

HAITI NEWS ROUNDUP: JULY 21 – AUGUST 1, 2006

Haiti kidnap victim heads home

The Associated Press

The Staten Island Advance

August 1, 2006

ALBANY, N.Y. (AP) — A 70-year-old man snatched in daylight from a car in Haiti and then released a day later was due home Tuesday, two weeks after his brief ordeal.

Charles Adams was to arrive Tuesday night at Albany International Airport, about 50 miles south of his home in Queensbury, N.Y.

Adams was being driven back from a humanitarian meeting July 19 when a group of armed men ambushed his vehicle while it was stuck in traffic near the airport in Port-au-Prince. The retired businessman was in Haiti working on a water treatment program for Pure Water for the World, a Rutland, Vt.-based nonprofit organization.

Not long after Adams' driver escaped early the next morning, kidnappers told Adams he was free to go. They gave him an armed escort through a gang-ridden neighborhood even though he never paid the \$500,000 ransom initially set by his captors.

"As kidnappings go, this one was about as good as one could have asked for," Adams wrote in an e-mail just after his release.

Sandra Aubin, a friend and colleague who has been in contact with Adams since his release, said Tuesday that he appeared to be doing well and continued his work in Haiti before heading to the Dominican Republic on Friday.

"I think he was doing some rest and relaxation as well," she said.

Adams is among dozens of people kidnapped since President Rene Preval took power in May, raising fears that street gangs could destabilize the new government. The abductions come amid sharply increasing violence in Haiti's capital.

CARICOM's principled stand on Haiti
The Nation Newspaper, Barbados
8/1/06

ON THIS EMANCIPATION DAY, it is encouraging to note that the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) has taken a rather principled stand against the continuing incarceration of prisoners in Haiti for what it considers to be political reasons.

This publicly expressed concern would have quickly put to rest any notion in and out of Haiti, that last week's release from imprisonment of Yvon Neptune, former Prime Minister of the deposed Aristide government, would have been sufficient to drop demands for the release of others arbitrarily jailed following the February 2004 uprising that climaxed with the ousting of President Bertrand Aristide.

It may be recalled that a division within CARICOM following the downfall of the Aristide administration had frustrated the Community's initial proposal for an independent international probe into the circumstances of how that freely elected and legitimate government in Port-au-Prince came to an end.

With Aristide living in exile in South Africa, what has remained consistent is CARICOM's stand in favour of the release of those arbitrarily arrested and thrown into prison with claims of being victims of politics. The concern is that they should all be subjected to established due process and for the judicial system to function without interferences.

Once newly elected President Rene Preval was inaugurated, CARICOM lost no time in underscoring its anxiety for the release of Neptune, who was gravely ill at one stage, to be either brought speedily to justice or be released.

Always blending its concerns for human rights and judicial independence with expressed commitment to share its limited resources with Haiti while continuing lobbying efforts for international economic aid for that country, CARICOM's new call at the weekend for an end to the arbitrary detentions of other prisoners is, therefore, also deserving of priority attention.

After all, member states of CARICOM are morally committed to honouring the Community's Charter of Civil Society which deals with human rights and democratic governance, though still to be elevated with status as a legally binding instrument.

The hope is that not only in the case of Haiti but that CARICOM would be forthcoming also in demonstrating concerns when it comes to speaking out against gross human rights abuses and denial of established democratic norms in member states of the African, Caribbean and Pacific bloc of countries with which it is linked to the European Union.

That independence of spirit, the emancipation of the mind, remains more relevant and critical today in the face of the awesome man-made human tragedies that require, for example, small states in subregions like ours, to speak not with clarity, but with a forked-tongue, in support of the principles of inter-nationalism and respect for the rule of law.

In this context, it would be good to learn, for instance, what CARICOM as a small but vital bridge between the two Americas has to say about the horrendous human tragedies resulting from the current Israeli/Lebanese war.

Hundreds flee Haiti's gang violence
Compound near capital slum takes in 300 refugees as fighting escalates
By Myrna Domit
The Associated Press
South Florida Sun Sentinel
July 29 2006

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti · Hundreds of people fled their homes in a hillside slum of the Haitian capital Friday to escape fierce fighting between gangs that has killed at least 30 people in the past two months, officials said.

Families streamed away from the Grand Ravine slum with whatever they could recover from their houses -- many of which were set on fire by gangs from neighboring slums that are fighting for control of the area.

"I have no money, no house, no idea where I'm going," said Joseline Louis, a 55-year-old fruit seller.

Witnesses said at least three people were killed in recent days, but United Nations spokeswoman Sophie Boutaud de la Combe said she could not confirm any casualties.

A nearby compound run by the Haitian Evangelical Baptist Union became a makeshift refugee camp for about 300 people. The compound is three miles from Grand Ravine along roads patrolled by U.N. peacekeepers.

Florice Mepolelet, 30, squatted in the corner of the crowded compound with her two young children. She said her family has received only one bowl of rice with bean sauce from the Red Cross since fleeing the neighborhood on Thursday.

Most houses in the slum -- home to several thousand people -- appeared abandoned Friday, their tin roofs and concrete block walls blackened by fire. Blood was smeared on the door and the floor of one house.

Gang violence and kidnappings have surged in Haiti after months of relative calm following the election of President René Préval in February.

U.N. officials say the coordinated nature of the violence suggests an attempt to stir chaos by well-armed, politically aligned gangs.

Danel La Roche, 23, showed a wound in his upper back that he said was from a bullet.

"I have nothing to do with this fight," he said.

Peacekeepers did not shoot at the gang members because civilians were in the area, de la Combe said.

Haitian man's deportation hearing delayed
BY ALFONSO CHARDY
Miami Herald
July 31, 2006

Lionel Jean-Baptiste, the first naturalized American in recent times to be stripped of citizenship, will have to wait a bit longer to find out if an immigration judge at the Krome detention center will order his deportation.

Immigration Judge Kenneth S. Hurewitz reset Jean-Baptiste's case, which was initially scheduled to be heard Monday, for Sept. 12.

Hurewitz told Jean-Baptiste's attorney, André Pierre, he was swamped with other cases and did not feel he could devote adequate time to his client Monday.

"This is case is very interesting," Hurewitz said. "Let's spend the whole afternoon September 12 on this matter, that's the proper and fair thing to do," Hurewitz said.

Jean-Baptiste, 58, was convicted of drug-trafficking in 1997 and years later had his citizenship revoked on the ground he committed a crime before being sworn in -- even though he was not arrested, charged and convicted until after swearing allegiance to the United States.

Haiti, donors need to avoid mistakes of the past

Miami Herald

Op-Ed

July 28, 2006

It sure sounds good: Foreign donors pledge \$750 million in aid to Haiti, well beyond the \$500 million the country had requested to jump start its economy. Hold the applause. In Haiti, the road to misery is paved with good intentions and extravagant promises. Sometimes, the promises aren't kept. Too often, aid is mismanaged. For the average Haitian, it seems nothing ever changes. To ensure a different outcome this time, a different approach is required.

Lesson One: involves security: The U.N. "stabilization" mission of 7,600 peacekeepers has to stay in Haiti if the government of President Rene Preval is to have any chance of success. Nothing can be accomplished in the absence of safety and security. A premature withdrawal of U.N. forces would invite street gangs and organized criminals to take over. Just as there has been a U.N. military force in Cyprus since 1964, so there may have to be an armed U.N. presence in Haiti for years to come.

Lesson Two: There is no quick fix. Preval's government smartly set out a five-year agenda to take in pledges of \$7.1 billion in foreign aid. That's the minimum amount of time it will take to get Haiti back on its feet. What mismanagement, rampant crime and civil strife have not destroyed has been blown away by devastating storms. Want to help Haiti? Be prepared to stay for the long haul.

Lesson Three: Watch every penny. Previous efforts to aid Haiti have been riddled with gross incompetence. Take the effort to reform Haiti's judicial system. We tried that once before, after the restoration of President Jean-Bertrand Aristide.

It didn't work, perhaps because one of the supervisors of the U.S.-funded effort was a convicted felon and disbarred U.S. lawyer who resigned from his \$271-a-day consultant's job in 1996 after his record became known. This time around, the Preval government is asking for \$1.5 billion to fix its broken public-safety and judicial systems over the next five years. Let's hope they get better consultants.

Lesson Four: Haitians must be united. The first Preval administration, 1996-2000, was one big lost opportunity. Then, too, there were U.N. troops on the ground keeping the peace and much aid had been promised. But political infighting made progress impossible. Fed-up donors gave up and walked away.

This is the last chance for Haiti's political class to show that it is capable of governing. To do that, it must be able to make compromises and put the national interest above personal political ambitions.

The people of Haiti are desperate for a chance to improve their country, but they don't celebrate progress until they see it. The donor conference was a good start, but talk is cheap.

Haiti wants clear rules for trade with Dominican Republic
The Dominican Today
July 31, 2006

Santo Domingo.- Haiti's ambassador yesterday requested clear rules to confront trafficking of drugs, guns and people in the border zone, and for the Dominican authorities to not break their own laws and respect both governments' dispositions exactly, for trade to be as transparent as possible.

Fritz Cineas favors the establishment of companies such as the Group M, in the border that separates Dominican Republic from Haiti, to make the zone's economic development possible and create the conditions for Haitians do avoid crossing into Dominican territory in search of a better future.

Interviewed in Channel 9's Aeromundo program, Haiti's ambassador stated that the economic interchange between Dominican Republic and his country is constantly increasing and cited as an example the issuing of 120 visas daily, many of which are given to industrialists and retailers.

The diplomat affirmed that the relations between the two nations "are on a good path" and that Haiti's political instability has begun to subside.

CANADA WELCOMES RELEASE OF FORMER HAITIAN PRIME MINISTER YVON NEPTUNE

Press Release - Foreign Affairs and International Trade Canada

July 28 2006

The Honourable Peter MacKay, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Minister of the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, today welcomed the release from detention of former Haitian Prime Minister Yvon Neptune.

“I am pleased with the decision to liberate Mr. Neptune,” said Minister MacKay. “Canada has been concerned with the prolonged detention of Haiti’s former prime minister and that of other detainees, in violation of Haiti’s laws and international obligations. I welcome the new Haitian government’s commitment to improve delivery of justice and respect for human rights,” added the Minister.

Canada has repeatedly raised the case of Mr. Neptune with both the former transitional government and the current government. Canada has been concerned about the deteriorating state of health of Mr. Neptune and the delays in processing the case due to the weaknesses of the judicial system in Haiti.

Given the fragility of Haiti’s judicial system, Canada has been working to help define priorities that would lead to significant improvements. A significant proportion of Canada’s contribution of \$520 million over five years, announced at the July 25 international donors’ conference in Port-au-Prince, will serve to support justice reform as part of overall efforts to solidify the transition toward stability, security and good governance in Haiti, and to assure respect for human rights and the rule of law.

Caricom welcomes release of Haiti's former leader, criticizes 'arbitrary' detentions

The Associated Press

South Florida Sun Sentinel

July 30 2006

GEORGETOWN, Guyana--The Caribbean Community regional group has welcomed former Haitian prime minister Yvon Neptune's release from jail but criticized the "arbitrary" detentions of other prisoners in the troubled country, the group said in a statement.

Neptune was released from a Haitian jail Thursday, more than two years after he was arrested on charges of orchestrating the killing of opponents of ousted President Jean-Bertrand Aristide at the start of a rebellion that engulfed the country.

But Neptune's release "should not obscure the fact that a large number of persons supportive of former President Aristide arrested arbitrarily for what appeared to be political reasons under the interim administration have also been denied justice," the 15-member group, known as Caricom, said. It did not disclose further details.

Still, the group praised Haiti's new President Rene Preval, who took power in May, for efforts in strengthening the nation's judicial system.

Neptune's release came a day after the regional alliance announced plans to give Haiti US\$17 million (euro13 million) as part of an international effort to aid the impoverished nation of some 8 million people.

Eurasian Minerals Press Release
Eurasian Minerals Acquires Two Gold Projects in Haiti
CCN Matthews Press Release
July 31, 2006

VANCOUVER, BRITISH COLUMBIA--- Eurasian Minerals Inc. (the "Company" or "EMX") (TSX VENTURE:EMX) is pleased to announce that it has acquired the La Mine and Lamiel gold properties, located in the Caribbean country of Haiti. Both properties have epithermal gold mineralization documented by United Nations Development Program (UNDP) work, and are hosted in a geological terrain similar to the world-class Pueblo Viejo gold deposit located approximately 225 km to the east. EMX management believes that Haiti has significant geologic potential for the discovery of major new gold deposits. This potential, coupled with an improving business climate in Haiti, follows EMX's strategy of working in under-explored regions with excellent discovery opportunities.

Overview

The geology of Haiti is very prospective for epithermal gold-silver as well as copper-gold porphyry deposits, and consists of preserved remnants of an early Cretaceous island arc assemblage situated along the northern margin of the Caribbean Plate. This geologic environment hosts numerous gold and copper occurrences in Haiti, as well as the Pueblo Viejo deposit in the adjacent Dominican Republic. Pueblo Viejo has estimated resources and reserves of 15.25 million ounces of gold and 82.8 million ounces of silver (www.barrick.com, July, 2006). However, even though Haiti's mineral potential is similar to that found in the Dominican Republic, it has remained under-explored due to the country's historic economic and political instability.

From 1972 to 1985, in order to assist in developing Haiti's economy, the UNDP conducted extensive regional geological studies and exploration programs. The UNDP work is credited with discovering and documenting many gold and copper occurrences, including the gold mineralization at EMX's new La Mine and Lameil properties. These two project areas are covered by four EMX Exploration Permits totaling 37,788 hectares of mineral rights.

La Mine Project

The La Mine project is centered 15 km south of the Atlantic Ocean and approximately 50 km west of the port city of Cap Haitien. The property consists of one 9,950 hectare Exploration Permit, and includes three separate mineralized prospects at La Mine, Colombo, and Rivieres des Barres. Gold-silver-barite mineralization at La Mine was discovered by the UNDP, and explored by Kennecott from 1975 to 1977 (Kennecott results currently unavailable). Mineralization and alteration occurs over an area extending approximately 7 km north-south, and 1 to 2 km east-west, exposed through a series of structural windows. The UNDP (1980) reported that the area contains extensive epithermal mineralization, including massive barite with gold, massive sulfides, and an extensive epithermal stockwork-vein zone, with attendant gold-bearing gossans hosted by andesitic to dacitic volcanic rocks.

Within the La Mine prospect sub-area, the UNDP (1980) identified all three styles of mineralization:

- A zone of steeply dipping massive barite with sulfides and trench sampling results over 17 meters averaging 7.6 g/t Au, using a 1.0 g/t cutoff.
- A massive sulfide type of mineralization, including a boulder assaying 8.4% Cu, 1.2% Zn, 4.8 g/t Au, and 64.9 g/t Ag. The source of the boulder has yet to be identified.
- The third style of mineralization consists of an extensive stockwork vein zone that is reported to be 3 kms long (north-south) and approximately 100 to 200 meters wide. The stockwork mineralization was reported to contain 5 to 30% sulfides composed of pyrite-chalcopyrite-sphalerite.

