

Canadian Imperialism Helps Smash Haiti for Profit

by Kevin Skerrett

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Canadian anti-war activists, anti-imperialists, socialists, anarchists, some social democrats, and even some pro-gressively-minded liberals contributed in various ways to building an impressive mass anti-war movement that helped prevent Canada's formal entry into the continuing Iraq war that began (again) in March 2003. Within that movement, it was broadly recognized that the arguments for the war were pretexts for a grab of economic and political power. Even some war advocates were too embarrassed to suggest otherwise, as we had right-wing pundits like Norman Spector in Canada and Thomas Friedman in the US admitting "of course it's about oil", and endorsing it nonetheless.

This powerful bloc of the left has not, yet, coalesced in opposition to Canada's terrible betrayal of Haiti's troubled democracy through its support for the February 29, 2004 coup d'état. This coup overthrew not only Haiti's twice-elected President, Jean-Bertrand Aristide, but also his entire cabinet and literally thousands of other elected officials. All of these election winners were replaced through a US, France, and Canada-backed "selection" process. So, unlike Iraq, regime change in Haiti replaced a popular and elected government with an unpopular and unelected one, clearly chosen by the imperial powers involved.

Our challenge is to understand why the broad anti-war left has been relatively silent on this issue, and what might be done about it. There are several obvious important factors. The media has been distorting Haiti's political picture for years. The Canadian media have relied extensively on very right-wing pro-US wire services and sources (Associated Press, NYT, etc.). This has produced an avalanche of State Department-sponsored anti-Aristide pro-coup propaganda, which came to be re-circulated throughout NGO networks as well.

The Haitian communities in Canada and the US were successfully divided, demoralized, and demobilized. So, when violence erupted in January-February 2004, it was not at all clear how the Haitian community itself felt. The left, of course does not simply follow the lead of an expatriate community – the Cuban community in Miami, for example, quite rightly does not set the tone. But when President Aristide was re-instated after the first (1991-94) coup to overthrow him, we were told that he enjoyed overwhelming support both in Haiti and in the diaspora, so when protests against the 2004 coup appeared to be small, many drew the conclusion promoted in the media (and by the US, French, and Canadian governments): Aristide had lost all support. This was wrong, as is obvious now that supporters of the constitutionally elected government are being shot, arrested, and terrorized in a horrifying wave of repression – all overseen by Canadian police and CIDA-paid officials working for Haiti's coup government. Nonetheless, it was a factor in demobilizing and confusing many on the left who might otherwise have raised a voice.

Some attention has been paid to these factors in other analysis of this situation (see www.zmag.org). I would like to introduce a third factor that also seems very important, but has not attracted as much

attention – the economics of the coup. As someone involved in trying to help build an effective solidarity with Haiti movement - that properly challenges Canada's policy in this country and exposes what is really happening there - there is one dominant reaction I get from progressives who might otherwise be supportive. They ask, with a skeptical eye, "But what is at stake? There is no oil or other obvious economic prize in Haiti." In other words, an intervention in impoverished Haiti cannot possibly be imperial in nature, as there is no obvious source of super-profits – oil, natural gas, a canal – to be won. Ultimately, goes this thinking, "Haiti just does not matter very much" - a racist view stated openly in a UK Guardian editorial just prior to last year's coup.

Well, Haiti does matter, as an article in Monthly Review asserted in its very title last year. And, in this regard, the recent history of Haiti offers us a powerful lesson in contemporary capitalist politics – if we choose to try to learn it. I want to argue here that there is an obvious source of super-profits to be obtained in Haiti, but that it takes a bit of analysis to map out. I begin with a brief examination of the role of the key institutions of neoliberalism in Haiti's coup, and what plans are now unfolding. After then considering what Canada's business elite might gain from all of this, I offer a tentative conclusion about what model is in store for Haiti's future, and how it relates to the rest of the region.

Neoliberalism in Haiti

The simplified view of Haiti under President Aristide (as well as his successor, Préval – 1996-2000), suggests that it was Haiti's polarized politics that led to economic and political unraveling. While this is partly true, it is only intelligible in the context of a quite conscious and planned economic attack, begun around 1996 and then intensified with a full-on economic aid embargo initiated by the US upon George W. Bush's "election" in 2000, followed in part by Canada. A significant international aid flow (coming primarily from the US, Canada, and France) of some \$600 million and \$700 million (US) in 1995 and 1996 was chopped down to some \$330 million in 1998, then under \$130 million by 2001 and even less in the following three years leading up to the coup. Significantly, as has been outlined in research by Canadian journalist Anthony Fenton and others, a substantial portion of these flows were converted into subversion funds destined to Haiti's political opposition, as well as NGOs, "human rights" groups, women's groups, and others who were either already, or were willing to become, part of a growing anti-Aristide political opposition – joining Haiti's sweatshop business elite that always despised Aristide's left-populist orientation.

It is difficult to underestimate the significance of this financial strangulation strategy. It left Haiti's government with absolutely no room to maneuver, forcing it to try to keep things running on some \$300 million (US) per year – the budget of a large Canadian hospital, much less than a large municipality. With a partly corrupted (corrupted by whom?) national police force of some 4,000 members overseeing some 8.3 million people, Haiti was slowly ripening for a coup.

But again, the question remains why. We have some idea of the explanation for the US government's embargo on Cuba – it represents at least some sort of model, an alternative political and economic arrangement that has delivered social goods to the mass population – something that US (and Canadian) elites declare to be logically and economically an impossibility. But why was Aristide's Haiti such a threat?

Several moves by the Haitian government under Aristide (during the remainder of his first term in 1994-96) infuriated the US government and created a bipartisan consensus that he and his popular

movement threatened US interests in the region. First, Aristide demobilized the Haitian army in 1995, which had been the primary tool of political influence used by the US (through the CIA) for decades. Second, he extended diplomatic recognition to the Cuban government – something that allowed the initiation of a very successful Cuban health care initiative that saw the allocation of over 500 Cuban doctors and nurses to provide primary health care to poor Haitians throughout the country. An obviously outrageous provocation.

Third, and I believe most importantly, President Aristide reversed a previous (perhaps unofficial) commitment to proceed with a massive privatization program, aimed at moving Haiti's valuable electricity, telephone, water, airport, port, and several other state-owned enterprises into the hands of the tiny Haitian bourgeoisie (as well as their American and Canadian corporate friends). While Aristide had made several compromises to neoliberalism – partly in exchange for his reinstatement – a popular mobilization against the privatizations, and parliamentary opposition stiffened his spine and he drew a line in the sand, refusing to proceed. It was at this point on that the aid flows referred to above contracted dramatically.

The details of the political crisis in Haiti that followed have been analysed in some detail, including in the excellent weekly journal *Haiti Progres*, a vehicle of the Parti Populaire Nationale (PPN). This party had been quite a strong critic of President Aristide from the left – challenging each neoliberal compromise made under US pressure just as it challenged each sign of foreign-financed subversion and destabilization. But when business elite push came to paramilitary shove in the January-February 2004 crisis period, the PPN denounced what they recognized as an obvious US (and Canadian) inspired and directed coup process aimed at reinstalling a client regime. Sadly, others on the Haitian “left” (primarily foreign-funded NGOs, but also certain trade unionists and student groups) threw in their lot with a key elite-led opposition group (Group 184) and joined their call for Aristide's resignation – either not recognizing or not caring about the obvious consequences. Even some Canadian NGOs, with full imperial arrogance, joined this partisan call.

What is important to recognize now is the political and economic result. With Aristide gone, US, Canadian, and French officials worked with Haiti's business elite to put together a client state that would be willing to take orders properly. By July 2004, a major new structural adjustment plan had been drafted, dubbed the International Cooperation Framework (ICF). Even cursory examination of the ICF reveals much about the character of what is now in place in post-coup Haiti.

Structural Adjustment Intensified A Window of Opportunity?

Haiti had already been through years of World Bank and IMF-guided structural adjustment, with basic goods trade and interest rates significantly liberalized (at no small social cost). In the mid-1990s, certain key commodity prices were liberalized as well, a move by the Aristide government that generated some opposition. But the big prizes – the electricity and telephone sectors, and the key public infrastructure in ports, airports, and water – remained in public hands in spite of ferocious US pressure.

For post-coup Haiti, the World Bank's ICF, which the Canadian and US governments not only supported but helped to craft, offers no disguise at all for its enthusiasm for the opportunities presented by what it calls Haiti's "transition" government:

"The transition period and the Transitional Government provide a window of opportunity for implementing economic governance reforms with the involvement of civil society stakeholders that may be hard for a future government to undo."

The kinds of "governance reforms" wanted are also made clear in this same document when it turns to a discussion of the health and education sectors:

"[Haitian] authorities have decided to strengthen the partnership between the public sector and private providers while strengthening the regulatory capacity of the public sector. This entails improving transfers to private schools based on transparent criteria and an accountability mechanism, and allowing public health facilities to sign services agreements with private health insurance agencies especially outside the capital city."

Here we see the first obvious entry points for US and Canadian multinationals to cash in on Haiti's suffering. First of all, it is worth noting that in Haiti, the health and education sectors are already between 80% and 90% privately provided, meaning many Haitians have access to neither. This document is signaling that those health facilities that are publicly operated will be arranging a first-step privatization by contracting-out the management of the facilities – the classic "public-private partnership" with which Canadian workers and service users are already familiar.

Of course, the real target – the remaining core of Haiti's state capacity – is in the contested electricity and telephone sectors, and the ICF has plans for these as well:

"Cleanup and modernization of the management of public enterprises in key sectors – EDH (electricity), Teleco (telephone), AAN (airports), APN (ports), and CAMEP (potable water in urban centers), while strengthening the State's regulatory role in key sectors of the economy such as telecommunications, energy, potable water, ports and airports. The accounts of the enterprises weakest in this area will be improved, financial audits and management consulting and training will be provided to each of these enterprises, and management contracts will be prepared in those cases where private sector participation is deemed appropriate during the transition period."

Again, just as we have seen in Canada, the sponsors are careful to use gentle euphemisms ("cleanup and modernization") for what has been a ferociously contested privatization program. Those familiar with World Bank/IMF policy prescriptions will understand that "private sector participation" is "deemed appropriate" in pretty much all cases. What is interesting is the injunction to prepare management contracts for these sensitive sectors prior to the promised "free and fair" elections – the promised democratic processes through which populations theoretically decide major policy issues such as these.

Haiti as a Model Economy for the Region

When we combine the above evidence from the World Bank with the reality on the ground in present-day Haiti – terrifying repression of opposition, the business elite now hiring private armies to provide “security”, possible re-mobilization of the despised Haitian army, and further stage-managed elections – we start to gain a picture of what the imperial powers have in mind for Haiti’s future: nothing short of a sweatshop paradise, whereby the price of labour is maintained at its hemispheric low-point, setting a standard against which other workers of the region will be forced to compete. The recent re-location of production by Canada’s Gildan Activewear (a t-shirt manufacturer) from brutal exploitation conditions in Honduras to the post-coup workers’ nightmare in Haiti is but one sign of this model’s realization. Gildan’s Montreal-area facilities are also being shut down in favour of lower-cost southern destinations – a direct impact on Canadian workers, increasing unemployment, while increasing Gildan’s already healthy profit margins. The only remaining challenge is to squelch Haiti’s rising anti-imperialist opposition – no small task as both Iraq and Afghanistan are demonstrating.

