

HAITI NEWS ROUNDUP: JULY 17 – 31, 2007

Ban-Ki moon to see UN rehabilitation efforts in Haiti during upcoming visit **UN News Centre** **31 July 2007**

When Ban Ki-moon arrives in Haiti tomorrow for a 24-hour tour, he will witness efforts by the United Nations in the fields of security, the economy and the judiciary that have fostered progress since the last visit by a Secretary-General to the impoverished Caribbean country a year ago, the UN mission there said today.

Notorious flashpoints of violence in Port-au-Prince, the capital, such as Cité Soleil, Martissant, Grand Ravine, Ti Bois, where residents were once terrorized by armed gangs, now enjoy relative calm thanks to security operations carried out by the UN Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) together with the Haitian National Police (HNP).

“We have made significant progress, even if the situation is still fragile,” MINUSTAH’s head and the Secretary-General’s Special Representative Edmond Mulet said, noting that the cooperation between the UN and the PNH helped reduce the “confrontation and animosity” that existed between the gangs.

In an article on its website, MINUSTAH pointed to the professionalization of the HNP with its organizational, administrative and operational capacities reinforced. Some 30 trainers from the UN mission together with national trainers are involved in preparing cadets at the police academy.

Technical advisers are also on hand at police stations, departmental headquarters and in joint patrols, according to the mission.

On the judicial front, important work is under way to guarantee the independence of magistrates, judges and the whole legal system.

These measures combine to contribute to a greater sense of stability, considered essential to encouraging foreign investment, fostering job creation and re-establishing tourism in Haiti.

Mr. Mulet said that economic gains were also encouraging, citing the reduction in inflation and relations between the Government and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank, the Inter-American Development Bank, and bilateral lenders.

During his visit Mr. Ban will meet with the President René Préval, Prime Minister Jacques Edouard Alexis and Justice Minister René Magloire, as well as with the presidents of the two chambers of Parliament, to discuss the great challenges lying ahead.

He will also visit Cité Soleil to see first hand the evolution of a social and development project set up by international partners including the UN Children’s Fund (UNICEF), the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and the inter-governmental International Organization for Migration (IOM).

Haiti debates a homegrown army

By Carol J. Williams

Los Angeles Times

July 30, 2007

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti — "In this land, we are the only masters," the Haitian national anthem proudly boasts of this country that in 1804 overthrew slavery and colonization.

But for more than a dozen years, Haiti has been without an army, dependent on a politicized national police force and foreign troops of the United Nations who protect its leaders, respond to natural disasters and quell violence in some of the hemisphere's most wretched slums.

That galls Joseph Alexandre, a 49-year-old lawyer who saw his military career and family heritage of service abruptly end in 1995 when then-President Jean-Bertrand Aristide disbanded the army that had been complicit in his 1991 ouster.

"We should be doing this for ourselves," Alexandre, who holds the rank of major, said of patrols here by U.N. military units from Nepal, Croatia, Bolivia and more than a dozen other countries. "Each time I have to pass foreign soldiers in our streets, it's like a knife stabs me in the heart."

With its history of military rule and the involvement of politically corrupted army factions in numerous coups, Haiti has a tainted legacy of leadership in uniform. But as security has improved in recent months and Haitian government institutions recover from three decades of political turmoil, talk has turned to reconstituting the national army born of the slave rebellion.

A citizens commission impaneled two years ago to explore the pros and cons of rebuilding the army concluded in its recent report that this nation of 8 million, with more than 1,100 miles of coastline and a 223-mile border with the Dominican Republic, could and should have its own armed forces. A New York management consultancy, Fordworks Associates, also recommended in a review commissioned by the post-Aristide interim government that Haiti create a limited national armed force to handle border, coastal and international security affairs.

The proposals pleased former soldiers and nationalists but met with little enthusiasm in the fledgling government of President Rene Preval. During last year's presidential campaign, Preval suggested that the army be permanently abolished.

Aristide's 1995 action demobilized the 7,500 troops then in service but failed to address the constitutional requirement that Haiti stand up both police and defense forces. Preval's parliamentary faction has ordered further study of the army issue by a panel of experts yet to be named, putting off any formal decision for months, if not years.

The recommendations have nonetheless stirred public debate, at least among the country's economic, social and political leaders increasingly chafing under the ever-expanding foreign military presence.

Georges Michel, a historian and writer who served on the citizens commission, believes Haiti would benefit from a small armed force, commensurate with its resources, to patrol the coastline and

Dominican border, through which Colombian cocaine makes its way to Europe and the United States and contraband weapons flow to a worldwide array of hot spots.

A force of about 2,000 would be both affordable and sufficient, Michel said, describing the overstuffed U.N. mission as wasteful and lacking in the motivation that Haitians have to protect their homeland. He said he had been in contact with officials of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization who are prepared to help train a Haitian force once its structure is reformed to make it less susceptible to political manipulation.

"We are actually quite happy that Aristide erased the blackboard so completely so we can start with a blank page," Michel said.

Still, he expects the preparation of a new force to take at least five years, if an army should ever be approved.

With unemployment afflicting at least 70% of the population, there is broadening sentiment that an army would offer work to young Haitians and restore a professional path proudly trod by generations.

"Military service was always a career option for those who wanted to serve their country and a way to better oneself socially and economically," said Francois Rodnez, who has worked as a teacher since Aristide's action ended a 15-year military career.

"We had an army for almost two centuries before one man chose to disband it," said Maurice Lafortune, a businessman who served on the citizens panel. "It was an institution mistrusted by one man, not by all Haitians."

Opponents of restoring the armed forces, including Aristide's former interior minister, Jocelerme Privert, argue that Haiti can ill afford to bankroll its own defense.

The U.N. mission's annual price tag now tops \$500 million — the equivalent of Haiti's entire budget.

"We have to choose between buying tanks and helicopters or building schools and hospitals," said Privert, one of the few Aristide lieutenants still in Haiti trying to navigate the new political waters.

Preval has said he expects U.N. forces to remain in Haiti throughout his presidency, which runs to February 2011, to maintain peace and security while his government struggles to resuscitate an economy that is the poorest in the Americas.

A major component of the U.N. mission is the training and equipping of the Haitian National Police, which will need another six or seven years to reach its goal of 14,000 officers, said Fred Blaise, spokesman for the U.N. police, which make up about one-fifth of the foreign forces.

Blaise, a Boca Raton, Fla., police officer on leave to help the U.N. mission in his native Haiti, argues that putting together an army at this point would be a distraction and a drain on resources.

"I can envision, after the Haitian National Police reach their numbers, that the country could use some kind of national guard to respond to disasters," he said. "But it's premature to talk about an army."

Former soldiers such as Alexandre disagree.

"We are ready to put on our uniforms tomorrow," the lawyer said of a 2,500-strong former soldiers association. "Our only reservation is that after so many years, some of them may be too tight."

Haiti enjoys peace, fragile stability under President Préval

By Carol J. Williams

Los Angeles Times

July 29, 2007

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti -- Shoeless boys with angry eyes and empty stomachs no longer loiter outside the green iron gates of the National Palace.

The odd jobs of oppression have disappeared. In the unfamiliar atmosphere of peace, there are no more orders to bash heads or crush dissent that once earned the ragtag enforcers a plate of rice and beans or a tube of glue to sniff.

A year into his second tenure as president, René Préval has broken ranks with two centuries of despots and demagogues.

Préval has eschewed the politics of brutality and confrontation, quietly achieving what only a year ago seemed unimaginable: fragile unity among this country's fractious classes.

Allies and adversaries alike credit the reclusive president with creating a breathing space for addressing the poverty and environmental devastation that have made Haiti the most wretched place in the Western Hemisphere.

Préval has taken small steps to crack down on crime and corruption, and improve Haiti's infrastructure and food supply. But he largely holds fast to the strategy he used in the presidential race last year: Make no promises, raise no expectations.

Observers say Préval's low-key approach may be what Haiti has needed, but they worry what will happen if his shaky health takes a turn for the worse or if the country's 8 million people start to lose patience with his go-slow approach. The 64-year-old began treatment for prostate cancer six years ago.

Préval loathes the limelight, evading ceremony and exuding impatience with meetings, limiting them to what aides insist are essential to move mountains of corruption, injustice, squalor, and 70 percent unemployment.

"Some people think he's too laid-back," conceded Lionel Delatour, a business consultant and friend. Préval hasn't made a single diplomatic appointment since taking office, Delatour said, shying away from the kind of decisions that could alienate factions in his broad coalition.

"He isn't going to make waves," Delatour said. "He told his ministers that he didn't want to see massive firings" of civil servants, as occurred after his mentor, Jean-Bertrand Aristide, fled after being ousted in February 2004 and a caretaker government swept his supporters from office.

Aristide basked in ceremony, donning his presidential sash with relish. In contrast, Préval has yet to tour the countryside, make a public address, give a news conference, or grant an interview in his 14 months in office.

"He's a very low-key president, but it would be a mistake to think he's not a hands-on president," US Ambassador Janet Sanderson said. Still, she wishes he would get out more and promote the hard-won stability he has secured to give confidence to potential tourists and investors.

Facing Environmental Catastrophe, Haiti Seeks Alternative Fuels

Carmen Gentile

31 Jul 2007

World Politics Review Exclusive

PORT SALUT, Haiti -- Dardy Saint-Jean looks at the rock-strewn river coursing through his village and shakes his head in disgust.

"Look at this river -- it's filled with stones from the mountains," said Saint-Jean, lamenting the results of decades of erosion caused by deforestation.

Much of the destruction can be blamed on the way the majority of the populace subsists in this poor Caribbean nation, where public utilities are unreliable and often unavailable.

With few reliable sources of fuel, most Haitians rely on charcoal made from local trees to heat water for cooking and cleaning.

Charcoal use over the last several decades has left the country's once lush countryside decimated, leading to serious problems with soil erosion.

Daily rainstorms during the summer hurricane season often lead to flash flooding and the dumping of massive amounts of silt and stones into the country's streams and rivers, blocking water sources.

Erosion coupled with pollution has also muddied the once bountiful fishing waters off Haiti, forcing fisherman to cast their nets farther out to sea.

Hoping to reverse that trend, Haiti is looking to alternative energy sources such as biofuel in hopes of curtailing the rampant deforestation, Haitian Prime Minister Jacques-Edouard Alexis told World Politics Review.

By finding an alternative to charcoal, said Alexis, "we could finally begin thinking about ways to protect our environment."

"But we must work to diversify our sources of energy. . . . It will not happen on its own," he added.

It won't be easy for a country with so many other problems to give priority to saving its environment.

Haiti's new government, led by President René Préval, is already under pressure to reduce poverty and corruption, as promised by the president ahead of his election last year. Alexis, meanwhile, emphasized the importance of getting some half-a-million school-age Haitians back in the classroom and improving the level of education for all of the country's citizens.

Those priorities would seem to leave little time and money for promoting and funding alternative fuels. That's why the government is relying on privately funded research to introduce alternatives such as at

jatropha curcas, a hearty seed-bearing plant already grown in India and Africa for use in lamps and stoves.

Once planted, the jatropha curcas needs little moisture and can thrive for up to 50 years, even in poor soil conditions like those in Haiti. Livestock and other animals won't eat jatropha after it is three months old, and the plant begins bearing seeds needed to make fuel after nine months, yielding anywhere between 6 and 12 tons of fuel annually per hectare. In comparison, soybeans used to make biofuels yield less than one ton per hectare.

Despite the positive reviews of farmers and users of jatropha, however, private and public funding sources alike have expressed concern about investing in such projects in Haiti, where political upheaval is tragically common, stability requires the assistance of international peacekeepers and corruption is endemic.

"It's the chicken and the egg problem," noted Peter Hakim, president of the Washington-based Inter-American Dialogue. "If you never do anything in the country [Haiti] to address the problem of stability, then you won't have stability . . . and you'll never get it without taking a risk."

Others are less pessimistic about Haiti's chances of improving its lot, at least when it comes to finding an alternative to charcoal.

Last month, at a regional summit in Panama, U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice touted Bush administration plans to promote alternative energy development in the Western Hemisphere. Following in the path of a recent biofuel agreement with Brazil, Rice mentioned U.S.-backed pilot projects to promote alternative energy in Central America and the Caribbean, including Haiti.

"We seek to promote the democratization of energy in the Americas, increasing the number of energy suppliers, expanding the market and reducing supply disruption," said Rice at the Organization of American States summit.

For Haitians, that means a chance, perhaps a final one at that, to do something to save a country literally eroding beneath their feet.

Carmen Gentile is a Miami-based freelance journalist and a regular WPR contributor.

Breaking the cycle of mother-to-child HIV transmission in Haiti

By Maria Vittoria Ballota and Patrice Brizard

UNICEF

July 30, 2007

Elmanise Jacques, a CARE worker who runs the prevention of mother-to-child HIV transmission programme in Bombardopolis.

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti, 30 July 2007 – Della lives in an isolated village in the Northwest Department, an arid and mostly barren region that is among the poorest of Haiti's 10 departments. It is in this economically challenged area that the young mother is raising her four daughters while preparing for the birth of her fifth.

One day, Della felt very sick. "I was afraid for the life of my baby," she recalls. So she took a motorcycle taxi to a hospital in Bombardopolis, more than 15 km away.

"The road conditions are very bad, and it was especially difficult for Della because she is five months pregnant and lives so far away," explains Elmanise Jacques, who runs the prevention of mother-to-child HIV transmission programme in Bombardopolis for the humanitarian organization CARE.

Della's husband died of AIDS four years ago and she has since remarried. After the long journey to the hospital, Della discovered that she was living with HIV.

Reducing the risk

UNICEF is working with partners like CARE to prevent mother-to-child transmission of HIV and provide paediatric treatment. An estimated 12,000 pregnant women in Haiti are living with HIV.

"Poverty, political instability and lack of access to education exacerbate the spread of HIV/AIDS in remote communities," says UNICEF HIV/AIDS Officer Cecilia Sanchez Bodas. "Without preventive interventions, roughly one-third of infants born to HIV-positive mothers will acquire the virus during pregnancy, labour, delivery or breastfeeding."

Following the advice of her doctor, Della has enrolled in a UNICEF-supported programme that provides medical care and support to pregnant women living with HIV. Preliminary results from such programmes have shown that they can reduce parent-to-child transmission of the virus by as much as 50 per cent.