At the Colombo prospect, the UNDP reported intrusive hosted stockwork zones, with up to 7.5 g/t Au reported from rock chip samples. The Rivieres des Barres prospect is also reported to contain stockwork style mineralization, and a strong copper in soil anomaly (UNDP, 1980).

Field review by EMX personnel, including Chief Geologist T.H. Chadwick, verified over 500 meters of vertical extent and 1.7 km of strike length to the high-sulfidation epithermal alteration and mineralization. The northwest trend appears to be composed of several near-vertical alteration zones controlled by northwest structures several meters to at least 20 meters wide. Vuggy silica and zones of massive barite occur high in the system at the southeast end of the known trend. Underlying zones of intensely argillized andesite are accompanied by disseminated and stockwork pyrite (5-25%), with covellite stringers (1-3%). Locally massive pyrite replacement was observed. The strongest covellite mineralization (2-5%) was not trenched by the UNDP or subsequent workers, and was found at the lowest elevation exposures encountered. The level of exposure of the system in general is very poor due to intense vegetative cover, and chances are thought to be excellent for discovery of additional mineralization.

Lamiel Project

The Lamiel project is located adjacent to the Haiti-Dominican Republic border, approximately 50 km south of the Atlantic Ocean and 65 km east of Cap Haitien. The property consists of three Exploration Permits, totaling 27,838 hectares that cover a 35 km long segment along the southern edge of the prospective Massif du Nord arc terrain. The project contains three areas of epithermal mineralization at the Grande Savane, Morne Bazille and Lamiel prospects. The Grande Savane area contains three argillic and advanced argillic alteration zones associated with a tabular silica cap, hosted in intermediate volcanic rocks over an area of eight square kms. Historic reports from the UNDP (1980) identified gold values up to 3.7 g/t gold from rock samples and a two km long gold in soil geochemical anomaly. The Morne Bazille and Lamiel prospect areas contain similar styles of alteration characteristic signatures of high sulfidation epithermal systems, including a quartz-barite-limonite cap, veins and breccias.

EMX Establishes Exploration Program in Haiti

EMX's appraisal is that Haiti's outstanding mineral potential has been overshadowed by political and economic turmoil during the last 20 years. EMX recognizes that the Government of Haiti is entering a new period of stabilization, favoring an environment for investment and growth. EMX considers this

an opportune time to establish an early-stage exploration program in Haiti focussing on known, but undeveloped occurrences. Further, EMX hopes to contribute to the economic and social development of the country, through successful development of productive mineral properties.

EMX's programs in Haiti are directed by Mr. Keith A. Laskowski, an industry veteran with over 25 years of international minerals exploration experience. Mr. Laskowski holds an M.Sc. in geology from the Colorado School of Mines, and worked for Newmont Exploration Ltd. from 1980-1997, including a posting as Caribbean Exploration Manager. Subsequently, Mr. Laskowski served as the President of Gallant Minerals Inc., and more recently as President and Chief Operating Officer of Solomon Resources Limited. Mr. Laskowski has established EMX's exploration office in Port Au Prince, which is headed by Dr. Dominique Boisson.

EMX is proceeding with work on the La Mine and Lamiel Exploration Permits, while pursuing additional early-stage opportunities in Haiti. These Permits have a maximum duration of two years, and provide for surface exploration activities, but no drilling. An Exploration Permit can be converted to a Research Permit, which does provides for drilling as well as feasibility studies. EMX has proposed a \$500,000 USD exploration program over the next two years consisting of regional geochemical sampling (streams and soils) with simultaneous mapping and rock sampling to delineate prospective target areas for trenching, and conversion to Research Permit status for drill testing.

Comments on Historic Exploration Results

The Company has referenced historical work results from the United Nations Development Program activities that were published as 'Exploration for Precious and Base Metals in Northern Haiti, Final Report Vol. 1, UNDP, 1980'. The Company believes that these results are reliable and relevant, and is currently performing independent verification and field follow-up.

Mr. Keith A. Laskowski, a Qualified Person as defined by National Instrument 43-101 and consultant to the Company, has reviewed and verified the technical information contained in this news release.

Forward-Looking Statement

Some of the statements in this news release contain forward-looking information that involves inherent risk and uncertainty affecting the business of Eurasian Minerals Inc. Actual results may differ materially from those currently anticipated in such statements.

The TSX Venture Exchange does not accept responsibility for the adequacy or accuracy of this release.

Petroleum Fund to assist Haiti's development
The Jamaica Gleaner
Sunday | July 30, 2006

GEORGETOWN, Guyana (CMC):

Caribbean Community (CARICOM) governments are joining the international community in providing funds to Haiti to jump start the Caribbean country's economic and social development.

The Caribbean Development Bank (CDB) will contribute US\$17 million towards the country, while Haiti will also have access to the Petroleum Fund established by Trinidad and Tobago in 2004 to provide relief to CARICOM member-states experiencing economic hardship resulting from persistently high international prices for energy products.

This is according to CARICOM's Assistant Secretary-General for Foreign and Community Relations, Ambassador Colin Granderson.

CARICOM to do utmost

Mr. Granderson said CARICOM would also "do the utmost with its own resources to lend support to Haiti's efforts to create the necessary conditions for reconciliation, reconstruction and recovery."

Granderson, who was part of the CARICOM team at this week's International Donors conference in Port-au-Prince, said plans were in train for a CARICOM technical assessment mission to visit Haiti in the coming weeks to work along with a Haitian counterpart team, in response to a request by President René Preval.

He said the community also intended to re-establish a technical office in Port-au-Prince, to facilitate Haiti's "regulatory and other efforts, as well as functional cooperation with the community in areas such as health, education, agriculture and natural disaster mitigation."

The CARICOM official said Haiti's re-engagement with CARICOM provided it with the "political, technical and functional support of the sub-regional grouping whose integration process continued to advance and to deepen."

Resuming support

"In this regard, Ambassador Granderson noted that CARICOM will focus on "resuming the support for Haiti's establishment of the required juridical, regulatory and administrative arrangements arising from the integration process."

The donor community meeting saw pledges of US\$750 million coming from the international community, a sum in excess of Haiti's request for \$500 million to expedite rebuilding activities for the period up to September 2007.

Aristide's premier is now a free man

Former Haitian Prime Minister Yvon Neptune was released after two years in jail.

BY NANCY SAN MARTIN

Miami Herald

July 28, 2006

PORT-AU-PRINCE - Former Prime Minister Yvon Neptune, looking frail in the wake of his on-and-off hunger strike, was freed Thursday after two years in prison and ferried away by an ambulance escorted by heavy security.

Neptune won his freedom one day after he spoke to the media for the first time since his arrest and vowed to fight what he called the "machine of injustice" responsible for his prolonged imprisonment without trial.

"The machine of injustice must stop," the barefoot Neptune told a small group of reporters in the barren bedroom that served as his cell. "This is not something that concerns just me. It is something that concerns all the Haitian people who don't have the means to face the machine of injustice."

Neptune's release brought a small measure of respect and goodwill toward the 2-month old government of President René Prével, who has called for national reconciliation in the aftermath of a revolt that toppled former President Jean-Bertrand Aristide in 2004. Neptune served as prime minister for Aristide.

Human rights activists hailed the new government's decision to free a man they had long considered as a political prisoner jailed by the U.S.-backed interim government that preceded Prével.

"It is a day of victory for a fight against injustice," Patrick Elie, a founding member of a Haitian citizens watchdog group that joined the international campaign for Neptune's release, said outside the prison walls. "Prime Minister Neptune has given us all a lesson in courage."

MANY DENIED JUSTICE

But scores of Aristide supporters and several thousand alleged criminals remain jailed without trials.

"I don't think that the justice system in Haiti has really redeemed itself," Elie said. "We've opened a chink in the armor of the beast. A lot remains to be done."

Neptune made no statements after his release and was taken to a hospital for a medical checkup. It was unclear what the next legal step in his case will be.

The U.N. mission in Haiti, in a written statement, said Neptune's health had "declined dramatically during his time in prison," and added that he would remain under medical care until he was well enough to go home.

2004 MASSACRE

The 59-year-old Neptune was jailed in connection with a 2004 massacre of Aristide opponents near the western port city of St. Marc. He has demanded his unconditional release and last year refused a deal that would have allowed him to leave for the neighboring Dominican Republic. An appeal seeking that the charges be dropped remains at a standstill since October.

"The appeals court has violated the rights of the political prisoner," said Neptune's attorney Mario Joseph. "As a political prisoner, he needs to fight for justice."

Elie called the case "emblematic" of Haiti's problems. His group claims that of an estimated 4,000 prisoners in jail here, only 10 percent have been tried and that many of them were arrested simply for supporting Aristide.

Neptune had been held in a two-story house next to the headquarters for the National Police that serves as a prison for high-profile inmates. The house, in the upscale neighborhood of Pacot, is surrounded by a tall steel fence topped with razor wire and guarded by police and some of the U.N. peacekeeping forces deployed here.

Neptune's room on the second floor had no furniture except for a cushion on the floor that served as a bed. The cushion was taken out of the prison Thursday, along with a suitcase carrying his belongings, including books on the Haitian constitution.

In his cell, Neptune kept two pieces of cardboard with handwritten messages in French and Creole. One welcomed "all who support truth and liberty" and the other called for doing away with injustice.

In his brief meeting with reporters Wednesday, Neptune spoke barely above a whisper as he lay on his bed, his head propped up by three thin pillows. He said that soon after Aristide fled, unnamed authorities came to him to tell him he had three options: exile, prison or death.

"Exile, they will never get me to leave; Prison, I'm already here; And death, that can come any time," Neptune said, speaking in English and Creole.

Asked if he blamed the U.S. government, which opposed Aristide, for his predicament, Neptune rolled his cloudy-looking eyes and snickered.

‘THE DAGGER IS HERE’

"The dagger is here," he said, pointing to his stomach. "You want me to give them the ability to twist it?"

"The truth is known now. It doesn't have to come from my mouth," Neptune added.

U.S. Ambassador Janet Sanderson told The Miami Herald Thursday that Washington played no role in the Neptune case. "We had absolutely no hand in his being arrested and have consistently condemned, both publicly and privately, his prolonged detention."

Since his arrest, Neptune has issued written statements questioning the arrests of other Aristide supporters, such as singer Annette Auguste, known as Só Ann, also incarcerated without trial since 2004. He also has implied that pressure from foreign opponents of Aristide -- not the revolt by armed gangs and former soldiers in 2004 who were at the doors to Port-au-Prince when Aristide fled abroad -- led to the president's downfall.

Aristide himself has said that U.S. and French officials all but forced him to surrender power and leave the country. Washington and Paris have denied the allegation.

"I have written and will continue writing about what I know," Neptune said. "I write about facts, not fiction. I will continue to do that as long as I live."

Haiti's former PM Neptune to be freed

Jul 28, 2006

By Joseph Guyler Delva

Reuters

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti- Former Haitian Prime Minister Yvon Neptune has been ordered released from prison, where he has spent more than two years following the ouster of President Jean-Bertrand Aristide, a prison official said on Thursday.

Human rights groups have repeatedly called on Haiti to free Neptune, who was arrested in June 2004, a few months after the populist Aristide gave up the presidency in the face of a bloody rebellion.

New President Rene Preval had said earlier this week that efforts were being made to free Neptune.

"We have received the order from the appeal court to free Neptune," said Wilkens Jean-Marc, Haiti's chief of prisons.

Neptune was among hundreds of Aristide supporters jailed by a U.S.-backed interim government after Aristide went into exile.

The former prime minister, who has said he was on a hunger strike for the last 15 months, was packing his bags at the prison on Thursday in preparation for his release. He expressed some reservation about the way he was being freed, apparently because it was unaccompanied by a declaration absolving him of wrongdoing.

"That's not exactly the way I wanted it to happen," Neptune said. "But the essential is that I'm going to recover my freedom after over two years of injustice."

The order for his release was made public a day after Neptune talked to reporters from his cell at the National Penitentiary annex in Port-au-Prince.

In the interview, he said Haiti's new government would be partly to blame if he died while in prison on charges he called false and politically motivated.

He said his arrest was a political decision by interim Prime Minister Gerard Latortue and former Justice Minister Bernard Gousse.

Neptune had served under Aristide, who was driven out in February 2004 during an armed rebellion. Neptune was detained on accusations that he masterminded what Aristide's opponents called a massacre on February 11, 2004, in La Scierie, a small village near the western port city of St. Marc.

Neptune has repeatedly denied the accusations and has never been tried. He complained that the international community that once championed his case had abandoned him.

On Wednesday, Neptune accused the administration of Preval, a one-time Aristide ally who took office in May, of continuing the "reign of injustice."

Jailed former Haitian prime minister speaks out

By NANCY SAN MARTIN

Miami Herald

July 27, 2006

PORT-AU-PRINCE - Former Prime Minister Yvon Neptune was freed Thursday afternoon, just hours after vowing that he remained as determined as ever to fight a "machine of injustice" that kept him jailed for two years without trial.

"The machine of injustice must stop reproducing itself," a barefoot Neptune had told a small group of reporters Wednesday in the barren bedroom that served as his cell. "This is not something that concerns just me. It is something that concerns all the Haitian people who don't have the means to face the machine of injustice."

Neptune's 20-minute talk with reporters came as human rights activists try to persuade him to end his on-and-off hunger strikes, even though they agree with his contention that his arrest was politically motivated. Neptune spoke barely above a whisper as he lay on a cushion set on the floor with his head propped up by three thin pillows.

"People understand the injustice they are doing to Neptune and other prisoners," said Ronald St. Jean, head of the Defense of Political Prisoners, a group that has collected about 1,500 signatures in Haiti and abroad appealing for a resolution in the case.

"Neptune also understands the significance of his message," St. Jean said. "We hope that he will give up his hunger strike and be set free."

The 59-year-old Neptune, who served under President Jean-Bertrand Aristide, was jailed in connection with a 2004 massacre of Aristide opponents near the western port city of St. Marc. He was among several prominent people jailed by the U.S.-backed interim government following a revolt that sent Aristide into exile in February 2004.

Neptune has been demanding his unconditional release and last year refused a deal that would have allowed him to go to the neighboring Dominican Republic. An appeal seeking that the charges be dropped was at a standstill since October.

"The appeals court has violated the right of the political prisoner," said Neptune's attorney Mario Joseph. "As a political prisoner, he needs to fight for justice."

Patrick Elie, a founding member of a citizens watchdog group that has joined the international campaign for Neptune's release, called the case "emblematic" of Haiti's problems. The group claims that of an estimated 4,000 prisoners in jail here, only 10 percent have been tried and that many of them were arrested simply for supporting Aristide.

"If we are able to spring Neptune loose, it will open doors for other prisoners arbitrarily arrested for political reasons," Elie said.

Neptune was being held in a two-story house next to the headquarters for the National Police that serves as a prison for high-profile inmates. The house, in the upscale neighborhood of Pacot, is surrounded by a tall steel fence topped with razor wire and is guarded by police and at least one soldier from the U.N. peacekeeping force deployed here.

