

Fri Mar 17, 2006

Haiti could be welcomed back to Caricom
Radio Jamaica

Friday Chairman of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), Patrick Manning, hinted at the re-admission of Haiti to the regional integration movement following the election of Rene Preval last month.

In a message to Mr. Preval, Mr. Manning said his victory at the polls opens the path to the re-engagement of Haiti at the highest levels of the Councils of the Community.

CARICOM has not invited Haiti to participate in its activities since the controversial removal of President Jean-Bertrand Aristide from office in February 2004.

Mr. Aristide, who resides in exile in South Africa, has accused the United States and France of engineering his removal, a claim denied by the George Bush administration.

Mr. Preval, who will be sworn in for a second term in April, was declared winner of the February 7 polls, the first to be held in Haiti since Aristide's departure.

Mr. Preval is expected to lead the Haitian delegation to the annual CARICOM Summit to be held in St. Kitt-Nevis in July.

CARICOM Chairman Congratulates Haiti's President-Elect
Government of Jamaica

Friday, March 17, 2006

PRINT THIS SEND TO A FRIEND

Attached is a congratulatory message from Chairman of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), Hon. Patrick Manning, Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago, to President-Elect of Haiti, H.E. Rene Preval.

His Excellency René Préval President-Elect Haiti

Dear President-Elect,

On behalf of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), and further to the Community's statement of 18 February 2006 in reaction to the notification of the official results of the presidential elections, I have the honour and the pleasure to congratulate you on your victory following the first round of the presidential elections of 7 February.

The margin of your victory is testimony to the achievements of your first term in office which brought a fresh breath of hope to the majority of the Haitian people, and to your efforts during the presidential campaign to reach out across the social and political divide and to focus on the factors that are critical for the social, political and economic development of your country. Key among these are reconciliation and stability.

Your victory also opens the path to the re-engagement of Haiti at the highest levels of the Councils of the Community given the all-embracing endorsement of your election as a reflection of the will of the people.

As you no doubt recall, the Caribbean Community took the principled position in March 2004 following the interruption of the democratic process of 29 February 2004 that the representatives of the Interim Administration of Haiti would not be permitted to participate in the Councils of the Community until the return to constitutional rule. With your victory at the polls, that process is well on the way to being achieved.

The Conference of Heads of Government of the Caribbean Community stands ready to accompany you and the people of Haiti as you confront the many challenges in the quest for the sustained political, economic and social development of Haiti.

Please accept, Mr. President-Elect, the assurances of my highest consideration.

EC provides 24.3 mln dollars in aid to Haiti

www.chinaview.cn 2006-03-17 13:56:12

HAVANA, March 16 (Xinhuanet) -- The European Commission (EC) on Wednesday promised to provide Haiti with 24.3 million U.S. dollars in aid to help its reconstruction and social development, according to reports from the Haitian capital Port-au-Prince.

Three agreements were signed at a ceremony in Port-au-Prince by the chief of the EC delegation in Haiti, Marcel Van Opstal, and Haitian government officials. The ceremony was also attended by representatives from some international and Haiti's domestic organizations.

According to the agreements, 9.7 million dollars of the funds will be used in the reconstruction of the northern city of Gonaives, which was severely damaged in a flood in July, 2004.

Up to 7.3 million dollars will be channeled to the Office of Civil Protection and the remainder will be used to tackle such issues as food insecurity and poverty. Enditem

Toothbrush lady looking to open second dental clinic in Haiti
Hamilton Mountain News, Canada

Georgina with her sponsor child Wildernise Albert, three years old. She is the child on the logo for Healthy Smiles For Haiti.

Teaching preventative dental care in the dental clinic in Les Palmes, Georgina with an eight-year-old girl.

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(Mar 17, 2006)

Rotary International funding would make project a reality

She's got the site picked out and a dentist lined up, now all Georgina Cosentino needs is \$20,000 to set up a new dental clinic in Thibeau, a community outside Cap-Haitien in the north of Haiti.

The Mountain resident is hoping a grant from Rotary International will cover the cost. She applied for the funding through the Burlington North and Mississauga-Meadowvale Rotary Clubs late last month.

"It's been in the works for a while," said Ms. Cosentino (aka the toothbrush lady), who recently returned from her 13th visit to the poor Caribbean island

Ray Trask, past president and a member of the international committee at the Burlington North club said he has been assured by Rotary International officials that the funding will be approved and he expects an official announcement in early spring.

"We're always looking for opportunities in third world countries," Mr. Trask said. "When Georgina brought this to us we thought here is an opportunity to work in a country that our club hasn't been in before."

Mr. Trask said Burlington North rotarians jumped on board after Ms. Cosentino made a presentation to the club early last year. The club has committed \$3,000 to the project, Mr. Trask said.

Ms. Cosentino was introduced to the club by Dr. Vipan Maini, a club member and dentist at the Claremain Dental Centre in Burlington where Ms. Cosentino works.

Through her organization, Healthy Smiles For Haiti, Ms. Cosentino helped set up a dental clinic in Les Palmes, a village in southern Haiti, in June 2004. She has been making two or three trips a year to the country since Oct. 2001. During those visits she has distributed more than 7,600 new toothbrushes

(collected through Hamilton area donors) and given brushing instruction and dental care tips to hundreds of children and adults at schools, orphanages and community centres.

Ms. Cosentino said the new clinic in Thibeau will be housed in an existing building and hard to come by electricity will be generated through the installation of solar panels. It is hoped enough power will be generated to serve a medical clinic and a pharmacy in the same building.

If the Rotary funding comes through, she figures it will be about a year before the new clinic is up and running.

Like the clinic in Les Palmes, the new service is expected to treat 10-20 people per day for a nominal fee. Also like the Les Palmes clinic, the approximately \$8,000 yearly salary for the dentist will be covered by fundraising.

The annual Healthy Smiles For Haiti fundraiser is slated for April 22, 7:30 p.m. to 1 a.m., at the Our Lady of Lourdes Parish Hall on Mohawk East and Mall Road. Tickets, which include a dance, buffet and silent auction, are \$15 and can be purchased in advance at C&D Jewelry at Mountain Plaza Mall and the White Flame Company at 10 Hempstead Drive.

Ms. Cosentino said the atmosphere in Haiti was very tense when she arrived Feb. 9, one day after residents on the politically unstable island voted in a new presidential election. She said the conditions remained unstable until the results of the vote were announced six days later.

The unrest forced Ms. Cosentino to reschedule her flight to the island in a journey that took her nearly two days to complete.

"Toronto (Pearson Airport) to Chicago, Chicago to Miami, overnight at Miami Airport on the floor and into Port-au-Prince (the Haitian capital) on Friday morning," Ms. Cosentino recalled.

Due to the political unrest, the Mountain resident got out of Port Au Prince almost immediately after she landed.

"A friend of mine picked me up at the (main) airport and delivered me to the regional airport so we could leave (for Cap-Haitien) right away," said Ms. Cosentino, who noted foreigners in Haiti are potential kidnapping targets for local insurgents looking to get money through ransom.

While in Cap-Haitien, a city of about 600,000 people, Ms. Cosentino had the nerve-racking experience one morning of walking from her friend's home about two kilometres down hill to a community centre where she was to teach some young mothers about dental care. Ms. Cosentino said her friend was worried for her safety as they walked down the main street.

"Normally we get a ride but we didn't have a ride available so we walked," she said.

Indications of trouble

Ms. Cosentino and her friend got to the community centre without any trouble but there were indications of trouble elsewhere in the city.

"We went to two schools and there were no children in the classes because of the potential for unrest," Ms. Cosentino said.

Ms. Cosentino said she did not venture out from her friend's home at night as there were reports of insurgents blocking roads and setting fires elsewhere in the city.

After a week in Cap-Haitien, Ms. Cosentino said she spent a reasonably peaceful week in Les Palmes, where she visited the dental clinic that had recently moved to larger quarters. She is contemplating a third clinic in Ricot, a rural community outside Les Palmes.