Within 72 hours of giving birth, Della's baby will be administered a dose of antiretroviral (ARV) medication in order to reduce the risk of mother-to-child transmission of the virus. The infant will receive paediatric care and will be tested for HIV during the next 18 months, while Della will receive counselling and advice on appropriate feeding methods. If it turns out that the infant is HIV-positive, Della's child may also be put on ARV treatment.

'Brave women like Della'

To address the stigma of those living with HIV, Della joined a community support group that offers psychosocial support.

“I learned at the group that being HIV-positive is not the end of the world and I can remain in good health with regular hospital visits. A doctor will follow the progress of my health and will give me medication,” she says.

Della’s life has changed for the better since she joined the support group. She plans to continue to participate in the group even after she gives birth, to share her experience with other women who face the same situation and to support them in this painful ordeal.

“Brave women like Della are important for the group because they help us strengthen and maintain our programme that helps pregnant women,” says Ms. Jacques.

Lynchings On The Rise In Haiti
UN Envoy Raises Concern Over Mob Attacks
IHT
July 27, 2007

(AP) The top U.N. official in Haiti denounced a sharp increase in lynchings and other mob attacks, including the killing of two innocent men as they traveled to a wedding.

At least six people were killed by mobs in a single week in different attacks this month, according to the U.N. mission's human rights section. At least 105 people have been reportedly lynched in Haiti since 2005.

"There have been a very large number of lynchings in the past months and weeks. We do hope this will not become a trend," Edmond Mulet, the special U.N. envoy to Haiti, told The Associated Press Friday in an interview.

He blamed the rise in part on a lack of confidence in Haiti's notoriously corrupt judicial system, which keeps hundreds of people imprisoned without trial while others who can afford a bribe walk free.

"You have cases of gang leaders being released after paying judges," Mulet said. "The population knows, so they're fed up ... and they take justice into their hands."

Lynchings have become more common especially in rural areas of the Western Hemisphere's poorest country, where police presence is thin and courts barely operate.

Mulet described an incident from earlier this month when two men traveling to a wedding near the coastal town of St. Marc were mistaken for kidnappers who had abducted several people the night before. A car knocked the men off their motorcycle and a crowd beat them to death with rocks and sticks.

Police arrested 10 people in the killing. All but one was later released.

Thiery Fagart, the head of the U.N. mission's human rights section, said his office interviewed witnesses to the attack and found that "perfectly innocent victims were targeted."

"It is extremely alarming," Fagart told reporters.

Mulet said the U.N. mission will launch a campaign to remind people that lynching is a crime, and is urging church leaders to denounce the practice.

About 9,000 U.N. peacekeepers are in Haiti, deployed after a 2004 revolt ousted former President Jean-Bertrand Aristide.

The U.N. mandate in Haiti expires in October, but the Security Council is certain to renew it.

New UN envoy for Haiti in juggle of top posts

Reuters

Fri 27 Jul 2007

UNITED NATIONS (Reuters) - U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon appointed a new top envoy for Haiti Friday in shuffling posts of two veteran officials in the U.N. peacekeeping department.

Hedi Annabi, a Tunisian, will go to Haiti to head the U.N. mission there. Annabi, 63, who joined the world body in 1981, is currently the U.N. assistant secretary-general in the peacekeeping department in charge of operations, including the new joint United Nations-African Union force for Darfur.

Ban had put Annabi on a list in February of U.N. officials who had been with the organization for many years and should retire but he did not name a replacement.

Jean-Marie Guehenno, the head of peacekeeping, fought to keep Annabi as long as feasible, U.N. officials said, speaking on condition of anonymity.

Annabi swaps jobs with Edmond Mulet of Guatemala, who is now head of the Haiti mission that includes 7,200 troops and 1,500 police to help keep the peace in the Caribbean nation.

Mullet, a lawyer and former journalist, was a lawmaker for 12 years in Guatemala and served as ambassador to the European Union and the United States.

At the same time, Ban gave a promotion to Dimitri Titov of Russia, the head of the Africa peacekeeping division, which handles 80 percent of the more than 100,000 military and civilian personnel fielded around the world in eight missions.

That division will be split into two units.

Titov was appointed assistant secretary-general for the rule of law and security sector reform in the peacekeeping department, making him the highest-ranking Russian at New York headquarters.

Moscow heads the U.N. center in Geneva but does not have a top post in the New York bureaucracy, as do other permanent U.N. Security Council members.

Although Titov, who has been in the peacekeeping department since 1991, does not have a legal or human rights background, he has played a key role in developing these programs in all U.N. missions, a U.N. statement said.

His position is a new one approved by the General Assembly last month as part of Ban's restructuring, which divided the peacekeeping department into two entities.

Titov has a degree in international relations and was in the Russian diplomatic service, where he participated in negotiations in Afghanistan, Cyprus, Cambodia and Central America.

**Real reason for Haiti raid
by John Yewell
Monterey County Herald
Haiti Action Committee
July 29, 2007**

There were new suggestions this week that a raid 10 days ago by Haiti's police and the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration may have been an attempt to silence one of the leaders of a 2004 coup that toppled Haitian President Jean-Bertrand Aristide - a coup many believe was orchestrated by the United States.

Guy Philippe, the target of the raid, avoided capture and is now in hiding. He has since been heard on Haitian radio claiming his attempted arrest was for political reasons.

Between his alleged drug affiliations and human rights abuses, Philippe has few friends in the government of current Haitian President Rene Preval or in the United States. But according to a report this week by Kevin Pina, writing for the Haiti Information Project, there may be another explanation for the DEA grab.

According to Pina, on May 27, after the arrest of Wilfort Ferdinand, another coup participant, Philippe went on Haitian radio and "began to name names of business and political leaders who backed the paramilitary insurgency against Aristide's government by providing arms, ammunition and logistical support."

"High on (Philippe's) list," Pina continued, "was Andy Apaid, the leader of the civil society organization called the Group 184."

Seven weeks after Philippe's radio broadcast, the DEA went after him.

In July 2004, Salon reported that Group 184, along with a group called the Democratic Convergence, was supported by the International Republican Institute, dominated by Bush loyalists and funded by the National Endowment for Democracy, the U.S. Agency for International Development and conservative groups.

Aristide's supporters have long suspected American support in the overthrow of his democratically elected government. Now here is Philippe, a man they had vilified, pointing a finger that leads to the U.S. government.

Salon quotes Thayer Scott, then communications director for the IRI, saying that the "IRI played an advisory role in Group of 184's formation." Hardliners in Group 184, Salon reported, "tapped Guy Philippe, a U.S.-trained former Haitian police chief with a dubious human rights record," to lead a coup.

The IRI's liaison to the Haitian opposition was Stanley Lucas, who, according to the New York Times, was accused by U.S. Ambassador Dean Curran of undermining diplomatic efforts in Haiti. The IRI denies this.

"Stanley Lucas was not IRI's 'point man in Haiti,'" said Lisa Gates, IRI press secretary, in an e-mail to The Herald. "In fact, IRI was not operating in Haiti during the time in question."

That's not what the Bush administration was saying. During a Senate hearing on March 10, 2004, 10 days after Aristide's overthrow, Sen. Christopher Dodd, D-Conn., asked Roger Noriega, then assistant secretary of state for the Western Hemisphere, about a USAID grant to the IRI that specifically limited Lucas' activities.

"The approval of the new grant was conditioned on the IRI (Haiti) director, Stanley Lucas, being barred from participating in this program for a period of time because the U.S. ambassador in Haiti had evidence that he was undermining U.S. efforts," according to Salon. "Is that not true as well?" Dodd asked Noriega.

"Yes, sir," Noriega said.

"Is Stanley Lucas still involved?" asked Dodd.

"As far as I know, he is still part of the program," Noriega replied.

The connection between Lucas and Philippe is less clear. Philippe says they are old friends, and the Times suggests there is circumstantial evidence the two worked together. The IRI says the USAID investigated their alleged connection in 2004 and found "no evidence."

But USAID, which has international skeletons in its own closet, shares political sympathies with the IRI. Claiming it exonerates the IRI is a little like Bush's 2000 election being certified by Katherine Harris, who was Florida's secretary of state at the same time as she served as the co-chairwoman of Bush's Florida campaign.

Without question, Philippe and Lucas shared contacts among Aristide's opponents, and Andy Apaid may have been the fulcrum. Within 24 hours of Apaid rejecting a political compromise with Aristide, according to Salon, Philippe launched his coup, which ended with the U.S. hustling Aristide out of the country against his will.

And if Pina is right, Aristide's opponents, including the IRI, might be plenty nervous with a talkative Philippe on the run.

=====

This commentary first appeared in the Monterey County Herald July 26, 2007

Corruption rankings hold some good news

Andres Oppenheimer

Tribune Media Services

July 31, 2007

Orlando Sentinel

If you ever wondered which are the most corrupt countries in the Western Hemisphere, a new study by the World Bank offers concrete answers: The regional champions are Haiti, Venezuela and Paraguay.

The ranking is buried in myriad statistics contained in a recently released World Bank study, *Governance Matters 2007: World Wide Governance Indicators 1996-2006*, which contains a statistical measure of 212 countries' effectiveness in controlling corruption.

Granted, the World Bank didn't publicly present the figures as a world ranking of corruption, perhaps fearing that member countries would raise hell if ranked at the bottom of the list. Rather, it listed all countries alphabetically, with the figures on how they measured in their anti-corruption controls on a scale of 1 to 100.

Even that has created an internal political upheaval at the Washington financial institution: Argentina, China and Russia officially complained to the World Bank's top authorities about the report, World Bank officials confirmed to me last week after *The Financial Times* and Reuters reported the story.

In fact, it doesn't take a genius to put the World Bank's alphabetical list into a computer program and rank all countries' figures on any of six categories, including "control of corruption." A charitable World Bank economist did that for me, and obtained the following results:

Haiti is one of the world's most corrupt countries, with a 2.4 percentile rating, meaning that 97.6 percent of countries around the world are less corrupt than Haiti. Venezuela is second in the region with 12.6 percentile points, and Paraguay third, with 13.6.

Other countries in the region listed in the lower half in the worldwide ranking of countries that are least effective in controlling corruption are Honduras (22.3), Nicaragua (23.8), Ecuador (24.8), Guatemala (26.7), Bolivia (31.1), Argentina (40.8), Peru (45.1), Mexico (46.6) and Brazil (47.1).

The countries in the region that are above the middle of the list, meaning that they perform better than average in controlling corruption, are Costa Rica (67), Uruguay (75.2), the United States (89.3), Chile (89.8) and Canada (93.7). The least corrupt country in the world, according to the list, is Finland, with 100 percentile points.

Daniel Kaufmann, the leading author of the World Bank report, says the study is the most comprehensive global database on governance and is based on surveys of hundreds of thousands of citizens, executives and experts around the world, compiled by 33 different organizations, including Latinobarometro, Freedom House and the Economist Intelligence Unit.

Asked which Latin American country has fallen the most since the World Bank started compiling these indicators, Kaufmann said Venezuela. "Over the past eight years, there has been an important deterioration there," he told me.

Conversely, Paraguay -- despite its poor ranking -- has improved somewhat, while Colombia and Chile are improving steadily, to the point that Chile is in a statistical tie with the United States.

My first reaction when I heard about this study was to wonder whether the World Bank has the moral authority to do a corruption ranking -- the institution itself was recently at the center of a corruption scandal, when its former President Paul Wolfowitz was found to have given a cushy job to his girlfriend.

But when Kaufmann and others reminded me that the World Bank acted swiftly to clean up its act in that respect and sacked Wolfowitz -- which is more than most countries do when their presidents try to help their girlfriends -- I decided to give it the benefit of the doubt.

I was not surprised by its conclusions. Haiti has been in disarray for as long as I can remember, and Venezuela is going through one of its usual oil boom-generated corruption sprees, aggravated by an authoritarian regime that has taken over independent institutions and is curbing press freedoms.

The good news for Latin America is that the ranking shows that corruption is neither a biological nor geographic condition -- it lists Chile as less corrupt than the United States, and Uruguay and Costa Rica as cleaner than Greece and Italy. With democratic institutions, a free press and a professional -- not politicized -- civil service, corruption can be reduced anywhere.

Andres Oppenheimer can be reached at aoppenheimer@miamiherald.com.

UN requires 'better' peacekeepers

BBC News

July 28, 2007

Nowak singled out Moroccan peacekeepers in Ivory Coast

A UN official has said soldiers from countries whose armies are suspected of torture and abuse should not be considered for peacekeeping operations.

The UN Special Rapporteur on Torture, Manfred Nowak, told Austria's Profil magazine that the UN's standards for selecting peacekeepers were too low.

Mr Nowak urged it to impose stricter standards and said it should consider forming a professional standing army.

His comments come amid a number of accusations of abuse against UN troops.

The UN has investigated such allegations in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Haiti, Cambodia and Ivory Coast over the past three years.

'Stricter standards' needed

In the interview with Profil, Mr Nowak said concerns about the quality, training and ethics of peacekeepers were growing as developing nations with questionable human rights records were being asked to contribute troops.

Mr Nowak said that peacekeepers from such nations might commit the same kind of crimes that they would at home.

The criteria are not very high

Manfred Nowak

UN Special Rapporteur on Torture

"The criteria are not very high," he said.

"The UN must impose stricter standards in recruiting soldiers."

Mr Nowak cited the case of Ivory Coast, where Moroccan peacekeepers have been accused of "widespread sexual exploitation and abuse".

A 730-member Moroccan army battalion was confined to its barracks in Bouake by UN investigators last week after the allegations began to surface.

Mr Nowak also said Nepalese troops, who he accused of "systemic" torture of Maoist rebels, should be barred from serving as peacekeepers.

"As long as the military in Nepal tortures, no troops should be consulted for peacekeeping missions," he said.

Mr Nowak said one solution was finally to give the UN its own professional standing army.

Haiti passes first IMF review, \$11.7 mln released
Tue Jul 24, 2007
Reuters

WASHINGTON, July 24 (Reuters) - The International Monetary Fund said on Tuesday it completed an initial review of Haiti's economic program, making about \$11.7 million immediately available for disbursement to the Caribbean nation under a \$113 million poverty-reduction program.

The IMF's executive board also approved Haiti's request for a waiver that allows for a delay in submission of a new banking law to the Caribbean country's parliament along with other modifications to performance criteria to be used in the next IMF review.

