian National Police.

"MINUSTAH and the Government of Haiti continue to work together to stop armed gangs and their criminal activities in the capital," the mission said.

On 10 November 2006, unidentified gunmen opened fire on a MINUSTAH patrol near the Port-au-Prince airport, fatally injuring Jordanian peacekeepers Ahmad Mohammed Hassan Ba'irat and Rami Wasif Taha Al Mohammed.

Also last year, on 17 January, two other Jordanian blue helmets serving with MINUSTAH, Tareq Al Jaafreh and Rabi Merei, were shot and killed while manning a checkpoint in Cité Soleil.

Armed gangs have been a constant concern of MINUSTAH since it was set up by the Security Council to help to re-establish peace in the impoverished Caribbean country after an insurgency forced elected President Jean-Bertrand Aristide to go into exile in February 2004.

Wyclef Jean becomes Haiti ambassador
Duncan Campbell
Friday January 5, 2007
The Guardian

The Haitian musician Wyclef Jean has been appointed as a roving ambassador for the country in an attempt to improve its image abroad. The appointment comes amid reports of violence and protests against the role of UN forces in Haiti.

President René Préval, who won office last year after many postponed elections, has given Jean the new role in an attempt to bring investors and tourists back to a country ravaged by internal violence and civil disturbance.

"We wish we could have several Wyclefs as roving ambassadors because the country could have gained so much," foreign affairs minister Régnal Clément told Reuters. He added that Jean was seen as an inspiration for young Haitians.

Jean was born in Croix-des-Bouquets in Haiti but moved with his family to Brooklyn, New York, at the age of nine. He and friends formed a group, the Fugees, whose second album, *The Score*, sold more than 17m copies and turned Jean into a major international star. He has always maintained links with Haiti, starting an aid foundation, *Yele Haiti*, and often wearing the country's flag. He has campaigned successfully for the US Congress to pass a trade bill aimed at helping the textile industry in Haiti, the poorest country in the hemisphere. He has even been talked of as a potential president.

Last month supporters of former president Jean-Bertrand Aristide, who remains in exile in South Africa, marched through Port-au-Prince, the Haitian capital, in his support and in protest against the UN peacekeeping forces who have been accused of firing indiscriminately in disturbances.

UN'S HAITI MISSION TO BOLSTER SECURITY WHEN SCHOOL CLASSES RESUME

**Press Release –
UN News Center
Jan 4 2007**

The United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) today announced plans with the country's national police to bolster security in the capital, Port-au-Prince, when students return to classes next week.

The effort starting on 8 January will involve joint UN-Haitian National Police patrols, vehicle searches and identity verification, MINUSTAH said in a news release.

Reaffirming its pledge to support the Haitian authorities as they battle insecurity and impunity across the impoverished country, the Mission also announced the details of telephone hotlines that citizens can use to report crimes.

Ex-Haitian MP Detained at Canada-U.S. Border
The Embassy, Canada's Foreign Policy News Weekly
January 10th, 2007
By Lee Berthiaume

A former Haitian MP under Aristide is awaiting an admissibility hearing following two weeks in jail after attempting to enter Canada to claim refugee status.

A member of former Haitian president Jean-Bertrand Aristide's government is holed up in Windsor awaiting word on whether he will be allowed to stay in Canada after border guards detained him for two weeks over the Christmas holidays.

According to former parliamentarian Jean Candio's lawyer, the Haitian man attempted to cross the Ambassador Bridge into Windsor on Dec. 13 and was stopped by border officials.

Mr. Candio was detained, apparently because he was considered a potential threat to the country, and was held in Windsor for the next two weeks, even though detention hearings are supposed to be held within 48 hours.

The Haitian's Toronto-based lawyer, Paul Copeland, said the delay, which has created a furor in some Haitian-Canadian circles, was caused by problems getting a French hearing for Mr. Candio, who speaks French and Creole.

Mr. Candio was released on Dec. 28 on bond, Mr. Copeland said, and is now waiting for Citizenship and Immigration Canada to set a date for an admissibility hearing that will determine if he can stay in the country.

The results of the admissibility hearing will also determine whether Mr. Candio can apply for refugee status, his lawyer said.

"We're hoping to go ahead with the refugee claim," Mr. Copeland told Embassy last week. "They have not held the admissibility review yet. Once he is notified of where to show up, we will go."

NDP MP Joe Comartin, whose riding covers Windsor and who has been involved in the case, said he has some concerns that it took two weeks for Mr. Candio to get a French-language hearing.

Mr. Comartin said he is considering bringing the issue to Parliament to see whether the delay was unreasonable or not.