Ms. Cosentino remains passionate about her cause, adding she has noticed an improvement in dental health in the Haitian communities she has been visiting since 2001.

"At the beginning there were mostly extractions, now we're seeing more people come in for preventative care," Ms. Cosentino said. "There has definitely been a change in attitude for dental care."

14th trip

A 14th trip is being planned for June.

In the meantime, along with the annual fundraiser, Ms. Cosentino said area scouts and guides will once again be collecting toothbrushes for her at the annual downtown scout-guide parade May 27. Last year the scouts and guides collected 2,000 toothbrushes.

Ms. Cosentino said toothbrushes are always needed and the public can donate them by calling 905-389-7602.

Source: Organization of American States (OAS)

Date: 16 Mar 2006

ReliefWeb

Print E-mail Save France supports Human Rights Commission's activities in HaitiReference: E-061/06

The government of France today donated \$126,000 to the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR), to support the Commission's efforts in Haiti.

"France very much appreciates the work and activities of the Commission and wants to become involved in a sustained way in its efforts to carry out a difficult task, that of promoting human rights in the Western Hemisphere," said the Permanent Observer of France to the Organization of American States (OAS), Ambassador Georges Vaugier.

During a brief ceremony at OAS headquarters, Ambassador Vaugier referred to positive results brought about by IACHR missions to Haiti and said his government intends to continue supporting this type of activity. "We would like to keep working together to obtain concrete results in the new phase that is beginning in the Caribbean island nation," Vaugier said, adding that one particular need is to support the strengthening of Haiti's judicial institutions.

In thanking the French people and government, Commission President Evelio Fernández Arévalos explained that the donation -- the second such contribution France has made for this purpose -- will allow the Commission to undertake visits and hold seminars and workshops to promote greater awareness among Haitians of the inter-American human rights system. The funds will also be used to publish a report on human rights in Haiti, as well as a special report on the situation of women and children in that country. The donation will also enable the Commission to contract a lawyer and select a French-speaking scholarship recipient to support these efforts.

For his part, the IACHR Rapporteur for Haiti, Commissioner Clare K. Roberts, underscored the ongoing commitment that France has demonstrated toward that country and reaffirmed that the human rights situation in Haiti will continue to be a high priority for the Commission. Roberts presented Vaugier with a copy of a Commission report, published today, entitled Haiti: Failed Justice or the Rule of Law? Challenges Ahead for Haiti and the International Community.

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Embassy, March 15th, 2006

NEWS STORY

By Sarah McGregor

The Embassy Magazine

Lift Visa Restrictions Pleads Haitian PM

Haiti's outgoing prime minister asks Canada to help with the troubled country's reconciliation by opening up visa restrictions on Haitians associated with former regimes.

Haiti's outgoing prime minister pleaded with the Canadian government last week to lift travel restrictions imposed on Haitians who were political supporters of the scandal-fraught former governments of Haiti.

"The immigration laws in Canada exclude from even visiting... people who have participated in one or another regime," said Gérard Latortue during a press conference at the Haitian Embassy in Ottawa.

"Help us, forget about that... give a chance to all Haitians now to be able to reconcile once again and be able to work together."

Mr. Latortue says one of his first acts when appointed head of the transitional government two years ago was an appeal to his compatriots to wipe the slate clean on divisive partisanship. He is urging Canada to change its immigration policy to give the same fresh start to Haitians wishing to visit Canada.

"I would like to make this plea for the Canadian authorities, particularly the immigration authorities, to help us in that process of reconciliation," says Mr. Latortue. He notes that a national dialogue committee is launching an internal process that will allow Haitians to vent concerns about past

injustices. But he dismissed the need for a formalized unity process, like the Truth and Reconciliation Commission set up by the South African government to discuss what happened under apartheid. "I think the Haiti case is very different. We never had one army against another army," says Mr. Latortue.

Citizenship and Immigration refuses to discuss individual visa cases. But Media Relations Spokesperson Marina Wilson says the Immigration and Refugee Act bans international visitors with a record of human rights violations or perpetrators of war crimes and crimes against humanity.

In special cases, Citizenship Minister, Monte Solberg, can grant one-time ministerial permits to would-be visitors who provide convincing evidence they don't pose a security threat. "I don't know if there are any plans to change [the system] for the time being," says Ms. Wilson. Haitian citizens require a visa to visit, study or do business in Canada.

Asked to elaborate on specific instances of Haitians denied entry, Haiti's Ambassador to Canada, Robert Tippenhauer, says, "I've heard of several people who were connected with... the military, and Baby Doc Duvalier [Haiti's dictator from 1971-1986] who were not allowed to come here, even under [former president Jean-Bertrand] Aristide as I understand."

Mr. Latortue was in Ottawa and Montreal on a three-day farewell tour as he prepares to make way for president-elect René Préval. In Canada, Mr. Latortue met with Prime Minister Stephen Harper, Foreign Affairs Minister Peter MacKay and Quebec Premier Jean Charest.

Protestors greeted Mr. Latortue at events in Ottawa and Montreal, accusing him of international crimes against humanity and demanding his arrest.

Mr. René Préval was declared the winner of Haiti's presidential election last month, after the election day was delayed four times and a chaotic ballot count led to a negotiated settlement. His inauguration was scheduled for this month, but then postponed after a setback in legislative elections, now set for April 21.

Mr. Latortue says he has no insider knowledge of possible plans by Mr. Aristide, in asylum in South Africa, to return to Haiti. Mr. Aristide, ousted from power in February 2004, has said he plans to go back to Haiti imminently.

Mr. Latortue warns that a swift arrival of Mr. Aristide could subvert the democracy-building process in the Caribbean nation. "He's a Haitian, he has a right," says Mr. Latortue. "When a leader has been forced to leave the country after a popular revolt, I think it is a tradition in Latin America... to let two, three, four years, [some] time pass before you come back."

Carlo Dade, a senior advisor at the Ottawa-based Canadian Foundation for the Americas, says he's encouraged by clear signals from the Préval government that reconciliation is a priority, including closer cooperation with business elites that had been an opposing force in the country. "Reaching out to the private sector is recognizing that you have to work with the opposition, that they have the resources -- the personnel, infrastructure and capacity-- to move the country ahead," says Mr. Dade.

Federal officials round up 60 immigrants

Boston Globe
March 17, 2006

BOSTON --Federal officials rounded up 60 immigrants during a two-day sweep through Boston, most of whom had either arrests or convictions, as part of an effort to stem the rising tide of violence in the city.

Of those arrested, 57 had been either convicted or charged with crimes, including drug offenses, rape, kidnapping and attempted murder, said Matthew Etre, acting special agent in charge of the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement in New England.

Forty-three were legal immigrants, but could still be subject to deportation if they have been convicted of a felony, federal officials said.

The arrests were criticized by advocates for immigrants, who claimed the sweep because targeted minorities. Those arrested were identified by nation of origin.

More than half came from Haiti, the Dominican Republic and El Salvador, according to charts released by the agency. Others came from Cape Verde, Vietnam, the United Kingdom and Greece.

"If the government is going to go as far as graphically displaying the countries of origin, what's the purpose there?" said Ali Noorani, executive director of the Massachusetts Immigrant and Refugee Advocacy Coalition.

"ICE's role is to enforce immigration law," Noorani said. "The role is not to have a public display of communities that are already under enormous pressure and higher standards of behavior."

The goal of the sweep, dubbed Operation Avalanche, was to locate and arrest immigrants whom law enforcement authorities said were threats to the community, Etre said.

"We were able to arrest people who had been wreaking havoc in our neighborhoods," he said.

He denied targeting any particular nationality.

"We do not target any one ethnic group," he said. "We are targeting those individuals who are committing crimes in our neighborhoods, and violent crimes at that."

The names of those arrested were not released. The cases of the 57 people arrested with records of arrests or convictions will be heard before an immigration court to determine whether they should be deported, said Paula Grenier, an ICE spokeswoman.

The three other immigrants were arrested on outstanding warrants of deportation and are being held pending their removal from the country, she said.