Neptune's room, on the second floor, had no furniture, except for the cushion on the floor that served as a bed. He had a private bathroom and access to a balcony enclosed by bars that overlook the sprawling capital city and its seaport.

At his bedside were several plastic bottles of water, books on liberty and the Haitian constitution, a radio and a yellow legal pad with a few scribbled lines in his handwriting. Also nearby were an unlit candle and a small electric burner, a clock and his glasses.

Leaning against a wall a few steps away, were two pieces of cardboard with handwritten words in French and in Creole. One welcomed "all who support truth and liberty" and the other called for doing away with injustice.

Neptune said that soon after Aristide fled, unidentified authorities came to him with three options: exile, prison or death.

"Exile, they will never get me to leave; prison, I'm already here; and death, that can come any time," said Neptune, speaking in English and Creole. Asked if he blamed the U.S. government for his predicament, Neptune rolled his eyes and snickered.

"The dagger is here," he said, pointing to his stomach. "You want me to give them the ability to twist it?"

"The truth is known now. It doesn't have to come from my mouth," Neptune added. "I'm accused of being the mastermind and the accomplice for something that at first was a genocide and then a massacre and now I don't know if it's been reduced to a killing.

"And the supposed democratic government is now offering me the opportunity to run away. Does that make sense?"

During the interim government's tenure, Neptune said he received many visits from foreign diplomats, including some from the United States. But those visits have stopped.

"In quite some time, I don't see them anymore," he said. "I guess they don't like my line of thought and they don't like to hear the truth."

Haiti's former PM to be freed
News24, South Africa
27/07/2006

Port-Au-Prince - Haiti's former prime minister, Yvon Neptune, has been ordered released from prison after being held for more than two years following the ouster of President Jean-Bertrand Aristide.

Human rights groups have repeatedly called on Haiti to free Neptune, who was arrested in June 2004, a few months after Aristide gave up the presidency in the face of a bloody rebellion.

"We have received the order from the appeal court to free Neptune," said Wilkens Jean-Marc, Haiti's chief of prisons.

Neptune was among hundreds of Aristide supporters jailed by a US-backed interim government after Aristide went into exile.

U.S. Pledges Additional \$210 Million To Aid Haiti's Recovery
\$750 million pledged by global community at conference in Port-au-Prince
By Eric Green
U.S. State Dept.
July 27, 2006

Washington -- The United States has pledged almost \$210 million in additional funds over the next year to help in Haiti's economic recovery, announced Thomas Shannon, the State Department's top policymaker for Latin America and the Caribbean.

In his prepared remarks July 25 at an international donors' conference for Haiti held in Port-au-Prince and in other statements made following the event, Shannon said the new pledge follows previous U.S. funding assistance for the Caribbean nation.

Shannon said the U.S. funds will help build a "stable and well-governed" Haiti that "responds to the needs of its people and provides the foundation for broad-based economic recovery."

The new U.S. commitment to Haiti is subject to approval by the U.S. Congress, said Shannon, assistant secretary of state for Western Hemisphere affairs. Shannon said the Bush administration is committed to meeting its funding pledge to Haiti.

Shannon added that the new U.S. funds also are designed to continue strengthening Haiti's security sector through the "vetting, retraining, and reforming" of the country's national police.

Shannon indicated the United States will continue to assist programs that promote stability in Haiti's "vulnerable urban areas." He said these programs include working to increase the effectiveness of Haiti's judicial courts, reducing pre-trial detention and addressing Haiti's efforts to combat trafficking in persons.

A U.S.-backed countertrafficking seminar was held in Port-au-Prince, Haiti, June 29-30. At that seminar, U.S. Ambassador to Haiti Janet Sanderson said the United States would help Haiti's new government, led by President René Prével, to deal with the country's human trafficking problem. (See related article.)

Shannon said that the United States has disbursed more than \$390 million to Haiti in the two years since a donors' conference for Haiti was held in Washington in July 2004. That makes the United States the largest single-country donor to Haiti. At that Washington conference, the United States pledged \$230 million but gone far beyond that commitment. (See related article.)

Shannon cautioned that while Haiti has made progress since the 2004 conference, "significant challenges remain."

Most recently, he said, Haiti has experienced a rise in violence and unrest in some urban areas. "Haiti cannot develop if security is not addressed," Shannon said. "We must continue our support to the Haitian government to reduce violence, address impunity, and bring crime under control."

Shannon indicated that the United States intends to continue its support for developing Haiti's law enforcement capacity, and "we urge other donors to contribute to this effort."

A "final communiqué" issued by the more than 30 delegations in Port-au-Prince said the conference yielded about \$750 million in pledges for Haiti. This figure should help meet Haiti's budgetary and investment needs for a period lasting until September 2007, the communiqué said.

Also, the communiqué said the international community recognized that the Port-au-Prince conference represents a "new beginning" for Haiti, and it applauded the "will expressed by Haiti's government" to improve political and economic governance in the country.

The United Nations and other members of the global community also issued separate statements of support for Haiti.

In a short statement released July 25, U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan said that the fact that the donors' conference was organized in Haiti's capital of Port-au-Prince "illustrates the firm commitment of the Haitian authorities to shape their country's own destiny."

Annan said international support remains essential as Haiti "tries to rebuild its economic life and reform its rule-of-law institutions."

In a July 26 statement, Albert Ramdin, assistant secretary-general of the Organization of American States, said OAS would continue to support Haiti's efforts "to meet the many challenges that remain as it seeks to build stronger institutions."

With elections held in Haiti earlier in 2006, "the basic, but very critical and important conditions for democratic governability and for social and economic development have been created" in the country, said Ramdin.

In a July 24 statement, the Inter-American Development Bank said that over the next 18 months, it would work on new loans for Haiti that could rise to \$225 million for priority needs in the country. The organization's president, Luis Alberto Moreno, said he was convinced that Préval's new government "can establish the economic and institutional foundations for sustainable growth and poverty reduction in Haiti."

Ramdin's statement is available on the OAS Web site.

The Inter-American Development Bank statement is available on the organization's Web site.

IDB to focus support for Haiti on new government's priority sectors
Caribbean Press Release
July 26, 2006

IDB to focus support for Haiti on new government's priority sectors

Over the next 18 months, the IDB will work on new loans totaling \$150 million – which could rise up to 225 million – for transportation, electricity, water and sanitation in rural areas, rural value chains and natural resources management in key watersheds.

PORT-AU-PRINCE – The Inter-American Development Bank will focus its support for Haiti in priority sectors for the government of President René Préval, IDB President Luis Alberto Moreno said in a meeting held at the Presidential Palace with the Haitian head of state, Prime Minister Jacques-Edouard Alexis and members of the national cabinet.

In his speech, Moreno said the IDB would respond to short-term urgencies such as the collection of trash in urban areas.

In the medium term, the IDB will concentrate its efforts on key sectors for economic growth, such as basic infrastructure, transportation, electricity and drinking water services, agriculture and education.

“I'm convinced that this new government can establish the economic and institutional foundations for sustainable growth and poverty reduction,” Moreno said at the opening of the meeting with Haitian authorities, which was held on the eve of an international donors conference for Haiti.

The IDB, which has streamlined its procedures to speed up the preparation and execution of projects in Haiti, expects to use resources from an existing basic infrastructure loan to support a trash collection program in Port-au-Prince with the Pan-American Development Foundation and the Metropolitan Garbage Collection Service (SMCRS).

The program has succeeded in working in some of the most difficult neighborhoods of Port-au-Prince, alleviating the accumulation of trash and generating jobs for hundreds of people. IDB support could help expand the initiative to most of the city.

In addition, in response to a request from President Préval, the IDB will support the government's efforts to engage the Haitian Diaspora to increase their involvement in local investment and strengthening the public sector.

IDB-financed operations are helping to build the institutional capacity of Haitian government agencies, in particular the ministries and specialized agencies in charge of project execution.

IDB Support for Haiti

The IDB's portfolio in Haiti includes projects with a total value of some \$524 million, of which \$420 million are available for future disbursements. The IDB is the leading source of long-term lending for Haiti.

The portfolio includes projects in transportation (highways, rural roads, ports and airports), basic economic infrastructure, water and sanitation, urban rehabilitation, agriculture, education, health, local development, job training, environmental management and flood prevention.

Other IDB projects support the reforms to strengthen the Haitian public sector, with special attention to public finances on the revenue side (the tax bureau and customs service) and the expenditure side (budgeting, financial management, procurement and a new anti-corruption unit).

Over the next 18 months the IDB will work on new loans totaling \$150 million – which could rise up to 225 million – for transportation, electricity, water and sanitation in rural areas, rural value chains and natural resources management in key watersheds. Early childhood development is another area where it may provide assistance, through a program that would deliver essential micronutrients for infants.

The IDB also expects to provide support for private sector development, ranging from loans for expanding cellular telecommunications coverage to improving the business climate and fostering microfinance.

Is racism behind treatment of Haitians?

By PAULINE ARRILLAGA

Seattle Post Intelligencer

July 29, 2006

MIAMI -- The conference room at the law offices of Kurzban, Kurzban, Weinger and Tetzeli was crammed tight. Attorneys took turns at the microphone, their faces etched with frustration. The question they kept coming back to: Why?

Why, they asked, are Haitian immigrants singled out by the U.S. government for unequal treatment?

On this day, earlier in the year, the topic was temporary protected status, a designation the federal government can grant to foreigners allowing them to remain part time in the United States because of political unrest or environmental disasters at home.

Central Americans have repeatedly been granted protected status following hurricanes and earthquakes in Nicaragua, Honduras and El Salvador. Immigrants from Burundi, Liberia, Somalia and Sudan also enjoy such protections.

But Haitians have never obtained relief, despite decades of political turmoil, kidnappings and killings, and tribulations from tropical storms.

"Why aren't Haitians good enough for the same basic protections?" demanded Steve Forester, of the group Haitian Women of Miami.

The question has long haunted Haitians seeking refuge in the United States. But underlying it is a more provocative issue, one that some say reflects how ill-designed and blatantly discriminatory the U.S. immigration system has become:

Are Haitian immigrants treated differently simply because they are black?

Ernso Joseph, an orphaned Haitian boy, was among hundreds of migrants who waded ashore after their sailboat grounded off Miami in 2002. Though just 15 when he arrived, Joseph spent almost three years battling Department of Homeland Security officials who insisted he was over 18 and eligible for deportation. Even after a judge granted him asylum in 2003, the government kept Joseph in detention while it appealed the decision.

Last summer, after a juvenile court ruled that Joseph was a minor, an immigration judge granted him permanent residency.

"I feel like I went through a lot, but it was worth it," says Joseph, who lives in Miami and is going to school to learn English. Still, he says: "All the Haitians and all of the nationalities should get equal treatment when they come here."

At the news conference earlier this year, 6-year-old Stephann Jasmin sat curled like a kitten in his mother Jeannette's lap. Jeannette Jasmin lives under a deportation order, having escaped Haiti seven

years ago after being kidnapped and beaten by political foes. Denied asylum in the United States, she and her American-born son face separation now.

Renes Ledix was there, too. His daughter, 28-year-old Renette, remains in detention after fleeing storm-ravaged Gonaives, Haiti, to join her family in Florida last year. Her father, a U.S. resident, sought to bring Renette here under provisions of a 1998 law allowing Haitians with legal status in the United States to apply for admission of their minor children.

However, Renette "aged out" - turned 21 - while the application was being processed, making her ineligible for admission. Now asylum has been refused, and officials won't release Renette during her appeals process.

What accounts for the treatment of these Haitians?

Some, like former Attorney General John Ashcroft, have said Haitian restrictions are a matter of national security - that migrants from countries such as Pakistan have used Haiti as a staging point for entry into the United States.

Haiti is not on the list of nations the U.S. Border Patrol considers of "special interest" because of alleged sponsorship or support of terrorism.

But while Haitians are uniformly detained or turned back, at least 148 immigrants from Pakistan, Iran and other listed countries were arrested in 2004-05 - and then released on their own recognizance, according U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services.

Meanwhile, the Border Patrol apprehended 30,843 Brazilians at the Mexican border in fiscal year 2005, an increase of 258 percent over the previous year. And though Brazil's border region with Paraguay and Argentina has been labeled a source of fundraising for radical Islamic groups by U.S. officials, more than 20,000 of these immigrants were released on their own recognizance.

Consciously or unconsciously, says Alex Stepick, director of the Immigration and Ethnicity Institute at Florida International University, the American policies on Haitians are driven by racism.

But such "specific, restrictive and repressive" policies, he says, also derive from negative stereotypes of Haitians as poor, uneducated and diseased because they hail from the Western Hemisphere's most impoverished nation.

"We have this perception of Haitians being basically pathetic. It's a misperception, and it simplifies the reality of Haiti extraordinarily," says Stepick, whose book "Pride Against Prejudice" examines the backlash against Haitians who emigrate to America. "Nevertheless, it's a perception that does lie behind many of the actions of the U.S. government and general public opinion."

Immigration officials maintain race has nothing to do with their rules.

Jan Ting, an assistant commissioner for refugees, asylum and parole at the Immigration and Naturalization Service during the first Bush Administration, acknowledges policies have singled out

Haitians for "undeniably harsher treatment." However, he holds that such measures are warranted to deter dangerous, and sometimes deadly, surges by sea.

"The government has a genuine fear of triggering a mass migration. Because Haiti is so close to the United States and because there are so many people in Haiti who would like to come to the United States, there is a fear ... that if we treat people too nicely or too gently and give them release from detention too quickly that will simply encourage lots of people in Haiti to make the effort," Ting says.

One such exodus occurred in 1980, when an estimated 25,000 Haitians joined 125,000 Cuban exiles in the outflow known as the Mariel boatlift. From 1991 to 1994, the U.S. Coast Guard intercepted another 69,000 Haitians.

Since then, however, the numbers have plunged. From 2000 on, the Coast Guard has discovered more Dominicans making the journey by sea than Haitians: more than 14,000 compared with some 12,000. Interdictions of Cubans aren't far behind, at more than 10,245.

Some Haitian rights advocates argue that the government's deterrance-for-safety's-sake argument also carries little weight in light of its open-door policy toward Cubans, allowing most Cubans who reach U.S. shores to apply for permanent residency one year later.

"It doesn't make any sense," says Marleine Bastien, who heads Haitian Women of Miami. "Does that mean that the Department of Homeland Security is more concerned about Haitians' lives than Cubans' lives?"

"Is it a crime to want to flee for freedom, for safety?" she adds. "Why is it a crime for Haitians?"

Nowhere are these inequalities more glaring than in South Florida, where even Haitians and Cubans arriving on the same beach at the same time in the same manner are treated differently.

In April, authorities detained 44 Haitians after they landed on a beach north of Miami in a 45-foot cabin cruiser. Also aboard was a Cuban man. The Haitians were processed for removal.

The Cuban, said Border Patrol spokesman Steve McDonald, "by virtue of the fact that he's Cuban and eligible to adjust his status under the Cuban Adjustment Act will ... have the opportunity to request to stay."