In this light, the universal question – what exploitable resource does Haiti offer that would merit imperial intervention – is answered: labour itself, the ultimate commodity. Equally important, we have transformed Haiti’s government from a recalcitrant moderately leftist source of occasional opposition to the neoliberal agenda into a model client that openly and enthusiastically embraces neoliberalism’s ugliest features – no small accomplishment given the continuing battle for the FTAA and its ugly cousins.

Fortunately, in spite of the media spin and the confusion among many in the anti-war movement and on the left, a solidarity movement is emerging in this country that is challenging our government’s murderous pro-privatization, pro-coup policy in Haiti. As recent 5-city demonstrations at the end of February (marking the anniversary of the coup) and on May 18 (Haiti’s Flag Day) indicate, more and more activists are waking up to the unpleasant reality that Canada’s foreign policy has already been “deeply integrated” with that of the US. While these signs of resistance are promising and important, we need much more discussion, more visible mobilization, and more connections being made between the fight against the privatization of Canada’s public services and the fight against the privatization of these same systems in poorer countries where the stakes are even higher. Finally, we need to build much stronger cooperation among existing movements working in solidarity with Cuba, Venezuela, Bolivia, Colombia, and the rest of the hemisphere, since we know that their struggle is also ours. In this context, it is very clear that Haiti does matter – it may very well symbolize contemporary Canadian capitalism.

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Across Haiti on a wing and prayer

An Illinois native helps spread the gospel as an evangelical pilot. He sees the plane as `a piece of technology that we can use for God.'

By Gary Marx

Tribune foreign correspondent

Chicago Tribune

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PORT-DE-PAIX, Haiti -- David Carwell bowed his head in prayer before easing into the cockpit of his single-engine Cessna and heading out onto the rocky airstrip.

"Don't worry, I'm not taxiing into the dump pile," Carwell, 40, said jokingly, the nose of his plane edging toward a smoldering mound of trash at the end of the runway. "I'm using every part of the strip that I can."

With that, Carwell pivoted the plane, powered up and lifted off at a steep angle, banking left as he soared over a maze of shacks in this isolated port city on Haiti's northern coast on his way toward the capital, Port-au-Prince.

A native of Paris, Ill., and an evangelical Christian, Carwell has spent a total of seven years in Haiti spreading the gospel not through fiery sermons but rather a particular set of aviator skills.

In a nation with few paved roads and spotty commercial airline service, Carwell and a handful of American evangelical pilots help ferry missionaries and many others for a small fee around a country long ravaged by instability and violence.

"I see the plane as a piece of technology that we can use for God," said Carwell, who flies for Mission Aviation Fellowship, or MAF, a California-based evangelical group operating in 16 countries in Latin America, Africa and Asia. "I want to see God's work advance."

But flying in Haiti, even in the name of the Lord, presents its own challenges.

There is no radar, few runway lights and only a handful of paved airstrips in this nation best described as being in a state of perpetual collapse. Donkeys and goats graze on runways even as Carwell lines up his plane for landing.

Two years ago, a motorcyclist zipped onto the airstrip in the central plateau city of Hinche just as Carwell was set to touch down. He yanked the plane up, missing the motorcyclist by about 25 yards.

"That's seconds," Carwell said. "That's not the kind of margin we'd like to have."

Then there are the drug traffickers, who share Haiti's skies with Carwell as they move huge quantities of cocaine from Colombia to the United States.

In 2000, Carwell was stoned by a mob after landing his aircraft for the first time in the city of Gonaives. They mistook Carwell for a trafficker.

"They thought that I had drugs on board and they wanted a piece of the action," said Carwell, who was actually testing Gonaives' landing strip to see whether it was sound enough for regular MAF service.

"There were a lot of guys with machetes," he said. "Fortunately the police came. But that discouraged us. I didn't want to fly into Gonaives after that."

Still, the close call hasn't stopped Carwell from ferrying missionary doctors, evangelical construction teams and pastors to a dozen Haitian cities, sometimes flying the plane low to catch a better view of Haiti's scrubby mountains, steep canyons and deep-blue Caribbean seas.

"The thatched-roof huts--that's where the real peasant people live," Carwell said as he zipped along a valley dotted with rural homesteads on the flight from Port-de-Paix back to Port-au-Prince.

"I can pick out where the witch doctors are," he said minutes later. "They make a pole and put a flag on top. I use the flag as a windsock to gauge which way the wind is going. There's one!"

Found Christ at age 5

After 6,000 landings and takeoffs in Haiti, nothing seems to faze the mild-mannered Carwell, who grew up in a central Illinois farming community where his Baptist parents forbade him to watch television, go to the movies or dance because it violated religious mores.

Looking back, Carwell said he found Christ at age 5 and decided to become a missionary at 13 during summer Bible camp.

But, he wondered, how would he serve God?

As a boy, Carwell was a relentless tinkerer, refurbishing junked lawn mowers for fun and breezing through math and science classes.

The answer came when he read a book titled "Jungle Pilot," which recounted the story of an MAF pilot and four missionaries who flew into a remote region of Ecuador in 1956 to bring the word of God.

Instead, the local tribesmen killed them. Still, the young Carwell was inspired by the missionaries' sacrifice. The teenager decided to use his technical skills to become a missionary pilot.

"I know it's not a natural reaction, but that's what I wanted to do," Carwell said. "It's a God thing."

After graduating from high school, Carwell studied religion at Chicago's Moody Bible Institute and then entered its aviation program.

Carwell was sent to Haiti--his first permanent assignment--in 1995, joining the legion of Christian missionaries who have been operating here for 200 years.

"It's pretty hard to throw a rock in Haiti without it going past some missionary," said Dave Gebben, who works in Haiti for the Michigan- and Canada-based Christian Reformed World Relief Committee.

As Carwell and other missionaries describe it, Haiti's abject poverty and failed public institutions, along with its proximity to the United States, provide an opening for thousands of evangelicals to use their earthly skills in the name of Christ.

They argue that few Haitians will listen to a blanc, or white person, preaching the gospel from a street corner.

But Haitians may pay attention if a missionary helps dig a well for safe drinking water, build a school or health clinic, open an orphanage or provide a small loan for a business.

It's not a quid pro quo. Helping out just opens the door a crack for evangelicals like Carwell, who describes Haiti's unique blend of Catholicism and voodoo as "Satanic" and argues that those beliefs feed the corruption and greed that have led to the country's collapse.

"The reason that I am here is to tell them about Jesus. There are a lot of people serving Satan," said Bruce Robinson, 49, a former Boeing engineer who has spent two decades as a missionary in Haiti and lives near Port-de-Paix.

"But you are preaching the gospel to people who are just trying to stay alive. You've got to help them," he said.

Robinson said residents of northwestern Haiti are so malnourished that they tie a rope tightly around their bellies--and eat clay--to relieve hunger pains.

Building school, church

In addition to digging wells, Robinson is building a school and church in an isolated village. Last week, Carwell flew 24 aluminum window frames for the new facilities from Port-au-Prince to Port-de-Paix.

The 150-mile flight took 45 minutes. By road, it would have taken at least 10 bone-jarring hours. That's if you can make it at all.

Vehicles must wade across two rivers a total of five times on the journey, and there are no bridges. The route becomes impassable during heavy rains.

"You know what a piece of aluminum foil looks like when you crumble it up in your hands?" Robinson said. "That's what they [the frames] would have looked like if I had taken them by road."

But Carwell faces more than just risks in the air. For years, Haiti has been racked by political violence that has worsened since a rebel force and U.S. pressure forced the ouster last year of Haitian President Jean-Bertrand Aristide

Several months ago, the U.S. Embassy in Haiti ordered all non-essential personnel to leave the country in the face of a wave of kidnappings, carjackings, homicides and other crimes.

While criminal gangs are not targeting Carwell and other missionaries, one American missionary was shot at during an attempted carjacking last fall, and others have had close calls.

In December, only days after Carwell returned to Haiti from a lengthy furlough in the Chicago area with his new wife, he and his wife were asleep when they heard gunshots outside their bedroom window.

"The first thing I thought is: `Are we going to make it through the night,'" said Patricia Carwell, 34, who grew up in Morton Grove, Ill. "I prayed and asked for God's protection."

It turns out the shots were fired by a neighbor's security guard chasing away would-be robbers.

Since then, Carwell has installed security bars on his windows and is raising the concrete-block wall around his home to 10 feet.

Some missionary groups are scaling back their operations in Haiti, including suspending visits by church groups that participate in construction and other projects and lead outdoor Bible readings under the shade of mango trees.

But Carwell has no intention of leaving Haiti.

"God has done some amazing things, and it's great to be in the front row to see it happen," he said.

S.Korean citizen released after abducted in Haiti
China View
July 31, 2005

SEOUL, July 31 (Xinhuanet) -- A South Korean businessman who was kidnapped in Haiti by a group of local gunmen was released, said South Korean Foreign Ministry on Sunday.

The ministry said in a press release that the South Korean citizen was released "at 2:15 p.m. Saturday in Haiti (3:15 a.m. Sunday, Seoul time)."

The South Korean Foreign Ministry also said that the UN peace keeping troops in Haiti, Haiti police and South Korean embassy in Dominica, who also takes charge of affairs in Haiti, played important role in the men's release.

The ministry said the abduction is not related to terror.

"It seems to be a simple case of abduction for ransom in the insecure country and had no relation to terror inspired by political purposes," it said.

The South Korean citizen is a vice president of a dressmaking company in Haiti. He was on his way to work on Thursday when he was kidnapped by a group of local gunmen early Thursday morning.

S.Korean citizen kidnapped in Haiti
China View
July 29, 2005

SEOUL, July 29 (Xinhuanet) -- A South Korean people was kidnapped in Haiti on his way to work by a group of local armed gangsters Thursday (local time), said South Korean Foreign Ministry on Friday.

The kidnappers demanded ransom, according to a press release of the ministry, which also said UN peace keeping troops in Haiti and Haiti police had set up joint team to investigate the crime.

The South Korean man, identified only by his surname Suh, who works as a vice president for a South Korean American-run dressmaking company, was on his way to work in the Caribbean island when was abducted, according to the press release.

South Korea's Ambassador to Dominica Lee Joong-il, who doubles as the ambassador to Haiti, immediately called for Haiti authorities to step up their security measures to protect South Koreans, said the release.

There are approximately 10 South Korean nationals residing in Haiti.

Teacher follows calling to Haiti

By Marie Franklin

July 31, 2005

Boston Globe

The Rev. Perard Monestime fled Haiti as a teenager after his father was executed for opposing the brutal regime of Francois Duvalier. Now, at 55, the Jesuit priest and longtime Boston-area educator is returning to Haiti to start a school there, though some of his acquaintances wonder if he is wise to go back to a country that remains in such turmoil.