Noorani, the immigrant advocate, was concerned that little information was released on the alleged crimes or convictions of those arrested.

"From an advocate's point of view, if it's a violent crime, it's a no brainer, it's inexcusable," Noorani said. "... but if it's just shoplifting (an arrest) doesn't make sense."

DEVELOPMENT-HAITI:

A Non-Military Solution

Inter Press Service News Agency

Marcela Valente

BUENOS AIRES, Mar 16 (IPS) - A proposal for producing energy from alternative sources along the border between Haiti and the Dominican Republic could be a first step towards development for Haiti.

"The solution for the crisis in Haiti should come from within the island" that Haiti shares with the Dominican Republic, Johanna Mendelson-Forman, director of the United Nations Foundation's Peace, Security and Human Rights Programme, told IPS.

The United Nations Foundation was created in 1998 by U.S. media mogul Ted Turner, to support U.N. programmes.

Although Haiti remains the poorest country in the hemisphere, solutions are possible, said Mendelson-Forman, who was invited to Buenos Aires by the Woodrow Wilson International Centre.

She recommended a focus on development that sees Hispaniola Island as a whole, noting that while the Dominican economy is much more advanced, the government in that country is afraid that if Haiti collapses, its failure would drag them both down.

On the Dominican side of the border are plantations of *Jatropha curcas* shrubs, which produce the physic nut (also known as Barbados nut), used to extract vegetable oil. The oil can be refined into biodiesel, an alternative fuel that could help ease dependence on costly oil imports, she said.

The idea, which has the support of Germany, the U.N. Development Programme (UNDP), and the private sector in the Dominican Republic, "is a development alternative that could also help restore the soil (in Haiti), which has been devastated by intense deforestation," she explained.

That is because the *Jatropha curcas* is a drought-resistant shrub that helps alleviate soil degradation, prevents soil erosion and serves as a natural boundary fence or live hedge.

Brazil, which heads up the international military mission in Haiti and has decades of experience producing fuel alcohol (ethanol) from sugar cane, can provide assistance in the form of know-how and experts, said Mendelson-Forman.

"The problem is that Haiti does not offer fast profits, which is why teams of experts specialising in development are needed, to carry this kind of project forward," she added. "Haitian entrepreneurs do not invest in their country, and it is unlikely that investment will come from abroad."

A development approach that focuses on Hispaniola Island as a whole can help boost cooperation between the two countries and the flow of international aid to the island, she argued. However, the government of the Dominican Republic cannot do it on its own.. It needs support from the United Nations, the Organisation of American States (OAS), and the multilateral lending institutions, she underlined.

Mendelson-Forman said the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) is very concerned about the soaring international oil prices and that it is especially interested in programmes for the development of alternative, sustainable sources of energy, she said in a presentation on the Buenos Aires campus of the Italian Università di Bologna.

In addition, some officials in Washington believe that support for alternative energy initiatives can help counteract Venezuelan President Hugo Chávez's growing influence in the Caribbean, she said.

Chávez, who has close ties with Dominican President Leonel Fernández, is backing the installation of an oil refinery in that Caribbean nation.

Mendelson-Forman's presentation coincided with the end of a tour by Haitian president-elect René Préval that took him to Brazil, Chile and Argentina ahead of his Mar. 29 inauguration. The leader asked for assistance and cooperation from the three countries "to draw up a development-focused government programme," a source with the Argentine Foreign Ministry told IPS.

The source, who asked to withhold his name, said that Haiti will be viable if the international pledge of aid is fulfilled, and if dialogue is strengthened among the country's internal sectors. He said it was unfortunate that countries like Spain have withdrawn their military presence, and that donor nations are delaying their promised financial assistance.

The three South American countries are major contributors of troops to the United Nations Stabilisation Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) deployed in the Caribbean nation of 8.5 million people in mid-2004. Haiti has been without a government since Feb. 29 of that year, when President Jean-Bertrand Aristide was overthrown by armed opposition groups, reportedly backed by Washington.

In February, the U.N. Security Council extended the mission's mandate until June. And with the exception of Spain, the countries that contribute military or civilian personnel ratified their commitment to remaining a part of the stabilisation force, despite the criticisms levelled at its supposed ineffectiveness.

During his tour, Préval spoke of the need for MINUSTAH, made up of close to 9,000 troops, to stay in his country for a longer time.

Préval received strong support from the Brazilian government of Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, newly inaugurated Chilean President Michelle Bachelet, and Argentina's Néstor Kirchner. But the challenges he faces are many, and the support offered always seems to fall short.

In her presentation, Mendelson-Forman warned that Haiti runs the risk of becoming a "failed state", where neither government institutions nor civil society function effectively.

She stressed that Haiti remains the country with the highest rates of AIDS and illiteracy and the lowest life expectancy in the Americas.

She also emphasised that Haiti has become a transit route for transporting illegal drugs from Colombia to the United States. The main sources of income in the Caribbean nation are remittances sent by relatives living abroad, followed in second place by drug trafficking, weapons trafficking and other criminal activity like kidnapping, she said.

Mendelson-Forman further noted that a large percentage of farm workers and construction workers in the neighbouring Dominican Republic are Haitians who have emigrated there with no legal documents and no treaty to protect them. President Fernández met with Préval earlier this month to relaunch a bilateral commission established to address this issue.

The United States, a superpower that has had a major influence on Haiti throughout history, is not paying attention to what is happening in the hemisphere, because it is totally focussed on its war in Iraq. As such, it would be fruitless to expect solutions to come from the United States at this time, she remarked.

Mendelson-Forman warned of the danger that the Feb. 7 elections in Haiti would be seized upon as the "exit strategy" for countries currently cooperating with the stabilisation process, and that as a result, just when Haiti most urgently needs international assistance, it will be abandoned to its own fate.
(END/2006)

Haiti's vibrant palette

By THERESA HOGUE
Corvallis Gazette Times
March 16, 2006
The Entertainer

When Michael Schapiro arrived in Haiti for the first time during a Peace Corps assignment, the first thing he noticed were the vibrant paintings hanging in his hotel.

“(The art) is very representative of their life,” Schapiro said. “It’s close knit, colorful, fluid, expressive.”

Haitian art is mainly painted to be sold, especially to tourists, but it comes from a long tradition of African artwork, especially art from Benin, where many of the ancestors of current Haitians lived before being brought to the Americas. To Schapiro, the work he saw was powerful and exciting, and he knew that art buyers back in the United States would feel the same way.

At the time, Haiti was particularly dangerous, and tourists were staying away because of reported kidnappings. Schapiro said artists are suffering without the tourist trade.

“It’s just overflowing with talent,” he said, “and not too many people are tapping into it. There’s a downtime, and no one’s buying.”

Schapiro spent two years working in rural parts of Haiti for the Peace Corps, but knew his connection wouldn’t end there. In fact, he believes he’ll be working in Haiti for a lifetime. Eighty percent of the population in Haiti is unemployed, and only 60 percent of children attend school.

“The people need our help immensely,” Schapiro said. While they’re in the Americas, Haitians feel that they are largely considered outsiders. Schapiro said he feels a personal responsibility to help the people he’s met in Haiti, and has co-created a nonprofit organization called the Haitian Sustainable Development Foundation, which focuses on educational development, building libraries in small communities and raising money to send local children to school.

To support art as well as education, Schapiro makes connection with local artists and art dealers, purchases local artwork and brings it to the states, where he sells it to collectors. Some of the profits he turns back into the sustainable development foundation.

When he’s not working in Haiti, Schapiro lives in Eugene, and shares his work around the area. A collection of oil paintings, entitled The Kreyol Collective, is currently on display at Sam’s Station in Corvallis. The collection features paintings from Haiti and the nearby Dominican Republic, where Haitians often immigrate to find work. Schapiro, who is also a musician, has been traveling to the Dominican Republic to learn about their musical history, and their connections with Haiti.

“I have a personal relationship with the people of Haiti, their language, their religion and their music,” Schapiro said.

For more information, go to www.sustainablehaiti.org.