"Haiti has made commendable progress on its path of economic and social stabilization. Significant economic reforms have been implemented and the security situation has improved markedly," said Murilo Portugal, IMF deputy managing director, in a statement

Portugal said Haiti's performance under the poverty reduction and growth facility arrangement has been strong and performance criteria were met, but growth had lagged slightly behind expectations. It will be important for Haiti to improve its rate of budget execution, he said.

"Over the medium term, Haiti's main challenge will be to secure a sustained increase in growth, while consolidating low inflation, in order to reduce poverty and promote social stability, he said, adding that authorities were taking steps to improve private-sector investment.

Domestic revenues need to be raised to allow for a sustainable increase in priority expenditures, which in turn would require enhancing and modernizing tax and customs administrations and a broadening of the tax base, he said.

Veteran Tunisian diplomat to head UN mission in Haiti
Caribbean Net News
Saturday, July 28, 2007

UNITED NATIONS (AFP): Hedi Annabi of Tunisia, the UN assistant secretary general for peacekeeping operations, is to swap jobs with the Guatemalan head of the UN mission in Haiti, the United Nations said Friday.

Annabi, who has been in his current post since 1997, will take over from Edmond Mulet, the chief of the UN stabilization force in Haiti (MINUSTAH) effective September 1, a UN statement said.

MINUSTAH, now comprising 7,200 troops and 1,500 police, was deployed in Haiti in June 2004 four months after then-president Jean Bertrand Aristide fled an uprising in the poorest country in the Americas.

A former Tunisian career diplomat, Annabi, 63, joined the United Nations in 1981 and has served in a series of senior posts in the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) since 1993.

As head of MINUSTAH, Mulet, 56, has helped Haitian President Rene Preval restore a measure of stability and undertake key institutional reforms. Previously, he had served as his country's ambassador to the European Union and to the United States.

In Haiti, ex-rebel sought by U.S. denies drug ties

The Associated Press

IHT

July 23, 2007

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti: A former rebel leader and presidential candidate who disappeared after U.S. anti-drug agents raided his home denied links to drug trafficking and said he is being politically persecuted, according to a recording played Monday by a Haitian radio station.

"Clearly this is a political game that is happening. They're trying to destroy me, they're trying to eliminate me," Guy Philippe says on the recording played by private broadcaster Radio Caraibes, Haiti's most widely heard radio station.

Radio Caraibes said an unidentified individual delivered the recording on a compact disc Saturday but it was not clear when it was made.

Philippe, who helped toppled former President Jean-Bertrand Aristide in 2004, went into hiding after U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration agents and Haitian police descended from helicopters and raided his home in the coastal city of Les Cayes on July 16.

In the recording, Philippe said his wife was assaulted and held at gunpoint during the raid, which he urged Haitian authorities to investigate.

"These people did not come to arrest me. They came to assassinate me," Philippe said.

"Before when they wanted to eliminate someone, they called them a communist. Now there's no more communists so you're either a terrorist or into drugs," he added. "I want everyone to know: I am not involved in drugs. If they have proof, let them bring it."

Haiti's sparsely guarded coastline and high level of corruption make it an attractive transshipment point for cocaine destined for the United States.

President Rene Preval said Friday the U.S.-Haitian drug offensives will continue and confirmed that some suspects have already been extradited to the United States.

Philippe did not reveal his location but said he planned to return to Les Cayes and live like "a simple citizen."

"If they're accusing me of something I'm ready to go before any tribunal. I don't want this to be a political reprisal," he said.

Philippe was the police chief of Haiti's second-largest city, Cap-Haitien, but fled the country in 2000 after he was accused of plotting a coup. He returned in 2004 to lead rebels in a three-week uprising that toppled Aristide.

Philippe said U.S. officials told him in 2000 that he was being investigated for drug ties and that his U.S. entry visa was being suspended. He said he was contacted again in April 2006 and told his travel visa had been reinstated, although it is unclear if he ever visited the United States.

A U.S. Embassy spokeswoman declined to comment Monday, citing the ongoing investigation and privacy laws regarding Philippe's visa status.

“Ghosts” – A Cheap Shot at the People’s Struggle in Haiti
by Shirley Pate
ZNet magazine, CA
July 26, 2007

A recently released film, "The Ghosts of Cite Soleil," tells the story of two young men, Bily and 2pac, who live in Cite Soleil, a poor neighborhood of Port-au-Prince.

Most people who have reviewed the film suggest that viewers are at once titillated and repelled by these young men because of their violence-ridden lifestyle. We learn that they are "chimeres" (a word that loosely means "monster" and used for several years to demonize supporters of former Haitian president, Jean-Bertrand Aristide). It's a label that adds a certain drama, if you are looking at it from a cinematic standpoint, but its political implications are serious. Several years ago, a mainstream journalist introduced "chimere" broadly into the international media suggesting that President Aristide had a corps of violence-prone monster-creatures responsible for attacks on his political opponents. The introduction and extensive use of "chimere" by journalists was part of an international plot to turn world opinion against Aristide paving the way for a coup d'etat that would oust him in 2004 and lead to the murder of thousands of his supporters.

While "Ghosts" appears to be the belle of the blogs and various newspapers, many of the reviews, analyses, and discussions about the film are unenlightened by facts concerning Haiti's history and politics.

Filmmaker, Asgor Leth, is under the mistaken impression that his movie is a documentary. Actually, it is a staged fraud of a movie that exploits the poverty and social circumstances of life in Cite Soleil. Just below the film's veneer of gangster rap, sex, and violence lies an unmistakable and intentional subtext: supporters of Aristide are violence-prone sub-humans who, because of their overwhelming majority and continued demand for the return of Aristide, must be contained and then eliminated. A lack of context might lead viewers to assume that the "chimeres" are the primary aggressors in Haitian society. Quite the opposite is true. Those labeled "chimere" during and after the coup were met with certain incarceration or execution by the Haitian National Police – many were accused over Haitian radio. Rather than aggressors, those labeled "chimeres" have been, and continue to be, the victims.

Not long after the UN peacekeeping mission, MINUSTAH, arrived in Haiti, it began to raid poor, Aristide-supporting neighborhoods. Yet, the indiscriminate attacks were causing it a public relations problem. In need of a propaganda advantage, MINUSTAH came up with its own term for the "resistant" population that remains loyal to Aristide – "bandit." This term may not be as exotic as "chimere," but with its roots in the 1915-1934 US occupation of Haiti, where the mere utterance of the word provided Marines carte blanche to kill, it resonated well and has become pervasive in the media and a major theme in speeches by the UN Secretary General's representative in Haiti, Edmond Mulet.

And, this brings another political reality to the fore. MINUSTAH's mandate calls for bringing security to Haiti yet, security for all Haitians is not part of its agenda. Make no mistake, MINUSTAH was sent to Haiti by a US-dominated UN Security Council to do one thing: make the coup of February 2004 "stick." Elite Haitians and international business interests are banking on an Aristide-less Haiti. Aristide was on a path of shifting the balance of power into the hands of the majority of Haitians who

are poor by doubling the minimum wage, dedicating 20% of the nation's budget to education, instituting widespread literacy programs and struggling successfully with international financial institutions to not privatize all of Haiti's state-owned companies. The last thing the business class needs in Haiti is a better-paid, better-educated workforce.

No documentary about post-coup Haiti can be authentic unless it "outs" those responsible for the carnage, asks hard questions and pursues answers relentlessly. "Ghosts" never tried to do any of these things. If "Ghosts" wants to collect its "documentary" credentials, it will have to admit that Bily and 2pac are not the real bad guys but, rather: the US, France, and Canada who planned, financed and implemented the coup that ousted President Aristide; the US-installed de facto government of Gerard Latortue that maintained an extraordinary atmosphere of impunity making summary incarcerations and executions of Aristide supporters effortless and without consequence; and the US-dominated United Nations Security Council and its peacekeeping mission in Haiti, MINUSTAH, which is making the coup "stick" by committing massacres of unarmed Haitians in poor neighborhoods.

Asking the right questions and pursuing the answers is the only way to honor the struggle of the people of Haiti. In addition, those answers will tell us far more about the lives of Bily and 2pac than "Ghosts" ever could. While there are many questions that can and should be asked, I propose the following:

What was intended for Haiti's economy and education, health and social structures when the US coordinated an embargo on loans to Haiti by international financial institutions beginning in 2000 and not ending until Aristide's forced departure four years later? Who in the international press collaborated with the coup makers to demonize Aristide and criminalize his supporters by labeling them "chimeres?" How long before the coup did the US, France, and Canada map out the plan to destabilize Haiti politically by financing "opposition groups" and fake human rights organizations that fingered "chimeres" for summary executions by the Haitian National Police? How many thousands of guns did the US give to the Dominican Republic that went to Haitian "rebels" hiding out there to invade their own country and kill thousands of Aristide supporters and, for god's sake, how many of those guns are still in their hands? What kinds of state repression tactics did the unelected Prime Minister of the illegal interim government of Haiti employ to "contain" the overwhelming majority of Haitians who demanded the return of their democratically-elected president? How long before the coup did the US-dominated UN Security Council develop its occupation plan for Haiti involving first, soldiers from the three countries that orchestrated the coup and then followed by a UN "peacekeeping" occupation? Why, for the first time in UN history was MINUSTAH the only peacekeeping mission deployed without a peace agreement to enforce? How many Haitians died because MINUSTAH ignored the assassination of unarmed demonstrators by Haitian National Police sharpshooters? Why does the present government of Haiti allow MINUSTAH to continue to label Haiti's citizens as "bandits" for supporting the return of Aristide and resisting a cruel occupation? Finally, what monster, under the guise of pursuing "bandits," authorized UN raids into Cite Soleil and other poor neighborhoods involving hundreds of UN soldiers, tanks, and assault helicopters resulting in the death and injury of hundreds of unarmed Haitians?

Luckily, there is one documentary that can answer these and many other questions about what happened in Haiti. It's a film called "Haiti: We Must Kill the Bandits," by acclaimed filmmaker, Kevin Pina. Finally, the people of Haiti have a film about their struggle that is honest, well-researched, hard-hitting, and dead serious. Most importantly, "Bandits" features Haitians telling their

own story about their fight for justice, peace and security. You can find more information about the film at this website: <http://www.haitiinformationproject.net/>.

Shirley Pate is a Haiti solidarity activist in Washington, D. C. You can contact her by email at: magbana@hcvanalysis.net. For other articles written by her, please go to:

Haiti's future glitters with gold

Impoverished country gets second look due to stabilizing political climate, high gold price

Jul 21, 2007

Reed Lindsay

The Toronto Star

SPECIAL TO THE STAR

LA MIEL, Haiti—Keith Laskowski bounds up the freshly-cut dirt road like a child at an amusement park. He stops at a patch of reddish rock, whacks at it with his miner's pick and slips a chunk into his pocket.

"This road exposure's great," he says, then laughs almost giddily.

For 27 years, Laskowski has been searching for gold, from Mongolia to the Amazon. Now, the geologist says, he may have hit pay dirt in the hills above the town of La Miel in northeastern Haiti.

But Laskowski's optimism belies a minefield of potential problems awaiting his Vancouver-based company, Eurasian Minerals. Although Canadian mining companies weather stormy political climates around the world, they have largely stayed clear of crisis-torn Haiti.

Now, with the price of gold doubling in the last five years and a newly elected government establishing a degree of stability, geologists are scouring the hilltops of Haiti, the region's poorest country.

"These are the best results I've ever seen," says Laskowski. "I don't think there's a question of whether there's a good deposit here. It's a question of whether we can develop it here in Haiti."

In late May, Eurasian Minerals announced the gold content found in several trenches cut into the hillsides here, driving its stock price up 40 per cent on the Toronto Stock Exchange. Laskowski says the company hopes to find billions of dollars worth of gold in the hills above La Miel, which is just a few kilometres from the border with the Dominican Republic.

This would be no small news for Haiti, where industrial production is meagre and agriculture is mainly subsistence. Haiti has never had a modern gold or silver mine; its only copper mine closed 35 years ago.

"It's been frustrating. But now we've got every reason to believe that in the coming years, there will finally be mineral exploitation in Haiti," says Dieuseul Anglade, a geologist who heads the Haitian government's bureau of mining.

A United Nations study in the 1970s indicated Haiti could be littered with gold and copper deposits. But political violence and recurring coups have kept investors away.

"Haiti's logical," says Alex Turkeltaub, managing director of Frontier Strategy Group, a consulting firm that advises mining companies. "The assumption of most mining executives is that its proximity to the United States and its relatively small size mean that they will have a lot of leverage as large

players in a small economy, and that the Americans will always be there to protect against complete disaster."

Turkeltaub predicts "a stampede into Haiti" if the existence of large gold deposits can be proved.

Another Canadian-backed company recently resumed prospecting in Haiti after abandoning its claims a decade ago. Steve Lachapelle – a Quebec lawyer who is now chair of the board of the company, called St. Genevieve Haiti – says employees were threatened at gunpoint by partisans of ex-president Jean-Bertrand Aristide.

The president at the time, René Préval, once an ally of Aristide, was elected for a second term last year, but Lachapelle says he has renewed confidence in the Haitian leader.

"Haitians are realizing that they no longer have a choice," says Lachapelle. "With all the problems the country has had, they realize that they have to play the game with investors or things are going to keep getting worse."

Laskowski says his biggest concerns in Haiti are venal officials and angry local residents. Haiti was recently ranked the world's most corrupt country by Transparency International, although Préval is widely seen as honest.

Formed in 1993, Transparency is a global network whose 90 chapters fight political corruption. Most of its funding comes from government development agency budgets and foundations.

Yesterday, Prime Minister Stephen Harper visited Haiti, the last stop in a week-long tour of South America and the Caribbean. After Afghanistan, Haiti is Canada's second-largest foreign commitment – about \$100 million a year until 2011.

Discontent is already brewing in La Miel and surrounding countryside.

The sudden appearance last year of Laskowski and his team of Haitian geologists sparked lofty expectations among the local families that the company would bring much-needed development to the area. So far, Eurasian's small-scale exploration work has resulted in only a few temporary jobs.

"They need to sit down with everyone together to let us know what decision they've made for the area. If they don't do this, we're not going to let them exploit us as they wish," says Suzanne Louis, a community leader and wife of a farmer.

Louis and other residents of La Miel say they are unaware of the environmental catastrophes and social upheaval sometimes associated with gold mining in other poor countries.