Monestime, who helped start Nativity Preparatory School in Jamaica Plain, spent the last eight years as diversity director and religion teacher at Boston College High School.

He returned to Haiti this month, hoping by this fall to open his own Jesuit school in Ouanominte, a town that borders the Dominican Republic.

ON LEAVING BC HIGH: I'm comfortable here and I have a lot of friends. The students are motivated to learn and it's a joy to teach them. I will miss the school very much. But when I went back to Haiti two years ago to finish my Jesuit training, and I saw the situation there, I knew that with my experience I could go back and make a difference.

BRINGING EDUCATION TO HIS HOMELAND: Seventy percent of the children who go to school in Haiti go to elite private schools that educate people, not for Haiti, but to leave Haiti to live in Europe, Canada, or the United States. Education for all is a must if Haiti is to progress and rebuild the country. My first goal is to get the school built. Then we have to gather books and supplies and hire our first teachers. The school will offer a traditional Jesuit education. We will educate students intellectually, emotionally, and physically. Most important, we will teach children to be aware of their surroundings and to develop a social consciousness to rebuild Haiti.

CONDITIONS IN HAITI: It's very poor and a lot of people are homeless. Many people live in shanty towns. Food is expensive. In Port-au-Prince, the sidewalks are packed with people who have no place to go. There is a lack of jobs, and a lack of infrastructure like running water, electricity, and roads. Healthcare is a problem and most people never see a doctor. In towns that border the Dominican Republic, such as Ouanominte where we will build the school, there are many refugees who have been sent back and have no place to go.

ON FUNDING: The Jesuits have purchased the land to build the school. They bought a small house where I will live and will provide much of the start-up funding. Another international program, Fey Y Alegria, or Faith and Joy, will also give us start-up funds. Once the school is established, a foundation in the United States will begin fund-raising so we can reach out and sponsor incoming students.

BELIEVING IN DESTINY: Many people think I am crazy to take on this assignment. I know it's a crazy thing to do. But I am going to do it anyway. I feel like it is my destiny to go back to Haiti now.

Democracy Progresses in Haiti

by Aaron Mate

July 30, 2005

Znet

On July 16, the Council of Sages, the Western-backed body that has overseen Haiti's political affairs since the February 2004 ouster of President Jean Bertrand Aristide, made a startling recommendation. Blaming the exiled Aristide and his Lavalas party for "continu[ing] to promote and tolerate violence," the council urged the interim regime that it appointed to "make the bold political and beneficial decision to disqualify the Lavalas Family Party from the electoral process."

The council needn't worry. International intervention, in which Canada has played a major role, has assured that it will be next to impossible for the country's largest political party to run freely in the scheduled fall elections.

On July 6, international troops with MINUSTAH, the United Nations peacekeeping mission in Haiti, conducted a raid into the Port-au-Prince slum of Cité Soleil, a Lavalas stronghold. The UN cast the operation as an effort to confront gang violence, but witnesses and observers tell a different story. CARLI, a respected lawyer-headed human rights group, stated that it had "credible information that U.N. troops, accompanied by Haitian police, killed an undetermined number of unarmed residents of Cite Soleil, including several babies and women." While the UN claimed that it had killed only five "armed bandits", Reuters reported that its local television crew "filmed seven other bodies of people killed during the operation, including those of two one-year-old baby boys and a woman in her 60s." Ali Besnaci, head of the Médecins Sans Frontières mission, said that his hospital had treated 27 residents for gunshot wounds. "Three quarters were children and women," he said, including one pregnant woman who lost her baby. "We had not received so many wounded in one day for a long time." Not one North American newspaper printed the Reuters report that these quotes are taken from.

Canada is an integral member of the MINUSTAH force, contributing over 100 police officers and overseeing its logistical planning. As part of the mission, Canada is also helping to train the Haitian National Police (HNP), which has been implicated in serious abuses of its own. Earlier this year, the Miami Herald reported that "Haitian police opened fire on peaceful protesters [on February 28], killing two, wounding others and scattering an estimated 2,000 people marching through the capital to mark the first anniversary of President Jean-Bertrand Aristide's ouster." A similar incident two months later was noted by the Associated Press as "the third time in three months that Haitian police have fatally opened fire on demonstrators in Port-au-Prince."

Through CIDA, Canadian funding has gone into Haiti's justice system, which this week added a new inmate to its ever growing population of political prisoners. On July 21st, Rev. Gerard Jean-Juste, a Cité Soleil priest, was arrested and accused of charges that include murder and kidnapping. As of this writing, he remains in solitary confinement. Calling him a "prisoner of conscience, detained solely because he has peacefully exercised his right to freedom of expression", Amnesty International noted that Jean-Juste "risks spending a long time in custody awaiting trial on apparently trumped-up charges." Perhaps until after the elections, in which he was expected to be Lavalas' Presidential candidate, were it to take part. Fellow Lavalas prisoners like deposed Prime Minister Yvon Neptune and folk singer So Anne Auguste have both spent over a year in prison with no trial in sight.

Why poor Haitians and their popular leaders are being targeted is not difficult to surmise: in large numbers, they are calling for the return of the government that they elected. One of Aristide's most popular decisions was to disband the feared Haitian military, whose remnants later led the armed rebellion that ousted him. Today, "the police high command is now dominated by ex-military," Reuters reports, with "only one of the top 12 police commanders in the Port-au-Prince area" not from its ranks.

Some are not satisfied with the role of the murderers, torturers and rapists taking up the positions they held under previous military regimes. Interim Prime Minister Gerard Latortue, for example, feels as if they haven't been able to terrorize the population enough. If the international community "had given us a little more freedom to work with the ex-military, so that they could have participated in the struggle against the armed groups, I am more than certain that we wouldn't be in the impasse we are in today," he explained to the Associated Press.

Aristide-led governments were also marred with some credible allegations of corruption and human rights abuses. But the fact remains that "[n]o other political party comes close to the support enjoyed by the Fanmi Lavalas," as Gallup found in a March 2002 poll (one of the last to widely survey Haitian public opinion), giving Lavalas 37% support. Its next closest competitor, the US-supported Democratic Convergence, attracted 8%. Appropriately, these results, commissioned by the US State Department, were never released to the public.

What is not clear is why popular sentiment is being suppressed with Canada's support. While none of Haiti's Caribbean neighbors have recognized the installed regime, the Liberal government has showered it with diplomatic ties, \$180 million in aid, and lofty public apologia. At a June 17 press conference, Foreign Minister Pierre Pettigrew rejected a question about HNP abuses, declaring his belief that "the Haitian police is doing its very best in extremely difficult circumstances."

Perhaps out of diplomatic politeness, Mr. Pettigrew's podium partner, U.N. mission head Juan Gabriel Valdez, refrained from commenting. But he has not been shy before. Three days after the Miami Herald report above, Mr. Valdez "said police brutality is undercutting progress and such action will no longer be tolerated," the paper reported. 'We cannot tolerate executions,' he said. 'We can't tolerate shooting out of control. We will not permit human rights abuses.'

Although Cité Soleil and many other examples demonstrate that his forces are in fact willing to participate in human rights abuses, Valdez could at least point to a few redeeming exceptions. Canada shows no such ambiguity. Pettigrew continued that while he had not even heard of the police shootings reported in the mainstream press, he could confidently dismiss a critical human rights report put out by the University of Miami's Center for Human Rights as "propaganda which is absolutely not interesting." "What interests me," he concluded, "is the future of Haiti, it is the future of Haitians, it is the progress of democracy, and the progress of the rule of law."

Some Haitians will certainly be heartened by Pettigrew's interest in their democratic future. Prominent bureaucrats and ex-military police chiefs come to mind. Residents of Cité Soleil, however, and the many other poor Haitians struggling for their basic democratic rights, will likely have a far different reaction.

Aaron Maté is a Montreal-based journalist. A shorter version of this article appeared in the Toronto Star, July 25 2005.

Haiti: Arms Proliferation Could Further Human Rights Crisis In Run Up to Presidential Elections, Warns Amnesty International
Women and Children Suffering Disproportionately in Absence of Rule of Law
PRESS RELEASE
AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL
July 28, 2005

(New York) -- Former military personnel and criminal gangs are using 170,000 small arms to commit grave human rights abuses against Haitian civilians – and, with Haiti still unstable, levels of violence may increase in the run up to year-end elections, warned Amnesty International in a report released today.

"Illegal armed groups and former military members are employing these arms to kidnap, sexually abuse and kill Haitians with absolute impunity," stated Dr. William F. Schulz, Executive Director of Amnesty International USA (AIUSA). "Meanwhile the Haitian National Police (HNP) and U.N. forces have failed to take decisive action to effectively disarm those responsible for the most severe human rights abuses. Without a disarmament and demobilization plan, Haiti is certain to sink further into crisis."

The report, *Haiti: Disarmament delayed, justice denied*, notes that in locations where state authority is weak, armed groups and individuals continue to illegally control territory and commit criminal acts without challenge from the HNP or the U.N. Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH). Furthermore, the interim government's lack of political will to reform the HNP or disarm criminal gangs is hampering MINUSTAH's efforts.

Attempts to disarm illegal armed groups have been insufficient; in March 2005, 325 former military personnel symbolically turned in seven weapons in Cap-Haitien, but since then, Haitian authorities have made no serious efforts to disarm the former military and rebel groups. From March 2004 to May 2005, there have been many hundreds of documented killings in Haiti. In addition to the extrajudicial killing, arbitrary detention and ill-treatment of men and children, women continue to suffer disproportionately in absence of the rule of law. At times, rapes are politically motivated; women are attacked because their husbands or relatives are believed to support former President Aristide's Fanmi Lavalas Party. Cases in the report include:

- On May 31, 2005, armed men attacked the Tête Bœuf marketplace. They bolted the doors and prevented merchants from leaving by shooting in all directions before setting fire to the buildings. More than 4,000 merchants saw their businesses go up in flames. At least eleven people were burned alive.
- In late June of this year, a Haitian woman working for the Red Cross was kidnapped. On July 14th, she was found dead. Her body was discovered bound and blindfolded in a Port-au-Prince slum. As yet, no one has been charged for the crime.
- Five men allegedly raped 19-year-old D.P. in her house in Cité Soleil, Port-au-Prince, on September 13, 2004. During the attack her brothers were reportedly held on the ground at gunpoint. The attackers

threatened D.P. with death if she reported the assault. In fear for their lives, the two brothers have been living on the streets of Port-au-Prince ever since. D.P. did not receive medical attention or psychological support and, when she spoke with Amnesty International, still was suffering from pelvic pain. She said other women had experienced similar attacks in the neighborhood. "Lack of accountability plus widespread impunity can never equal stability in Haiti," said Eric Olson, Americas Advocacy Director for AIUSA. "The interim government is failing its international and fundamental responsibilities to protect Haitians' most basic rights. Durable peace cannot be achieved unless human rights abusers are held to account and the victims given redress."

Amnesty International urged the interim government and MINUSTAH to implement without delay a comprehensive disarmament, demobilization and reintegration program; aggressively work toward reforming the judicial system in accordance with international human rights legislation; investigate all reports of human rights violations; and bring those responsible to justice.