Haiti schedules legislative run-off election April 21

Jamaica Observer

AP

Thursday, March 16, 2006

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti (AP) - A legislative run-off needed to restore popularly elected government to Haiti will take place April 21, the interim administration announced yesterday.

Michel Brunache, chief of Cabinet for interim President Boniface Alexandre, told The Associated Press he was confident preparations for the election would be completed in time.

Scores of candidates seeking 129 legislative seats will participate in the run-off, which is considered the final step in often-delayed elections called to replace former president Jean-Bertrand Aristide, who fled into exile amid a bloody revolt in February 2004.

Officials originally scheduled the legislative run-off for March 19 but later postponed it, citing large-scale street protests in the wake of February 7 elections won by Rene Preval, a former president.

The delay also forced the postponement of Preval's inauguration because he technically cannot take power without a sitting parliament. A new inauguration date hasn't been set.

Haiti's electoral council expects results of the run-off to be available April 28, paving the way for the new government to take power, the electoral council said in a statement carried on local radio.

Preval, who received four times as many votes as his nearest rival, was declared the victor after delays in the vote count angered his supporters, who took to streets and accused election officials of trying to manipulate the results.

Preval's Lespwa Party is considered a front-runner in the legislative race, although observers say he will likely need to forge a coalition government because of the large number of political parties contesting the runoff.

Preval, who served as president from 1996 to 2001, has pledged to restore security, create jobs and attract foreign investment in Haiti, the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere.

HAITI-DEMOCRACY Mar-15-2006 (840 words) With photos. xxxi

Haiti's presidential election sets stage for democracy, say bishops

By Agostino Bono
Catholic News Service

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti (CNS) -- Several Haitian bishops have expressed hope that the recent presidential election sets the stage for a stable democracy and the removal of U.N. peacekeeping troops.

They said the situation is still volatile in the poorest country in the Americas, and the church can play a role in dampening political passions and fostering reconciliation so that a new government can take root after several years of social and political instability.

The church is present in every city and town, making it important for the rebuilding of the country's institutions, said Msgr. Andre Pierre, permanent secretary of the Haitian bishops' conference.

"The church is helping the people focus on peace through meetings, preaching and radio messages," he said March 8. "It's giving direction, helping people to calm down."

About 80 percent of Haiti's 8.1 million population professes Catholicism.

Msgr. Pierre was among Haitian church officials who briefed four visiting U.S. bishops and several staff members of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops during a fact-finding trip.

Haiti has been politically, economically and socially unstable since the 2004 overthrow of elected President Jean-Bertrand Aristide, an ex-priest with widespread support among the nation's poor. An interim government has been running the country and requested U.N. troops to help police Haiti and to maintain order so that new elections could be held.

A Feb. 7 vote elected Rene Preval as president. Runoff congressional elections are scheduled for April 23, with the presidential inauguration to be held after the new legislature is installed.

"The people showed great maturity despite the polarization of political groups," Msgr. Pierre said of the Feb. 7 election.

"I saw long lines of people waiting to vote. They had a sense that they could do something about their future. It shows the people are ready for democracy," he said.

Agreeing were Bishop Louis Kebreau of Hinche, president of the Haitian bishops' conference, and Auxiliary Bishop Joseph Lafontant of Port-au-Prince, conference secretary-general.

But the church officials were cautious regarding the possible return of Aristide, a polarizing figure in Haitian politics who was forced to flee the country after his 2004 overthrow. Aristide was popularly elected twice and overthrown twice, the first time in 1991.

His opponents said that his governments were moving toward one-party rule and that he was organizing armed gangs of supporters to terrorize opponents. Aristide supporters, in turn, accused his opponents of organizing armed gangs.

"The street is still hot. Any spark could ignite it," said Bishop Kebreau, speaking of Aristide's possible return. He said the issue of Aristide's return is something that Haitian leaders have to work out.

Preval, a former Aristide ally, also has been cautious about the advisability of Aristide's return but has left the door open.

Msgr. Pierre said the ultimate decision may rest with Aristide.

Aristide should use "wisdom and justice to see what is best at this time" regarding his return, said Msgr. Pierre. "The decision (on Aristide) cannot be mine."

Msgr. Pierre expressed similar caution regarding the possible return of Father Gerard Jean-Juste, a popular Aristide supporter and a priest of the Port-au-Prince Archdiocese who has been suspended from active ministry.

Father Jean-Juste was arrested last July and accused of murdering a journalist. The murder charge was dropped in January, and the priest was allowed to go to a Miami hospital for leukemia treatment. He also was indicted for illegal weapons possession and criminal conspiracy.

Although Father Jean-Juste is controversial, people generally appreciated the social and educational work he did among the poor and want this work to continue, said Msgr. Pierre.

He said Father Jean-Juste has appealed his priestly suspension to the Vatican, and no word had been received regarding a decision.

At the time of the March briefing, Father Jean-Juste was still in a Miami hospital.

The Haitian church officials were highly critical of the U.N. troops stationed in Haiti and expressed hope that they would be withdrawn as quickly as possible. They said the troops' continued presence is robbing Haitians of their autonomy because the U.N. troops -- rather than the Haitian police -- have the primary responsibility for maintaining law and order.

"The population is angry. They don't know why the troops are here. The troops remain with their arms folded when people are attacked," said Bishop Lafontant.

Bishop Kebreau said most of the 9,000 Brazilian-led troops do not speak French or Creole, Haiti's two languages. He added that many are from Middle Eastern countries having different religions, customs and cultures that those found in Haiti.

Preval has said that the security situation has improved since the presidential election but that it would be irresponsible for the U.N. troops to leave until he has had the chance to strengthen Haiti's police force and judiciary.

Posted on Thu, Mar. 16, 2006

LITTLE HAITI
Attorney's office reaches out
The State Attorney's Office has expanded its community outreach division in an effort to make a difference to South Florida's Haitian community.
BY
TRENTON DANIEL
daniel@MiamiHerald.com
For many in South Florida's Haitian community, police officers are viewed as crooked, officials are out for themselves and government is a disappointment. Authorities, in short, are something best to avoid.

In an effort to assuage those suspicions and reach out to local Haitians, the State Attorney's Office recently expanded its Community Outreach Division to include a full-time liaison to the Haitian community. His name is J. Raynald Louis.

"Our intention is to teach people within the community how to use the services of the State Attorney's Office," said Louis, 58. "As a law-abiding citizen, you need to know where you can get [legal] help." And so, Louis will serve as a point person to the Haitian community in the outreach office, which offers a range of services, including finger-printing for children and crime prevention tips for the elderly.

Previously, the agency relied on a Haitian prosecutor to pitch in on an ad hoc basis, said State Attorney's Office spokesman Ed Griffith.

Louis, hired in July, isn't a prosecutor. Rather, he will assume a variety of responsibilities geared toward educating the public, ranging from holding seminars at immigration centers to knocking on Little Haiti doors.

Prior to joining the State Attorney's Office, Louis ran the government-owned Haiti Television Network as a general manager. One duty with the new job, he says, will be to remind the community's parents about the legal difference between corporal punishment and child abuse in their adopted country.

"You beat up your child and there's a mark; police may take your child," Louis said.

There will be other challenges.

One of them, Louis and Griffith say, is trying to help somebody adjust to the way and means of a different legal system. In Haiti, as in France and other Francophone countries, the courts are regulated by the Napoleonic code, whereby the defendant is guilty until found innocent. Another is convincing witnesses to testify.

"There's this idea, 'You don't need me; you got the guy,'" Griffith said.

Meanwhile, community leaders applaud the State Attorney's Office's hiring. They say they see the presence of somebody like Louis in Miami-Dade State Attorney Katherine Fernández Rundle's office as a way to make authority-figure shy immigrants feel comfortable reporting crimes.

"That she's hired somebody in that position, that's good," said Aude Sicard, community relations specialist for Jackson Memorial Hospital's Cuban/Haitian Refugee Program. "Many of our population in Miami-Dade are not familiar with the system, and I'm hoping that they can educate the community - letting people not to be intimidated by the [the State Attorney's Office] just because it's government. Crimes should not be left unpunished, and they should not be fear in deportation if they report a crime. It's more for the benefit of the population."