\$750 million in aid pledged to help Haiti

BY NANCY SAN MARTIN

Miami Herald

July 26, 2006

Haiti's prime minister praised 'a new window of opportunity' for his scarred nation after foreign donors pledged \$750 million in initial aid -- 50 percent more than had been asked.

PORT-AU-PRINCE - Representatives from more than 50 international organizations and nations Tuesday promised \$750 million in aid toward Haiti's efforts to claw its way out of an economic and social pit.

The pledge was \$250 million above Haiti's appeal for an immediate cash input of \$500 million over the next year and a total of \$7.1 billion over five years to fund eight priority projects, including road construction and strengthening the security, education and health systems.

"We are happy for the support and commitment," Prime Minister Jacques Edouard Alexis said at the closing of the daylong International Conference for the Economic and Social Development of Haiti. "This will allow us to erase the burden and errors of past governments."

'AN OPPORTUNITY'

President René Préval called the promises "an opportunity for Haiti to get back on track on the path to democracy."

The support comes as Haiti struggles with a wave of violence and kidnappings that threatens to destabilize his 10-week old presidency.

Alexis said that even though Haiti is going through a "difficult and turbulent moment," the country's leaders remain hopeful and welcome support for programs that would allow Haiti to "recover its international sovereignty on the path to development, lasting development."

"We are at a new starting point, a turning point where all of our efforts must yield a democratic society," Alexis said. "A new window of opportunity is opening up before us. We must seize this opportunity. We have a country to build."

Alexis said the initial funds would be used to develop projects that would help create jobs, raise salaries and improve electricity, potable water supplies and roads. He called security an "unacceptable" problem and, when asked how he planned to combat that issue, said: "There are going to be carrots and sticks."

Alexis also said that before Haiti can ask for outside help, it must do more at home. He had a strong message for people who evade taxes or contribute to rampant corruption and the smuggling of goods.

"The country considers you all as traitors," he said. "My government will fight mercilessly against corruption, smuggling and tax evasion."

International aid just recently began to trickle back into Haiti after years of frozen funds due to political troubles. The European Commission blocked some \$90 million in aid five years ago during the government of former President Jean-Bertrand Aristide, forced out by a revolt in 2004.

Albert Ramdin, assistant secretary general for the Organization of American States, said Haiti's economic proposal was a "work in progress" that will be reviewed each year.

`STEP BY STEP'

"Slowly, step by step, we'll have to lay the foundation for sustained growth," he said. ``Everybody wants to see Haiti grow and prosper, and not always as a problem."

Edmond Mulet, the U.N. representative in Haiti, pledged continued support but warned that if the security problems were not solved development would be hindered. The capital has experienced relative calm in the months since Préval's election in February, but a recent rash of killings and kidnappings has heightened tensions again.

Mulet said that in order to preserve stability, the government "must uphold the principles of good government" and develop a strong alliance with the international community.

Among the other organizations that pledged support were the Inter-American Development Bank, the U.S. Agency for International Development, the World Bank, the Organization of American States and the 15-nation Caribbean Community.

"Haiti is emerging from a long winter of discontent," said Jamaican Foreign Minister Anthony Hylton. ``We all have a responsibility to ensure that the sun remains shining for all Haitian people."

Donor nations pledge \$750 million for Haiti

Wednesday, July 26, 2006

by Joseph Guyler Delva

Reuters

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti: International donors pledged \$750 million on Tuesday to help fund impoverished Haiti's economic recovery efforts for the next fiscal year.

Delegates from about 40 nations and financial institutions gathered in Port-au-Prince for a conference aimed at helping the turbulent and destitute Caribbean nation build social and economic stability.

Haiti's government had asked for \$540 million in immediate donations as part of an overall request for \$7 billion to pay for long-term efforts to improve security, build roads, improve health and agriculture and promote institutional reform in the poorest nation in the Americas.

The pledges for short-term funding were expected to clear the way for the newly elected government of President Rene Preval to submit a budget to parliament.

The donor community pledged \$1.3 billion in 2004 to help Haiti rebuild after an armed rebellion toppled the government of President Jean-Bertrand Aristide, but the interim government that replaced Aristide complained that less than half that amount had actually been disbursed.

Participants in this week's meeting included delegates from the World Bank, the Inter-American Development Bank, the European Union and the U.S. Agency for International Development. They planned to meet again in November in Madrid to consider long-term funding for Haiti.

DR projected growth for '06 an estimated 8%, Haiti's 2.5%
The Dominican Today
July 26, 2006

SANTO DOMINGO.- Dominican Republic and Haiti, in the unique situation where two nations share a same island, will present completely opposite growth rates this year paradoxically, according to the predictions emitted by the Latin America and the Caribbean Economic Commission.

In its more recent report, the Commission indicates that Dominican Republic will register an economic growth of 8% this year, the greatest of all Latin American countries, only equaled by Venezuela.

Nevertheless, Haiti, border country to Dominican Republic, will be the one showing the slowest economy with a growth of only 2,5%.

The Economic Commission predicts the region will grow around 5% during this year, but the macro growth dynamism has not been sufficient, because Latin America and the Caribbean continues showing lesser growth rate than the rest of the developing world.

The average growth will be between 3,5% and 6,5% for most Latin American countries, with the exceptions of Argentina, Dominican Republic and Venezuela, that will grow at rates superior to 7,5% and of Haiti, that will border 2.5%.

The report foresees other Caribbean countries will grow 6,3%, those of South America 5,4%, and Mexico and Central America 4.1%.

Latin American Economy Growing
MSN Money
Associated Press Business News
July 25, 2006

SANTIAGO, Chile (AP) - Strong exports and a solid U.S. economy will help Latin American and Caribbean countries post overall economic growth of 5 percent in 2006, compared to 4.5 percent growth last year, a U.N. agency said Tuesday.

It will be the fourth consecutive year of growth for the region, although it will be less brisk than in other developing regions in the world, according to a report by the Economic Commission for Latin American and the Caribbean, ECLAC.

Jose Luis Machinea, executive secretary of the Santiago-based agency, said the region's solid economic performance this year was partly due to an expected slowdown not materializing in the U.S. economy, a leading destination for the region's exports and a major source of investment.

"Late last year it looked like the growth of the regional economy would slow down, but that did not happen," Machinea told a news conference.

Trinidad and Tobago, with 10 percent gross domestic product growth, and Venezuela with 8 percent growth, were expected to lead the region's economic expansion, boosted by their oil income.

Brazil and Mexico, the region's two largest economies, both are expected to grow 4 percent.

Haiti, the region's poorest country, is expected to show the region's slowest growth estimated at only 2.5 percent.

High energy prices, however, are expected to be a drag on the region's economies in 2007, when growth is expected to slow to 4.5 percent, according to ECLAC.

Machinea said investments continue to increase in Latin America "but there are still not enough to reach higher growth rates that are needed to reduce poverty in the region."

Still, he said, the Latin American and Caribbean economies "are now less vulnerable than they were in the past."

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Haiti Suffers And Bleeds
The Bahama Journal
July 25, 2006

The Republic of Haiti is in a mess. Depending on who you talk to the impression you get is either a place where order is being established inch by inch; or that it is a place where those who build are matched one on one by those who would destroy.

Today, this once great nation -and still proud people- suffers and bleeds.

And for sure, regardless of orientation and political disposition, there is agreement on the one fact that Haiti is a place where the gun and those who own them are in the ascendant.

And for sure, the truth is that gun violence, drugs trafficking and human cargo smuggling are literally big business in that hard place.

This is all so very sad for the vast majority of Haitian people who only want a space in this world where they and their children can live in dignity and in freedom.

We now hear say that kidnapers have joined the fray. This is so very much the case that reference is made to a so-called "surge".

In this regard, we are learning that "the kidnapping surge has destroyed a tense calm that prevailed since President Rene Preval took power in May, and prompted new criticism against the U.N. peacekeeping force sent to restore order after the 2004 revolt that toppled ex-president Jean-Bertrand Aristide."

We are told that "the abductions come amid sharply rising violence in the capital, including this month's slum massacre of 22 people. Police blamed the killings on warring gangs but have made no arrests."

U.N. and Haitian officials disagree on whether the recent violence is politically motivated.

The U.N. mission says the coordinated nature of the recent attacks suggest an attempt to stir chaos by the gangs, many of which are loyal to Aristide and are demanding his return from exile in South Africa.

But Preval insists the troubles are criminal - not political - acts by wanted fugitives, corrupt police and drug traffickers.

Try as they might to put their poverty wracked nation on a right footing, Haitians are today being obliged to face certain troubling facts. Highest on that misery list would be the continuing incidence of lawlessness in so many parts of that country.

As we have previously noted, guns and gun-related violence are among the facts that few Haitians ignore. Living as they do in a time of dread, terror, and in a place where the law of the gun prevails, average Haitian people are obliged to yield space and place to the hard men with the guns.

And as we have also observed, we have come to understand that some average Haitians are today obliged to live on a razor's edge of poverty, hunger and withering despair.

Truth, too, is that their countrymen who reside in The Bahamas are wracked in the throes of pain as they wait for more bad news from home.

But despite it all, the vast majority is resilient enough to abide this life's myriad of fearful vicissitudes. With the help of some who have escaped, the Haitian people somehow –and sometimes just somehow– manage to eke out an existence, proving that human beings are resilient, and that they will survive.

It is also clear, however, that no real or sustained development can take place in an environment where squalor, violence, crime and other social obscenities are allowed to take root.

Unfortunately, this seems to be the state of affairs in a Haiti where its newest crop of leaders want so much by way of sustained development assistance for their country.

Tragically, the news too is that Haiti bleeds; some of its fearful neighbors take steps to cleanse themselves of the so-called influx. And even as steps are taken to expatriate some and repatriate some hapless others, more desperate refugees make preparations to take the perilous ocean voyage to The Bahamas.

We are today convinced that they will continue to come as long as the crisis in Haiti persists. We also know that the crisis engulfing Haiti includes two key dimensions; one involving security issues; and the other pertaining to poverty and hunger.

Quite evidently, neither set of problems can be solved in a setting that is suffused with lawlessness.

In the meantime, we are learning that U.N. and police officials say that they are doing all they can and blame Haiti's notoriously corrupt justice system for releasing suspected kidnappers and other criminal suspects who can afford bribes.

More needs to be done. For our part, we do believe that the United States can and should do more to help. Haiti's contemporary condition has come about as a direct consequence of U.S. action, intervention and neglect.

Donors promise aid to struggling Haiti

By Nancy San Martin

Miami Herald

July 25, 2006

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti - Representatives from more than 50 international organizations and nations Tuesday promised \$750 million in aid toward Haiti's efforts to claw its way out of an economic and social pit.

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WHERE THE MONEY WOULD GO

The Haitian government is seeking \$7.1 billion in foreign aid over the next five years in eight areas:

_Public works: \$1.5 billion

_Social programs: \$120 million

_Justice and public safety: \$1.5 billion

_Tax collection resources: \$150 million

_Reinforcing state institutions: \$850 million

_Education: \$930 million

_Health: \$1.2 billion

_Agriculture and environment: \$850 million

Donor nations pledge \$750 million for Haiti

26 Jul 2006

Reuters

By Joseph Guyler Delva

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti - International donors pledged \$750 million on Tuesday to help fund impoverished Haiti's economic recovery efforts for the next fiscal year.

The pledges exceeded the \$540 million requested by the newly elected government of President Rene Preval and Prime Minister Jacques Edouard Alexis in immediate donations to help build roads, schools and hospitals and to strengthen Haiti's police force and judicial system.

Delegates from about 40 nations and financial institutions gathered in Port-au-Prince for a conference aimed at helping the turbulent and destitute Caribbean country build social and economic stability.

The World Bank's director for the Caribbean, Caroline Anstey, said she was encouraged by the new government's assurances that the money would be spent responsibly.

"I think Mr. Preval and Mr. Alexis have made strong commitments to that kind of transparency, accountability that donors request to move forward," Anstey said. "It's a new beginning. We need to act now to break that vicious cycle of poverty, insecurity and instability."

The pledges were expected to clear the way for Preval's government to submit a budget to parliament for the fiscal year that begins on Oct. 1

"We are delighted by the commitment of the international community," Alexis said. "Its response has been enthusiastic. We'll make sure those funds are used for good ends."

Haiti has requested \$7 billion to pay for long-term efforts to improve security, health and agriculture and promote institutional reform in the poorest country in the Americas. Donors planned to meet again in November in Madrid to consider long-term funding for Haiti.

Participants in the meeting included delegates from the World Bank, the Inter-American Development Bank, the European Union and the U.S. Agency for International Development.

The donor community pledged \$1.3 billion in 2004 to help Haiti rebuild after an armed rebellion toppled the government of President Jean-Bertrand Aristide, but the interim government that replaced Aristide complained that not all the money had been disbursed.

The World Bank pledged \$61 million for the next year, on top of \$66 million already committed.

The donor pledges for the coming year include \$120 million to compensate employees who were fired arbitrarily during the interim administration, fund job training, establish small businesses and integrate former soldiers into the civilian work force.

The pending long-term funding request includes \$1.2 billion for health projects and \$1.5 billion for public works projects, including a road system that would link all of Haiti's provinces.

Provide justice, not charity
South Florida Sun Sentinel
Op-Ed By Brian Concannon Jr. and Anthony Phillips
July 24 2006

When international diplomats and financiers convene Tuesday in Port-au-Prince to discuss development assistance with Haiti's newly elected government, the one issue certain to be off limits is the one certain solution to Haiti's grinding poverty: repayment of the "independence debt" that France illegally extorted from Haiti in 1825. The crushing burden imposed by that debt -- over \$21 billion in today's dollars -- is the principle historic cause of Haiti's underdevelopment, and is directly responsible for today's grinding poverty in Haiti.

Haiti's history is remarkable. In 1804, Haiti became only the second independent country in the Americas, the world's first "black republic" and the only nation in history born of a successful slave revolt.

Haitians won their independence by beating the French army in a bloody 12-year war, but European countries and the United States forced them to pay a second price to gain entry to the international community. The world powers refused to recognize Haiti's independence, while France posted warships off her coast, threatening invasion and the reinstatement of slavery. After 21 years of fighting this isolation, Haiti succumbed to France's unjust terms in 1825. In exchange for diplomatic recognition, Haiti agreed to take out a loan from a designated French bank and pay compensation to French plantation owners for their loss of "property," including the freed slaves.

The amount of the debt, 150 million French francs, was 10 times that of Haiti's total 1825 revenue and twice the price paid in 1803 by the United States to France for the Louisiana Purchase, some 74 times more land.

This imposition of compensation by a defeated power and reimbursement by freed slaves of their former owners is unique in history and violated international law even in 1825. The agreement began a cycle of debt that has condemned the Haitian people to poverty ever since. Haiti did not finish paying the loans that financed the debt until 1947. Over a century after the global slave trade was recognized and eliminated as the evil it was, the Haitians were still paying their ancestors' masters for their freedom. The crippling legacy of debt begun in 1825 has stifled Haitian development ever since.