Contact AIUSA Press Office: 202-544-0200 x 302

Teacher recalls decision to stay in harm's way
Sunday, July 31, 2005
By ERIN KLABUNDE
The Express-Times

During what was supposed to be a routine, week-long break from the school in Haiti where he worked, Lower Nazareth Township resident Stephen Keppel found himself at an alarming crossroads.

In response to former Haitian President Jean-Bertrand Aristide's February ouster, gangs surrounding the capital city, Port-au-Prince and the town where Keppel worked wreaked havoc, causing violence, closing the border, blocking roads and brandishing firearms.

When the situation became so dire that even the director of the school returned to the United States, Keppel had to make a decision: go back to the States, where he could stay with his family and raise funds for the school until it was safe for him to return, or sweat it out in the Dominican Republic, where he was vacationing, and hope for an early return to the students and staff at the school.

"They sealed the border and set up roadblocks. That was a sign that we probably weren't going to get back (to Haiti) for a little while," Keppel said.

He opted to stay.

Two weeks later, he left the Dominican Republic and finally returned to Haiti. He and other staffers reopened the school, making it the first school in the area to open its doors after Aristide's removal. All told, students missed only five class days.

Keppel works for The Haitian Project, a Catholic mission that supports and operates the Louverture Cleary School, a tuition-free school for academically gifted but poor Haitian children. The school is located in Croix-des-Bouquets, a town 10 miles south of Port-au-Prince.

Keppel began teaching English and literature at the school after graduating from Notre Dame University in 2003. He said his main motivation for doing this work is simply "because I knew that I had been given so much, and I felt a strong need that I had to give something back."

"In Haiti, you can do something for someone every day, because there's such a need," Keppel said. When Hurricane Jean hit in September 2004, it demolished a town called Gonaives and thousands perished.

"We hear about the tsunami, but it seems like Haiti always gets overlooked," he said.

Keppel taught with about 70 other staff members of Louverture Cleary, including seven foreign volunteers and about 20 Haitians who taught French, math, science, and history.

LCS enrolls about 300 students in a country in which nearly one-third of the 3.5 million children have no access to education, according to a 1999 UNICEF report. In a given year, only 20 to 40 percent of

students across the country pass the national baccalaureate exam that all Haitian students must pass to complete secondary school and go on to university.

This year, 100 percent of Louverture Cleary students passed the exam.

Aristide's party split over Haiti election

28 Jul 2005 20:36:49 GMT

Reuters

By Joseph Guyler Delva

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti, July 28 (Reuters) - Ten weeks before elections in Haiti the largest political party, the Lavalas Family of ousted president Jean-Bertrand Aristide and the poor masses, still does not know if it will participate.

Overwhelmed by political and gang violence that has killed some 900 people since September, the Caribbean state is struggling to put its derailed democracy back on track. But it faces the possibility of doing so without the party that has dominated politics for 20 years.

One faction within the party -- a grass-roots movement that helped turn the country from dictatorship to democracy in the 1980s -- believes Lavalas should not take part unless Aristide, exiled after a bloody revolt last year, is allowed to return.

"No one, no party wants elections more than us, because we'll win any democratic and free elections," said Samba Boukman, a spokesman for grass-roots organizations affiliated with Lavalas. "But it makes no sense to go to vote when you know your president can be kidnapped any time."

Another faction, saying Lavalas must continue to fight for the masses in the poorest country in the Americas, believes the party should indeed participate in the local, presidential and legislative elections scheduled for October and November.

"We definitely want to take part in those elections, but as election dates draw near, the government is doing everything to make sure we don't participate," said Yvon Feuille, a moderate senator from Lavalas.

Some party officials say Aristide's position will be critical. "Aristide is still the leader of the party," said Felito Doran, a party spokesman. "His position is key in any decision to go to election."

Aristide, whose movement forced Jean Claude "Baby Doc" Duvalier from power in 1986, became Haiti's first freely elected president in 1991 and won a second term in 2000. He left for exile in South Africa in February 2004 driven out by an armed uprising and prompted to go by Washington and Paris.

The Lavalas faction arguing for Aristide's return says such a move is necessary to restore Haiti's constitutional order but the U.S.-backed interim government repeatedly accuses the former president's supporters of fomenting violence.

HUMAN RIGHTS CRITICISM

Human rights groups, in turn, have criticized the government for jailing Aristide supporters, including his former prime minister, Yvon Neptune, and Rev. Gerard Jean-Juste, a Roman Catholic priest who has become a popular figure with the poor in Aristide's absence.

"When the government keeps former Prime Minister Neptune in jail illegally, when they arbitrarily arrest and detain Father Jean-Juste, and when they detain so many other political prisoners, the authorities are just trying to prevent us from running," Feuille said.

In a report issued on Thursday, the London-based rights group Amnesty International said Haitians remained mired in a human rights crisis that could worsen as the election nears. It said little progress had been made since the interim government took over and U.N. peacekeepers arrived last year.

"Politically motivated arbitrary detentions, ill treatment, extrajudicial executions, deliberate and arbitrary killings of civilians, rape, death threats and intimidation are routine and are perpetrated with impunity," the group said.

Haitian priest Jean-Juste arrested

By Tim Pelzer

**People's Weekly World Newspaper,
07/28/05**

Haitian police arrested former political prisoner Father Gerald Jean-Juste July 21 and are holding him in Port-au-Prince's Haitian National Penitentiary. Witnesses reported that the anti-Lavalas "Group of 184" supporters brutally assaulted Jean-Juste July 21 at the funeral of murdered journalist Jacques Roche. Police and UN forces moved in to protect Jean-Juste and then escorted him to a waiting police vehicle. He was taken to a nearby police station and placed in custody.

While it was initially reported that police had charged Jean-Juste with murdering Roche and "failure to return state property," legal advisor Bill Quigley, a law professor at New Orleans's Loyola University, stated that the newest charges against Jean-Juste are "public denunciation" and "inciting to violence."

"These charges are as groundless as the prior ones — but are still not in writing and will probably change again," remarked Quigley, who accompanied Jean-Juste after police arrested him.

According to the Catholic priest's lawyer, Mario Joseph, there is no basis in the law for the charges against his client. The Haitian News Agency reported that a source close to the Latortue government indicated that some sectors [within the regime] are trying to create "legal arguments" to justify Jean-Juste's detention.

This is not the first time that Jean-Juste has been arrested. Police arrested the Catholic priest November 5, 2004, and held him for 48 days until a campaign launched by international human rights groups forced authorities to release him. The outspoken Catholic priest has been a thorn in the side of the coup-installed government. He has campaigned within and without Haiti for the release of political prisoners, the restoration of constitutional order and the return of elected President Jean Bertrand Aristide. Recently he was in Miami leading protests against the Latortue regime and UN military forces in Haiti.

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Additional troops headed to Haiti
By UNITED PRESS INTERNATIONAL
Published July 29, 2005
World Peace Herald

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti -- An additional 750 troops are set to join the 7,600 U.N. peacekeepers in Haiti working to bring stability and security to the embattled nation.

The additional troops will come from the ranks of the Jordanian military, Haitian radio reported Friday. They are set to arrive within next few months, said a representative for the U.N. mission in Haiti.

The decision to send additional troops to the troubled Caribbean nation followed a recent report by human rights group Amnesty International that the presence of the peacekeepers has failed to curtail the widespread violence there.

Killings and kidnappings have been rampant in Haiti since early 2004, when armed rebel groups began taking over the country calling for the resignation of then-President Jean-Bertrand Aristide.

The Haitian leader left the country in February 2004 and sought refuge in a number of countries until finding asylum in South Africa.

Haitian gunmen attack UN base
Saturday, July 30, 2005
Caribbean Net News

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti (UPI): Haitian gunmen on Friday attempted to raid a UN base in the capital, but were thwarted by troops, a UN mission spokesman said.

The gunmen attacked the base in the Bel-Air neighborhood of Port-au-Prince in a pre-dawn raid.

It marked the first time since the UN peacekeeping mission began in May 2004 that armed gangs have been so brazen as to attack a UN post.

The 7,600 soldiers and police officers in the international force -- led by Brazilian troops -- have experienced difficulties bringing stability and security to the troubled Caribbean nation.

Violence broke out in Haiti early last year when armed gunmen began taking over the country calling for the resignation of then-President Jean-Bertrand Aristide, who left the country in February 2004.

BSO reaches out to immigrants with course on law enforcement

By Toni Marshall

South Florida Sun Sentinel

Posted July 31 2005

Paul Metelus grew up in a place where the police are feared and mistrusted.

When he came to South Florida, he brought those sentiments with him.

"If you see police in Haiti, they are so tough. They will shout at you for looking at them," said Metelus, 41, one of 33 graduates of the Broward Sheriff's Haitian Citizens Academy last year.

"They will beat you up for no reason. They make you nervous. No one talks to the police in Haiti."

A new crop of academy graduates will take part in the academy's second commencement ceremony at 6:30 p.m. Monday, at Deerfield Beach's Commission Chambers, 150 NE Second Ave.

"When I finished the course I realized that the police is nobody's enemy. They are everybody's friend," said Metelus, who will be on hand to salute this year's class.

The Haitian Citizens Academy, an educational enrichment program open to adults 18 and older, was established last year to expose Haitian immigrants to American law enforcement and to give them a venue to ask about law enforcement. They receive a certificate at the end of the program and, organizers hope, a better understanding of law enforcement.

This year's class of 25 graduates spent 11 weeks learning about city government and the criminal justice system. They attended classes on Mondays from 6:30 to 9:30 p.m.

Students learned about both the criminal investigation unit and the SWAT Team, took tours of local prisons, the Broward Sheriff's Office 911 communications center, watched K-9 demonstration and rode along with deputies.

The idea for the academy came about when city officials from Deerfield Beach expressed concern over recurring disturbances between black Americans and Haitian Americans in schools during Haitian Flag Day held in May, said Lt. Don McCuaig of the Broward Sheriff's Deerfield Beach district office.

"The past few years we stepped up patrol around the high schools, but that was a Band-Aid approach to what we could be doing in the cities of Deerfield and Pompano Beach," McCuaig said.

"We decided to reach out to the Haitian community and bring them in and enlighten us as to what was going on," he said.

The Sheriff's Office copied a plan used in Delray Beach. The class was free to the Haitian community. Instructors either volunteered their time or the Sheriff's Office rearranged schedules so as to not incur costs.

Agencies with this type of program should be applauded, said Richard Mangan, a professor of criminology at Florida Atlantic University and a former agent of the Drug Enforcement Agency.

"Whether Asian or Russia or Haitian, they did not grow up with Officer Friendly," Mangan said. "The police were someone you were afraid of or corrupt," he said.

Mangan said that in many U.S. cities, the police did not know the crime rate in ethnic areas because the residents wouldn't report the crimes. "We used to say that the problem was the language. That was only a part of the problem. We did not understand the culture until these programs took effect and we got people to go in and get involved."

The class has encouraged Metelus to help out in his community. He now patrols his neighborhood with the Citizens On Patrol group.