When not working at the State Attorney's Office, Louis helps oversee a Haiti news site haitimedia.com (on which he has a photo posted of his boss Fernández Rundle), and lives in Taramac with his wife Goldie of three years and their 1-year-old son Raynald II.

Argentina, Brazil to keep peacekeeping troops in Haiti

www.chinaview.cn 2006-03-14 09:32:18

BUENOS AIRES, March 13 (Xinhuanet) -- Leaders of Argentina and Brazil said on Monday that the two countries would keep their troops in Haiti as part of the United Nations peacekeeping mission in the Caribbean nation.

Re ne Preval, president-elect of Haiti, who is visiting Buenos Aires, held talks with Argentine President Nestor Kirchner on Monday, before speaking to the press, alongside senior Argentine ministers, who promised to continue supporting Haiti.

Haiti needs the presence of the UN peacekeeping mission, said Preval, who arrived in Argentina on Monday, as part of a tour of Latin America.

Argentina will keep its peacekeeping troops in Haiti, reaffirmed Kirchner.

Preval began his tour on Friday in Brazil, which supplies 1,200 troops to the UN mission. During a meeting with Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva, the Haitian president-elect said that Haiti's situation would soon turn difficult without Brazil's support.

Lula on Monday responded with a promise to keep its troops in Haiti, as part of the UN peacekeeping mission, for as long as Haiti's government wants.

"We serve the will of the United Nations, and we are subordinate to the national will of the Haitian people... (and) to the government of Haiti," Lula told listeners to his weekly show Coffee with the President. "When they say 'we want no more' we will return to Brazil with our consciences clear and the knowledge of a job well done," he said.

Preval, an ally of deposed former-president Jean Bertrand Aristide, won February elections as the candidate of the Lespwa (Hope) Party, following two years of political and social chaos in the Caribbean nation.

Also in February, the United Nations Security Council voted to extend the UN mission by six months, until the beginning of Preval's rule. Enditem

Mercosur
Tuesday, 14 March
MercoPress

Haiti will decide when UN troops leave

Brazilian troops which make up the multinational United Nations peace keeping contingent will remain in Haiti until that country so decides, said Monday Brazilian president Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva.

"We're subordinate to United Nations, we're subordinate to the sovereignty of the Haitian people to the government of Haiti", remarked Lula da Silva in his weekly radio broadcast. "When they tell us, "that's it, no more", in peace with our consciences we will return to Brazil having accomplished our duty", added the president.

Lula da Silva revealed he had a four hours chat last Saturday with elected Haitian president René Preval when they flew together to Chile for the inauguration of President Michelle Bachelet.

It was then that President Preval "specifically told me that the (Brazilian) troops in Haiti under UN command will only leave when he's able to set up the law and order structure, because we can't leave a vacuum".

Minustah, or the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti, created by the Security Council in 2004 and made up of 7.500 soldiers and 1.700 policemen, including 1.100 Brazilians is under the command of a Brazilian general.

Elected president Preval has anticipated that he would request UN for the troops to remain but “reformulating” the Security Council mandate. Apparently Mr. Preval would like to see more policemen, less military, and help to set up an efficient court system.

Last week Brazilian General Jose Elito Carvalho Siqueira, commander of Minustah told the Brazilian press “peace keeping troops would have to remain in Haiti for another two to three years”.

“Although the political situation has improved since the election of president Preval, the instability of the last few years still prevails in many areas of the country”, said General Carvalho Siqueira.

“We won’t be leaving in the short term. There might be a change of countries in the UN mission, which is natural, but there’s still much ahead and time is needed for a structured Haiti police force to take over law and order”, he added.

“The Haiti people and Brazilian military actually get along very well. They admire our professional competence and have a good opinion of Brazilians”, said the general who anticipated the great security challenge ahead will be the inauguration of President Preval in the second half of April.

Obstacles ahead for Préval, Haiti

Vote shows desire for change after two years in political limbo

By CLAIRE SCHAEFFER-DUFFY

March 14, 2006

Port-au-Prince, Haiti

For all the uncertainty preceding Haiti’s elections in February, the announcement declaring 63-year-old agronomist René Préval the country’s next president came as no surprise. A one-time protégé of Haitian leader Jean Bertrand Aristide and a former president, Préval was the favored candidate among the country’s poor majority, an undisputed front-runner who had four times the votes of his next contender.

Approximately 60 percent of Haiti’s 3.5 million registered voters participated in the Feb. 7 presidential and parliamentary elections, the first since a bloody uprising ousted former president Aristide two years ago. Voters overwhelmed poorly prepared voting centers, exhibiting a confidence in the electoral process that was inspiring, given how often election outcomes have been thwarted by coups. (Haiti has had five coups in the past 20 years.)

Préval’s win was not officially declared until nine tumultuous days after Haitians cast their ballots, the result of an agreement brokered between the candidate and election officials. After two years of living in political limbo, Haitians finally had an elected president.

The man they chose represents a desire for change in Haiti, says Robert Maguire, director of the Haiti Program at Trinity College in Washington. “It is people asking for an open society, asking to become fully participating citizens.”

Whether that desire will be honored remains to be seen.

High stakes election

The stakes were high for this \$80-million election, the most expensive in the nation's history. The interim government, regarded by most Haitians as an import of the international community, and 9,000 U.N. peacekeeping troops had failed to bring stability and the country was still shuddering from the aftereffects of the February 2004 coup that overthrew Aristide.

A charismatic and polarizing leader, Aristide, who now lives in exile in South Africa, was forced out by armed rebels amid accusations that his government was corrupt and that the United States and France had played a role in his removal. Since his departure, unemployment was up and so too was violence. In Port-au-Prince, factories that had closed because of looting in the wake of the coup remained shuttered. Gangs and private armies controlled the city's slums. Within the international community, the election was billed as a much-needed lifeline to pull the country out of its current turmoil. For many Haitians, the ballot simply represented the opportunity to once again have a say in their own governance.

"The vote is our answer to the interim government," said Port-au-Prince resident Denis Onersonn. "If you want to have power, it is only the people who can give it."

On the day before the vote, Port-au-Prince was unexpectedly calm, the mood in the capital one of cautious anticipation. Kidnappings were down, and the armed groups operating in Port-au-Prince's poor neighborhoods had reportedly declared a weeklong cease-fire to allow the elections to take place safely.

The city was awash in campaign paraphernalia. Posters bearing the photographs of presidential and parliamentary candidates were plastered on public walls and telephone poles and strung above congested streets where they fluttered like prayer flags. A UNICEF banner urged the future leaders of Haiti to consider the children. The morning's headline for *Le Nouveliste*, one of Port-au-Prince's oldest dailies, was reflective: "1986-2006: Where Are We?"

Security was foremost on the minds of many voters within the capital, but in Jacmel, a small coastal city in southern Haiti, election talk focused on the economy and local needs.

Jonas Azor, director of Youth in Action, an organization for young adults, said most of his members had registered to vote and were "optimistic they could find someone who will deal with 40 percent of their demands." Jacmel needs a functioning government to help tackle its numerous problems, he said. "We don't have good sanitation or health care and the environment is a big concern. When there is a flood [here] a lot of people die."

Several women vendors working a side street in Jacmel said they hoped their votes would translate into more jobs and reduction in the cost of food. Seventy percent of the population in Haiti is unemployed and live on less than \$400 a year.

“[Over the past two years] life has been very difficult,” said Guerline Charles, the mother of a large family. “All food has become very expensive. ... A sack of rice that cost 200 [Haitian] dollars now costs 300.”

A populist candidate

In addition to a president, Haitians were voting to fill the seats in their 129-member National Assembly. The presidential ballot offered 33 candidates, many representing political parties with grandiose names and a minuscule membership. Only a handful of these candidates were considered serious contenders, among them Lesley Manigat, who briefly served as Haiti's president in 1988 before being toppled by a coup, industrialist Charles Henry Baker, a member of the mulatto elite, and Préval.