The government could not invest in education, health care or infrastructure projects because all available funds went overseas. In 1915, for example, 80 percent of government revenues went to debt service. The need for hard currency forced Haitian farmers to favor financially or environmentally risky cash crops such as coffee and hardwood, rather than development of a diverse national economy. Over-farming and over-logging led, in turn, to catastrophic deforestation and soil erosion, which put more pressure on the remaining arable land.

Economic instability has engendered political instability: Haiti has been beset by dozens of coups, rebellions, foreign military interventions and a cycle of violence that paralleled the country's downward economic spiral. Today Haiti is the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere, with 80

percent of its people living below the poverty line, and is ranked 153rd out of 177 on the U.N. Human Development Index, far behind all of its Caribbean neighbors.

The \$21 billion, in current terms, that France extorted illegally, and therefore owes Haiti, dwarfs the aid packages being debated in Port-au-Prince this week. Unlike loans and other foreign assistance, a just repayment of the independence debt would not extend dependence on foreign aid, and would allow the people of Haiti to develop their country as they, not the international community, think best.

If the international community were serious about lifting Haiti out of its desperate poverty, repaying the independence debt would be at the top of the agenda, not off the table.

Brian Concannon Jr. is director of the Institute for Justice and Democracy in Haiti; Anthony Phillips is a student at the University of San Francisco School of Law and an intern with IJDH.

Annan applauds staging of international donors' conference in Haiti
UN News Centre
25 July 2006

Welcoming today's international donors' conference for Haiti, Secretary-General Kofi Annan called on donors to give generously so that the impoverished Caribbean nation can rebuild its economy and infrastructure.

The one-day conference, being held in the capital Port-au-Prince, follows presidential elections in February that were won by René Préval.

In a statement issued by his spokesman, Mr. Annan said "the fact that is being organized in Port-au-Prince for the first time illustrates the firm commitment of the Haitian authorities to shape their country's own destiny."

Urging donors to make generous pledges, the Secretary-General said international support remains essential as Haiti tries to rebuild its economic life and reform its rule-of-law institutions.

Government of Canada Shows Support for Rebuilding Haiti
CCN Matthews
July 25, 2006

OTTAWA, ONTARIO- The Honourable Josee Verner, Minister of International Cooperation and Minister for la Francophonie and Official Languages, the Honourable Peter MacKay, Minister of Foreign Affairs, and the Honourable Stockwell Day, Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, today announced that Canada will allocate \$520 million for the reconstruction and development of Haiti from July 2006 to September 2011. This announcement was made during the International Donors' Conference for the Economic and Social Development of Haiti, which is being held today in Port-au-Prince, Haiti.

The Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) will allocate \$485 million of this amount to strengthen political governance, national reconstruction, economic recovery, and to provide access to basic services for the population.

"Haiti's newly elected government has outlined priorities that will set the country firmly on the path of reconstruction and development," Minister Verner said. "Canada is pleased to be one of the principal donors to these important reforms that the Government of Haiti will implement during its five-year term."

The \$15 million contribution of the Department of Foreign Affairs comes from the Global Peace and Security Fund and is intended mainly to support the security and justice sectors.

"I am encouraged by the determination of the Haitian authorities to hold elections, deal with problems of national security in the country, and promote political reconciliation, as well as institutional reform," said Minister MacKay.

Nearly \$20 million will be allocated through the Canadian Policing Arrangement to maintain up to 100 Canadian police officers as part of the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH). Renewal of the police peacekeeping component for this mission will be required for 2007 and beyond.

"The work of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police in Haiti will provide the support and expertise required to stabilize the region," said Minister Day.

Canada's commitments are in response to requests made by the Government of Haiti in its Interim Cooperation Framework (ICF). This framework, which was to end in July 2006, has been extended to September 2007. The funding announced today to assist Haiti includes \$135 million allocated exclusively to support activities planned during this extension period.

For more information about Canada's development assistance in Haiti, please visit the Haiti webpage on CIDA's website.

Backgrounder

Canada's Commitment to Haiti

Context

In 2004, the Government of Haiti presented international donors with an Interim Cooperation Framework (ICF) to support Haiti's development. Haiti's newly elected government wanted to extend the ICF to the end of September 2007, and to this end, it provided donors with a document that outlines its priorities and financial needs for the extension period. The document also outlines the Government's vision for its five-year term (July 2006-September 2011) and highlights activities that will contribute to social peace in Haiti.

Two-phase Commitment

Based on this document, Canada and other donors announced their financial contributions at the International Donors' Conference held July 25 in Port-au-Prince, Haiti. The funding announcements made at this conference are in two phases. The first covers the new Government of Haiti's five-year term from July 2006 to September 2011, and the second covers the ICF's 15-month extension.

1. Five-Year Term (2006-2011)

The Government of Canada plans to provide \$520 million during the new Government of Haiti's five-year term. This amount includes a contribution of \$485 million, about \$95 million a year, by the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA). The funding will continue to provide support for the ICF's four pillars: political governance, national reconstruction, economic recovery, and access to basic services.

The Department of Foreign Affairs will continue its efforts to help strengthen security and justice; disarmament, demobilization and reintegration; and prison reform. The Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) will be responsible for selecting and deploying Canadian police officers as part of the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH).

2. ICF Extension

Of the \$520 million Canada has committed to help rebuild and develop Haiti, \$135.5 million will be disbursed during the ICF extension period from July 2006 to September 2007.

- CIDA will disburse \$104 million for health, education, power grid rehabilitation, local development, and economic recovery projects.
- Foreign Affairs Canada will contribute \$15 million through the Peace and Security Fund.
- Close to \$16.5 million will be allocated through the Canadian Policing Arrangement to maintain up to 100 Canadian police officers as part of MINUSTAH.

U.S. Participating in International Donors' Conference for Haiti
State Department, USAID officials leading delegation at event
By Eric Green
US State Dept.
July 24, 2006

Washington -- The United States is participating in a July 24-25 international donors' conference for Haiti designed to help the new Haitian government of President René Préval with social and economic development in the Caribbean nation.

Thomas Shannon from the U.S. State Department and Adolfo Franco from the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) are leading a U.S. delegation at the conference, taking place in Haiti's capital of Port-au-Prince.

Pledges from the international community are scheduled for the July 25 session. Almost 30 countries and international organizations are participating in the conference, which includes the Inter-American Development Bank, the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and CARICOM, a 15-nation bloc of Caribbean nations.

The State Department says the Port-au-Prince event will build on the strong show of support for Haiti's new government made by the international community at a May 23 ministerial meeting in Brasilia.

In Brasilia, the department said the global community reiterated its commitment to Haiti's long-term development and agreed to support the Preval government's goals of building sound democratic institutions, promoting national dialogue, increasing private sector investment, promoting solid economic policies and extending basic services to every corner of Haiti.

Shannon, the State Department assistant secretary of state for Western Hemisphere Affairs, and Franco, USAID's assistant administrator for Latin America and the Caribbean, also led the U.S. delegation at that Brasilia meeting.

The meeting also reunited what is called the "Core Group on Haiti" -- the United States, Canada, Latin America and the European Union -- and reconfirmed the commitment of nations that have sent peacekeeping troops to Haiti under the banner of a U.N. stabilization force known by the acronym MINUSTAH. (See related article.)

Franco said at the Brasilia meeting that Haiti faces many challenges and the international community must remain engaged over the long term to help the beleaguered nation recover from many years of political, economic and social instability.

On the crucial matter of security in Haiti, Franco said the global community must support "vetting, training, and equipping" an increased Haitian police force, "paying particular attention" to its role in protecting human rights. The U.S. government, he said, is providing \$15 million a year to support Haiti's police force. (See related article.)

At a July 2004 donors' conference for Haiti held in Washington, the international community pledged \$1.3 billion in Haitian assistance. The goal of the Port-au-Prince event is raising a similar amount following Préval's February 7 election as Haiti's president and his subsequent May 14 inauguration.

The State Department released a fact sheet May 25 that said the United States is committed to developing a democratic Haiti and to improving the lives of Haitians.

In fiscal years 2004 and 2005, the United States spent more than \$340 million to improve governance, security, the rule of law and economic recovery, as well as to meet critical humanitarian needs in Haiti, according to the fact sheet.

With the addition of nearly \$200 million allocated in fiscal year 2006, U.S. total assistance to Haiti is expected to be more than \$530 million by the September 30 end of fiscal year 2006. The president's budget request for fiscal year 2007 includes \$194 million for Haiti, the fact sheet said.

The fact sheet is available on the State Department Web site.

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

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

Haiti seeks \$7 billion in international aid

24 Jul 2006

Joseph Guylor Delva

Reuters

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti - Haiti will ask for \$7 billion from international donors meeting in Port-au-Prince on Tuesday to help the troubled Caribbean country revive its moribund economy, a government minister said.

Haitian Foreign Affairs Minister Renald Clerisme said on Monday that the government needs several billion dollars to implement medium- and long-term projects likely to have a sustainable impact on the social and economic situation in the poorest country in the Americas.

"We are seeking \$7 billion in the long term," Clerisme told Reuters. "But what we need for the next months and the next fiscal year is about \$500 million."

Road building, agriculture, tourism and institutional reform projects top the long list of proposals Haiti will present to international donors.

About 40 delegations from bilateral and multilateral institutions have registered to take part in the conference, including the World Bank, the Inter-American Development Bank, the European Union and the U.S. Agency for International Development.

The U.S. assistant secretary of state for the Western Hemisphere, Thomas Shannon, and the U.N. Development Program's director for Latin America and the Caribbean, Rebeca Grynspan, also will attend the meeting.

The new government led by President Rene Preval and Prime Minister Jacques Edouard Alexis is counting on the meeting to help it access badly needed funding for capital spending and operating costs.

The government has been unable to submit its budget to Parliament for approval because it could not provide funding detail until it receives donors' pledges, officials said.

"We need to know the commitment of the international donors before we can actually plan what we're going to do," Finance Minister Daniel Dorsainvil said.

The donor community pledged \$1.3 billion in July 2004 to help Haiti rebuild after a bloody rebellion toppled the government of President Jean-Bertrand Aristide five months earlier.

The interim government that replaced Aristide complained that less than half that amount had actually been disbursed. But diplomats said Haiti's very weak absorption capacity and fund release procedures were among the reasons for slow and delayed disbursements.

The U.N. Development Program's representative in Haiti, Adama Guindo, said donors have been working to simplify procedures, especially in the case of Haiti, which is recovering from a conflict, while ensuring funds are used properly.

Kidnapping wave threatens Haiti

AP

Sunday 23rd July, 2006

Cay Compass News

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti (AP) – A new rash of kidnappings has raised fears that well-armed, politically aligned street gangs are seeking to destabilize Haiti's new government, threatening U.N.-led efforts to restore security 2 1/2 years after a crippling revolt.

But some say the gangs are simply after cash to buy more arms and fuel other criminal enterprises in the impoverished Caribbean country.

Most agree the problem seems to be getting worse. It reached a boiling point this week with people – including three Americans – being snatched by gunmen in an unprecedented series of bold, daylight attacks in the capital, Port-au-Prince.

Almost no one has been spared – missionaries, employees of foreign embassies and Haitians both rich and poor have fallen victim to the trend that has given Haiti the highest kidnapping rate in the Americas.

"We are beyond afraid," said Patrick Gadere, whose brother was abducted and who owns a ceramic tile factory that has been forced to close its warehouse because of violence. "We've been shot at, robbed, kidnapped. We have no other way to make a living."

The kidnapping surge destroyed a tense calm that prevailed since President Rene Preval took power in May, and prompted new criticism against the U.N. peacekeeping force sent to restore order after the 2004 revolt that toppled ex-president Jean-Bertrand Aristide.

At least 30 people have been kidnapped so far in July, about the same number for all of June, said Leslie Dallemand, chief of the U.N.'s anti-kidnapping unit in Haiti. The number is likely much higher because many families prefer to negotiate with kidnappers rather than notify police.

"I haven't had this high a volume since last year," when gangs went on a kidnapping spree before elections, Dallemand said.

Among the victims were three Americans, including two missionaries grabbed by gangsters on their way to church. All three were released unharmed Thursday after negotiations involving the FBI.

Charles Adams, a 70-year-old from Queensbury, New York, who was working on a water treatment program, was driving back from a meeting when a group of armed men ambushed his vehicle while stuck in traffic near the capital's international airport.

"All the sudden I looked up, doors were being ripped open and there were all these people with revolvers and long guns walking around. It was quite an awakening," said Adams, who was freed after a day in captivity without paying a ransom.

The abductions come amid sharply rising violence in the capital, including this month's slum massacre of 22 people. Police blamed the killings on warring gangs but have made no arrests.

U.N. and Haitian officials disagree on whether the recent violence is politically motivated.

The U.N. mission says the coordinated nature of the recent attacks suggest an attempt to stir chaos by the gangs, many of which are loyal to Aristide and are demanding his return from exile in South Africa.

"Their violence is motivated to draw attention to the government that they are dissatisfied," U.N. spokesman David Wimhurst said. "It obviously has a destabilizing effect."

But Preval insists the recent troubles are criminal not political.

Members of Preval's Lespwa party and the business community are calling on the 8,800-strong U.N.

Donors Define Scope of Aid to Haiti
Prensa Latina
July 25, 2006

Port-Au-Prince, The UN, Caribbean Community, and the OAS are discussing the scope and areas to address economic assistance to Haiti on Wednesday.

Security for the 400 guests at the fifth Donors Conference is guaranteed, Haitian Planning and Foreign Cooperation Minister Jean Max informed.

Prime Minister Jacques Edouard Alexis will submit a 5.4 billion dollar budget for a five-year social agenda, with road and electrical infrastructure, tourism, agriculture, education and health as priorities.

The greatest funds will be directed to road construction (no less than 1.3 billion dollars) and agriculture 850 million.

Some donations from countries like Canada (48 million dollars) have been injected into the official social development project whose realization relies largely on foreign aid.

Haiti: The Growing Threat to Westerners
The Stratfor
July 24, 2006

Over the past nine days in Haiti, kidnapers have abducted a contractor from New York, two missionaries from North Carolina and two Franciscan friars -- one from El Salvador and the other a Haitian. In all three cases the victims were freed within a few days, and at least one ransom was paid. This latest rash of kidnappings exemplifies the increasing violence in the impoverished Caribbean country. The FBI, in fact, now says Haiti has surpassed Colombia as the riskiest country in the Americas for kidnapping.

The first kidnappings in the latest string occurred July 16, when two male missionaries from North Carolina were dragged from their car in Port-au-Prince's crime-ridden Delmas neighborhood while on their way to church. The abductors demanded \$500,000 for the victims' release, but later lowered the amount to \$100,000. An undisclosed ransom eventually was paid and the men were released July 20.

Also on July 20, armed men grabbed a contractor from Queensbury, N.Y., from his car near the Port-au-Prince airport. The gunmen took the victim, Charles Adams, to a house in the slum of Cite Soleil, near the international airport, where other kidnapping victims were being held. Adams was released within 24 hours, apparently without having paid the \$500,000 demanded from his captors. The kidnapers reportedly told Adams that kidnap-for-ransom is their only means of support. Finally, the two friars abducted July 21 in Haiti reportedly were freed by July 23.