"After I finished the program, I did a radio show and dispatched the word," he said.

Sabael Destinvil, 40, of Boca Raton, heard it. He called the Broward Sheriff's Office to see whether he could take the class although he lives in Palm Beach County.

Destinvil, who works as a waiter in a country club, is graduating Monday and thinking about pursuing a job in law enforcement.

"Now I feel that we can work together. We learned a lot ... especially about justice," Destinvil said. "They can help you if someone tries to threaten you."

Haiti: World Bank Approves \$38 million Grant to Support Community-Driven Development
July 29 2005

Press Release - World Bank
Harold Doan and Associates

The World Bank Group's Board of Directors approved today a US\$38 million grant from the International Development Association (IDA) to scale-up the direct transfer of public resources to local community organizations in poor rural areas and urban communities.

"The project signals the Bank's commitment to the development and empowerment of Haitian communities, especially in poor rural areas," said Caroline Anstey, the World Bank's Country Director for the Caribbean. "The project will support economic rehabilitation and the creation of economic opportunities, including rapid job creation; improve basic services, such as education, health and sanitation; and improve economic governance, also at the local level. It directly supports 3 of the 4 pillars of the Interim Co-operation Framework agreed by the Transitional Government of Haiti and the donors a year ago."

The Community-Driven Development Project builds upon the successful implementation of a Community-Driven Development pilot project, which was executed in 2004 by the Pan-American Development Foundation and financed by the World Bank's Post-Conflict Fund. Ms. Anstey added that the project is part of the Bank's reengagement strategy with Haiti as set out in the Bank's Transitional Support Strategy (TSS):

"The TSS sets the stage for the Bank's reengagement in Haiti and highlights Community-Driven Development (CDD) as an approach to improve basic economic, social and infrastructure services while building social inclusion, participation, transparency, trust, and public-private partnerships at the local level."

The project will scale-up direct transfer of funds to local community organizations to improve their access to basic social and economic infrastructure and income-generating activities. Specifically, the project will support the following activities:

Community Subproject Funds, Management and Support: This component will finance approximately 1,300 small-scale investments in 55 to 65 targeted municipalities of rural and peri-urban Haiti. The investments are identified by community organizations and prioritized in project development councils.

Capacity Building and Technical Assistance: This component will finance the training of trainers in basic management, administration, accounting and financial management and sharing of experiences and knowledge between municipal and regional representatives, and local councils.

Project Administration, Supervision, Monitoring and Evaluation: This component will finance incremental costs associated with project implementation and operate under the oversight of the Ministry of Planning and External Cooperation.

"Community-Driven Development is a viable approach for improving access to basic social and economic infrastructure in a short period of time," said Garry Charlier, the World Bank's team leader

for the grant. “The grant approved today will address one of the goals of the TSS of delivering hope and achieving quick wins, particularly in rural areas of Haiti.”

The World Bank in Haiti

The World Bank’s Board of Directors approved the two-year TSS for Haiti on January 6, 2005, along with two operations totaling US\$73 million to support economic governance reforms and emergency recovery efforts in flood-affected areas. The two operations, financed through IDA, are the first approved by the Bank for the Government of Haiti since 1996.

The Bank’s TSS seeks to assist the Government of Haiti in delivering hope to the population through quick wins, such as the provision of basic services and job creation; and to restore credibility in public institutions by helping the government launch reforms that promote sound economic governance and institutional development.

The Bank approved a total of US\$75 million in financing from IDA during the past fiscal year, of which US\$38 million was provided in the form of grants. In addition to these US\$75 million, the World Bank is providing a grant of US\$6.4 million drawn from the Low-Income Countries Under Stress (LICUS) Trust Fund. The Bank has disbursed US\$50 million from this IDA and LICUS Trust Fund financing. During its fiscal year 2006, the Bank will also provide 100 percent of its IDA assistance on grant terms for investment projects. The CDD project approved today is the first project for this fiscal year.

UN seeks SWAT team, spies, road projects in Haiti

28 Jul 2005

Reuters

By Irwin Arieff

UNITED NATIONS, July 28 (Reuters) - A senior U.N. official urged the Security Council on Thursday to reinforce the peacekeeping mission in Haiti with a "SWAT" team and an intelligence unit to boost its fight against criminal gangs.

But just putting an end to street gangs, killings and kidnappings is not enough, said U.N. peacekeeping head Jean-Marie Guehenno.

He said it was equally important to launch projects like road construction and ensure all political factions participate in elections due in November.

Haitians "have to see that the mission is making progress and also making a difference in their lives," he told reporters after briefing the 15-nation council behind closed doors.

A SWAT (Special Weapons and Tactics) team would help peacekeepers cope with gang leaders and hostage-takers, he said. In a densely populated setting, "these are highly trained individuals who can do the job quickly and efficiently without risk to the surrounding civilian population."

As for intelligence agents, he said, "the best possible information on the ground is helpful and possibly having some very specialized capacities would help on the security front."

Guehenno said the United Nations was investigating allegations of high civilian casualties during a July 6 anti-gang raid in Cite Soleil, Haiti's largest slum.

Rights groups and residents said U.N. peacekeepers and Haitian police killed numerous civilian bystanders during the raid, but U.N. officials said they were unaware of any unarmed civilian deaths.

Guehenno said the mission had heard that a number of revenge killings took place after the raid, something that might explain the finding of civilian bodies at the site.

While the account was unconfirmed, "we have every reason to believe that report," he said. "There may have been some civilian casualties, but certainly not in the magnitude mentioned by those who want to discredit MINUSTAH," he said, using the acronym for the U.N. mission in Haiti.

Mission in Haiti needs capacity for urban operations, UN peacekeeping chief says

UN News Centre

July 28, 2005

28 July 2005 – The United Nations mission in Haiti is making slow headway on the many challenges it faces, but lacks specialized capabilities for the urban confrontations it experiences daily, the head of UN peacekeeping said today.

After briefing the Security Council in closed session, Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations Jean-Marie Guéhenno told journalists that security in the Caribbean nation, where the UN has deployed the UN Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) since June of last year, is the immediate and fundamental challenge, without which “no progress is certain.”

In the Haitian capital, Port-au-Prince, there have been security improvements in one slum district, Bel Air, but no real improvement in Cité Soleil, where the people have been the first victims of gangs, he said.

MINUSTAH has carried out a number of military actions in these areas, Mr. Guéhenno said, but “it is not easy for MINUSTAH to conduct these operations because, operating in an urban environment, ideally you need the kind of very specialized capacities that the mission doesn’t really have. But this security situation needs to be addressed urgently.”

Saying there may have been some civilian casualties during a MINUSTAH operation carried out on 6 July in the Bois Neuf area of Cité Soleil aimed at arresting a prominent gang leader, Emmanuel Wilmer, alias “Dread Wilmé,” Mr. Guéhenno said they were “not of the order of magnitude” reported by some critics of the mission.

“After the operation, there were unconfirmed reports from the Haitian National Police (HNP) and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that there were a number of revenge killings,” he said.

The country was extraordinarily polarized, he noted, using as illustrations the burning of a major market downtown Port-au-Prince last month and the killing of journalist Jacques Roche, whose body was found last Sunday, four days after he was abducted.

Another challenge facing MINUSTAH was assisting with the upcoming elections which could be a foundation for stabilization or could further divide the country, Mr. Guéhenno said, as a consequence of which the mission was promoting inclusiveness, but on the basis that violence was not an option. He welcomed the clear condemnation of violence from moderates in Fanmi (Famille) Lavalas, the party headed by President Jean-Bertrand Aristide before he left the country in February of last year.

The third challenge for the mission was the shocking poverty and high unemployment he had observed across Haiti, which “does not create, obviously, a good basis for reconciliation and progress.” MINUSTAH, for its part, was looking at using Haitian manpower in such projects as road building, Mr. Guéhenno said.

UN mission in Haiti defeats first effort to infiltrate a base

UNNews Centre

July 29, 2005

29 July 2005 – For the first time since the peacekeeping United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) arrived in the Caribbean country in mid-2004, bandits attempted today to infiltrate a mission base, but were defeated and lost one life, the mission said.

At a post manned by Brazilian troops in the Bel-Air district of the capital, Port-au-Prince, at about 4:30 a.m., local time, "the bandits tried to infiltrate the MINUSTAH soldiers' base, recently established on Rue Tiremasse," it said. "The 'blue helmets' reacted efficiently to this criminal effort. One bandit was killed, one gun seized, and the other three people succeeded in running away."

MINUSTAH's report came the day after the head of UN peacekeeping, Under-Secretary-General Jean-Marie Guéhenno, told journalists at UN Headquarters in New York that the mission needed troops with specialized training for its raids in the Bel-Air and Cité Soleil shantytowns, where he said gangs were victimizing the poor.

U.N.: Haiti to Get 750 More Peacekeepers

By ALFRED de MONTESQUIOU

Associated Press Writer

July 29, 2005

Newsday

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti -- The U.N. mission to Haiti said it will receive 750 more peacekeeping troops to help control the violence that threatens to undermine fall elections.

The new troops from Jordan will arrive in coming months and will be serve as temporary reinforcement to the multinational contingent of 6,200 troops and 1,400 police trying to stabilize the country, U.N. spokesman Damian Onses-Cardona said Thursday.

The announced reinforcement came a day after Amnesty International said the presence of U.N. peacekeepers for more than a year had failed to curb widespread rights abuses and political violence and that the human rights crisis could worsen as the elections approach.

Haiti is scheduled to hold local elections in October followed by national elections in November to replace the interim government put in place after a violent rebellion that ousted President Jean-Bertrand Aristide in February 2004.

U.N. officials said security has begun to improve in recent weeks because of increased police roadblocks and raids against gang leaders.

While there are no official crime statistics for Haiti, a senior U.N. adviser said the average number of kidnappings in the capital, which has a population of some 2.5 million, has decreased by half to about six a day over past few weeks.

The U.N.'s mandate is expected to end next February, a few days after the newly elected government is scheduled to come in power.

Separately, the top U.N. peacekeeping official said Thursday that the United Nations is also seeking specialized troops or police who would be better trained for raids in dense civilian areas.

Jean-Marie Guehenno, the undersecretary-general for peacekeeping, told the Security Council that forces in Haiti aren't trained for raids such as one this month in the capital's Cite Soleil slum in which witnesses have claimed that at least nine civilians were killed in crossfire.

"I have to acknowledge the forces we have do not have the kind of very specialized capacity ... that makes absolutely sure that there will be zero civilian casualties in a densely populated environment," he said while briefing the council in New York.

Gun culture 'undermining' Haiti

BBC News

July 28, 2005

7,000 UN peacekeepers have failed to halt the violence

Haiti is awash with small arms which are fuelling violence and human rights abuses and threaten planned elections, according to Amnesty International.

The group says armed criminal gangs and police officers alike are able to act with impunity towards civilians.

It urges the US-appointed interim government and UN peacekeepers to carry out complete disarmament.

The UN mission in the country is struggling to maintain law and order following a surge in violence in Haiti.