Laskowski has asked the locals to be patient. In the best of scenarios, he says, it will take from four to six years before any actual mining could begin. By that time, Haiti will have a new government and gold will likely be selling at a different price.

Haiti: We are not ghosts and will not be silenced
by Haiti Information Project
Wednesday, 25 July 2007

Once again, as they have a thousand or more times before, even when confronted with the big guns of the U.S. and U.N. military, Haitians poured out into the streets to demonstrate that the power of the people won't quit. They marched July 15, the birthday of their beloved and democratically elected President Jean Bertrand Aristide, to demand he be allowed to return home to Haiti from exile. Aristide had won the hearts of the vast majority of Haitians as a priest preaching Liberation Theology. As president, he dismantled the military, demanded reparations from France, recognized Creole as an official language and affirmed the dignity of every person, often quoting the Haitian proverb, "tout moun se moun," every human being is a human being. Port-au-Prince — Thousands of people demonstrated in Haiti's capital on July 15 demanding the return of ousted president Jean-Bertrand Aristide. Similar demonstrations took place in six other Haitian cities on the same day, which is the anniversary of Aristide's 54th birthday. Demonstrations were also reported to have taken place as far away as Miami, Fla. Aristide was forced into exile on Feb. 29, 2004, and has lived as a guest of the South African government for the past three years.

Following an invasion of Haiti by paramilitary forces from the Dominican Republic in early February 2004, the governments of the United States, France and Canada increased pressure on Aristide to resign. Former Haitian police commissioner and reputed drug trafficker Guy Philippe led the invasion. This past May, Philippe accused leading members of what was then called the "peaceful opposition" to Aristide of providing his paramilitary forces with funding and logistical support.

Aristide was taken from his residence in Haiti along with his wife by a contingent of U.S. Marines early in the morning on the day of his exile. U.S. Embassy officer Luis Moreno instructed the marines to put Aristide on a plane bound for the Central African Republic. Aristide said later that Moreno told him that Philippe's forces surrounded the capital and if he didn't leave Haiti there would be a bloodbath including his own execution.

The circumstances of the ouster of Aristide, who was elected democratically, remain highly controversial to this day. The twice-elected president was allowed to leave the Central African Republic and flew to Jamaica after intense negotiations led by U.S. Congresswoman Maxine Waters. Aristide finally accepted an invitation, reportedly made at the behest of Nelson Mandela and the highest authorities of the African National Congress, to reside in South Africa as a guest of the government. Aristide has lived in South Africa since June 2004 and recently received a doctoral degree in African Languages from the University of South Africa.

The large crowd at Sunday's demonstration for Aristide contradicted comments made by U.N. Special Envoy to Haiti Edmond Mulet. Mulet claimed that similar actions, organized by Aristide's Lavalas movement "have only been able to turn out between 50 and 100 people." Lavalas is Haitian Creole for "flash flood."

This banner, raised for the July 15 march, says: "Dr. Titid (the people's affectionate nickname for Aristide), the people wish you a happy birthday, good spirits and that you never forget the road home. Your homeland awaits you." "This was a very important moment because it shows the world that

despite claims to the contrary, the Lavalas movement is very much alive and well,” said Renald Louis, who currently resides in Florida after being forced to flee the country while he was the former director of the state-run Haitian National Television station in 2004.

Pierre Antoine Lovinsky, founder of a victims’ organization called the Thirtieth of September Movement, was less generous in his comments while being interviewed during the demonstration. “The U.N. supported a murderous government that the United States and international community imposed on Haiti after forcing Aristide out of the country. They participated in the attempt to destroy the movement of the majority of the poor in Haiti for democracy, equal rights and justice.”

Lovinsky continued, “We have shown them again today that we are not going away. We have always been here and we will be here long after they have left Haiti, because we are Haitians and this movement represents the majority of the Haitian people. Those who were killed in the terror that forced our president into exile are honored today. Those of us who survived the terror are not ghosts and we will not be silenced.”

A DEA raid on the home of paramilitary leader Guy Philippe has overshadowed the sparse international news reports of the demonstrations demanding Aristide’s return that took place throughout Haiti on July 15. DEA agents also arrested Lavaud Francois, a local businessman in the town of Gonaives with close ties to Philippe. Francois has bragged publicly that he helped finance the rebellion against Aristide along with Andre Apaid of a civil society organization called the Group 184.

The DEA raids confirmed accusations made by Aristide before he was forced out of the country. Before his removal he held several press conferences in Haiti’s National Palace where he said that drug traffickers led the paramilitary forces invading from the Dominican Republic in an effort to overthrow his government.

© 2007 Haiti Information Project. HIP, HIP@teledyol.net This e-mail address is being protected from spam bots, you need JavaScript enabled to view it , is a non-profit alternative news service providing coverage and analysis of breaking developments in Haiti. The trailer of HIP’s latest film, “Haiti: We Must Kill the Bandits” is posted at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1RSZI3zUqkM>. To learn more, visit www.haitiaction.net.

Poverty of Haiti's Cite Soleil gives Harper firsthand look at country' desperation
Saturday, July 21, 2007
Canada.com

PORT-AU-PRINCE -- Prime Minister Stephen Harper made history in Haiti on Friday, becoming the first foreign leader to enter into the sprawl of human misery that is Cite Soleil -- the notorious, crime-ridden slum on the west side of this desperate capital.

It was also Harper's first personal brush with such wretched poverty. And although his journey into the slum was brief -- he went there to visit a Canadian-funded hospital -- it was a vivid, firsthand lesson in Haiti's harsh realities.

"You go into a neighbourhood like Cite Soleil, where there has been considerable improvement in security and life, and yet you see how difficult that life is obviously for most people," Harper told reporters later, after a meeting with Haitian President Rene Preval.

"I think all of us, as fellow human beings, as people who have our own families, can only begin to understand the true difficulties and the challenges that so many people in this country face on a day-to-day basis."

Haiti, the poorest and most lawless nation in the Western Hemisphere -- and the birthplace of Gov. Gen. Michaelle Jean -- was Harper's fourth and final stop on his week-long tour of Latin America.

As the second largest recipient of Canadian foreign aid after Afghanistan, Haiti is evidence of the obstacles in this region to Harper's new vision of a hemisphere bound together by prosperity and security.

His trip into Cite Soleil was made under tight security. Armed Brazilian soldiers from the United Nations stabilization mission were on every street corner as his motorcade made its way through neighbourhoods filled with ramshackle homes and storefronts pock-marked by bullet holes from years of gang violence and civil war.

Residents stared at the passing Canadian vehicles with moody detachment. Few smiled or waved. When CanWest News asked one woman her opinion of Canada - and whether the world was doing enough for her country - she made a simple plea.

"I am hungry, and I need money," she said.

At Sainte Catherine Laboure Hospital, a medical clinic funded in part by Canada and the United States, Harper spoke with doctors and nurses, watched the vaccination of young children, and met two little girls whose mothers are HIV-positive.

As Canadian police patrolled the rooftops of the clinic, Harper stood in the courtyard, sweating in the overpowering Haitian heat, and presented a blood-analysis machine to the hospital.

Canada, which had contributed a total of 550 soldiers to United Nations forces in Haiti over the past decade, now has 100 military and police personnel working with the current UN stabilization mission, known by its French acronym MINUSTAH.

Last year, Canada also pledged \$520 million in development support to Haiti over a number of years, and is currently involved in a range of aid efforts, from the building of schools to the training of local civil servants, judges, prison workers and journalists.

After his private meeting with Harper, Preval said Haiti was a country "in convalescence," and that Harper was like a "doctor" coming to check up on a patient.

"It is still weak, very weak," Preval said, speaking in French, "and we have to be careful to protect it from relapse."

Harper said Canadians "should be very proud that they are offering to help. Their help is making a difference in terms of the safety of people's lives, in terms of giving them some hope and some opportunity.

"We all want to see that people enjoy some of the things we're able to enjoy in our country," he said.

Just how effective Canadian and other aid dollars are in helping Haiti rise above its misery is open to debate.

Commander Daniel Allard, a Montreal police officer working here with the UN mission, told CanWest News that if Harper had come last year, Cite Soleil - beset by violent gangs and drug traffickers - would not have been safe enough to visit.

"In the eight months I've been here, things have definitely improved," Allard said.

Other observers say that while political security has improved and inflation has been brought under control, crime, drug trafficking and human smuggling have reached epidemic levels - despite two years of international intervention following the election of the Preval government.

A recent report in the Miami Herald said record numbers of Haitians have been boarding rickety boats this summer and risking their lives at sea in a bid to reach other Caribbean islands, or even Florida.

Prosperity and stability have eluded Haiti ever since a slave revolt overthrew French colonial rule here in 1804.

Three-quarters of the country's 8.5 million people now live on less than \$2 US a day, many scratching out a subsistence living in shantytowns like Cite Soleil.

Modern efforts to reform the country began in 1986, at the end of the dictatorial Duvalier era, but although a democratic constitution was adopted in 1987, Haiti remained in political turmoil, with former president Jean Bertrand Aristide twice being elected and ousted by coups and rebellions, the most recent of which, in 2004, was sponsored in part by the United States.

The world's hopes for Haiti now rest on Preval, a moderate who holds power thanks to a shaky coalition of political parties.

A stone's throw from the presidential palace grounds where Harper met Preval on Friday, a graffiti-stained concrete wall shows proof of Preval's tenuous hold on power, and his reliance on the UN forces that prop up his government.

"Vive Retou Aristide!" says the graffiti. "Hail the return of Aristide!"

© CanWest News Service 2007

'Extraordinary challenges' faced by Haiti, Harper says
Prime Minister moved by country's extreme poverty, obstacles to progress

Jul 21, 2007

Allan Woods, Ottawa Bureau
The Toronto Star

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti—Prime Minister Stephen Harper ended a trip through Latin America and the Caribbean yesterday with a brief stop in Haiti, the poorest country in the hemisphere and the one with which Canada has the closest links.

It was Harper's first trip to Haiti, Canada's second-largest aid recipient, and he was clearly moved by the extreme poverty and the challenge of shoring up government support, building up its weak institutions, cleaning up corruption and helping the Haitian people.

Leading Harper's motorcade was a vehicle with three armed UN troops, one pointing a machine-gun at the people who gathered along the road.

President René Préval said a visit as short as Harper's six-hour stop is known here as a "doctor's visit."

"You can be assured, dear doctor, that your patient is no sicker, but remains fragile," he said following a meeting at the presidential palace, an opulent white building amid devastating poverty.

Harper visited Cité Soleil, a ghetto in the Haitian capital that, just months ago, was a stronghold of armed criminal gangs.

He went to a Canadian-funded hospital, observed children being vaccinated and donated a blood-analysis machine that tests for HIV/AIDS in 15 minutes. Testing currently takes a full day.

The Prime Minister said Haiti faces "extraordinary challenges" and its people have difficult lives.

"We start to really appreciate the great challenges that our friends have in their daily lives," he said, adding Canadians can be proud of the half-billion dollars in aid money committed to the country through to 2011.

Six months ago, observers and locals said, Harper and his entourage of officials and journalists would not have been able to visit the hospital in Cité Soleil.

But since then, gang leaders have been toppled in major fighting between the armed gangs and United Nations forces that killed hundreds of people, according to local sources.

Now the international community is citing the slum as a sign of progress and had groups of young men at work polishing up street-front facades and cleaning out open sewer systems.

"These so-called no-go areas have basically come to an end," said Colin Granderson, assistant secretary-general of the 15-member Caribbean Community. "The armed gangs have been dismantled, their leaders have been arrested."

But there is still lingering resentment in some quarters around the 2004 overthrow of President Jean-Bertrand Aristide, who had the backing of Cité Soleil's gang leaders. On the walls of buildings pocked by bullets, is the spray-painted phrase: "Vive la retour d'Aristide." It outnumbered those urging Haitians to "Vote Préval."

But regional officials insist that Préval is right, that the country is starting to recover.

"From an economic point of view, the government has been able to keep the situation under control. It's been able to come up with a budget within the constitutionally allotted time," Granderson said.

Préval said his priority now is to create the necessary conditions for private-sector investment by strengthening security, fighting poverty and ending Haiti's status as a hub for drug traffickers.

"Until those conditions are met, investors won't have confidence," he said.

He also noted a 2006 landmark in the country's electoral history – the first time since 1990 that a vote was not followed by violence and political revolt. It did not happen last year because Préval's party reached out to the opposition to form a coalition government in an attempt to appease all factions.

"It means that the political parties represented in parliament are also represented in the government. That has led to political stability and that's extremely important," he said.

Donor 'Haiti fatigue' a threat to real progress

TIMOTHY DONAIS

The Globe and Mail

July 19, 2007

Given its depressing history, Haiti might seem to be one of the least likely places to look for a peace-building success story. Yet when Prime Minister Stephen Harper lands in Port-au-Prince later this week, he will find a democratically elected government that enjoys broad popularity and a security situation that is vastly improved over even six months ago. Perhaps more significantly, he will also find a tentative but growing sense of optimism among Haitians and internationals alike that the country has a real chance to emerge from its misery.

The key to this revived sense of hope is René Préval, the understated agronomist who re-emerged as president in 2006. His return (he was also president from 1996 to 2000) was an enormous stroke of good fortune. Not only did the election of Mr. Préval, a one-time protégé of former president Jean-Bertrand Aristide, moderate the tensions lingering from the 2004 coup that forced Mr. Aristide from office, but it also put in place a government that enjoys broad legitimacy both within Haiti and abroad and whose priorities are more or less in line with those of the international community. With Mr. Préval in power, the international presence looks and feels less like an international occupation and more like a genuine partnership between Haitians and the international community.

The results have been most apparent in security. Over the past several years, armed gangs consolidated their hold over Port-au-Prince's more notorious slums, including Cité Soleil, the poorest neighbourhood in the hemisphere's poorest country. With Mr. Préval's blessing, the United Nations peacekeeping mission (known by its French acronym, MINUSTAH) has confronted these groups head-on, resulting in the arrest of 750 gang leaders over the past six months. At the same time, Mr. Préval's government, with international support, has made significant progress toward re-establishing the credibility of the Haitian National Police. And while the country remains mired at the bottom of Transparency International's corruption perceptions index, a handful of recent high-profile arrests on corruption charges have had a significant symbolic impact.