Kidnappings have become common in Haiti since the 2004 revolt that resulted in President Jean-Bertrand Aristide's ouster. This is not a rare occurrence in countries where poverty and crime rates are high, and weak governments have little ability to enforce laws. Kidnappings and other violence began to increase even more beginning in late 2005, leading up to the February 2006 presidential election. In December 2005, the number of kidnapping cases peaked at 291, with locals comprising more than 90 percent of victims.

The trend dipped in the early months of 2006, but appears to be on the rise again. In most cases, the violence had been Haitian-on-Haitian. Now, however, Westerners are increasingly being targeted for kidnapping. In 2005, about 40 U.S. citizens were kidnapped in Haiti, while three more Americans were killed during abduction attempts that went wrong. In July alone, 29 Westerners have been abducted in Haiti, about one-third of them U.S. citizens.

Today, foreigners are just as likely to be kidnapped as Haitians, perhaps because of the belief that they will have money to pay the ransom. U.S. citizens of Haitian origin also appear to be prime targets, especially if the locals learn of their relative prosperity. It appears, however, that no one is exempt from this type of crime. Missionaries, filmmakers, aid workers, businessmen, children riding a school bus and U.S. Embassy employees all have been abducted since December 2005.

Kidnappings of foreigners in the country are criminal, rather than political, in nature, and in most cases the victims are released after a ransom is paid. The kidnapers usually ask for a large amount, but lower it dramatically during negotiations. Sometimes, however, ransom payments are stolen by the courier hired to deliver them or interdicted by another criminal gang before they get to the kidnapers.

Such occurrences increase risk to the victims, as they increases the amount of time the victims are held while another ransom payment is arranged.

Most kidnappings occur in Port-au-Prince, although the country's interior also is dangerous for Westerners. In June, a Canadian missionary was abducted from an orphanage in Simonette, a small village north of Port-au-Prince. The victim was released on a \$2,000 ransom after being held for nearly a week in Cite Soleil.

The United Nations maintains a 9,000-strong peacekeeping force in Haiti, but has had little effect on the level of kidnappings. Leslie Dallemand, head of the U.N. anti-kidnapping unit, blames ineffectual or corrupt Haitian police and criminal gangs for the escalation in kidnappings. The Cite Soleil slum is so violent, for example, that Dallemand's troops rarely venture there, because they come under fire when they do. On July 19, gangs in Cite Soleil exchanged fire with U.N. peacekeepers, killing at least two bystanders. The fighting broke out after peacekeepers received reports of gunmen stopping cars along the main road to the airport, apparently looking for victims to kidnap.

Poverty, a weak government and other systemic problems contribute to the increasing number of kidnappings in Haiti -- and there appears to be no relief in sight.

Franciscan Friars Release in Haiti
The Universe
July 24, 2006

THE two Franciscans friars that were kidnapped on Thursday in Haiti are free and in good health.

The Franciscan province of Central America reported to the general curia of the Friars Minor in Rome that the friars were released on Friday night.

The abducted friars were Salvadorian Brother César Humberto Flores, 50, responsible for the postulants in the monastery of Port-au-Prince, and a young Haitian postulant.

In a statement issued by that institution, the minister general of the order, Brother José Rodríguez Carballo, wished to thank all those who helped in this case, especially for the prayers and solidarity which many offered.

He added that "the Franciscans will keep working in Haiti among the poorest and needy. The Haitian people can remain assured that this sad episode will make us feel closer to those who suffer because of violence. In Haiti, as in all countries where we live, the Franciscans want to be instruments of peace and reconciliation."

Wave of Kidnappings Leaves Haiti Shaken

Saturday July 22, 2006

AP

By STEVENSON JACOBS

The Guardian Unlimited

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti (AP) - A new rash of kidnappings has raised fears that well-armed, politically aligned street gangs are seeking to destabilize Haiti's new government, threatening U.N.-led efforts to restore security 2 years after a crippling revolt.

Others say the gangs are simply after cash and see kidnappings as a lucrative source of revenue to buy more arms and fuel other criminal enterprises in this impoverished country.

But most agree on one thing - the problem is getting worse.

It reached boiling point this week when scores of people - including three Americans - were snatched by gunmen in an unprecedented series of bold, daylight attacks in the capital of Port-au-Prince.

Almost no one has been spared - missionaries, employees of foreign embassies and Haitians rich and poor have fallen victim to the trend that has given Haiti the highest kidnapping rate in the Americas.

"We are beyond afraid," said Patrick Gadere, owner of ceramic tile factory that has been forced to close its warehouse because of violence and whose brother was abducted. "We've been shot at, robbed, kidnapped. We have no other way to make a living."

The kidnapping surge has destroyed a tense calm that prevailed since President Rene Preval took power in May, and prompted new criticism against the U.N. peacekeeping force sent to restore order after the 2004 revolt that toppled ex-president Jean-Bertrand Aristide.

At least 30 people have been kidnapped so far in July, about the same number for all of June, said Leslie Dallemand, chief of the U.N.'s anti-kidnapping unit in Haiti. The number is likely much higher because many families prefer to negotiate with kidnappers rather than notify police.

"I haven't had this high of volume since last year," when gangs went on a kidnapping spree before elections, Dallemand said.

Among the victims were three Americans, including two missionaries grabbed by gangsters on their way to church. All three were released unharmed Thursday after negotiations involving the FBI.

Charles Adams, a 70-year-old from Queensbury, N.Y., was working on a water treatment program. He was stuck in traffic, driving back from a meeting, when armed men ambushed his vehicle near the capital's international airport.

“All the sudden I looked up, doors were being ripped open and there were all these people with revolvers and long guns walking around. It was quite an awakening,” said Adams, who was freed after a day without paying a ransom.

The abductions come amid sharply rising violence in the capital, including this month's slum massacre of 22 people. Police blamed the killings on warring gangs but have made no arrests.

U.N. and Haitian officials disagree on whether the recent violence is politically motivated.

The U.N. mission says the coordinated nature of the recent attacks suggest an attempt to stir chaos by the gangs, many of which are loyal to Aristide and are demanding his return from exile in South Africa.

“Their violence is motivated to draw attention to the government that they are dissatisfied,” U.N. spokesman David Wimhurst said. “It obviously has a destabilizing effect.”

But Preval insists the troubles are criminal - not political - acts by wanted fugitives, corrupt police and drug traffickers.

Members of Preval's Lespwa party and the business community are calling on the 8,800-strong U.N. peacekeeping mission to take a harder line against gangs.

“This is the first time in our country's history that we've had so many armed forces and yet we're still in this mess,” said Gadere, the tile factory owner.

U.N. and police officials say they're doing all they can and blame Haiti's notoriously corrupt justice system for releasing suspected kidnappers and other criminal suspects who can afford bribes.

“We can't keep criminals off the streets if the courts keep letting them go,” police chief Mario Andresol said.

Kidnappings were once rare in Haiti, the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere. The trend flourished after Aristide's departure but leveled off shortly after elections in February.

Foreigners have been particularly vulnerable because they fetch a higher ransom, usually around \$10,000, compared to about half that for a Haitian.

Last year, 43 Americans were kidnapped in Haiti, including three who were killed in attempted abductions, according to the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Consular Affairs.

“We have agents down there almost constantly working kidnappings,” said Judy Orihuela, an FBI special agent in Miami. “It's surpassed Colombia.”

**CHAN statement on CANADA and HAITI'S political prisoners
by CHAN
San Francisco Bay Area Indymedia
Sunday Jul 23rd, 2006**

Five months after Haiti's presidential election on February 7th, several thousand pre-trial detainees and political prisoners remain within Haiti's horrid prisons. The list of political prisoners includes former Prime Minister Yvon Neptune, folk-singer and activist So Ann Auguste, grassroots activist Paul Raymond, and well-known rara musician Yvon "Zap Zap" Antoine. The conditions inside the prisons are horrific. Prisoners in Haiti's National Penitentiary, the country's largest and most well-known prison, are often kept in unsanitary conditions with no access to medical care. Detainees are kept in over-crowded cells without lighting or ventilation, are sometimes barred access to washroom facilities, and are often beaten by prison guards during recreation times. Lavatory facilities are close to the prison's water wells, raising concern about the contamination of water supplies.

At a press conference held on April 6th, 2006, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights in Haiti Thierry Fagart criticized the Haitian government for its treatment of prisoners. According to UN Spokesperson David Wimhurst, of the 4,034 people imprisoned nationwide, only 450 inmates (or 11%) had been convicted of any crime. In the case of Yvon Neptune, even Roger Noriega, the former US Assistant Secretary of State for Hemispheric Affairs, has criticized the Haitian judiciary for its handling of his case, while Canadian Foreign Affairs Minister Peter Mackay has publicly stated that he supports Neptune's immediate release. Again according to Fagart, the vast majority of prisoners within Haiti's jails are from poor neighbourhoods and lack access to basic legal counsel.

Although such recognition of the situation in Haiti's prisons is certainly heartening, the Canadian government, as well as the UN, share a responsibility for the conditions within these prisons, the policy of arbitrary arrest within poor neighbourhoods on the part of the Haitian Police and the UN Forces, and the continuing state of impunity for the wealthy and powerful within Haiti's judiciary.

Police Brutality

The Haitian National Police, whose UN training has been led by Canadian RCMP officials since the summer of 2004, have consistently been carrying out a campaign of arbitrary imprisonment and human rights abuses within some of the poorest neighbourhoods in Haiti's capital. Such acts of brutality have been documented in reports issued by Amnesty International, the Harvard School of Law, and the Centre for the Study of Human Rights at the University of Miami. Training for such "anti-gang raids" or "weapon sweeps" has commonly resulted in the rounding up of men and women from poor neighbourhoods, in a sort of "preventive detention." Deadly shootings upon peaceful demonstrations of supporters of the ousted Lavalas government were commonplace prior to the February 7th election, as documented by reports from AP and Reuters.

Sadly, such practices seem to have been taken over by members of the UN Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH). Increasingly, street youth within poor neighbourhoods have been targeted for pre-emptive arrests by the UN and HNP forces. A May 3rd, 2006 press conference held in Cite Soleil by the Haitian human rights organization AUMOHD culminated in a call by 200 community members and family of victims for reparations for human rights abuses and killings committed by UN forces.

MINUSTAH forces often detain Haitians who live in these neighbourhoods without warrant or charge, and then hand them over to the Haitian National Police for indefinite imprisonment. After the February 7th elections, these arrests continued, albeit to a much smaller degree, in neighbourhoods such as Pele. It should be pointed out that Canadian military and civilian personnel occupy prominent positions within the UN military command.

Canadian UNPOL officers were also present outside Haiti's National Penitentiary on May 14th, 2006 after a number of prisoners broke out of their cells and staged a demonstration drawing attention to the illegality of their detention. Independent journalists videotaped Chinese UN soldiers firing into the prison during this demonstration. Prisoners claimed that 10 unarmed detainees were killed as a result.

Canada and Haiti's Prisons

Canada has been one of the key donor countries contributing to the reform initiatives of the United Nations aimed at Haiti's prisons. As noted by Thierry Fagart of the UN's Human Rights Commission in a March 17, 2006 interview:

"Canadians in particular are very involved in the prisons area. Both at the UNDP and MINUSTAH, the guys who are in charge are all Canadians."

Canadian officials, working through the capacity of the UN Development Program (UNDP) or MINUSTAH, offer training and other support to prison officials and guards. MINUSTAH also offers security at each of Haiti's prisons.

Such logistical and security support is troubling due to the unsafe and brutal conditions found within Haiti's prisons, as well as the tendency to offer special punishment for political detainees.

At present, the UNDP does not even provide regular monitoring of the human rights conditions within Haiti's prisons.

Canada and Haiti's Judiciary

For years, Haiti's judiciary has been plagued by corruption and impunity. However, the international community, in its judicial reform programs, has particularly favoured judicial partners which have shown their absolute contempt for Haiti's constitution, as well as basic human rights for Haiti's poor.

In particular, the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) is known to be funding coordinating members of the Group of 184, a powerful "civil society" organization composed almost entirely of members of Haiti's wealthy elite. The organization is led by sweatshop owner and industrialist Andre Apaid, who was amongst the leading proponents of the coup against elected Haitian President Jean-Bertrand Aristide in February of 2004. Apaid has acknowledged ties to gang leaders, as noted in the University of Miami Centre for the Study of Human Rights report. The Group of 184 was also one of the main elements within Haiti which pressured the UN to "crack down" on "gang neighbourhoods" such as Cite Soleil. This crackdown has resulted in the killings of numerous civilians

in many poor neighbourhoods, and culminated in the July 6th, 2005 raid which left 23 civilians dead in Cite Soleil, including women and children, according to reports from Medecins Sans Frontieres staff.

Canadian International Development Agency programs offer funding to the Haitian Judges Association (ANAMAH). ANAMAH's director, Judge Jean Peres Paul, has demonstrated a total disregard for human rights and the rule of law in Haiti. Peres Paul kept the Catholic Priest Gerard Jean-Juste, a "prisoner of conscience" according to Amnesty International, in prison for six months, even after he was diagnosed with life-threatening leukemia. Peres Paul also recently presided over the release of seven police officers who were arrested in connection with the August 2005 Gran Ravine massacre in which twelve individuals were shot and hacked to death in a soccer stadium within the Port-au-Prince neighbourhood.

Such funding arrangements do little to establish an impartial judiciary that is willing to dispense equal justice to rich and poor Haitians. In addition, Canada has maintained CIDA funding for the clearly partisan "human rights" organization, the Reseau National du Defense des Droits Haitien (RNDDH), formerly known as NCHR-Haiti. RNDDH has been singularly responsible for the unfounded allegations that have kept Yvon Neptune in prison for over two years.

Conclusion:

Even after a bi-partisan Canadian parliamentary delegation toured Haiti's National Penitentiary in April of 2006, few critical questions of Canada's role within Haiti's judiciary were raised. Most delegation members simply praised Canadian officials working in Haiti while failing to address the difficult questions surrounding Canadian funding for organizations such as the RNDDH and members of the Group of 184. Sadly, such behaviour has followed the pattern of almost all of Canada's members of Parliament; few have raised any questions of Canada's involvement in Haiti, and none have expressly called for the release of illegally detained pre-trial detainees in Haiti's prisons. Such silence has continued the policy of quiet consent to Canada's shameful and anti-democratic role in Haiti, first initiated under the previous Liberal government.

Such silence is unacceptable. Despite the possibility of a release of Yvon Neptune in the coming weeks, the time is long overdue for the Canadian government to recognize its role in maintaining a system of impunity in Haiti's judicial system. Such recognition is vital if Canada's professed commitment to supporting democracy in Haiti is to be anything other than empty words.

As a result we, as members of the Canada Haiti Action Network, call upon the Canadian government to:

- Cease its interference in Haiti's judicial system and thereby allow the new government to fulfill its declared goal of returning Haiti to the rule of constitutional law. Canada has provided key funding and personnel to the "Ministry of Justice" of the coup regime in Haiti, which has, in turn, presided over the jailings of hundreds of political prisoners.
- Support efforts of the elected Haitian government to break the pattern of impunity within Haiti's justice system, and use all possible diplomatic means to pressure for the release of Haiti's political

prisoners and pre-trial detainees, including Yvon Neptune, So Ann Auguste, Yvon “Zap Zap” Antoine, and Paul Raymond.