The country has recently been hit by a string of abductions and police say that more than 450 people have been kidnapped since March.

'Little progress'

The UN has carried out a series of high-profile raids on shanty towns on the edges of the capital, Port-au-Prince, in a bid to paralyse the armed gangs they say are behind the violence.

But Amnesty says rogue police officers and demobilised Haitian armed forces are also responsible for human rights abuses.

It accuses the UN force of not doing enough to control the situation ahead of elections planned for October and November.

"Haitians remain mired in a human rights crisis despite the presence of a UN peacekeeping force," the report says, warning violence could get worse before the elections.

"Little tangible progress has been made to protect human rights since the interim government took office in early March 2004," it adds.

The report's author says that the country's interim government has not signed up to a comprehensive disarmament plan drawn up by the UN force.

The government, it says, is failing to protect the basic rights of the Haitian people.

"Durable peace in Haiti will never be achieved unless those responsible for human rights are held to account," Amnesty's Mike Blakemore said.

The country's interim Prime Minister, Gerard Latortue, has admitted that police commit abuses but has maintained these are investigated.

Haiti: Father Jean-Juste sends a message from prison

Haiti Action Committee

July 30, 2005

Message to all from Fr. Gerard Jean-Juste inside Haitian National Penitentiary:

Dear Friends, Militants for Justice & Peace, Family Members, Veye-Yo in Miami, Religious Brothers and Sisters & All of You Distinguished People,

With God's blessing & grace, with your support on all levels, I am fighting to stay alive & well. The service to the needy brothers and sisters are continuing at St. Clare's Tiplas Kazo, the 425 member summer camp is running.

I am suffering physically but spiritually I am in good shape.

Victory is coming. I am innocent of all invented charges. Praise be God & to all of you who serve humanity!

Brotherly Love, N Jeri

This message was given to Dave Robinson of Pax Christi USA during a visit with Fr. Gerry in the Haitian National Penitentiary. Fr. Jean-Juste is in a very hot place and is still in significant pain from injuries suffered in the attack on him in St. Pierre's Catholic Church. Haiti

UN seeks specialist Haiti troops

BBC News

July 28, 2005

The UN says it needs specialist troops for shantytown raids

The United Nations says it is seeking highly trained troops to operate in slum districts of Haiti.

It wants specialist forces who can ensure minimum civilian casualties while performing delicate operations, such as arresting gang leaders.

Head of UN peacekeeping operations Jean-Marie Guehenno says the UN is reviewing a raid in which witnesses said civilians were killed.

Earlier, Amnesty International said gun culture was "undermining" Haiti.

Haiti is experiencing a growing wave of violence as it prepares for elections later this year.

Small arms are fuelling violence and human rights abuses, and threaten the planned elections, Amnesty reported.

The human rights group is urging the US-appointed interim government and UN peacekeepers to carry out complete disarmament.

Slum raids

The UN has carried out a series of high-profile raids on shantytowns on the edges of the capital, Port-au-Prince, to paralyse the armed gangs they say are behind the violence.

But Mr Guehenno told the Security Council that UN forces in Haiti were not trained for raids such as the one in the capital's Cite Soleil slum earlier this month.

Witnesses say at least nine civilians were killed in crossfire.

"I have to acknowledge the forces we have do not have the kind of very specialised capacity... that makes absolutely sure that there will be zero civilian casualties in a densely populated environment," he said.

He added he did not yet have any commitments to supply such forces.

Peacekeepers accused after killings in Haiti

July 29, 2005

By: Andrew Buncombe

The Independent

Evidence is mounting that United Nations peacekeepers shot and killed unarmed civilians, including children, during a recent raid in Haiti. The UN said it was ready to investigate the alleged 'use of unnecessary force'.

Independent witnesses say up to 23 people were killed during the raid and that many were shot in the head. Video footage seen by The Independent shows the bodies of many killed in the capital, Port-au-Prince, and contains testimony from witnesses claiming the victims were killed by 'blue helmets' - common parlance for UN peacekeepers.

In a statement, the UN Mission in Haiti (Minustah) said: '[UN forces] did not target civilians in the operation ... but the nature of such missions in densely populated urban areas is such that there is always a risk of civilian casualties. Minustah deeply regrets any injuries or loss of life during its operation.'

Yesterday, the most senior UN peacekeeping official appealed to the Security Council for specialised troops for Haiti - admitting the forces available were not trained for such raids.

The footage of the aftermath of the 6 July raid in the Cité Soleil slum was taken by a team led by Haitian-based journalist Kevin Pina. Pina said: 'Numerous witnesses said the victims were killed by UN forces - the Haitian National Police (HNP) were not even there. I think the fact the UN did not bring a single doctor or ambulance with them on this mission is extraordinary - surely you would do that whether you were targeting criminal gangs or civilians? It is interesting that so many victims were shot in the head. I think the reason they did not bring ambulances is that they were not shooting to wound, they were shooting to kill.'

The raid took place against a backdrop of violence in Haiti ahead of autumn elections. Authorities say much of the violence is perpetrated by criminal gangs with links to the former president, Jean-Bertrand Aristide.

But since the ousting of the democratically elected Mr Aristide last year, human rights groups have detailed repression of his supporters by the US-backed interim government and the HNP. A report by the human rights programme at Harvard Law School said there were also 'credible allegations of human rights abuses perpetrated by Minustah'.

Minustah said its dawn raid, involving more than 400 troops, targeted the gang leader known as 'Dread Wilme', who is accused of murder and kidnapping. He and four alleged associates were killed.

But other independent witnesses support Pina's evidence that civilians were also killed. David Welsh, of the US Labour/Human Rights Delegation to Haiti, was at a conference in Port-au-Prince that weekend. Delegation members interviewed witnesses and filmed the bodies of victims. He described

the shooting as a "massacre": 'Based on witnesses' testimony and the number of bodies we were able to confirm, we believe that at least 23 people were killed,' he said.

Among the dead were four-year-old Stanley Romelus, who was shot in the head; his mother, Sonia, and his one-year-old brother, Nelson. The boy's father said they were killed in their house after UN forces threw smoke grenades. His testimony is to be included in a documentary Pina is producing based on the footage.

Christophe Fournier, Médecins Sans Frontières, which has a clinic close to Cité Soleil, said: "On that day we treated 27 people for gunshot wounds. Of them, around 20 were women under the age of 18."

Minustah claims it received 'unconfirmed information' that criminal gangs were seen killing civilians after its operation. It said: " Subsequently, these elements attributed these atrocious acts to Minustah."

At UN headquarters yesterday, Jean-Marie Guehenno, undersecretary-general for peacekeeping, asked for specialist troops for Haiti. 'I have to acknowledge the forces we have do not have the kind of very specialised capacity ... that makes absolutely sure that there will be zero civilian casualties in a densely populated environment.'

Report: U.N., government doing little on violence

By Joe Mozingo

Miami Herald

July 28, 2005

Amnesty International says that U.N. peacekeepers and the Haitian government have done little to disarm violent groups and stop human rights violations.

U.N. peacekeepers and the Haitian government have done little to disarm a population awash in guns, root out armed militants and stop widespread human rights violations by police, including summary executions, Amnesty International says.

In a report to be released today, the human rights organization paints a picture of official complacency that has allowed Haiti to sink ever deeper into violence, impunity and despair.

Amnesty International called on U.N. troops to immediately begin the forced disarmament program they promised following Sept. 15 -- their official deadline for groups to voluntarily hand over their weapons.

"Haitians remain mired in a human rights crisis despite the presence of a U.N. peacekeeping force," wrote Amnesty researcher Gerardo Ducos. "In fact, little tangible progress has been made to protect human rights " since the ouster of President Jean-Bertrand Aristide early last year.

The report is one more volley in a barrage of human-rights reports decrying the violence that dogs Haiti and criticizing the peacekeepers and an interim government that seems unable to rein it in.

ELECTIONS CLOSE

Many observers, including Amnesty, fear that elections scheduled for later this year could cause even more turmoil as various groups and their armed supporters struggle for power.

The 38-page Amnesty report, titled "Haiti, Disarmament Delayed, Justice Denied," lays out a detailed case that police are continuing a pattern of human rights violations that began under Aristide, and that the U.N. troops that often accompany them are not doing enough to stop the abuse.

"The support that [peacekeepers] may have with the Haitian population fades away with every abuse reportedly committed with impunity by the national police," wrote Amnesty.

EXECUTIONS

In one case, the human rights group alleged, police raided a home in the Fort National neighborhood of Port-au-Prince on Oct. 26., ordered 13 people to lie on the ground and executed all of them.

While Amnesty lays direct blame for the violence in Haiti to a range of perpetrators -- members of the now disbanded armed forces, pro-Aristide gangs, rebels that overthrew Aristide, police, common criminals -- it says the inability of the interim government to control the country allows the bloodshed to flourish.

Ducos also called two detainees -- Gerard Jean Juste, a pro-Aristide priest arrested last week; and former Prime Minister Yvon Neptune, arrested last year -- little more than ``political prisoners."

Other people -- particularly leaders of pro-Aristide gangs -- are killed in police shootouts.

"Nobody even knows who does what," said Ducos. ``That's the problem. You can never answer for your crimes because you get a bullet between your eyes."

Wave of protest condemns UN massacre of poor in Haiti
Protest campaign spreads to 5 countries and 15 cities
by Dave Welsh
San Francisco Bay View
July 28, 2005

Emergency protests were held July 21 in Brazil, France and 13 U.S. and Canadian cities to express the world's outrage at the massacre of at least 23 Haitian civilians on July 6 in the popular neighborhood of Cité Soleil by UN troops under Brazilian command. Demonstrations in Haiti and elsewhere continue this week.

Meanwhile in Haiti, Father Gerard Jean-Juste – who kicked off the international protest campaign two weeks ago at the Brazilian consulate in Miami – was beaten and arrested July 21 after speaking out against the coup regime. The pastor of St. Claire's Church in Port-au-Prince, he has been called the "Martin Luther King of Haiti" for his courageous defense of Haiti's poor majority. Father Jean-Juste is now in solitary confinement at the National Penitentiary in the Haitian capital.

On Tuesday, Amnesty International declared Father Jean-Juste a "prisoner of conscience, detained solely because he has peacefully exercised his right to freedom of expression." On Monday, the United Nations responded to protests around the world by announcing it has decided to investigate the "alleged" killing of civilians by its troops.

These two significant developments come as a direct result of the coordinated demonstrations that took place July 21 in Washington, D.C., Ottawa, Miami, Montreal, New York, Toronto, San Francisco, Minneapolis, San Jose, Boston, Halifax, Winnipeg and Vancouver. Protesters called for UN troops and Haitian police to stop the killings, for all UN soldiers from 20 nations to leave Haiti now and for the restoration of Haiti's sovereignty and constitutional rule.

In Brazil a high-level, 15-member delegation, including leading members of Congress and union leaders from the CUT labor federation, rallied in front of Planalto Palace in the capital of Brasilia. They presented a letter to President Lula da Silva, signed by numerous Brazilian labor leaders and well-known personages, calling for withdrawal of all Brazilian troops from Haiti and respect for Haiti's sovereignty. The letter to Lula was based on a report by the US Labor-Human Rights Delegation to Haiti about the July 6 killings (see "Protest UN 'peacekeeper' massacres in Haiti" in last week's Bay View).