Haiti has been here before. After Mr. Aristide's U.S.-led restoration in 1994, a string of UN support missions focused, ultimately unsuccessfully, on consolidating the rule of law and respect for human rights, while the international community — Canada, in particular — expended considerable effort helping to build up the Haitian National Police, only to watch as corruption and politicization unravelled early advances.

And despite the latest progress, the underlying obstacles to sustainable peace-building remain daunting. Beyond the endemic corruption challenge, Haiti's economy is moribund (its most viable industry at present is cocaine transshipment); nearly half its children do not attend school; there is a major environmental crisis; the gap between the wealthy and the impoverished remains appalling; and the judicial system has proven remarkably resistant to reform. Years of conflict, repression and brain drain have taken their toll on state institutions.

Clearly, Haiti still has a long way to go, and the risks of slippage remain considerable. Still, there are reasons to believe Haiti can avoid a repeat of the 1990s.

Mr. Préval's stabilizing influence is one. While in many ways a one-man show — "The government definitely is Préval," Haitian Senator Rudy Boulos says — the President's integrity is largely unchallenged. Many see him as Haiti's last chance to escape what scholar Robert Fatton has called predatory republicanism, in which the absence of economic opportunity has made the capture of governing power the primary means of acquiring wealth and power.

At the same time, the international community has learned important lessons, the most important of which is that abandoning the country in exasperation in the late 1990s merely accelerated its downward spiral. Peace-building is a slow, gradual process, requiring considerable patience and a long-term commitment from both peacekeepers and donors. UN planners are now thinking as far ahead as 2014. Canada also seems to have learned the lesson — Mr. Harper's government has committed \$520-million between 2006 and 2011, and has sent the right signals about staying for the long haul.

While a long-term commitment is a basic requirement for success, so too is an ability to take advantage of short-term windows of opportunity. Here, the international community's recent record is less impressive. In places like Cité Soleil, both MINUSTAH and donors have been slow to respond to the recent anti-gang campaign, failing to follow up the military intervention with quick-impact development projects designed to provide immediate peace dividends.

The international community has perhaps two more years to work with a friendly, pro-reform government before the unpredictability of next election cycle begins. Finding the right balance between patience and urgency, in recognition that this may be Haiti's last, best chance for progress, represents one of the international community's greatest challenges. Over the longer term, avoiding donor "Haiti fatigue" and a repeat of the peace-building reversals of the late 1990s will largely depend on ensuring that the recent step forward isn't again followed by two steps back.

Timothy Donais is an assistant professor of political science at the University of Windsor.

Haiti, U.S. to Continue Joint Offensives

Friday July 20, 2007

By STEVENSON JACOBS

Associated Press

The Guardian Unlimited

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti (AP) - President Rene Preval said Friday that Haiti and the United States will continue joint offensives against drug trafficking, which he described as the biggest threat to his impoverished Caribbean country.

Preval's comments were his first public remarks since U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration agents and Haitian authorities launched a forceful crackdown on suspected drug traffickers in two coastal towns earlier this week.

The agents arrested a Haitian businessman allegedly tied to cocaine traffickers but failed to capture their main target, former rebel leader and presidential candidate Guy Philippe, who is believed to be in hiding.

Preval said the operation resulted from meetings he held recently with DEA Administrator Karen Tandy, and said more actions are planned.

"These aren't operations we want to advertise. We're not going to say what the next step is but there will be other steps," Preval told reporters during a joint press conference with visiting Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper.

He called drug traffickers "the single biggest destabilizing factor facing weak countries like Haiti," which has only a few thousand poorly paid police and a notoriously corrupt judicial system.

Shortly after dawn Monday, five helicopters, two airplanes and at least a dozen DEA and Haitian agents converged on the southern town of Les Cayes and the northwestern town of Gonaives, both known receiving points for South American cocaine bound for the United States.

The agents raided Philippe's two-story home in Les Cayes but found only his wife, two children and maid. Philippe led the 2004 rebellion that toppled former President Jean-Bertrand Aristide and has denied past accusations of drug trafficking.

A U.S. law enforcement official said authorities were surprised they didn't find Philippe and had already prepared a press release announcing his capture. The official requested anonymity because the operation is ongoing.

Preval said other suspects have already been extradited to the United States.

Preval did not name the extradited suspects, but Haitian media have identified them as Lavaud Francois, a Gonaives-based businessman arrested in the DEA raid; Bernard Piquion, who was arrested in May with several Haitian policemen as they allegedly transported cocaine; and Raynald Saint Pierre, a former lieutenant in Haiti's disbanded armed forces.

The U.S. investigation is led by the U.S. Attorney's Office in Miami and the DEA.

Arthur pushes for Haiti help

7/20/07

The Nation Newspaper, Barbados

PRIME MINISTER OWEN ARTHUR has urged the international community to work with the Caribbean Community to help develop Haiti.

He was speaking at the joint Press briefing with the Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper yesterday morning at Sherbourne Centre.

"The region stands ready to work with the international community and especially Canada to ensure that the basic requirements of a civil society are established, the bases of a modern economy are put in place.

"Most important thing is to develop Haiti to the capacity to absorb the financial pledges because without the absorptive capacity the pledges mean nothing," he explained. (TM)

IMF Executive Board approves First Review Under Haiti's PRGF agreement and approves US\$ 11.7 million disbursement
Press Release - International Monetary Fund
July 24, 2007

The Executive Board of the International Monetary Fund completed on July 23rd the first review of Haiti's economic program under the Poverty Reduction and Growth Facility (PRGF) arrangement. Completion of the review makes SDR7.6 million (US\$ 11.7 million) immediately available for disbursement. The PRGF arrangement was approved on November 20, 2006 in the amount equivalent to SDR73.7 million (about US\$ 113 million).

The Executive Board also approved Haiti's request for a program waiver for delayed observance of a performance criterion requiring submission of a new banking law to parliament, as well as a number of modifications and additions to the quantitative and structural performance criteria associated with the forthcoming second review of the program.

Following the Executive Board discussion, Mr. Murilo Portugal, Deputy Managing Director and Acting Chair, said:

"Haiti has made commendable progress on its path of economic and social stabilization. Significant economic reforms have been implemented, and the security situation has improved markedly. The government is also building on earlier efforts to improve governance, including through transparency in public sector operations and improved public financial management. A full poverty reduction strategy is being developed, based on a broad participatory process.

"Haiti's performance under the PRGF-supported program has been strong and the authorities deserve credit on achieved positive results. All performance criteria associated with the first review were met, but growth has lagged slightly behind expectations. For the remainder of the program year, a significant pick-up in the rate of budget execution will be important. For this, the authorities are putting in place measures to strengthen administrative capacity and overcome supply-side constraints. The government is finalizing a draft budget that is consistent with the indicative macroeconomic framework for the second year of the PRGF arrangement.

"Over the medium term, Haiti's main challenge will be to secure a sustained increase in growth, while consolidating low inflation, in order to reduce poverty, and promote social stability. Higher growth can be achieved provided that the conditions to overcome existing structural and institutional bottlenecks continue to improve. To address these issues, the authorities are taking steps to invigorate private sector investment, including the recent creation of a one-stop window for investors, and plans to improve the efficiency of remaining state-owned enterprises through various modalities of private participation.

"Domestic revenues will be raised from the current relatively low level to allow for a sustainable increase in priority expenditures. Enhancing and modernizing the tax and customs administrations, which the authorities are already undertaking, will contribute to this effort, as will the broadening of the tax base. Improved public financial management capacity will help ensure that additional resources are well spent, in support of poverty reduction.

"The further development of Haiti's monetary policy regime will help to consolidate a stable low-inflation environment. This will entail focusing monetary policy in the short term on money supply management, with a view of developing a more effective interest rate channel.

"To strengthen competitiveness, against the background of an appreciating real exchange rate caused by growing international transfers, the existing structural and institutional bottlenecks will need to be addressed. This will lower the high costs of doing business in Haiti and, in general, help to promote private sector activity.

"Overall, prospects are positive for an acceleration of growth over the medium term, and for continued strong implementation of the PRGF program," Mr. Portugal said.

Haiti: Ghosts Entertains and Sensationalizes, Offers Few Answers

by Shirley Pate

July 24th, 2007

Dissident Voice

The Ghosts of Cite Soleil, tells the story of two young men, Bily and 2pac, who live in Cite Soleil, a poor neighborhood of Port-au-Prince, Haiti.

By reading the newspaper accounts and blog posts, it appears that most viewers are both titillated and repelled by these young men because of their violence-ridden lifestyle. We learn that they are “chimeres” (a word that loosely means “monster,” which was used for several years to smear supporters of former Haitian president, Jean-Bertrand Aristide). It’s a label that adds a certain drama, if you are looking at it from a cinematic standpoint, but its political implications are serious. Several years ago, a mainstream journalist introduced “chimere” broadly into the international media suggesting that President Aristide had a corps of violence-prone monster-creatures whose sole responsibility was to attack his opponents. What was not known is that this demonization of Aristide and his followers was part of an overall plot to turn world opinion against Aristide thus paving the way for a coup d’etat that would oust him and lead the murder of thousands of his supporters. Ghosts appears to be the belle of the blogs and various newspapers a well. Yet, many of the reviews, analyses, and discussions about the film are unenlightened by facts concerning Haiti’s history and politics.

Filmmaker, Asgar Leth, is under the mistaken impression that Ghosts is a documentary. Actually, it is a staged fraud of a movie that exploits the poverty and social circumstances of life in Cite Soleil. Just below the film’s veneer of gangster rap, sex, and violence lies an unmistakable and intentional subtext: supporters of Aristide are violence-prone sub-humans who, because of their overwhelming majority and continued demand for the return of Aristide, must be contained and then eliminated. Lack of context might leave viewers under the impression that “chimeres” are the primary aggressors in Haitian society. Quite the opposite. Those labeled “chimere” during and after the coup met with certain incarceration or execution by Haitian National Police. No, rather than the aggressor, those labeled chimere have been and continue to be the victims.

Not long after the UN peacekeeping mission, MINUSTAH, arrived in Haiti, it began to raid poor, Aristide-supporting neighborhoods. Before long, in need of a propaganda advantage, MINUSTAH came up with their own term for the “resistant” population that remains loyal to Aristide — “bandit.” This term may not be as imaginative as “chimere,” but it has roots in the 1915-1934 US occupation of Haiti where the mere utterance of the word provided Marines carte blanche to kill. And this brings another political reality to the fore. MINUSTAH was sent to Haiti by a US-dominated UN Security Council to do one thing: make the coup of February 2004 “stick.” Elite Haitians and various international business interests are banking on an Aristide-less Haiti. Aristide was on a path of shifting the balance of power into the hands of the majority of Haitians who are poor by doubling the minimum wage, dedicating 20% of the nation’s budget to education, instituting widespread literacy programs and struggling successfully with international financial institutions not to privatize all of Haiti’s state-owned companies. The last thing the business class needed from Haiti was a better-paid, better-educated workforce. No documentary about post-coup Haiti can be authentic unless it “outs” those responsible for the carnage and asks the hard questions and pursues the answers relentlessly. “Ghosts” never tried to do any of these things. If Ghosts is really a documentary, it would tell you that the real

bad guys are not Bily and 2pac, but, rather the US, France, and Canada who planned, financed and implemented the coup that ousted President Aristide; the US-installed de facto government of Gerard Latortue that maintained an extraordinary atmosphere of impunity making summary incarcerations and executions of Aristide supporters effortless and without consequence; and the US-dominated United Nations Security Council and its peacekeeping mission in Haiti, MINUSTAH, responsible for numerous massacres in poor neighborhoods trying to make the coup “stick.” Asking the right questions and pursuing the answers is the best way to honor the struggle of the people of Haiti. In addition, it will tell us much more about the lives of Bily and 2pac and the majority of Haitians than Ghosts ever could. While there are many questions that can and should be asked, I propose the following:

What was intended for Haiti’s economy and education, health and social structures when the US coordinated an embargo on loans to Haiti by international financial institutions beginning in 2000 and not ending until Aristide’s forced departure four years later? Who in the international press collaborated with the coup makers to demonize Aristide and criminalize his supporters by labeling them “chimeres?” How long before the coup did the US, France, and Canada map out the plan to destabilize Haiti politically by financing “opposition groups” and fake human rights organizations that fingered “chimeres” for summary executions by the Haitian National Police? How many thousands of guns did the US give to the Dominican Republic which the Haitian “rebels” hiding out there used to invade their own country and kill thousands of Aristide supporters? What kinds of state repression tactics did the unelected Prime Minister of the illegal interim government of Haiti employ to “contain” the overwhelming majority of Haitians who demanded the return of their democratically-elected president? How long before the coup did the US-dominated UN Security Council develop its plan for Haiti involving an initial occupation by a multi-national interim force after the coup to be followed by a UN occupation? Why, for the first time in UN history was MINUSTAH the only peacekeeping mission deployed without a peace agreement to enforce? How many Haitians died because MINUSTAH ignored the assassination of unarmed demonstrators by Haitian National Police sharpshooters? Why does the present government of Haiti allow MINUSTAH to continue to label Haiti’s citizens “bandits” for supporting the return of Aristide and resisting a cruel occupation? Finally, what monster, under the guise of pursuing “bandits”, authorized UN raids into Cite Soleil and other poor neighborhoods involving hundreds of UN soldiers, tanks, and assault helicopters and resulting in the death and injury of hundreds of unarmed Haitians?

Luckily, there is one documentary that can provide the answers to what happened in Haiti: It’s a brilliant new film by acclaimed filmmaker, Kevin Pina, called: Haiti: We Must Kill the Bandits. Finally, the people of Haiti have a film that is honest, well-researched, hard-hitting, dead serious and, most importantly, features Haitians telling their own story of struggle. The website can be found at: www.haitiinformationproject.net. You can watch the two-minute trailer here.

Shirley Pate writes for the Haiti Information Project (HIP), a non-profit alternative news service providing coverage and analysis of breaking developments in Haiti. She can be reached at: magbana@hcvanalysis.net. Read other articles by Shirley, or visit Shirley's website.

Four dead in Haiti flooding
Wednesday, July 25, 2007
Caribbean Net News

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti (AFP): Flooding in Haiti triggered by torrential rain has killed at least four people and destroyed dozens of homes, local authorities said.

"The victims were found in the water that flooded the streets of two areas near Port-au-Prince," Haitian civil protection spokesman Dieufort Delorges said on Monday.