- Withdraw all support and command personnel associated with UNPOL. This UN body has played a clear role in aiding and perpetrating human rights abuses throughout the country and has displayed no intent of altering its conduct.

- Cease all funding arrangements with the Haitian Judges Association (ANAMAH) as a result of its unequivocal support for a regime of human rights abuses that have reigned in Haiti since February of 2004.

- Cease all funding arrangements with any judiciary or “civil society” members of the Group of 184; Cease all CIDA funding to the biased and wilfully negligent “human rights” organization RNDDH/NCHR-Haiti.

<http://www.canadahaitiaction.ca/>

NC missionary describes 5-day kidnapping in Haiti
WISV.com, Columbia, South Carolina
July 22, 2006

(Port-Au-Prince, Haiti-AP) - Two missionaries from High Point, North Carolina, who were held hostage for five days in Haiti spent their captivity praying and ministering to their kidnapers.

In an interview with The Associated Press, Tom Barron says he and fellow hostage William Eugene Seastrum were treated relatively well during the ordeal, but he says they were occasionally being threatened with loaded pistols to speed up the ransom negotiation.

Barron and Seastrum were snatched by gunmen Sunday on their way to church with three Haitian friends. They were released Thursday after negotiations led by the FBI.

Barron says they were held at a house in the notorious slum of Cite Soleil and locked in a boiling-hot room with blankets over the windows and a single mattress on the floor that they shared with a Haitian hostage.

Through holes in the brick walls, they could see UN helicopters above during the day and hear heavy gunfire at night, most likely coming from fighting between U-N troops and gangs.

New Haiti human rights report: Miami Law school investigates UN "failures"
Haiti Action Committee
July 22, 2006

A new human rights report on Haiti was released today by the Center for the Study of Human Rights at the University of Miami, School of Law. The study is titled "Haiti: Human Rights Investigation - March 11-16 2006" and is available from the UM website.

Three students - Anna Mance, Quinn Smith and Rebecca Yagerman - traveled to Haiti in March of this year to investigate the role of the UN occupation forces (MINUSTAH) in the atrocities and other human rights abuses during the years of the US-installed coup government.

Excerpts from "Haiti: Human Rights Investigation - March 11-16 2006"

"As human rights atrocities continue to occur across Haiti, the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) has received much criticism for failing to adhere to its mandate to "promote and protect human rights."1 Indeed this failure has been one of the major causes of the prolonged suffering of the Haitian people during the interim government's reign between 2004 and 2006 ... MINUSTAH has failed both to actively and aggressively investigate atrocities and to account for its own human rights violations."

By ANNA MANCE, QUINN SMITH and REBECCA YAGERMAN
INTRODUCTION: IRWIN P. STOTZKY

"The investigator's charge was to determine whether the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) was enforcing its mandate, particularly the requirement that it help 'promote and protect human rights' by supporting 'the Transitional Government as well as human rights institutions and groups in their efforts to promote and protect human rights' and 'to monitor and report on the human rights situations.' The investigators concluded that MINUSTAH has failed to live up to its mandate. In reaching this conclusion, the investigators interviewed gang members, lawyers, human rights groups, United Nations officials, and Haitian National Police officials. They visited the infamous slum areas of Port-au-Prince - Cité Soleil and Bel Air - outdoor town halls, and attended a protest rally at the Palais de Justice conducted by women connected to political prisoners."

"Judges are under significant pressure not to release prisoners, regardless of the evidence against them. In July 2004, ANAMAH, the national judge's association, issued a press release condemning executive interference in judicial matters. In December, the Minister of Justice personally wrote to the Chief Judge of the Port-au-Prince Trial Court, ordering him to take all the cases away from Judge Fleury, who had ordered Father Jean-Juste's release. The Minister of Justice also ordered the Chief Judge to take all the cases away from Judge Fabien, who had ordered the release of four other people who had spent ten months in jail on trumped up charges. These orders are as illegal in Haiti as they are in the United States. One of the judges resigned in protest."

"The press is not able to monitor effectively the police. As the Committee to Protect Journalists and others have documented, attacks against journalists by private groups and the government have sent many journalists into hiding, and silenced others. In mid January 2005, the police executed Abdias Jean, a journalist with a Florida radio station, after he witnessed police executing two men. Several

press organizations and UNESCO denounced this killing. In another notorious incident in January 2005, Prime Minister Gerard Latortue threatened journalist Guy Delva, the correspondent for Reuters in Haiti and the head of the Haitian Journalists Association. Journalists who criticize the insurgents, the gangs, the police, and the government have been threatened, beaten, even kidnapped."

"For example, on August 20, 2005, members of the Haitian National Police, acting in concert with gang members wielding machetes and guns, caused mayhem during a USAID-sponsored soccer match in the Grande-Ravine at Martissant slum neighborhood. General Carlo Lochat of the Haitian National Police, was identified by Haitian investigators as one of the leaders of the massacre, and sent before a tribunal. However, in early March 2006, he was provisionally released, and it is unclear whether he will be further charged. Fagart states that he is aware of the incident, yet no report has been issued. The failure to issue timely reports on the Martissant massacre is a clear violation of the mandate which stipulates that Fagart and his human rights officials are 'to monitor and report on the human rights situation.'"

"These cases of flagrant human rights violations as well as those of prominent political prisoners, such as Fr. Gerard Jean-Juste and former Prime Minister Yvon Neptune, have been cast into the world spotlight, receiving international attention in the press. Again, Fagart as well as the UN High Commissioner of Human Rights are aware of these cases. However, as an independent, sovereign country with an officially independent judiciary, Fagart contends that Haitian laws are to be followed. He suggests that the fear of infringing on national sovereignty, as well as a perpetual series of obstacles blocking his path, prevent him from securing the release of prominent political prisoners. Fagart's inability 'to ensure individual accountability for human rights abuses and redress for victims,' as the mandate demands, by securing their release from prison where they are being illegally detained, is a breach of the mandate."

**Haiti: 700 Workers to Loose Jobs due to U.S. State Department funded Batay Ouvriye
by Indy Bay Update
Sunday Jul 23rd, 2006
Haiti Labor Update**

A Dominican factory that makes Levi's jeans in a Haitian free-trade zone plans to close its doors and lay off 700 Haitian employees because of labor disputes, company officials said in early June 2006.

Grupo M, one of the Dominican Republic's largest free-trade zone companies, built the \$10 million factory a year ago in the border town of Ouanaminthe, Haiti. The decision is a blow to Haiti, the Americas' poorest country, where most people are jobless and the political situation has become more fragile since the 2004 ouster of the elected government of President Jean-Bertrand Aristide. "This has been a very difficult decision, and we've done everything to avoid it," Grupo M spokeswoman Rosa Taveras said. "The majority of people want to keep working but it's a radical group that pushed us to this point."

Workers at the factory, who make about 750 Haitian Gourds \$18 a week and have no health benefits, have been pushing for higher wages and a medical plan over the last two months. About 100 workers went on strike for a day in early June and stopped workers from crossing a picket line, Grupo M said. Though production resumed Tuesday, the company said it needed to make a change.

The decision was made "for security reasons in the face of threats and violent actions by a group of activists called Batay Ouvriye," Grupo M President Fernando Capellan said.

Representatives of Batay Ouvriye could not be reached for comment. Batay Ouvriye has been the recipient of nearly half a million dollars in program funding emanating from the U.S. State Department, a relationship which started soon after Batay Ouvriye rallied for the departure of Haiti's constitutional government in 2004. An illegal coup d'etat occurred on Feb 29, 2004 after numerous foreign funded Haitian organizations called for the constitutional government's departure and armed paramilitaries invaded the country. The coup has resulted in over two years of human rights hell for Haitians.

While foreign labor institutions (ORIT, AFL-CIO) dependent on funding from wealthy governments have supported Batay Ouvriye and other essentially pro-coup labor groups (CSH) they have remained on a strict path of ignoring the thousands of laid off civil servant workers who were fired under the harsh privatization plans of IMF/World Bank accords set into motion by the illegal Latortue interim government. In recent weeks these laid off civil servants have launched protests in Port-au-Prince. They have called for the release of political prisoners and the numerous civil servants who remain illegally in Haitian prisons without being formally charged. Meanwhile, foreign labor institutions present in Haiti (ICFTU,etc) refuse to investigate the IMF/Latortue privatization lay offs.

The Free-trade zones (FTZ) in the Dominican Republic and Haiti are areas where companies can manufacture goods without having to pay import taxes on raw materials or export taxes on the final product. Prior to the coup, the constitutional government, after years of an elite supported foreign aid embargo, was forced into allowing the set up of one FTZ in the north of the island. Although it continued to refuse IMF privatization demands and it was able to negotiate the right of workers within

the FTZ to organize, the Batay Ouvriye and other foreign sponsored organizations heavily criticized the legal government for setting up the FTZ claiming it was a government of "criminals".

Companies operating in free-trade zones are a leading employer in the Dominican Republic, with 530 of them employing 170,833 people in 2002, officials said. Despite the proximity to Haiti, only a few companies have set up shop across the border as Haiti is seen as violent and unstable after years of elite sabotage of elected governments. One prominent labor leader wishing to remain anonymous for fear of reprisal states, "Haiti needs jobs and the money these companies in the FTZ pay is better than all the Apaid and other sweatshops pay. We should not be driving these companies away, now 700 workers will loose jobs. We need jobs for people to eat."

Eight killed in Haiti gun battles

7/22/2006

Source ::AFP

The Peninsula Online, Qatar

PORT-AU-PRINCE • Eight people were shot dead and four others injured in gun battles over the past three days between armed Haitian assailants and the United Nations peacekeeping force, UN officials said yesterday.

The United Nations Stabilisation Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) said in a statement that armed groups have attacked stations belonging to the Haitian police and UN peacekeepers. They did not say if there were any casualties among police or peacekeepers. The peacekeepers and Haitian police “responded to the attacks, killing eight of the assailants and wounding at least four others,” the statement said.

Late Thursday, UN Secretary General Kofi Annan’s special representative in Haiti, Edmond Mulet, met with Haitian President Rene Preval and Prime Minister Jacques-Edouard Alexis to discuss the government’s policy toward the renewed wave of violence in the capital, the statement said.

And yesterday, the head of MINUSTAH, Brazilian General Elito Siquiera, is to meet with Haiti’s head of public security, Luc Eucher Joseph, and the head of Haiti’s police force, Mario Andresol. The US State Department meanwhile announced the release of a Haitian national who worked in the US embassy in Port-au-Prince and was abducted Wednesday. “He has been released. He is back safely,” the State Department said without revealing details of the incident.

Haiti Violence Worries Joseph
By LaShonne Outten,
Nassua Guardian
July 26, 2006

Haitian Ambassador to The Bahamas, Louis Harold Joseph, said he has no confirmed reports that a surge in violent crimes in Haiti is geared toward overthrowing the country's new President, Rene Preval.

"Certainly I've heard reports, but it is difficult for me to comment since I don't have an official report. I know that the president has said the security problems that we have in Port-au-Prince, might be because of criminal activities," said Ambassador Joseph. "Unfortunately, I didn't get any official information or report on that matter from the government."

International media reports indicate that more than 20 people have been killed over the past week and some 2,000 UN peacekeepers were forced to rush back into Port-au-Prince, the island's capital, to try to restore peace.

According to a Haitian media report, politically aligned street gangs in Haiti have raised fears that the recent crime wave of kidnappings of tourists and business owners are being done by gangs who are seeking to destabilise the new government. Reportedly, UN officials seem to believe that someone is on a mission to discredit Preval's name.

In addition, it was reported that thousands of Haitians recently demonstrated in Port-au-Prince, for the return of ousted President, Jean Bertrand Aristide, from exile in South Africa.

The Haitian media report noted that Aristide supporters armed only with t-shirts bearing Aristide's image, gathered in the capital's poorest district, before moving through other parts of the city, eventually dispersing in front of the presidential palace.

According to international statistics, Haiti has the highest kidnapping rate in the Americas. In an Associated Press report, the Chief of the UN's anti-kidnapping unit in Haiti, Leslie Dallemand, said the rate of kidnapping in the country could increase.

"At least 30 people have been kidnapped so far in July, about the same number for all [of] June," said Mr Dallemand in the report.

"The number is likely to increase because many families prefer to negotiate with kidnappers rather than notify police. I haven't had this high volume since last year, when gangs went on a kidnapping spree before elections."

However, many Bahamians fear that the recent unrest in Haiti could undermine The Bahamas government's efforts to tackle the country's immigration problems.

What the World Bank and IDB Owe Haiti

By Dan Beeton*

Global Policy Forum

***Opinion Forum**

July 24, 2006

For several years Haiti, the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere, has been left out of the World Bank's "Heavily Indebted Poor Country" (HIPC) debt relief initiative. At last, Haiti may soon see some of its IMF and World Bank debt cancelled. [1] (Haiti also has \$550 million in Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) debt – 13% of its GDP - and this too is expected to be cancelled).

U.S. Representative Maxine Waters hopes to fast track Haiti's debt relief process with legislation she recently introduced that would instruct the U.S. Treasury to push for full cancellation of Haiti's debt without conditions at the Multilateral Development Banks. The Bush Administration and some Latin American countries (including Chile as well as debtors like Bolivia) have encouraged the IDB to be part of debt relief efforts and IDB members have formed an ad-hoc committee to negotiate the terms of canceling debt for HIPC countries. [2] Cancellation of the IDB debt is crucial to freeing up much-needed funds for health needs and basic social services, and the IDB debt represents 41.2 per cent of Haiti's total external public debt. [3]

Following President Rene Preval's May 14 inauguration, the World Bank and the IDB are preparing to quickly reengage with Haiti. There is no doubt that Haiti desperately needs an influx of capital – with some 65% of the population below the poverty line, infant mortality rates at 7.4%, and public health crises raging. [4] Funds from the multilateral development banks could serve a crucial need. But who will guarantee that new loans from the banks will actually serve Haiti's poor without perpetuating its debt crisis? Can Haiti receive debt relief without having to undertake new policy conditions that would hinder its economic recovery? An examination of these Multilateral Development Banks' relationship with Haiti over the past several years shows why the IDB and World Bank's activities in Haiti will require considerable scrutiny and ongoing pressure to ensure that the needs of the Haitian people come first, and that economic growth and development are top priorities. [5]

Haiti is one of four countries that may qualify as HIPC's by the end of 2006 "under the HIPC 'sunset clause'," and which could also qualify for debt cancellation when it reaches its HIPC completion point in the future. [6] Despite its dire poverty, its grave HIV/AIDS epidemic (5% of the population), and attendant problems, Haiti was excluded from HIPC for years under the Lavalas party-led governments of Aristide and Rene Preval based on the argument that the country would be able to bring its debt down to a "sustainable level" through "other sources of debt relief." [7] (The World Bank also cited Haiti's need to "show a commitment to reducing poverty" as another reason). Bank officials now hope that Haiti will complete a Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP)[8] that could require the country to undergo more painful economic conditions. As part of the process, some World Bank board members want to open the participatory process to "a wide range of civil society groups and political actors, especially those with ties to the military and the rural population." [9] [emphasis added]

Preval's predecessor, democratically elected Jean-Bertrand Aristide, was overthrown in a violent military coup in February 2004 in which the U.S. military physically flew him out of Haiti. Both the

2004 coup and the International Financial Institutions' (IFI's) new plans for Haiti are the culmination of several years of severe economic pressure from Washington.