In San Francisco, 200 chanting people led by Haitian drums marched down Market Street, then snaked into the Montgomery Street financial district to the Brazilian consulate, chanting "Why is Brazil killing in Haiti?" and "U.S./UN, get out of Haiti."

Earlier in the day, members of the Labor-Human Rights Delegation met with the Brazilian consul general for an hour. They presented a letter to President Lula, calling for an end to the UN occupation and killings in Haiti. A similar letter was presented at the Brazilian consulate in Miami and at their embassy in the Canadian capital of Ottawa by Haitian community leaders.

The international campaign – with protests in five countries – kicked off on July 13, when Father Gérard Jean-Juste flew from Haiti to Miami to lead a demonstration at the Brazilian consulate. He met with consular officials for nearly three hours to protest the Cité Soleil massacre by UN troops under Brazilian command.

The campaign picked up steam the following day, on July 14, when despite heavy repression and continued killings by UN forces, more than 5,000 people demonstrated in Cité Soleil to condemn the UN massacre in their neighborhood on July 6. They chanted for the return of President Aristide and demanded prison for the leaders and backers of the coup regime.

Also on July 14, Father Jean-Juste was “denounced” on a right-wing Haitian radio program in Florida, saying he was returning to Haiti on American Airlines, with the implicit threat that something bad might and should happen to him. The next day Jean-Juste was searched and questioned for 20 minutes by U.S. authorities at the Miami airport.

On arrival in Port-au-Prince, he was detained by Haitian National Police for two hours. A week later he was attacked and beaten while attending a funeral, re-arrested and sent to the National Penitentiary.

The citizens of Cité Soleil, Father Jean-Juste and the internationally coordinated demonstrations on July 21 are shining a spotlight on the crimes committed by the U.S./UN occupation on July 6 in Cité Soleil. Clearly the coup regime feels threatened by these revelations, and they are retaliating against our courageous brother. Defending Father Jean-Juste – and demanding his immediate release – is an integral part of this campaign.

Organizers emphasized that UN troops, who have been in Haiti since June 2004, are there as a proxy force doing the bidding of the U.S. government – replacements for the U.S., French and Canadian troops who assisted in the Feb. 29, 2004, coup d'état that overthrew the constitutional government of President Aristide.

The movement is spreading. Philadelphia is demonstrating July 28, New York again July 28 at the Brazilian consulate and Paris again on July 30 at the Place de la République. Miami demonstrated again July 26 at the Haitian consulate demanding the release of Father Jean-Juste.

In Haiti, demonstrations were held July 25 in the Bel Air district of Port-au-Prince and July 26 in Cité Soleil, also demanding the release of Father Jean-Juste. These popular neighborhoods have been staunch supporters of President Aristide and opponents of the coup regime.

In Brazil, a coalition is organizing public meetings and rallies in various cities, demanding that Brazil end its military involvement in Haiti. The coalition includes unions and top leaders affiliated with the CUT (Brazil's largest labor federation), the Unified Black Movement (MNU) and Campanha Haiti (the Brazil Out of Haiti Campaign).

In San Francisco, Pierre Labossiere of the Haiti Action Committee, which organized the protest there, said, “The UN mission apologized to the Haitian police for its delayed arrival on the scene of an incident where two police officers were killed on May 22, but it has never once apologized for any of the many documented instances where its troops killed civilians.”

”Instead of stopping the killing of civilians, the UN,” which supervises the police, “is stepping up the slaughter. That must not be accepted by the international community.”

Dave Welsh, a Bay Area labor leader, just returned from Haiti, where the Labor-Human Rights Delegation he and Seth Donnelly headed documented the July 6 massacre in Cité Soleil. Email him at sub@sonic.net. For the latest on Haiti and what you can do to help free Father Jean-Juste and other Haitian political prisoners, go to www.haitiaction.net.

Judge no example of impartiality
Steven Forester
Senior Policy Advocate Haitian Women of Miami
Posted July 30 2005
South Florida Sun Sentinel Opinions

Kudos on "Gatekeepers: Who gets asylum?" (July 3).

Re Krome's Judge Neale Foster perhaps being "particularly tough on Haitians" and that this "longest sitting immigration judge in South Florida ... didn't approve a single Haitian asylum claim during the five-year period studied": Having appeared before Judge Foster frequently in the early 1980s as an attorney with the now-defunct Haitian Refugee Center, I'm not surprised. "This country is being overrun by Haitians," he declared on the record during one Haitian's hearing, looking directly into a TV camera he'd permitted into the courtroom.

Seemingly catching himself in an impropriety, he continued, "And therefore we must give them the due process of a hearing."

Judges must not only be impartial but appear to be so. I leave it to your readers to consider the "fairness" of such comments and the statistics you report.

**Mostly Dominicans, Guyanese and
Haitians in undocumented schools
The Daily Herald Newspaper, St. Maarten
July 29, 2005**

PHILIPSBURG--Children from the Dominican Republic, Haiti and Guyana account for the majority of 500-plus students attending the some nine undocumented schools on the Dutch side, an informal survey conducted by St. Maarten United Multi-Purpose Education Association (SUMEDA) in January revealed.

The undocumented schools that cater to children without legal status on the island are also attended by Jamaicans, Dominicans and to a lesser extent Chinese and Indians. Not all of the children were born outside of St. Maarten. A significant number were born on the island, but are in a citizenship limbo because their parents do not have residence permits or their papers are in process or have been lost in the system.

The school fee is between US \$65 and \$100 per student per month. Due to the cost, the survey found that often students are missing from school for months at a time because parents cannot afford to pay the school fees.

Aside from long absences from school, most of the students attending these institutions are not on par with the educational level for their age, because the schools are usually no more than a room with all age groups being taught together by mostly untrained teachers, the representatives said.

The undocumented schools from which the information was collected are located in Cole Bay, St. Peters/Cul de Sac, Middle Region, Dutch Quarter and Fort Willem. Since the survey was conducted another school was opened in Cole Bay where two schools already exist.

“All children attending these undocumented schools, by right, deserve a good education, as they are a part of the St. Maarten society. They are growing up here and will one day have to work here. If we don’t look and remedy the situation now, it will be worse in the future,” SUMEDA representatives Carmen Hodge, Juliana Hodge-Shiple and Hipolito Herrera told The Daily Herald on Thursday.

The association gathered its information from the school directors and has used the results as the basis for a project aimed at upgrading school facilities, acquiring new learning materials, training teachers and cleaning up the surroundings of the school premises.

There will also be sessions to better inform parents of their options and role in their children’s education, set to start in August, the SUMEDA representatives said.

The project forms part of the St. Martin United Non-Governmental Organisations Federation (SUNFed) multi-annual social policy plan, which is a combination of integrated projects from the various NGO sectors.

Funding for the school upgrading and teachers' training is expected from the Antillean Co-Financing Office AMFO in the near future.

The teachers' training should start at by the end of the year and last for two years. SUMEDA will be working with other organisations such as the environmental groups to tackle the school surroundings and to acquire other materials and help.

Parade ruffles feathers
By LESLIE CASIMIR
New York Daily News
July 29, 2005

The feathers are already flying at the West Indian-American Day Carnival Parade and it's not even Labor Day.

The splashy Brooklyn event has banned marchers who aren't in costumes, the Daily News has learned.

That means virtually no Jamaicans, Haitians or Barbadians - who usually are represented by their country's top musical artists - will have a showcase on Eastern Parkway, critics of the new rules contend.

The organizers, many of whom are Trinidadians, say that the annual technicolor show is getting drab with all the "T-shirt bands" - revelers in T-shirts and regular clothes who follow flatbed trucks carrying musicians.

"It seems as if they're trying to weed out a lot of people. They're eliminating Jamaica and Haiti and other countries that don't see it as a costume event, but as a music-driven event," said Robert (Bobby) Clarke, president and CEO of Irie Jam radio station WTRN (93.5 FM).

But Jean Alexander, a spokeswoman for the West Indian-American Day Carnival Association, which organizes the annual Labor Day event, said there is no attempt to keep anyone out.

"We've been telling people this for the last three years, but they have never listened. The noncostumed bands have overtaken the carnival. It has destroyed carnival and we're through talking," Alexander said. "This rule is not meant to exclude, it is just forcing people to go back to their roots."

Millions of people gather annually for the celebration of West Indian culture. Many plunk down hundreds of dollars for elaborate costumes of sequins and feathers to be part of an organized procession, called Mas bands. But others just find their favorite bands and join the march, following the truck in street clothes.

"I respect them [the organizers], but at the same token they are being insensitive to the people who don't have the traditional aspect of costume," said Irwine Clare, an activist in the Jamaican community.

Organization Accused Of Ripping Off Haitians
July 27, 2005
Local 10 News, Fort Lauderdale, FL

FORT LAUDERDALE, Fla. -- Federal agents raided the Haitian American Community Help Organization, or HACHO, in Fort Lauderdale and made several arrests Wednesday.

Investigators say the organization was ripping off refugees by filing incomplete applications for employment authorization and then pocketing cash from applicants who were rejected.

The organization's executive director, Gomez Accime, is scheduled to appear in court Thursday on charges of conspiracy to commit mail fraud, mail fraud and presenting false applications for employment authorization.

If convicted, Accime faces a maximum term of imprisonment of five years and a \$250,000 fine on the charge of conspiracy to commit mail fraud and a maximum term of imprisonment of twenty years and a \$250,000 fine for each of the mail fraud charges.

During the raid, 16 other people were arrested, all for being in the country illegally.

Students get some needed help

Sixty underprivileged children got \$250 each from corporations Saturday to buy back-to-school supplies at Pembroke Lakes Mall.

BY DAVIS WARD

Miami Herald

July 31, 2005

Andrew Lewis patiently tried on black dress shoes to go with his school uniform on Saturday. But his mind was on other, more expensive things.

"OK, now I want basketball shoes. Air Jordans," said Andrew, 5, who is entering first grade at Colbert Elementary in Hollywood.

Andrew's family normally struggles to buy back-to-school clothes. On Saturday, though, he joined 59 other underprivileged children who each got a \$250 shopping spree at the Pembroke Lakes Mall.

The Corporate Volunteer Council of Broward County, which includes American Express, AutoNation, Macy's, Memorial Healthcare Systems and Motorola, sponsored the event.

The principals of Thurgood Marshall Elementary School and North Side Elementary School, both in Fort Lauderdale, identified 10 children each at their schools for the shopping adventure. Workers for Minority Development and Empowerment Inc./Haitian Community Center of Broward and Gunzburger Washington Park Child Care Center Inc. in Hollywood picked the remaining 40 children.

The Back-to-School Blowout, in its eighth year at the Pembroke Pines mall, featured appearances by Stanley C. Panther, the Florida Panthers' mascot, the Miami Dolphins cheerleaders, the University of Miami's SunSation Dancers and a number of local TV personalities and journalists.