The son of a government official, Préval was prime minister to Aristide during his presidency in 1991 and then served as president himself from 1996 to 2001. Described as shy and retiring, he lacks the charisma of his former mentor Aristide, who succeeded him as president in 2001.

Haiti experts give Préval's first presidency a mixed review. According to some reports, human rights groups accused him of interfering with the judiciary and politicizing the police. Under enormous pressure from foreign donors, he introduced a modified form of privatization. The policy was hugely unpopular with many Haitian.

But Préval is the only democratically elected president in Haiti to have finished his five-year term and transferred power peacefully, a credential that goes a long way here. He quickly garnered the backing of the urban poor, Aristide's strongest constituents, when he entered the presidential race last fall, running on a political platform called “Lespwa,” the Creole word for hope. Peasants hailed him as a leader who tried to initiate land reform when he was in office.

Farmers, clustered outside the Lespwa headquarters in Jacmel described Préval as a president with a proven track record of serving the people, a man who “walks with the poor.” Interrupting themselves to list his achievements, they said Préval improved roads, provided scholarships so medical students could study in Cuba, and built a hospital and a harbor in Jacmel.

Analysts say the road ahead for Préval will not be smooth. As president of Haiti, he faces the longstanding difficulties of governance in this impoverished nation where class divides and political fault lines run deep.

Robert Fatton Jr., author of the book Haiti's Predatory Republic, said Préval was the only viable candidate to bridge the gap between the poor majority and the very rich elite. “But he has an enormous task ahead of him,” said Fatton.

Politically, Préval remains in a tenuous position. His brokered win leaves him susceptible to critics who wish to delegitimize his presidency. Préval's closest rivals, Baker and Manigat, who won 6 percent and 12 percent of the vote respectively, have vigorously denounced the ruling of the electoral council, a sign, said Fatton, that “the opposition is not dead yet.”

Additionally, the composition of the Haiti's legislature has yet to be decided. The question is an important one for Préval, whose first administration was bogged down by conflicts with the National Assembly. Results from the first round of the parliamentary election show Lespwa candidates won a significant number of seats, but the March 19 runoff has been delayed and no new date set. Préval cannot be inaugurated until the country has a legislature.

As president of the poorest country in the Western hemisphere, Préval will be forced to placate the demands of foreign donors, especially the United States. So far, U.S. policymakers have expressed support for Préval, referring to him as "a man we can work with."

Trinity College's Maguire, author of *Haiti Held Hostage: International Responses to the Quest for Nationhood*, said that in the past the United States had contradictory policies towards Haiti, marked by divisions between those who recognized Aristide as the country's legitimate president and those who despised him. "I think the [Bush] administration has resigned itself to engage with the Haitian government," Maguire said. "Things got worse after Aristide's removal."

Citing a recent report in *The New York Times* that documents the role of the International Republican Institute, a democracy-building group formed by some conservative members of the Republican Party, in facilitating the 2004 coup, Maguire said, "The United States has stained hands. Since this has been unmasked, I hope the United States will not be doing that again. I hope the United States will be open and transparent."

Préval has spoken modestly about what he can do for Haiti, saying the work is more than can be accomplished in a five-year presidency. In an interview with a Cuban newspaper, he said he recognized the country's most pressing need was reconciliation, which he defined as reaching out to Haiti's underprivileged masses.

"I think the greatest reconciliation we should strive for is the one with starving people who need food. It is with those who do not have access to medical services. It is for those who have no education to make sure they have access," Préval said.

Claire Schaeffer-Duffy is a frequent contributor to NCR.

CARICOM to Help Haiti Integrate

Kingston, Mar 15 (Prensa Latina) Jamaica's Prime Minister Percival J. Patterson said the Caribbean Community will accept Haiti in the CARICOM.

Patterson voiced the community's efforts to foment democratic tradition and called for international aid to improve Haiti's living standards via material and technical assistance.

The primer minister also called for Haiti's full engagement in international and regional commercial trade with special treatment.

CARICOM welcomes Rene Preval as president elect of Haiti, to be confirmed at the July Summit in St. Kitts and Nevis.

Edwin Carrington, CARICOM Secretary General, said they are readying a document with details on Haiti's official integration to the area.

The regional organization vetoed Haiti after Jean Bertrand Aristide was toppled on Feb 2004 with a coup led by the US.

Wednesday, March 15 Southport, NC

Local missionaries survive frightening ordeal in Haiti

By Terry Calhoun
News Editor
State Port Pilot, NC
For the love of Christ!

Said in anger, that statement might be a profane curse.

But for a Boiling Spring Lakes couple and their pastor and his wife, the statement is one of praise.

Don Stephenson, a Boiling Spring Lakes man who operates a used car business on Long Beach Road, and his wife Ann survived a daring raid on a mission compound in Haiti Saturday. Now they, and Ronnie and Johnnie Smith of Holden Beach, count the love of Christ and the mercy of God as their protectors.

The foursome arrived in Haiti last Thursday to lend a hand at a children's mission they support. While they worked building picnic tables for the children's use, they suddenly found themselves surrounded by gun-wielding thugs with evil intentions.

“We assume they were trying to kidnap us and hold us for ransom,” said Ronnie Smith Tuesday after the local group hastily returned to the safety of their Brunswick County homes.

Smith is pastor of Love of Christ Church in Bolivia, where the Stephenson’s are among about 30 to 35 active members. The church is one of many that support Bethel Mission Outreach in the former French colony of Haiti.

“They had us surrounded,” Smith said — three Haitians, several of them holding a handgun in each hand, had somehow gained entrance to the locked concrete block compound.

In the next few minutes, another mission worker had been shot three times, another had been pistol whipped, Johnnie Smith had been knocked to the ground twice and Don Stephenson had looked down the barrel of a handgun whose trigger had been pulled five times but which had failed to fire each time.

“It was happening so fast it was hard to tell what was going on. They were trying to get us into our van, which we suppose they planned to steal,” said Smith.

But after the initial commotion, other mission workers responded, launching a barrage of stones at the trio of bandits and evoking “the name of Jesus” as a command, a form of prayer sometimes emphasized by Full Gospel, interdenominational churches like Love of Christ and others that support the mission and school in impoverished Haiti.

Those believers reference Colossians 3:17 — “And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him” — to propose that miracles can be performed through followers of Christ if His name is evoked.

Smith sees miracles throughout in his retelling of the story.

“It was a miracle that gun didn’t fire,” said Smith. “The gunman even opened his revolver to confirm that there were bullets in it after it misfired several times. He tried again. It sounds like the Lord just wouldn’t let it fire.”

The Stephensons’ daughter, Paula, who works with her father at his car dealership, likewise considers the incident a miracle.

“The Lord was looking out for them,” she said. “There’s not one bit of doubt in my mind that the Lord kept that gun from firing.”

Smith said the wounded man miraculously was not seriously injured, despite being shot in the face and both arms by one of the attackers.

“The doctor said he had never seen anything like that,” said Smith. He said one shot grazed the man’s cheek and the two shots into his arms failed to do nerve damage or crush bone. Instead the bullet, which he believes was fired from a 9mm weapon, broke apart.

“The bullet came out in three pieces. The bullet was crushed, not the bone,” said Smith.

The mission trip to Haiti was the first for Stephenson, who was traveling on business Tuesday and spoke by cell phone. Stephenson said the foursome from Brunswick County was on a fact-finding mission to see what they could do to help the Haitian people, who suffer within the poorest economy in the Western Hemisphere.

There they saw continuing construction within the compound, including the second-story expansion of the mission's main concrete block building, known as The Rock. Smith said Bethel Mission Outreach feeds 120 children a single daily meal and introduces them and their parents or guardians to the scriptures. Medical services are provided to some 300 children, according to the mission's website.

Stephenson is an imposing man, well over six feet tall and sturdily built, and Smith speculates that because of his size he was perceived as representing the biggest physical threat by the attackers. That's the only explanation he can offer as to why Stephenson was the target of the murder attempt.