At least 300 families were affected by the flooding and dozens of homes had been ruined, according to an initial assessment by authorities.

Meteorologists are forecasting more rain in coming days, which could cause flooding in southern areas of the country. Widespread deforestation in Haiti exacerbates the effects of heavy rainfall.

Haiti's desperate women
Paul McPhun, Citizen Special
The Ottawa Citizen
Wednesday, July 25, 2007

While, according to Prime Minister Stephen Harper's office, the purpose of his recent trip was to "establish new partnerships in the Americas and enhance Canada's relationships in Latin America and the Caribbean," let's hope his stop in Haiti makes people notice that that country is embroiled in a significant humanitarian crisis that has previously been largely ignored.

Haiti has the grim distinction of being the poorest country in the western hemisphere and having the highest level of maternal mortality. This may be difficult to believe, considering it is only a four-hour flight from Montreal. Haitians continue to suffer the consequences of systemic and insidious violence, and women are among the most vulnerable victims.

Despite elections in 2006 and the presence of a United Nations stabilization mission, Haiti continued to experience regular outbursts of violence: kidnappings, rape, organized crime and confrontations between armed groups and UN forces.

Haitian women waited to vote in their country's presidential election in 2006. The country lacks such basic necessities as safe places to give birth, Paul McPhun writes.

Daniel Aguilar, Reuters

In this context of severe political and social instability, Medecins Sans Frontieres (MSF) opened an emergency obstetric-care hospital in the Haitian capital, Port-au-Prince, in March 2006. MSF's Jude Anne Hospital serves women who have little access to health care, who live in the poorest neighbourhoods of the city and are thus most marginalized and at risk of violence.

MSF's experience tells us that women living in the slums of Port-au-Prince are exposed to violence daily. An expectant mother from the Cite Soleil slum could be sexually assaulted by a family member, a neighbour, a gang member or other assailant. She might get caught in the crossfire of a conflict between armed groups, or she might experience psychological trauma due to the violence.

Because she lives in a gang-controlled slum, she could be ostracized by people from other parts of Port-au-Prince who fear that she might be associated with the gang. Perhaps the sole caregiver for her children, she struggles against the increased vulnerability that comes with extreme poverty. She is forgotten by her society and the international community.

These women have very little choice, if any, when they seek health care. The health-care system in Haiti is accessible only to those who can afford it and thus remains out of reach to women living in the poor areas of the city. Medical services in public hospitals are too expensive for the majority of expectant mothers. Should a baby be born by normal delivery, the mother would have to pay a \$13 fee at a public hospital -- six times the average daily salary of a working Haitian, and completely unaffordable for an unemployed mother, despite a declaration made two years ago by the interim government that maternal care should be offered for free.

Since MSF opened Jude Anne, more than 10,000 babies have been delivered, which amounts to 20 per cent of the estimated births in Port-au-Prince. Thousands of mothers seek care at this hospital because they cannot access or afford to get treatment anywhere else in the city.

These figures clearly indicate a massive and ongoing need for emergency obstetric care for women living in the slums of Port-au-Prince, and a humanitarian crisis deserving of worldwide attention.

Paul McPhun is operational manager for Haiti for Medecins Sans Frontieres, Canada.

HAITI: Workers Protest Privatisation Layoffs

By Jeb Sprague and Wadner Pierre*

IPS

July 24, 2007

Téléco headquarters in Port-au-Prince.

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Jul 24 (IPS) - Late last month, President René Préval announced that Haiti's public telephone company, Téléco, would be privatised. Meeting recently with the Haitian Chamber of Commerce and Senator Jean Hector Anacacis of Preval's Lespwa political party, the president finalised plans to sell off the aging enterprise.

The move toward privatisation began abruptly, and according to Téléco, 2,800 employees have been terminated thus far. For decades foreign lenders and multinational corporations have pressured the Haitian state toward privatisation; layoffs are seen as the first step.

Cellular phones have spread rapidly across the country and it is common to hear complaints about Téléco's poor landline service.

One cellular company, Digicel, has grown at a fast pace since 2006, allowing many poor Haitians to own a phone for the first time. By offering incoming calls for free and pre-programmed phones for 15 to 25 dollars, Digicel initially outpaced Voilà and Haïtel, which were charging 50 to 150 dollars for basic phones.

Digicel is also widely popular because of its investment in civic institutions such as sporting events and street signs, and its partnerships with foundations such as Fonkoze, a microfinancer for the poor.

The problem is that after getting the cheap phones, many poor subscribers cannot afford the balance on their phones, despite some of the lowest-priced recharge phone cards selling for about 1.5 dollars.

Haiti's government has justified the privatisation of Téléco by comparing its employment levels with those of the private cell phone companies, adamant that the difference in employee figures reveals gross mismanagement of Téléco.

Préval explained that, "Haïtel S.A., has 500 employees for 350,000 subscribers, Comcel, 630 employees for 650,000 subscribers, Digicel 700 employees for 1.4 million subscribers, Téléco has 3,293 employees for only 150,000 subscribers".

In response to the layoffs, Téléco workers launched protests around the company's Port-au-Prince headquarters. Critics point out that cell phone companies don't require wires being strung in the streets or to perform wire maintenance as do companies using land lines.

Cell tower installation is done by a few highly skilled and paid, often foreign technicians, whereas wire line maintenance is done by a larger and often lower paid, lower skilled work force.

While calls made from cells are more expensive than most Téléco calls, it is extremely difficult to procure a Téléco line. Over 90 percent of phone subscribers use private companies, a vast difference from a decade ago.

Téléco profits from a small fee on every communications transaction with Haiti, whether it originates inside of Haiti or from outside of the country. This includes regular land-lines and all cell phone and calling card communications. Therefore Téléco does have the potential to be financially healthy but it requires many employees to work its various departments, with offices throughout the country.

Préval has committed to paying a year's salary to Téléco employees who are being laid off, as well as those from across much of the civil sector who were illegally fired by the previous interim government.

But labour organisers at Téléco speak of a long-term, quiet campaign to undermine state enterprises. They say managers appointed by officials backing privatisation purposely mismanaged the company in order to justify its break-up, as well as corruption and the use of its infrastructure by competitors as undermining forces.

During his first term in 1996-2001, Préval sold off the Minoterie flour mill and Haiti's public cement company. Supporters of privatisation note that the cement company now provides large tax revenues for the state.

But many small contractors and their clients face cement costs out of reach for those aspiring to live in one-room homes. Cement donations from Venezuela have provided some respite for Haiti's public works.

Brian Concannon, of the Institute for Justice and Democracy in Haiti, recalls that in order to stave off pressure from international financial institutions, Préval, during his first term, dragged his feet and only "let go two of the smallest and least strategic state enterprises." But by the end of his term donors had begun to disengage from providing aid to the state.

With the inauguration in early 2001 of President Jean-Bertrand Aristide, who refused untrammelled privatisation, donors reacted further by cutting off nearly all support to the aid-dependent but privatisation-weary state, placing a further pinch on the civil enterprises.

One recently laid off Téléco worker, while waiting in line to receive his severance pay, challenged Préval's policy of privatisation. He recalled to journalists that prior to Préval's selling off the cement company during his first administration, a bag of cement was 30 to 50 gourdes but now exceeds 200 gourdes -- about 5 dollars. However, part of this is due to the devaluation of the gourde.

Since the ouster of Aristide in a U.S.-backed 2004 coup d'état, the advocates of privatisation have become emboldened.

A donor-sponsored interim government helped formulate a privatisation strategy and fired at least 2,000 workers from Téléco and thousands more from other state jobs, most from poor backgrounds who sympathised with the overthrown constitutional government.

In 2006, Préval was popularly elected to office and the widely disliked interim government stepped down.

Labour organisers explain that conditions have improved under Préval and they take part in talks with the government, but in recent weeks tension has grown with the government's move toward privatisation.

One of Haiti's largest labour confederations, the Confédération des Travailleurs Haitiens (CTH), has protested the government's privatisation plan and the layoffs at Téléco.

In a joint statement CTH Secretary-General Paul Loulou Chéry and his deputy, Hubert Jean, pointed out that Haiti's Commission for the Modernisation of Public Enterprises (CMEP) is "very specific on the way the state should proceed, regarding their modernisation; that is, by management contract, concession or capitalisation."

The labour organisers told IPS that while they support talks with the government, they oppose privatisation that costs jobs and believe the government should instead focus on alternatives to fix the aging state telephone enterprise, as there remains an unmet need for landline services. They point out that neoliberal privatisation policies have led to disaster across Latin America.

In recent days, hundreds of dismissed workers have stood in line at the Téléco headquarters in Port-au-Prince, ironically providing work for U.N. troops stationed in Haiti and the Haitian National Police, who were posted nearby in case protests erupted. Several workers said they felt humiliated -- "as if we were not worthy to be inside," one former employee told journalists.

The director general of Téléco, Michel Prémumé, who recently appeared in a debate on Haiti's National Television, argued that privatisation is urgently needed and stressed it could be done in an intelligent manner. "The dividends of the [privatised] flour mill are about 500 million gourdes [13 million dollars]," he observed.

But negligible dialogue is said to have taken place between the employees of Téléco and the director general. The president of the Télécommunications trade union -- who has been fired -- Jean Mabou, has accused the director general of illegally and arbitrarily dismissing people. According to many employees there were numerous instances of employees being fired in order to settle political scores.

Prémumé says the number of workers at Téléco will be reduced to 1,200 for the whole of the country, but local press reports put the number at 800.

Préval has appointed a commission to study the privatisation of more state enterprises. The National Port Authority and the Office of Insurance Work and Disease are both likely targets.

*Jeb Sprague and Wadner Pierre contribute to HaitiAnalysis.com

Nutritional Supplement Cuts Anemia In Poor Children By Half

Source: Cornell University

Science Daily

July 27, 2007

Science Daily — A nutritional supplement known as Sprinkles, which can be added to children's food, reduces anemia by more than half, according to a recent study published in the Journal of Nutrition.

The study was led by Purnima Menon, Cornell Ph.D. '02, a research associate in the Division of Nutritional Sciences at Cornell. It is the first to show, using a rigorous study design, that Sprinkles can reduce the incidence of anemia among poor children enrolled in an ongoing fortified food aid program implemented under challenging, real-life conditions in developing countries.

The research, conducted by Cornell's Division of Nutritional Sciences with the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI), offers promising insights on how to reduce iron and other micronutrient deficiencies among poor people in developing countries. These deficiencies are a devastating problem worldwide, causing poor health, premature death and impaired development, says Menon. Children age 6 to 24 months are most vulnerable to suffering from iron-deficiency anemia.

"When combined with other food aid initiatives, the potential impact [of Sprinkles] is huge," said Marie Ruel, Cornell Ph.D. '90, director of IFPRI's Food Consumption and Nutrition Division and a co-author of the study.

The findings are based on a study in rural Haiti, where at least two out of every three children under age 3 are anemic. Children in the study were enrolled in a food aid program that included cereals fortified with iron and other micronutrients. After Sprinkles, a dry powder containing iron and other vitamins and minerals, were added to their food for two months, anemia rates among the children were reduced from 54 percent to 24 percent, and further reduced to 14 percent seven months later. However, anemia rates remained unchanged for those children in the study who did not receive Sprinkles.

The study also found that fortified food aid alone is insufficient to prevent anemia in infants and young children, even if mothers are advised to complement the donated commodities with locally available, iron-rich foods. This could be due to the fact that foods such as meat are too expensive for families to buy on a daily basis and that donated foods are often shared among all family members rather than consumed only by the child.

According to the study, it is highly feasible to integrate Sprinkles distribution and education into existing food aid programs. Mothers participating in the study indicated that they would be willing to buy Sprinkles if sold in local markets because they believe it will benefit their children and prefer it to other nutrition interventions. World Vision-Haiti currently assists mothers with purchasing Sprinkles from Population Services International, a social marketing firm, which markets them in Haiti under the name "Babyfer."

"Sprinkles are one of the most promising innovations in nutrition today," said Menon. "They offer an inexpensive option that mothers seem to love and children can consume easily."

While the study took place in Haiti, its implications are global, she said. Sprinkles have been tried in other developing countries, such as Bangladesh, Ghana and Indonesia, and were found to be a very effective way to reduce micronutrient deficiencies.

Other Cornell co-authors of the study include Cornell nutritionists Rebecca Stoltzfus and Jean-Pierre Habicht. Collaborators on the study include World Vision-Haiti, Micronutrient Initiative, and the U.S. Agency for International Development-funded Food and Nutrition Technical Assistance Project, managed by the Academy for Educational Development.

Sprinkles were developed by the University of Toronto's Stanley Zlotkin and are licensed by the Sprinkles Global Health Initiative, which works closely with an international network of approved suppliers.

Note: This story has been adapted from a news release issued by Cornell University.

Drugs and Politics in Haiti
Haiti Information Project
July 24, 2007

The US Drug Enforcement Agency's recent attempt to hunt down former policeman, paramilitary commander and presidential candidate Guy Philippe on drug charges can be traced back to a recent arrest in the town of Gonaives, Haiti.

Haitian police and Argentinean units of the UN arrested Wilfort Ferdinand, alias Ti Wil; on May 26 after he gave a lengthy interview on local radio station Radio Gonaives FM. Although news of Ferdinand's arrest received scant attention in the international press it was one of the top stories throughout Haiti the following day. Much of the reporting in the Haitian press focused on the shared history of Wilfort Ferdinand and Guy Philippe in leading paramilitary forces that helped to oust the government of Jean-Bertrand Aristide.

In early February 2004, Wilfort Ferdinand along with Butteur Metayer, Winter Etienne and Dieujuste Jeanty, led armed gangs to attack police stations in the Artibonite region in a bid to oust Aristide's government. They left a bloody trail in their wake including the summary execution of Aristide supporters in the streets of several cities. Their group, called the Artibonite Resistance Front, later joined with the small but well-armed paramilitary groups that invaded Haiti from the Dominican Republic under the leadership of Guy Philippe and former death squad commander Jodel Chamblain. Ferdinand and the others quickly claimed allegiance to Philippe and publicly referred to him as their "commander-in-chief" in press interviews.