With the help of volunteers from the companies and the TV personalities, the children shopped using check lists their parents completed that detailed what the kids needed most.

Andrew's checklist did not include the Air Jordans, which can sell for over \$100, and he was not allowed to buy them.

Even so, he enjoyed the shopping spree, including a pair of black sunglasses a clerk gave him at Payless Shoes.

"It's a great, great event, the kids really love it," said Carmen Mure, an assistant store manager at Macy's, and secretary of the Corporate Volunteer Council.

``Many of these children have never been able to get brand new back-to-school clothes."

The children were also provided with free breakfast and lunch, free backpacks and free back-to-school supplies, in addition to the \$250.

Many of the children and teens seemed overwhelmed by having so much money to spend on themselves.

Martin Hernandez, 14, a student at Pompano Beach Middle School, was trying to get the most out of his money. He lives with his aunt, who struggles to provide for him and his three brothers.

Though Martin really wanted to buy Sean John designer clothes, he started off by buying five solid-colored T-shirts for \$4 each at Foot Locker.

"I'm getting a whole lot more clothes," Martin said. ``It's a nice thing. Last year I didn't get a whole lot."

Frantz Beauplan, 9, a student at Thurgood Marshall, was overjoyed, even if he did have to buy mostly school uniforms.

"I'm happy, I'm excellent. Even though I have to get uniforms, it's nice," he said. ``I really want a Dolphins jersey, Ricky Williams jersey."

Take home a little piece of Haiti

By Alan Bostwick

July 31, 2005

The Tennessean

It's again time for the Haitian Street Art Auction and Wine Tasting event, a chance to sample the artsy side of modern Haiti.

The event's third annual installment is set for Friday at Father Ryan High School and kicks off with a wine tasting by West Meade Wines and Spirits. That's followed by silent and live auctions featuring Haitian art and crafts. These include wood carvings, metal sculptures, decorative mirrors, paintings and a colorful silk appliqué.

Food from Park Cafe, Copper Kettle, Caffe Nonna, Nick & Rudy's and Mambu restaurants is on the menu, as is live music from Deep Grooves Steel Drum Band.

Again serving as the event's honorary chair is artist Phil Ponder, assisted by co-chairs Susan Jakoblew and Erin Roman. This year, Ponder will donate to the live auction an original piece of art, The Tree of Life.

Last year's event raised \$44,000.

Proceeds assist a worthy endeavor in rural southwest Haiti. Known as the Visitation Hospital project, the idea, spearheaded by executive director Theresa Patterson, is to raise \$2.5 million to build a 76-bed comprehensive-care hospital specializing in heart surgery for children in the small town of Petite Riviere de Nippes. The region's nearest medical facility is four hours away by car.

"We are proud to say that since our last auction, we have raised funds to begin construction of the outpatient center," said Patterson, who works out of Nashville.

"Since we began offering our auction three years ago, we have accomplished a number of things such as employing the local people in the construction of a road leading from the main road to the proposed hospital site. Next, we developed our site plan and are finalizing plans for the clinic design working with a variety of experts."

Haitian Priest Assaulted by Mob at Funeral and Arrested for Murder

by Bill Quigley

July 27, 2005

Haiti Progres

On Thursday, July 21, 2005, Fr. Gerard Jean-Juste went to St. Pierre's Catholic Church to be one of the priests participating in the funeral of Haitian journalist Jacques Roche. Fr. Jean-Juste is a cousin of the Roche family and members of the Roche family protected him from a mob earlier in his life. He went to express spiritual comfort and reconciliation to the family.

The tragic kidnaping and death of Jacques Roche have been taken up as a cause by those opposed to the Lavalas party. Jacques Roche was identified as a supporter of the people calling themselves the Group of 184, who overthrew by force the democratically elected government of President Aristide, the leader of the Lavalas party, in February 2004.

Opponents of Aristide say that Jacques Roche was executed by the Lavalas party because his body was found on July 14 in a poor neighborhood, where Lavalas support is very strong. For those of us in the US, this is much like blaming John Kerry for inner city deaths because most of the people in the inner city vote for the Democratic Party.

Father Jean-Juste went to the funeral expressly to pay his respects to the family and to express his open remorse and opposition to any killing of anyone, no matter what their political affiliation.

Jacques Roche's coffin was in the chapel next to the sacristy and main area of the church. At 10 a.m., the bishop and about seven priests robed in white with purple stoles or sashes paraded out of the sacristy of the church to the chapel next to the main area of the church to say blessings over the coffin of Jacques Roche.

When Fr. Jean-Juste walked out, people started yelling at him in the chapel. They called him "assassin" and "criminal" and yelled out to "arrest and kill the rat."

Fr. Jean-Juste has been publicly accused in the last several days of "a plot against the security of the state," of smuggling money and guns into the country, and of being behind all the kidnappings. These are all clearly false charges but widely reported by unfriendly press.

People knew Fr. Jean-Juste was coming to the funeral because it was printed on the front page of a conservative newspaper the day before.

As the well-dressed people continued yelling at Fr. Jean-Juste, the prayer service nearly turned into a riot. The other priests turned to leave and a well-dressed crowd of screaming people surrounded him. I went out to be by his side. Some plain-clothes security people and a few priests surrounded us and helped push us through the increasingly hostile crowd back into the church sacristy.

The other priests then persuaded Fr. Jean-Juste not to continue in the funeral service. So we stood aside as the priests and the funeral crowd filed past us into the main church.

Well-dressed men and women continued to scream and threaten Fr. Gerry as they moved by us into the church. Then a crowd of 15 or 20 or more young men, not dressed at all for the funeral, came into the sacristy and the mood turned uglier and more menacing. At that point, the security forces melted away.

The young men continued the screaming started by the well-dressed people and then started pushing and hitting Père Jean-Juste. At that point, a young woman came out of the funeral crowd and embraced Fr. Jean-Juste, shielding him with her body from the blows and the increasingly loud and angry young men. She started praying loudly and saying "mon père, mon père."

A man in a suit, who identified himself as head of security for the funeral, rushed back in from the church area - only a few feet away and in plain view - and told Fr. Gerry that these people were going to kill him there in the sacristy unless he fled. Fr. Jean-Juste knelt to pray, and the woman and I knelt with him in the middle of the growing crowd.

At that point, people started slapping Fr. Jean-Juste on the head and face and spitting on him, the woman and myself. Something then hit Fr. Jean-Juste in the head. Someone punched him in the eye. We stood up and a few UN CIVPOL officers showed up to help us leave the sacristy of the church. As we tried to get to the stairs, people continued pushing and screaming and shouting threats. They continued to call out "assassin," "criminal," and "kill the rat." The crowd now overwhelmed the police. More people spit on us and hit Fr. Gerry, even in the face, while others were grabbing his church vestments trying to drag him off the church steps.

The CIVPOL were trying to hold back the crowd but were still well outnumbered and unable to halt the mob. We moved up the steps into a narrow dark corridor while the crowd pushed and shoved and spit and hit. We then retreated into a smaller corridor and finally to a dead end that contained two small concrete toilet stalls.

The three of us were pushed into the stalls as the crowd banged on the walls and doors of the stalls and continued screaming. The woman held the door closed and prayed loudly as the people outside roared and the CIVPOL called for reinforcements.

After a few minutes, reinforcements arrived and the hallway was finally cleared of all but us and the authorities.

A man in a suit identifying himself as secretary for security for Haiti told us that he was going to have to arrest Fr. Jean-Juste because public clamor had identified him as the assassin of journalist Jacques Roche. The police would bring him to the police station for his own safety. Fr. Jean-Juste told the man that he was in Florida when the journalist was killed, and he wanted to return to St. Claire church, his parish. The man left, escorting out the woman who helped us.

In a few minutes, CIVPOL police, including troops from Jordan, surrounded me and Fr. Jean-Juste and then ran us out of the church to a police truck. The truck, carrying police armed with machine guns, sped away from the church and took us not to Fr. Gerry's parish but to the police station in Pétionville.

For the next seven or eight hours, we were kept in a room while the UN forces and the Haitian forces negotiated about what to do. Fr. Gerry read his prayer book while we waited. We were told informally that the UN wanted to escort Fr. Jean-Juste back to his parish, but the Haitian government was insisting that he be arrested.

The attackers were allowed to go free and were not arrested, but they wanted to arrest the victim!

Fr. Gerry told me: "This is all a part of the death sentence called down upon me on the radio in Miami. The searches at the airport, the visits to the police stations, the mandate to appear before a criminal judge yesterday, and now this. It is all part of the effort to silence my voice for democracy."

At about 6 p.m., several Haitian officers came into our room and ordered Fr. Gerry and I and Haitian attorney Mario Joseph to come with them.

The officers held out a piece of paper that they said was an official complaint against Fr. Gerry accusing him of being the assassin of Jacques Roche. The complaint was based on "public clamor" at the funeral identifying him as the murderer. They refused to let Fr. Jean-Juste or the lawyers see this paper. It was their obligation, they said, to investigate this public clamor identifying him as the murderer. If Fr. Jean-Juste chose not to talk with them, they would put him in jail immediately.

Fr. Jean-Juste agreed to the interrogation, and it went on for over three hours. He was growing increasingly sore and tired from the beating he took, but was not bleeding externally. When the lawyers argued with the police, Fr. Gerry read his prayer book.

The police already knew that Fr. Jean-Juste was in Florida at the time of the kidnapping and death of the journalist, because the police had already interviewed him several times in the last few days in connection with the other false allegations against him, but asked him many questions anyway. How many cell phones did he have? What is his exact relation to Jacques Roche? Why did he go to the funeral? Can he prove he was in Florida? Since he was on the news in Florida, can he provide a copy of the news tape showing he was in Florida? When Aristide was president, was he provided with armed security? What happened to the pistols that his security had? Could he find out and have any pistols returned to the government? Did Lavalas promise Aristide to execute someone from the Group of 184 in retaliation for them taking power? When was the last time he was in the US? Are the Catholic sisters in Bel-Air with you when you go to demonstrations there? and on and on. After over three hours, the interrogation finished.

With great solemnity the police told Fr. Jean-Juste that he was being charged with participating in the death of Jacques Roche and not returning state property. They said the law demands that he be brought before a judge within 48 hours for further decision.

At exactly 10 p.m., Fr. Gerry handed me his keys and church vestments and was locked into the jail cell at Pétionville with many, many others. He was holding a pink plastic rosary, his prayer book and a roll of toilet paper. He flashed a tired smile and told me: "Now you see what we are up against in Haiti. If they treat me like this, think how they treat the poor people. Tell everyone that with the help of God and everyone else I will keep up the good fight. Everyone else should continue to fight for democracy

as well. The truth will come out. I am innocent of all charges. I will be free soon. Freedom for Haiti is coming. The struggle continues."

As I left him, a very tired Fr. Gérard Jean-Juste was being greeted by all the prisoners in the very crowded jail cell as "mon père!"

Bill Quigley is a law professor at Loyola University New Orleans and is co-counsel for Jean-Juste with Mario Joseph and the Institute for Justice and Democracy in Haiti.