The Smiths are in their 50s, and the Stephensons in their 60s, Smith said. The two couples were roughing it in the mission compound, which has no running water or electric power.

"We were more or less camping out with a roof over our head," said the pastor.

Smith said all four were doing well know, physically and spiritually.

"We don't have any anger toward those guys," Smith said. He said he believes there was a divine plan at work. Perhaps, he ventured, the purpose was to bring the Haitian community together.

"As we look back, we can see how God used us," said the pastor.

The community response was a steadfast one.

"We're not going to have this," was the reaction, he said. "They wanted us to know that the mission would stay."

Among those who shared those sentiments, Smith reported, were Voodoo priests — "worshipers of Satan" by his estimation.

"They need lots of help down there. The people want to work; there are no jobs. When you're down, you need someone to help," he said.

Smith said the events "broke the people's hearts in the community."

"Most of the people were very nice people; these were thugs, criminals," said Smith.

Perhaps predictably, Smith said he and the Stephensons were already planning their return trip to Haiti and Bethel Outreach Mission. He said the compound had no security force and he didn't expect that to change because of the isolated incident.

"The only security — the only security they have — is God," he witnessed.

Chile to keep peacekeeping troops in Haiti till June

SANTIAGO, March 12 (Xinhuanet) -- Chile will keep its peacekeeping troops in Haiti until June at least, Chile's defense and foreign ministers told a press conference Sunday.

The ministers made the remarks after a meeting with Haitian president-elect, Rene Preval, who was in Chile to attend the inauguration ceremony for Chile's new president Michelle Bachelet.

"We already have permission from Congress to keep our troops in Haiti until June," said Defense Minister Vivianne Blanlot. However, she noted, the nature of Chile's participation in the United Nations peacekeeping force in Haiti had yet to be discussed.

Blanlot said Chile's forces, currently in Haiti as part of the UN peacekeeping force Minustah, would have an important role in rebuilding public order in the country.

"We are available to help train Haiti's police: something very much needed in peace time, but less important in wartime. This topic must be thoroughly discussed. All the possibilities are still open," she said.

Foreign Minister Alejandro Foxley also pledged to continue supporting the efforts at stabilizing the situation in Haiti. He directed the attention of Chile's legislators to the distressing situation many Haitians were in, saying, "We are not going to turn our back on the nation which has the most problems and the worst poverty in Latin America."

Haiti has been plagued by gang violence since the 2004 overthrow of former President Jean-Bertrand Aristide. Enditem

Brazil's troops to stay while Haiti needs
San Diego Union Tribune

REUTERS

7:05 a.m. March 13, 2006

BRASILIA, Brazil – Brazil's peacekeeping forces will stay in Haiti for as long as the new government needs them, President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva said Monday.
The troops were in Haiti at the request of the United Nations and the Haitian government, Lula said

Advertisement

“Brazil will stay as long as the Haitian government sees it necessary,” he said in his fortnightly radio address. “When they say 'we don't want you any more,' we will leave in the knowledge we have completed our task.”

Haitian President-elect Rene Preval said in Brasilia Friday there was more optimism and security in Haiti after the Feb. 7 presidential election, but the country's police and judiciary were still weak and it would be irresponsible to withdraw U.N. forces.

“(Preval) told me the troops there should only leave when he manages to set up the police because you can't have a vacuum,” Lula said.

Brazil has commanded the 9,000-member U.N. force in Haiti since 2004 after the overthrow of President Jean-Bertrand Aristide and makes up its largest contingent. Brazil has offered aid in developing the agriculture and telecommunications industry.

Haitian electoral authorities set the second-round of legislative elections for April 21. Preval is expected to take office in early May.

Haiti changes date again for runoff election

Sat Mar 11, 2006 6:06 PM ET

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MORE

By Joseph Guyler Delva

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti (Reuters) - Haiti's electoral authorities on Saturday brought forward slightly the date for runoff elections to pick senators and legislators.

Originally due to take place on March 19 and then rescheduled for April 23, the second-round vote will now take place on April 21, a Friday, ostensibly to allow officials the weekend to prepare for classes on Monday the schools that will be used as voting centers.

"We finally decided to organize the second round on April 21, which is a Friday, for practical reasons," Max Mathurin, president of the Provisional Electoral Council, told Reuters.

Elections are usually held on Sundays in Haiti, the poorest and most unstable country in the Americas.

An exception was the presidential election on February 7, the first national ballot since former President Jean-Bertrand Aristide was ousted in February 2004 by an armed revolt and under international pressure to quit.

Mathurin said the council decided to hold the runoff on a Friday to give election workers the whole weekend to put desks, chairs and other equipment back in place in time for schools to open on Monday.

"When we have the election on Friday, at least they will have Saturday and Sunday to starting cleaning and reorganizing," he said.

None of the contenders in the races held alongside the presidential election on February 7 for 30 Senate seats and 99 seats in the lower house appear to have won the majority -- 50 percent plus one vote -- needed for a first-round victory.

President-elect Rene Preval, a onetime Aristide ally and like him a champion of the Caribbean nation's poor masses, was himself originally awarded just under 50 percent of the votes after a week of ballot counting.

But, fearing angry protests by his supporters and mindful of growing allegations of vote fraud seemingly aimed at denying Preval a first-round win, the electoral authorities decided to change the way they counted ballots with no votes cast on them and thereby handed him a victory.

Preval was originally supposed to take office on April 29, but his inauguration is expected to be delayed because of the inability to hold the second round of the legislative election on time. He could take office in the first week of May.

The party that holds a majority in parliament will pick a prime minister and form a government.

No party seems likely to obtain an outright majority but Preval has been meeting other parties in hopes of building a governing coalition that can bridge the deep divides in the country of 8.5 million, in particular the deep distrust between the poor and the small, wealthy elite.

Shame and Scandal
Commonsense 518

by John Maxwell
Haiti Action Committee
March 11, 2006

In a most important comment on the Haitian situation, Brian Concannon, head of the Institute for Justice and Democracy in Haiti points out that

"February 7 was the fourth consecutive landslide victory for a Presidential candidate from the Lavalas movement. In any other country, such electoral success would translate into a long period of stability, and an opportunity for the victors to implement the policies they were elected on. Instead, for three of those terms, there have been two coup d'etats leading to five years of exile for the elected President, a nearly perpetual controversy over legislative elections and very little progress on the root causes of Haiti's misery. " http://www.HaitiAction.net/News/BC/3_7_6/3_7_6.html

The reason is simple; a tiny group of people, some of them Haitians, has managed to engage the money and power of a tiny but powerful minority in the United States to develop strategies which have made government - as most people understand it - impossible in Haiti.

Since the Duvalier dictatorship was brought to earth by popular protest and mass action twenty years ago, a group of mostly white people, some of them Haitians, have successfully conspired to produce in the Caribbean the most extreme ideal of the libertarian fringe - a country without a functioning government.

The Duvalier dictatorship (1957 to 1986) began as a popularly elected government led by a man with impeccable credentials - a medical doctor and sociologist who was an authority of sorts on his country's culture. Over the years Dr Francois Duvalier forged important ties with Haitian businessmen and important figures on the racist right of US politics which culminated in Duvalier's son's dictatorship.

ARISTIDE. was Haiti's
first freely elected president

Duvalier II developed into an extreme version of primitive fascism in which the state and the business community combined to terrorise and parasitise the poor people of Haiti.

The people brought down "Baby Doc" but, no matter how hard they have tried, they have not in the two decades since, succeeded in having a government of the people, by the people and for the people.

The major reasons are to be found in the so called 'Elite' of haiti, ideological and spiritual descendants of the French mulattos who from time to time, made alliances with the black majority or simply bought off their leaders in order to more efficiently exercise the power once held by the French slave-owners.

The interests of the slave-owners have been paramount in Haiti for much of the time since the Haitians abolished slavery. Thomas Jefferson and other founding fathers of the United States ensured that Haiti would not provide a 'bad' example to the restive slaves of the Southern United States. The French, formerly the colonial masters of Haiti, combined with the British and the Americans to ensure that Haiti could not export its produce and therefore not develop industrially. They simply insisted that the Haitians should pay France for their independence before they were allowed into the world markets.