"I may go back and talk to people about this to see if we had some lapses in the Windsor/St. Clair area," Mr. Comartin said, "recognizing that this is an unusual case, so maybe it's understandable."

While both Mr. Comartin and Mr. Copeland were reluctant to discuss Mr. Candio's case until after the admissibility hearing, according to the Canada Haiti Action Network, a pro-Aristide group based in Montreal, Mr. Candio was responsible for education and community programs in a region of Haiti called Aquin prior to a coup d'état within the country in 1991.

Candio Forced Into Exile

He was forced into exile until 1994, the group said on its website, which makes no mention of his activities between then and May 2000 when Mr. Candio was elected to the Haitian parliament representing the same area.

The group said Mr. Candio was an outspoken critic of foreign intervention within Haiti and was persecuted following an uprising within the country that saw the United Nations send a mission to the country and Mr. Aristide's resignation.

Mr. Candio fled the country in 2004 after his house was burned to the ground and several family members were killed, going to the Dominican Republic before heading to the United States in March 2004, the group said.

The Canada Haitian Action Network said Mr. Candio was detained in the U.S. by government officials and released in April 2006 after agreeing to leave the country, though it's unclear why he chose to cross the border into Canada last month.

While few details are available about Mr. Candio's actions within Haiti, separate Amnesty International and UN reports name the parliamentarian as a participant in a confrontation at a Haitian church in 2000.

According to the reports, Mr. Candio and a group of armed men arrived at a church on the afternoon of Nov. 25, 2000 where a group of people had gathered to discuss tourism issues and plans for a celebration the following day, upon which presidential and senate elections were to be held.

Mr. Candio and the armed men allegedly ordered those gathered at the church to close the building, pointing weapons at them and breaking items in the immediate area, the reports say.

While no one was hurt, the celebration was eventually cancelled. The UN report describes the incident as "an emotional one because it relates to fundamental freedoms: the freedom of association, the freedom of opinion and the freedom of expression."

Gloria Nafziger, Amnesty International's refugee co-ordinator, said while Mr. Candio was singled out in the report as having allegedly violated several human rights, she felt he should be allowed to apply for refugee status within the country.

"He should be allowed to proceed with a claim," she said. "Let the Immigration and Refugee Board deal with that."

Danny Yen, spokesman for the Canadian Border Services Agency in Windsor/St. Clair, would not comment on individual cases, but said border officials would not have had access to the NGO or UN reports that singled out Mr. Candio.

Instead, other criteria, such as how an individual responds to questions, government data, and whether an individual has the appropriate documentation to enter the country, are used to determine whether they are allowed to enter the country.

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**UN report on Haiti recommends 12-month extension of mission
Current mandate ends on February 15, 2007
01/4/2007
Caribbean Press Releases**

New York -- 4 Jan. 2007 -- Citing “significant challenges” for Haiti’s Government, the United Nations Secretary-General has recommended extending the world body’s mission in the impoverished country for a further 12 months until February 2008.

The report by former Secretary-General Kofi Annan, who was succeeded as the world’s top diplomat on 1 January by Ban Ki-moon, covers the work of the UN Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) for five months until December 2006, including its logistical and security assistance for last month’s elections.

“The Government will continue to face significant challenges in the coming months... Accordingly, I recommend that the Mission be extended for a further 12-month period...and with its present authorized troop and police ceilings,” Mr. Annan wrote, referring to MINUSTAH’s current mandate that ends on 15 February 2007.

Citing the potential for destabilizing forces “to use violence to attain their objectives,” he argued that, “The continued engagement of the Mission’s military and police will remain crucial in responding to significant threats at a time when Haiti’s own security capacity is still at an early stage of development.”

MINUSTAH currently employs more than 6,600 military personnel and over 1,700 police officers, as well as hundreds of civilian staff assisting the people of Haiti, which is the poorest nation in the Western Hemisphere.

The challenges ahead for the Government cover the areas of “security, institution-building and socio-economic development,” Mr. Annan noted, adding that while primary responsibility for ensuring progress remains with Haiti’s leadership and people, international aid remains essential.

“Sustained bilateral assistance will be indispensable to further reinforce and strengthen democratic structures of governance and rule of law, including through meeting key infrastructural requirements. This will also be crucial to bringing tangible improvements to the daily lives of Haitians.”

“Tangible improvements in the socio-economic conditions of the general population, including through job creation, is essential to forestall an increase in popular discontent that could unravel all that has been accomplished thus far.”

In December, the UN launched an appeal in Geneva for \$98 million for Haiti to cover basic services, political governance and economic recovery, as well as provide assistance to help authorities better prepare for natural disasters, which frequently hit the country.