While Aristide was in exile after being overthrown for the first time in a 1991 coup, the U.S. exerted strong pressure on him to implement a structural adjustment plan prior to returning him to power in 1994. Yet the World Bank notes that from 1994-1997 it continued to butt heads with both the Aristide and the subsequent Preval Administrations, who found that some of the Bank's projects were "never accepted by the government...seen as too hasty a push for structural adjustment and privatization." [10] Among other components of its plan for Haiti, the Bank "recommended privatizing key infrastructure and entrusting the delivery of education, health, family planning, and water supply and sanitation to NGOs." [11] Yet the Bank noted "privatization had already proved to be contentious in Haiti. ...Clashes over [privatization and downsizing] were very visible." [12]

After failing to get their way, the International Financial Institutions began to disengage from Haiti beginning in 1997. This disengagement then became an outright development assistance embargo imposed on the Haitian government after Aristide returned to the presidency in 2001.[13]

Embargo

The IDB had approved loans between 1996 and 1998 for critical social needs: health, education, potable water, and education, including a loan for "Reorganization of the National Health System." [14] But approval of the loans depended on the outcome of new elections and subsequent parliamentary approval, and the government had trouble organizing new legislative elections until May 21, 2000, when Aristide's Fanmi Lavalas swept to victory. [15]

The U.S. and the IFI's used these elections as a justification for blocking disbursement of any new aid money. Although the Orlando Sentinel reported that the Organization of American States (OAS)-led observer mission gave an initial stamp of approval to the elections, a challenge to the elections' credibility soon emerged - from the "Democratic Convergence" - an opposition group funded by the U.S. National Endowment for Democracy (in turn funded by the US Congress) that would later support the 2004 coup. [16]

The challenge to the elections' legitimacy then crept into the OAS' subsequent position. After initially stating that voting irregularities were limited to technical errors that had affected neither the vote tally nor the outcome, the OAS subsequently changed its assessments. In the end, under pressure, the OAS reversed course and contended that the election tally had been manipulated--and that as a consequence at least seven candidates from Aristide's Lavalas Family party were able to avoid runoff elections. [17]

When Haiti's 47th legislature was sworn in at the end of August 2000 and quickly thereafter voted to ratify the four IDB loan agreements, the IDB did nothing to release the funds. Between January and March 2001, the World Bank also "suspended" most grants to Haiti and "all IDA [International Development Association, an arm of the World Bank] disbursements."

In the case of the IDB, there is overwhelming evidence of U.S. involvement. An April 6, 2001 letter from Lawrence Harrington, the U.S. Representative to the IDB at the time, to IDB President Iglesias, confirms this, referring to the approved loans and stating, "we do not believe that these loans can or should be treated in a routine manner and strongly urge you to not authorize any disbursements at this

time.” [18] As journalist Tracy Kidder noted in *The Nation*, “This was unusual. No [IDB] member nation is supposed to be able to stop the disbursement of loans that are already approved.” [19] Indeed, it was in direct violation of the IDB’s charter. Article VIII, Section 5(d) states: “The President, officers, and staff owe their duty entirely to the Bank and shall recognize no other authority. Each member of the Bank shall respect the international character of his duty.” [20] Kidder notes, “The Haitian government also lost access to loans it could have received from the IDB over the next several years, worth another \$ 470 million.” The Haitian Government then stopped making payments to the IDB after April 2001 when the Bank did not release the funds. [21]

The IDB was acutely aware of the devastating impact that the withholding of assistance was having on the country, as it noted in a 2001 report: “the major factor behind economic stagnation is the withholding of both foreign grants and loans, associated with the international community’s response to the critical political impasse. These funds are estimated at over \$500m.” [22] The IDB also underscored the danger to the projects if their implementation was delayed: “long delays in project start-up may have a negative impact.” [23]

Nonetheless, the IDB continued to withhold the funds, and, according to Paul Farmer, even began to demand that Haiti begin making payments on the undisbursed loans, to the tune of \$5 million in arrears plus a 0.5% “credit commission” on the entire balance of undisbursed funds, effective 12 months after the date the loans were approved. [24] A spokesperson for the IDB claimed, “We generally have waived those fees [for countries borrowing on concessional terms].” But the spokesperson also suggested it would not have been unusual, even under such circumstances, for the IDB to charge Haiti the commitment fees.

No matter what steps Aristide took to resolve the controversy, it was not good enough for Washington. On June 2, 2001 the *Associated Press* reported, “Aristide promised that the seven senators whose elections were disputed by the OAS would resign and new elections would be held for those seats before the end of the year. The senators resigned Monday. ...Aristide also agreed to cut short the terms of all members of the House of Assembly and of a third of the Senate, with elections in November 2002. Another third of Senate seats would go up for early election in November 2004.” [25]

Yet in February 2002, then-Secretary of State Colin Powell was quoted in *The New York Times* saying the United States would continue to oppose loans from the IDB: “We are terribly concerned about the political unrest that continues to haunt Haiti. We are concerned about some of the actions of the government, and we do not believe enough has been done yet to move the political process forward. ...We believe we have to hold President Aristide and the Haitian government to fairly high standards of performance before we can simply allow funds to flow into the country,” he added. [26] Although the article went on to note that, “Earlier this week, Mr. Aristide offered to hold new elections in November for seven disputed Senate seats,” the World Bank nonetheless echoed Powell’s sentiments in a report that same month, citing unmet “conditions” as a pretext for the ongoing withholding of assistance. [27]

Despite the fact that seven of the disputed Senators had already resigned, and despite Aristide’s willingness to hold new elections for the contested seats, the article notes that not only the U.S. but also the E.U. would continue to cut off aid promised to Haiti, the E.U. “offering \$350 million in aid

over the next five years if the political situation is resolved.” [28] In October 2002, the IDB reiterated its demands that Haiti must make payments on the loans that had yet to be disbursed. [29]

The Aristide Administration took other steps in attempts to see the aid money released. In 2003, the government agreed to meet the IMF requirements for the Staff Monitored Program - including, despite the devastating impact it would have on the populace - lifting its petrol subsidy. Then, seeing that no IDB funds would be forthcoming as long as the Bank demanded the arrears payments, Aristide’s government nearly emptied their national reserves to pay \$32 million in arrears in mid 2003. [30] After these payments, the IDB finally relented, reactivating the loans in July 2003 and releasing \$35 million of an investment sector loan (which left the Haitian government with a net gain of only \$3 million). The old social sector loans remained undisbursed, however. [31] By then, time was quickly running out for the Aristide government.

Coup d’etat

In December 2003, “civil unrest” intensified, including raids across the Dominican border by former Haitian army soldiers and former members of the death squads that had terrorized Aristide supporters during the dictatorship of the early ’90s. Jeffrey Sachs, former advisor to the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank, wrote, “U.S. officials surely knew that the aid embargo would mean a balance-of-payments crisis, a rise in inflation and a collapse of living standards, all of which fed the rebellion.” [32] The Washington Post noted some of the motivating factors behind the violent opposition: Aristide’s “populist agenda of higher minimum wages, school construction, literacy programs, higher taxes on the rich and other policies that have angered an opposition movement run largely by a mulatto elite that has traditionally controlled Haiti’s economy.” [33]

On February 29, 2004, after months of bloodshed, Aristide was flown out of the country in a U.S. plane and taken to the Central African Republic – an event that he has famously described as a “kidnapping” in the service of a coup d’etat. [34] The next day Andrea Mitchell reported on NBC Nightly News that, “With Aristide gone, Haiti can now qualify for millions of dollars in aid, frozen since 1997 because of Haiti’s political chaos.” [35]

Mitchell may have stated something bluntly that U.S. Government, World Bank, and IDB officials preferred to imply in more subtle terms: the problem always was Aristide and Lavalas – their policies, and the lenders’ refusal to work with them anymore.

Meanwhile, the bloody rampage and coup of early 2004 finished the job of destroying Haiti’s economy that the IFI’s had begun, as the IDA described in July 2004. “While many businesses have not yet restarted operations, it is becoming clear that many others will not recover at all, resulting in the loss of direct and indirect jobs. The government’s financial position further deteriorated as revenues declined substantially due to the fall in economic activity, weakened administrative capacity and security concerns.” [36]

In March 2004 the coup was completed with the installation of a “transitional government.” The World Bank wasted no time in chairing a donors meeting in Washington where it was agreed, in consultation with the “Transitional Government” to launch a joint government and donors’ assessment of what sort of assistance the new regime would need from the IFI’s. [37]

Even if the OAS's electoral fraud allegations against Aristide had been true, as Jeffrey Sachs has said, "it would be nothing different from what has occurred in dozens of countries around the world receiving support from the IMF, World Bank, and the U.S. itself. By any standard, Haiti's elections had marked a step forward in democracy, compared to the decades of military dictatorships that America had backed, not to mention long periods of direct U.S. military occupation." [38]

The greater blow to Haitian democracy came not from any election irregularities, but from Washington. At the same time that the IFI's and Washington were telling the Haitian government that no money would reach the government until an agreement was reached with the Democratic Convergence, the International Republican Institute -a Congressionally funded group that acts as a foreign policy arm of the U.S. Republican party and which spearheaded efforts to oust Aristide - was giving the opposition a different message. According to former U.S. Ambassador to Haiti Dean Curran and others, the IRI told the Democratic Convergence that they did not need to negotiate with the government -- as a way to undermine Aristide. [39] Since the Haitian government could not survive without foreign aid, U.S. Government and IFI policy assured the downfall of Haiti's democratically elected government.

In effect, the IFI's and the U.S. played "good cop" to the rampaging militias' "bad cop" during a period of negotiations between the Aristide government and the political opposition when the militias stormed across Northern Haiti en route to Port-au-Prince. According to Sachs, "by saying that aid would be frozen until Aristide and the political opposition reached an agreement, the Bush administration provided Haiti's un-elected opposition with an open-ended veto." [40] The opposition had no incentive to negotiate; they had all the aces.

After the troublesome Aristide had been forced out, the U.S. was more than willing to "simply allow funds to flow into the country," as Colin Powell characterized it, to the tune of \$150 million from the World Bank over the next two years. [41] With bureaucrat Gerard Latortue overseeing the interim government in Port-au-Prince, the IFI's seemed confident that their economic plan might at last be implemented in full; the World Bank planning to support "economic governance reforms" in coordination with the IMF and the IDB. [42] The World Bank's Country Director for the Caribbean, Caroline Anstey, noted as the first post-coup international donors' conference convened that "the interim government is made up of technocrats who have agreed not to run in the next presidential election. As a result, they are much freer to embrace a reform agenda." [43]

Noting that "reform" of "public enterprise management" is another priority for the IFI's, one is led to suspect that a renewed privatization plan may not be far off – despite the World Bank's own recognition of the Haitian people's resistance to it. [44] The Bank also notes the "increased role of the private sector in social service delivery, particularly in education." [45]

Meanwhile, the World Bank actively pushed for Haiti to pay its arrears (some \$52 million) to open the way for its reengagement. This was something Latortue was all too willing to do this, despite the many dire needs facing the poorest country in the hemisphere.

Conclusion

Given this recent history, international attention is needed to ensure that the IDB and World Bank – and the U.S. Government, which has effective control over these institutions – finally permit Haiti's

economic development on its own terms, respecting its national sovereignty as it formulates plans for economic recovery. Cancellation of Haiti's debt to the banks will be an important first step for freeing up desperately needed funds that have been denied the Haitian people for far too long. But such debt-cancellation should be unconditional, free from any HIPC or other policy conditions.

Even since just a few years ago, when Aristide fought to have the IDB loans disbursed, the globalization playing field has changed dramatically. The IMF has largely lost its influence after its policy prescriptions led Argentina to economic collapse. When Argentina stood up to the IMF and actually defaulted temporarily on its loans to the IMF itself, the confrontation ended up severely eroding the Fund's power over middle-income countries. Instead of suffering terribly at the hands of foreign investors, as many outside observers warned would happen, the Kirchner government led Argentina to a successful recovery that has seen the economy grow at about over 9% annually for the last three years. In March of this year, the newly elected government of Evo Morales in Bolivia told the IMF it did not want a new IMF program, after 20 years of operating under IMF agreements. [46] The Fund's power diminished, Bolivia - the poorest country in South America - was able to stand up to it with no repercussions.

Countries like Argentina and Bolivia—and also heavyweights like Brazil and Indonesia--have turned away from the IMF for good reason: its policies have largely failed most places they have been implemented. [47] In Latin America, this economic failure has been drastic. Compared to the twenty years from 1960 to 1980 when Latin America's economies grew by 82% in per capita GDP, the region has grown by only 14% since 1980. [48] Haiti experienced the worst economic failure in the region over this period. Whereas Haiti saw positive per capita GDP growth of 24% from 1960 -1980, GDP per person actually shrank 48% from 1980 - 2005. [49] An economic disaster of this magnitude is difficult to conceive of in most countries, and it underscores the extent to which Haiti desperately needs to implement pro-growth policies that will put people to work and allow them to provide for their families. It also underscores why funds are urgently needed to repair Haiti's crippled infrastructure, revive its health care and education systems, and ensure its population access to sanitary living conditions and potable water - in short, the needs that the stalled IDB loans were intended to address prior to the 2004 coup.

The IMF visited Haiti in mid-June in a delegation. Among its recommendations after meeting with President Preval and other officials was for the government to spend more on social programs. The international community should hold the IMF to its words. Reducing poverty and addressing other urgent social needs should be the Preval Administration's first priority and no outside government or institution should be allowed to impede its progress.

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Endnotes

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16. Miles, Melinda, "Elections and 2004," Haiti Reborn website, August 2003 <http://www.quixote.org/hr/campaigns/lhl/elections-and-2004.php>. See also Tracy Kidder , "The trials of Haiti: why has the US government abandoned a country it once sought to liberate?," *The Nation*, No. 13, Vol. 277; Pg. 26, October 27, 2003
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18. Letter found at: <http://www.cooperativeresearch.org/archive/2001/USdoc040601.pdf>
19. Tracy Kidder , "The trials of Haiti: why has the US government abandoned a country it once sought to liberate?"
20. Found at <http://www.iadb.org/leg/Documents/Pdf/Convenio-Eng.Pdf>. Additionally, Article VIII; Section 5(f) states: "The Bank, its officers and employees shall not interfere in the political affairs of any member, nor shall they be influenced in their decisions by the political character of the member or members concerned. Only economic considerations shall be relevant to their decisions, and these considerations shall be weighed impartially in order to achieve the purpose and functions stated in Article I."
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