Ferdinand appointed himself Chief of Police of Gonaives and Winter Etienne became the Chief of the Gonaives Port Authority, ruling Haiti's fourth largest city as a personal fiefdom following the ouster of Aristide on Feb. 29, 2004. Philippe shared the podium with Ferdinand in late March 2004 when US-installed prime minister Gerard Latortue was flown into Gonaives by US military helicopters accompanied by David Lee, Canadian ambassador to the Organization of American States. During a mock celebration of Aristide's ouster, Latortue publicly praised the men as misunderstood "freedom fighters" while ambassador Lee nodded his head in approval.

During Ferdinand's interview on Radio Gonaives FM and just before his arrest on May 26, he repeated assertions he had made days earlier on another radio station in the capital. He claimed that he was being pressured by "certain members of the business community" to take up arms against the current government of President Rene Preval. He explained that these were some of the same business leaders that had financed their paramilitary operations against Aristide and ended with "I would rather commit suicide than raise arms against this government."

The day following Ferdinand's arrest, May 27, Guy Philippe was interviewed on Haitian radio station Signal FM where he took the accusations a step further. Without answering the question of pressure to take up arms against Preval, Philippe began to name names of business and political leaders who backed the paramilitary insurgency against Aristide's government by providing arms, ammunition and logistical support.

Philippe's list included members of what was then touted as the "peaceful opposition" in Haiti that led demonstrations in the capital and other cities demanding Aristide's resignation. High on the list was Andy Apaid the leader of the civil society organization called the Group 184.

Apaid had been extensively quoted in the international media at the time saying their movement was non-violent and had no connections to the paramilitary bands. Claire Marshall wrote for the BBC on Feb. 13, 2004, "One of the most prominent opposition platform spokesmen, Andy Apaid, wanted to make it clear that he did not approve of violent methods." Marshall continued, "Andy Apaid invoked the names of Martin Luther King and Mahatma Gandhi, saying that he wanted to try and lead the opposition in a form of peaceful protest." Philippe's disclosures exposed Apaid's duplicity and served to discredit the "peaceful opposition" movement against Aristide. It also highlighted the uncritical and favorable reporting given to it by the BBC and other major news organizations.

Philippe's list also included the leadership of several political parties that were part of a United States Agency for International Development funded program in the 90's and who recently ran candidates in UN-sponsored elections in Haiti. Among others fingered by Guy Philippe were Evans Paul of KID/Alyans, former senator Dany Toussaint of the MODEREH, Serges Gilles of PANPRA (note: FUSION currently) and Himmler Rébu of the GREH.

On June 1, Haitian police spokesman Frantz Lerebours, announced that they had discovered a kilo of "a white substance resembling cocaine" after searching the residence of Wilfort Ferdinand. On July 16, DEA agents executed a dramatic raid against Philippe's residence in the southern coastal town of Les Cayes and he has been on the run ever since.

"It's a good question of whether Philippe will actually be arrested," responded a source close to UN intelligence operations in Haiti who asked not to be identified. "The other option is that he may end up in a third country in a quiet exile like Michel Francois," he said in reference to a former police chief who led a military coup against Aristide in 1991. Francois was indicted by a Miami Grand Jury in 1997 for drug trafficking and currently resides in Honduras after that country's Supreme Court refused to extradite him. The official continued, "It would take a complete change in current policy for him to be allowed to remain in Haiti without being arrested. But stranger things have happened."

Journalists describe reporting in Haiti
Shajia Ahmad - The Daily Iowan
7/23/07

As nine Haitian journalists explored the foundations of American journalism during a visit to Iowa City over the weekend, they brought with them their own perspectives on the trade.

Small headphones filtered an interpreter's voice as the visiting professionals, who spoke Creole, French, and Spanish - but limited English - listened to UI journalism Associate Professors Frank Durham and Lyombe Eko discuss the "culture" of the UI School of Journalism, its students, and the system of law and ethics for American journalists in the Adler Journalism and Mass Communication Building on July 20.

The Council for International Visitors to Iowa Cities - a part of the UI International Programs and the U.S. Department of State International Visitor Leadership Program - sponsored the visit, which lasted five days. A number of translators helped the group discuss the state of journalism in both Haiti and the United States during the visitors' stay.

Unlike in the United States, journalism education is limited in Haiti, said Valéry Numa, a journalist for Vision 2000, a radio station in Haiti's capital, Port-au-Prince. The first professional school was built in 1974, Numa said, though most journalists get their training in the field.

Haiti, a country with close to 9 million residents, is located on the western side of Hispaniola, a Caribbean island that is also home to the Dominican Republic. Ninety-five percent of the population is black, while a minority is either multi-ethnic or white, according to the CIA World Factbook.

Most of the visitors agreed they face several constraints when practicing journalism in their home country, including limited training, restricted access to information, and inadequate salaries. In Haiti, the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere, the reporters and broadcasters said accepting favors from government officials and sources is often a temptation.

"It is a permanent struggle to not end up being influenced and corrupted," said Yves Patrice Merisier, a journalist for Radio Galaxie.

Eko, who specializes in media law and ethics, spoke with the journalists about the ethical problems they face when covering politics in their country. Each agreed that denying gifts and social interaction with government officials is part of a universal ethic for journalists, he said.

Haiti has only two daily newspapers, both published in French, Merisier said. Because of the low literacy rates - 53 percent - radio serves as a more practical means of communication, especially in Port-au-Prince, where some 40 radio stations broadcast.

Despite some differences in media consumption, both parties agreed that the role of journalists as watchdogs for the government was important to the profession.

"Our work is to make people aware of their reality, to not accept their position in poverty, and to demand that civil society does more," Numa said.

The journalists said that often, negative images of Haiti are portrayed in America, but they said they would like to be involved in presenting another side by focusing on Haiti's rich culture.

Don Kirchner, a Council for International Visitors volunteer who hosted the journalists for dinner at his Coralville home during their stay, said the meeting allowed the guests to learn about Americans, another goal of the program.

Despite the differences between the two countries, the journalists expressed their appreciation for U.S. culture.

"Because of so many ethnic groups, America is really like a mosaic and cosmopolitan," Numa said. "We like the openness of Iowa City and the open society we are finding here."

E-mail DI reporter Shajia Ahmad at:
shajia-ahmad@uiowa.edu

July 30th, 2007

**Interview with Athena Kolbe: Co-Author of Lancet Study on Haiti
HaitiAnalysis**

By: Joe Emersberger - Haitianalysis.com

How have the responses been at the conferences where you have presented results of your survey (supervised by Royce Hutson)? I understand you presented results that were not part of the paper published in the Lancet.

We did present additional information at other conferences as well. For instance, Dr. Hutson spoke at the American Public Health Association conference about the identity of the victims of human rights violations. You'll remember that our piece in the Lancet focused on answering the question "who were the perpetrators?" At APHA, Dr. Hutson spoke about "who were the victims?" Not surprisingly, people who were politically affiliated -- with any party -- were significantly more likely to be murdered. Also, individuals from households affiliated with the Lavalas and Lespwa political parties were more likely to be arrested than people from other political parties and those who had no political affiliation at all.

People have been very responsive to our study, especially concerning our use of GPS. Dr. Hutson just got back from presenting our study at a conference in Geneva where the participants were primarily people in this field, that is, people who study war-related human rights violations, the effect of small arms on the population, mortality, etc. He can probably tell you more about that.

Traditionally mortality during armed conflict has been estimated by using passive accounts: relying on reports from key informants (such as health workers, community leaders, the Red Cross, etc) or through documents such as analyzing morgue records or media reports. The Iraq Body Count website is a good example of document analysis. They count the numbers of those killed in the Iraq war by using news media reports.

But the problems with this type of passive counting are numerous. For instance, if we rely only on key informants to supply us with the numbers of those killed or raped, then we may miss people whose human rights violations was never reported to that key informant (for instance, women who were too embarrassed to report being raped, or families who never took their family member's body to the morgue because they didn't have the money to pay the mortician). Key informants may not have access to accurate numbers or they may inflate or deflate their estimates because of their own personal or political bias.

Counting human rights violations using media reports has drawbacks as well. One of the criticisms of the Iraq Body Count website is that the deaths of many Iraqis are never reported in the national news. Someone may die from injuries sustained during a gun battle in which they were an innocent bystander, and they may die weeks or months later. Does every death get reported in the media? Of course not, usually only those that are most newsworthy make it into the press.

People are starting to recognize that the human cost of armed conflict can't be calculated by simply counting the number of combatants who fall on the battlefield. Armed conflict has devastating consequences to families and communities. Haiti is a good example. In 2004 we saw whole

communities which were displaced because of the fighting. This was not a bloodless coup. People died. Children were raped. People's homes were looted and destroyed. People were arrested but never charged with a crime and held in jail for long periods of time. Those who care about politics can argue until the cows come home about whether the coup was justified or whether more or less human rights violations happened after the ouster of President Aristide. But the fact remains that serious human rights violations including rape, murder, and illegal detentions were rampant during the 22-months after Aristide left Haiti.

Let me make another point here. Some critics have argued that the human rights violations against some people were justified or that any murders after the coup were in self-defense against the "tyranny of Lavalas." Let me quote an email that I received recently from an American who travels frequently to Haiti. He wrote: "I can understand their [referring to the perpetrators of human rights violations] desire to rape and pillage. Aristide and his goons persecuted the Haitian people for years. He [Aristide] ordered his chimere gangs to murder anyone who wouldn't submit to his authority and then he gave them the guns to do it! If the people felt like taking things into their hands and getting some revenge, then so be it."

Rape is never justified. I don't care who you are or what your politics are, it is never okay for force anyone to have sex with you. In the same way, killing your political opponents, burning down their house, destroying their business, stealing their car, kidnapping their child, beating and torturing them – all of these things are wrong. There is never any justification for violating someone's human rights. If you have a political disagreement with someone, work it out in the realm of politics, don't rape their wife or murder their child.

The argument that Haitian people who committed human rights violations were motivated by revenge is also very racist and xenophobic. It implies that the Haitian people are incapable of controlling themselves while other (read: civilized) peoples work their problems without extracting revenge. This just isn't true. The individuals and groups who engaged in massive human rights violations in Haiti did so knowingly and purposefully. They didn't accidentally or in the heat of the moment kill people; no, those who tortured, raped and killed did it to terrorize a population.

People who commit massive and systematic human rights violations do so because they think they can get away with it and because they find it more expedient to cultivate political power through the violent suppression of dissent than by fostering a democratic society that promotes the free and open exchange of ideas.

Has anyone proposed testing the results of your survey by redoing it? I am thinking in particular of critics of the study. Can your survey be checked at this point or would recall bias be too big a problem?

No, no one has proposed redoing the survey to me. In any survey about past events there are going to be issues with recall bias. Recall bias happens with a survey respondent's answer to a question is influenced by their own memory of what happened. For instance, if I ask you what you had for breakfast this morning, you'd probably remember. But, unless you eat the same breakfast every morning, if I asked you what you had for breakfast 30 days ago, you probably wouldn't be able to remember.

We assume that when very significant events happen in a person's life, they are able to remember the date or month and year in which they occurred. But as time passes, a person's memory of the exact details of the event may fade. I remember getting my wallet lifted at Boston's South Station 16 years ago, but I don't remember how much money was stolen, the month it happened, or how I managed to get take the train home with no money to pay for my fare.

Recognizing this, it's important to design a survey so that detailed questions are asked about recent events and only more general questions are asked about events that took place a long time ago. We used another technique to improve the reliability of subject recall as it related to event dates: each interviewer had a calendar that had been filled in with the dates of significant events in Haiti over the previous two years. The calendar included events such as major storms, holidays, important things that were reported in the news media, etc. When a person reported a human rights violation, we tried to verify the date by asking what events occurred in the same time period and whether the violation happened before or after events for which we knew the exact date. Of course, no system is perfect, but researchers have developed techniques like this to improve the reliability of information gathered from survey respondents.

Could our survey in Haiti be replicated? Of course it could. We gave a very detailed explanation of our methods in the Lancet article so that people could replicate our type of study in Haiti or elsewhere if they wanted to use the Random GPS Coordinate Sampling methodology.

Of course, in doing our study we didn't ask about the years before the departure of Aristide. Our study was not motivated by the desire to prove a particular political point; rather, we wanted to know what was going on in Haiti at the time and what the extent of the human rights problem was so that services could be developed to address the needs of survivors. So for us, it wasn't so important to ask questions about two or three years prior. But if someone wanted to, they could. The information may not be as reliable as more recently recalled events, but I would assume that someone who has been sexually assaulted, shot, tortured or had their family member murdered would be able to recall the general details such as the date and the perpetrator five or ten years after the event. Less significant events may be harder to recall and the information might not be as reliable. Anyone who wanted to replicate our study could do it easily from our description in the Lancet article and I'd encourage them to really delve

How do you respond to people who note that (in two cases) research published in the Lancet over the years have been exposed as fraudulent. The implication is that therefore what the Lancet publishes cannot be trusted. Is there a medical journal with a much better track record than the Lancet?

The Lancet is up there with the New England Journal of Medicine and the Journal of the American Medical Association. It's a distinguished, reputable journal that has taken a very proactive approach to publishing public health studies such as ours, Les Roberts and his colleagues' study on mortality in Iraq, studies about conditions in the Palestinian Territories, and others that deal with significant human rights issues.

People uphold the New England Journal of Medicine and say that it is a more trustworthy source than the Lancet but the New England Journal of Medicine has also withdrawn papers because of fraud. The news media has this problem as well; look at the New York Times, the New Republic and others who

have had to withdraw reporting because it was fabricated. In research articles, people get caught often times because, using statistics, we can tell when data is fabricated. In my experience, fabricated data is never as real as real life.

Was the Haiti Human Rights Survey analyzed in this way?

Using statistics? Of course. We turned over the dataset to someone else, a professor who is an expert in this area, who not only reran the analysis we did for the article but also ran a series of statistical tests to see if the data was manipulated in any way or if there was bias associated with any one or a group of interviewers. And of course no irregularities or problems were found, which is why this accusation is a dead issue with all except a handful of individuals outside the academic world who have strongly-held opinions about particular political events in Haiti.

In looking at this issue of reliability, I think an important thing to remember is that you can't judge a research article by looking at the beliefs or presumed beliefs of the authors. After all, just like most people get into cancer research because they think cancer is a bad thing, most people who conduct human rights research do it because they think rape and murder are bad things.

To know if you can trust a research article, you must first read the study (not the media reports about the study or someone's convoluted list-serv post about the study) and know that you understand it. Then look at whether it has been peer-reviewed. Our study was reviewed by something like a dozen people, all of whom are experts in their field and all of whom made comments for suggested additions and revisions that strengthened the final paper. Look at the methodology. Is it sound? Does it use accepted practices? If it uses something new and different, is it well explained? Are there any problems in the methodology? Does the article use published peer-reviewed literature to back up the methodology and findings of the study?

What most surprised you about the way the corporate press responded to your survey?

I wouldn't say that I was particularly surprised one way or the other. I mean, we all know that human rights violations happened in Haiti during and after the coup. Journalists know this as well, whether or not they report it, they know what happened. And the mainstream North American press responded to our study the way they have responded to most news about Haiti: with silence.

I was a little surprised that the Miami Herald ran a letter to the editor from Gerard Latortue decrying our study and using my name in an accusation about children being trained in terrorism. If the former prime minister had an objection to our study, then his administration should not have authorize us to conduct the study. We did get written permission from the upper level of Latortue's administration prior to conducting the Haiti Human Rights Study and they were fully informed (in writing) of who was conducting the research and of the fact that I previously volunteered at the Lafanmi Selavi Center for Street Children. But then once Prime Minister Latortue heard that the results of our study included massive human rights abuses by government officials under his watch, then he objected to the study.

But overall I was most surprised and encouraged by the response our study received within Canada. Several newspapers, including the Montreal Gazette, reported on the study and the Canadian military responded by ordering an investigation into the actions of their soldiers who were part of the

Multinational Forces in Haiti after the departure of President Aristide. I would hope that other countries and their military forces would be as open to investigation and willing to consider how their soldiers have violated the human rights of ordinary citizens while on peacekeeping missions.

AUMOHD and CHRC: Two Years since Gran Ravin Massacres July 27th, 2007

By: Evel Fanfan and Tom Luce - HaitiAnalysis.com

On August 20th of 2005 the duly elected government of President René Préval had not been even envisioned. The out-law government of U.S. backed Gérard Latortue was proceeding with the agenda of eliminating pro-Aristide forces. Anti-Lavalas militias were cooperating with elements of the Haitian National Police that summer with full impunity as they carried out vengeance killings. Among these groups was the Little Machete Army based in Gran Ravin and headed by Rudy Kernizan.

The police head of the west department of Port-Au-Prince, Carlo Lochard, organized within his office a plan, utilizing members of the Little Machete Army, to arrest prominent Lavalas leaders, allegedly armed and violent, at a summer, "peace" soccer tournament at St. Bernadette's soccer field in Martissant an inner city zone on the flatlands leading to the harbor. The plan escalated into a Rwanda style massacre with Little Machete Army members hacking people to death, and the police shooting victims as well, over 50 dead. A follow-up massacre in Gran Ravin was carried out by the police including house burnings the day after. A total of 15 police were eventually arrested for this governmental crime, but were released, case closed, in February of 2006, just before the election of President Préval, by Judge Jean Peres-Paul.

On July 7, 2006 a second massacre occurred in Gran Ravin, carried out by the same Little Machete Army. Intensive peace-making efforts on the part of the Association of University Graduates Motivats For A Haiti With Rights (AUMOHD) and its local Community Human Rights Council (CHRC) in Gran Ravine were carried out throughout the fall of 2005 and into the beginning of 2006. Hundreds of residents including people from neighboring zones where violent retributions had been carried out in addition to the "soccer" massacre met for weeks in an attempt to obtain a disarmament agreement. This work was done by AUMOHD which insisted that the so-called "DDR" (demobilization, disarmament, reintegration) program of the UN not be brought in because of its clearly biased nature--allowing groups to turn in arms and then immediately arresting and jailing them.

A public reconciliation ceremony was held in March of 2006, amidst Canadian solidarity observers, with members of CHRC present, during which Rudy Kernizan of the Little Machete Army and Jean Louis Colson, a representative from Grand Ravine, and a community mentor, went on stage to pledge ongoing efforts at peace. As the new Préval government was just getting itself into operation, in spite of repeated urgent calls by AUMOHD for government intervention, the Little Machete Army struck again in Gran Ravin, slaying over 20 innocent men, women and children and burning 300+ homes creating over a 1000 refugees. And in a bold intimidation move to stop prosecution for massacre #1 and #2 the new CHRC-GR chair, Esterne Bruner, was assassinated on Sept. 21.

The original 1st massacre victims and their families are still without any justice as well as the second massacre victims and their families. The initial legal work on the Gran Ravin massacres was done by the Bureau des Avocats Internationaux (BAI). Since then AUMOHD has carried out frequent field/footwork in the area. AUMOHD has not received any communication from the government groups, Haitian or UN, regarding a petition and watchdogging efforts to prosecute the cases. It is hard

to tell what is being done to reform the judiciary which under Judge Jean Peres Paul (former head of the judges' association) threw out the cases of the police involved in the 1st massacre.

We can give credit to Police Head Andresol who did credible work under impossible circumstances in this first case and has been personally involved with the second. He is right when he says his job is done after the arrests are made. But the UN has not communicated since January with AUMOHD's supporter Human Rights Accompaniment in Haiti (HURAH). There are news reports that the UN continues to work with the police in the area and are still based at the high school that AUMOHD's assassinated human rights worker Esterne Bruner wanted vacated. However, agreements made at a January meeting with the UN Human Rights division to collaborate with AUMOHD, have not been kept.

According to the press and human rights sources there has been a reduction in violent crimes in Gran Ravin and Martisant. The minimal response to the pressure on the part of AUMOHD and the Community Human Rights Council (CHRC) from the government has been an allocation of some money to the families whose homes were burned last summer.

The CHRC of Gran Ravin has been working hard on trying to forge a peace plan that will prevent any further violence among neighbors in this volatile area. Support for AUMOHD's work continues to be very minimal. To contribute send a check to Joan Rae, Treasurer, P.O. Box 418, Faytson, VT 05673.

An Interview on Privatization with CEPR's Mark Weisbrot and Dean Baker

July 25th, 2007

By: Joe Emersberger - HaitiAnalysis.com

Haitian President René Préval recently announced the privatization of Téléco, the state telephone company. HaitiAnalysis approached two economists, Dean Baker and Mark Weisbrot, co-founders of the Center for Economic and Policy Research (CEPR) with questions about privatization.

One of Preval's arguments for privatizing Teleco has been that its employee per subscriber ratio is much higher than other companies operating in Haiti. What do you think of that as an argument for privatization?

MARK WEISBROT: Dean has made the main points [below]. I would just add that I was consultant to Aristide's first government when they first came under enormous pressure to privatize the telephone, electricity, cement and other companies, in 1996. At the time, the pressure was clearly from the US government and it was on behalf of private companies like MCI here. Even the IMF was not in favor of the privatization of the telephone company, because they knew that it was a huge source of revenue for a government that could hardly collect any taxes from rich people or businesses in Haiti, but was able to tax international calls. For them, that outweighed other considerations, and it did for me too.

DEAN BAKER: You have to make sure that you're comparing apples to apples when using a ratio like this. A public utility is often run deliberately as a public service rather than to maximize profit. This could mean, for example, that they are trying to provide service to hard to reach sections of the country (either because of distance, poor infrastructure, or crime). Private companies will cherry pick and take the easiest to reach sections. An analogy in the U.S. is that the U.S. postal service will deliver a letter to rural Alaska for the same price as it costs to send a letter across the street. If a private company specialized in sending letters across the street, it could clearly undercut the postal service, but of course they would not be delivering mail to rural Alaska.

Has there been a detailed analysis of the impact of privatization in Haiti or Third World countries generally?

DEAN BAKER: Not that I know of, but I do know of research by the World Bank on Social Security privatization that finds that it is not working very well. There is a book, "Keeping the Promise of Social Security in Latin America" published in 2004. by Indermit Gill, Truman Packard, and Juan Yermo, Stanford Economics and Finance.

Some have said it is foolish for progressives to defend state enterprises which have lost support among the poor due to corruption and poor service. How do you respond?

DEAN BAKER If no one likes a service, including the people who are supposed to be benefiting from it, then it's probably a good idea to ask why. If it provides bad service than we should be asking how it can be reformed. I would agree that it would be foolish to devote a lot of energy to defending an unpopular service in its current form. The question would be whether there is a better alternative to privatization.

Isn't Venezuela's oil company providing much more benefit to the public under the new management Hugo Chavez brought in? Isn't that an example of government drastically reforming a state enterprise without privatization?

MARK WEISBROT: Yes. Venezuela's state oil company (Petroleos de Venezuela, or PDVSA) provided \$13.3 billion of social spending last year, or 7.3 percent of GDP. For comparison, this is more than one and a half times US military spending as a percentage of our economy. The government's reform of the state oil company has also included raising royalty rates on foreign companies operating in Venezuela. Venezuela's oil production was nationalized in 1976 but by the 1990s it had become a relatively autonomous entity. Since the Chavez government got control over the industry, it has vastly increased oil revenues -- far beyond the increases in the price of oil -- and increased social spending per person by more than 300 percent over pre-1999 levels. PDVSA still has problems in its administration, but there is no question that millions of Venezuelans are better off as a result of the government's asserting control over the company and the industry.

It has also been argued that cell phone companies in Haiti have "democratized" the market - providing options for the poor. The suggestion is that privatization would offer more choices?

DEAN BAKER: The real question is what sort of choices might the company be offering if it were private that it can't offer because it is public. If we think that there are things that a privately run company would do, but the public company is not doing, then we should be asking why the public company isn't doing them. There are some things that a privately run company might do that may not be desirable, for example it may seek to break the unions at the company.

To what extent have cell phone companies owe their existence to government funded research in rich countries.

DEAN BAKER: Rich country governments have supported research that has helped develop cell phone technology. Of course, they have also funded research that has helped to improve fixed line technology. I'm not sure what impact these facts would have on the privatization decision.

When private companies offer relatively affordable products (computers or cell phones) people come to believe that it is the inherent efficiency of private companies that makes this happen forgetting, perhaps not realizing, how the research was funded by governments. Doesn't the lack of appreciation of the public role help the boosters of privatization?

DEAN BAKER: There are certainly many people who believe that governments cannot do anything, in part because they fail to recognize the impact that government funded R&D has had in raising productivity and improving the quality of life. This ideology can lead to a bias towards privatizing industries that may be successfully operated in the public sector.

Guy Philippe in Hiding According to Confidant
Haiti Analysis
Agence Haïtienne de Presse
July 19, 2007

Port-au-Prince- FRN (National Reconstruction Front) Deputy Ronald Etienne indicated Tuesday that the leader of the party, former police commissioner Guy Philippe, was not arrested during Monday's raid at his residence by DEA agents.

"Guy Philippe is for the moment in hiding", said Mr. Etienne, asserting that it is a very serious matter that foreign agents intervened in such a brutal manner at the home of a former presidential candidate.

After having taken up arms in January 2004 to support the GNB opposition in its efforts to overthrow the Aristide government, Guy Philippe filed as a presidential candidate in the February 2006 elections.

The Deputy appealed to President Préval to denounce the DEA operation against the former rebel leader.

"There are people", he said, "who would like to see Guy Philippe reduced to silence because he still has things to say following the revelations that political leaders and members of the business community had financed the armed operations of early 2004"

When asked why the head of his party was being sought by the authorities, Ronald Etienne indicated that Mr. Philippe has always denied accusations that he has been involved in drug trafficking. "Things could have been handled differently because Guy is an open individual, he could have responded to any judicial summons. There was no need to intervene with so much brutality at his residence", said the Deputy from Pestel, the home town of Guy Philippe.

For his part, Wilner Content, former Deputy from Jacmel, criticized the intervention of the DEA.

Why all this activity at the home of Guy Philippe, since it was known that he wasn't at home, asked Mr. Content.

He said that drug traffickers are dangerous people who impose their laws with the force of money.

"Some way should be worked out to arrest Guy Philippe who, during the anti-Aristide GNB campaign, was guilty of killing many civilians and police officers, and set fire to public and private institutions in the North, the Artibonite and the Centre Departments", said Mr. Content. He added that he hopes that all whose names have been mentioned by Guy Philippe as his accomplices will also be arrested and prosecuted according to the law.

More than 24 hours after the raid at the residence of Guy Philippe in Bergeau (Les Cayes), and the operation that led to the arrest of Lavaud François in Gonaïves, neither the Haitian authorities nor the US Embassy have provided any explanations or information, and have allowed the rumors to flow.

Rumors coming from sources close to the government even suggested Tuesday morning that Guy Philipe had been taken away on Florida the night before (around 9:00 PM). And the same sources were the ones who denied these very rumors as they had very little real information as to what actually happened.

Attempt made to Arrest Guy Philippe in Les Cayes

Haiti Analysis

July 18, 2007

Agence Haitienne de Presse

Les Cayes/Gonaïves- DEA agents attempted to arrest former Haitian army officer and former police commissioner Guy Philippe while at the same time, in Gonaïves, the DEA and the Haitian Anti-Drug-Trafficking Office (BLTS) arrested François Lavaud, the owner of Chachou Enterprises.

DEA agents in several black helicopters patrolled the airspace over Les Cayes (209 km south of Port-au-Prince), while other agents raided the residence of Mr. Philippe in the Bergeau district at the entrance to the city.

The former presidential candidate from the FRN Party was not at home during the raid. His wife, an Ecuadorian national, was taken into custody and later released.

In Gonaïves (180 km north of Port-au-Prince), François Lavaud, who had been named in an international warrant, was arrested.

In the City of Independence people were talking about the fact that Mr. Lavaud had been imprisoned in the United States before being sent back to Haiti.

Residents of Les Cayes and Gonaïves say the difficulties facing the two men are connected to drug trafficking. Former police commissioner Guy Philippe, who took up residence in Les Cayes several months ago, headed the armed insurrection in January and February 2004 to overthrow President Jean-Bertrand Aristide.

Mr. Philippe received police training in Ecuador and settled in the Dominican Republic following the attack on the Police Academy in Port-au-Prince on July 28, 2001.

He has recently made sensational statements that have embarrassed political leaders and members of the business community linked to the anti-Aristide GNB campaign. Guy Philippe indicated that it was these very Haitians who came to get him in the Dominican Republic and who financed the armed campaign of January and February 2004.

A diplomatic source contacted by AHP refused to comment on the operations conducted this Monday. The source simply said that there will be no safe haven for any drug trafficker and that one of these days his turn will come.