The American bankers came to the "assistance" of the Haitians, lending them the money to pay off the evil French levy on their freedom. Soon enough, because of the crippled economy, Haiti ended up owing most of its GDP to American banks.

In the interest of the US Banks the American government intervened in 1915, attempting ruthlessly, to obliterate any vestige of freedom from the people who had abolished slavery. The US even perfected its martial skills by dive-bombing unarmed Haitian peasants in 1919 to suppress their demand for freedom. The US left behind an army which was a bad carbon copy of the racist Marines who had occupied Haiti, and that army, allied with and at the service of corrupt politicians and the Elite, has tormented Haiti ever since and made true freedom impossible.

Jean Bertrand Aristide, fashionably denigrated as a slum priest, a ghetto priest, was the symbol of Haitian resistance to the army/elite repressive coalitions which succeeded Baby Doc. When the pressure of the masses finally forced free elections in 1990, Aristide came from nowhere, it seemed, to win the election with 67% of the vote. He was Haiti's first freely elected President. He didn't last long. Haitian freedom was too much for the elite and the army and in 1992, after failing to assassinate him, they managed to overthrow his government and send him into exile.

Then ensued a saturnalia of oppressive violence, in which the targets were members and leaders of the popular movement, Lavalas, which had supported Aristide.

The conscience of US President Clinton was finally touched by the agitation of black Americans, led by Randall Robinson, President of TransAfrica who began a fast unto death which terrified Clinton because if Robinson had died, his support among African Americans would have been wiped out or at least, seriously damaged. Clinton excused his intervention by referring to the fact that in Haiti, "people were having their faces chopped off."

Aristide was restored to the presidency of Haiti in 1994, but his mandate was so circumscribed by concessions extorted from him by the Americans that his remaining time was hobbled by the lack of money, the inability to enforce law and order and by the machinations of the Elite and their American friends now operating in force in Haiti. They were 5,000 Mormons alone, on the ground.

Official and unofficial organs of the US government, including USAID, the National Endowment for Democracy and the Haiti Democracy Project financed and organised anti-Aristide groups and political action committees made up of some who were legitimate opponents of Aristide and his movement but also of left-over Duvalierists and easily bribed rabble rousers in all sectors of the society. During the term of Aristide's successor Preval, these groups kept up a steady drumbeat of propaganda and provocative actions which, they said, were in response to the authoritarian nature of the Lavalas governments.

Their propaganda, exemplified by a website called "wehaitians.com" called Aristide a criminal, the chief bandit, prehistoric, a 'bestial' dictator, a murderer, among other things, and claimed that he had made himself a millionaire. They even installed spy cameras in his Presidential residence, and published a photograph of Aristide, naked, in his bathroom.. Some claimed he drank the blood of babies in some Satanic sacrament. When they weren't foaming at the mouth, presumably, they were busily enhancing democracy

They employed the Haitian constitution, re-written with American assistance, ambiguous and full of holes, to paralyse government action. During most of Preval's presidency parliament was for all practical purposes, non-functional

Part of the reason for this is that Haitian democracy is very new, and since so many people were illiterate as well as unaccustomed to any kind of representative government, those who controlled the mass media and the non-governmental organisations - 'civil society' - were able to spread confusion and disunity. There were no organised parties, as we understand the word. The results of those campaigns continue to bedevil Haitian politics to this day.

In the latest presidential elections the Elite and their American tutors made it as difficult as possible for the ordinary Haitian to make his voice and will heard and understood. Their leaders were murdered or jailed. The murderers and thugs of the Duvalier and post Duvalier regimes were brought back into play. The army, disbanded by Aristide was resurrected, an undisciplined gang of cutthroats who are in fact, mercenaries employed by the Elite. If they were not enough, the American-Canadian-French coalition to destabilise Haiti brought in Kofi Annan and the United Nations Security Council, which established a so-called peace-keeping force whose function seemed to be to eliminate the grassroots leaders of Lavalas on the pretext of restoring law and order by killing gang-leaders.

We in Jamaica know that this doesn't work. We also know that when Europeans of high rank come to our countries, they tend to talk mostly to other Europeans or to people who look most like Europeans.

MINUSTAH is not recorded as having any dealings with leaders of Lavalas, the majority of Haitians. They did converse with the light-skinned Elite, who, of course, must be witnesses of truth because they look like witnesses of truth.

One such consultation had an unfortunate consequence. The newly appointed head of MINUSTAH, a Brazilian general, killed himself after a conversation with leaders of the elite.

"After having assumed command of the UN military mission less than four months ago, the body of Brazilian officer Lt. Gen. Urano Teixeira da Matta Bacellar was found sprawled out on the balcony of the Hotel Montana, the apparent victim of a self-inflicted gunshot wound to the head. According to several sources in the Haitian press, Bacellar had participated in a tense meeting with the president of Haiti's Chamber of Commerce, Dr. Reginald Boulos, and Group 184 leader Andy Apaid the night before. http://haitiaction.net/News/HIP/1_7_6/1_7_6.html

In May last year, in a meeting between the business community and Haiti's Chief of Police Leon Charles, Boulos demanded the US.-installed government of Gerard Latortue allow the business community to form their own private security firms and arm them with automatic weapons.

This clearly was a demand for the Elite to be given licence to go hunting "chimères" and "Bandits" as the Elite describe Lavalas grass roots leaders.

After the recent election, Boulos, described by the Associated Press as 'one of Aristide's most ardent foes', said the private sector is "prepared to support and to unite behind the president . . . whoever it is, provided the international and national observation sanction this election as a fair one"

Before the votes were fully counted, the campaign began to label the elections as "flawed".

This despite the incontrovertible fact that Preval got four times as many votes as his nearest rivals, even if the votes dumped and not counted are ignored. And this despite the fact that ordinary campaigning was impossible.

The Elite have long experience in understanding how the claim of "flawed" elections can bring immediate help - money and materiel - from those Americans who ensured that votes for Gore were not counted in Florida six years ago and votes for Kerry in Ohio were not counted two years ago.

The real problem is not only will the elite pretend that Preval's legitimacy is in doubt, their expensive plowing of the electoral landscape ensures that Preval will not have a parliamentary majority to carry out the programme on which he was elected.. Since the local Lavalas leaders and organisers have been murdered, jailed, driven into exile or into hiding or otherwise intimidated, no coherent electoral campaign was possible across Haiti. By separating the parliamentary and presidential elections the Americans and their Elite friends have ensured that there is no 'coat-tail' effect - that people voting for Preval could not simply vote also for people who were pledged to support him.

This means that if parliament is to function, Lavalas members or those supporting Lavalas, will be subject to effective vetoes by Boulos and his gang including Andy Apaid and Charles Henri Baker, Apaid's brother in law who came third in the Presidential elections with less than 10% of the vote.

It seems clear to me that this scenario is not intended for Haiti alone. As we have seen, elements of the 1970's anti-communist campaign in Jamaica have turned up in other places, including Venezuela, Lebanon, and Ukraine.

If the new Fascist programme for neutralising the majority works as expected, we may confidently expect that it will be introduced in one form or another into other parts of Latin America and after 'Lessons Learned' sessions, in carefully selected test beds in the United States itself, complete with bogus voting.

Mr Preval has two serious handicaps' unlike President Bush, he was clearly the choice of his people, and unlike President Bush, he has no dependable Supreme Court to bail him out of trouble.

On the other hand, Mr Apaid, the real gauleiter of Haiti, will continue to rule from behind the scenes. As an American citizen who fraudulently obtained Haitian 'citizenship' in 1986, Mr Apaid cannot run for election. However, Apaid and his stand in, brother-in-law Charles-Henri Baker, decisively rejected by the Haitian electorate, and Reginald Boulos, will continue to have the decisive voices in the governance of Haiti. USAID, the National Endowment for Democracy, the International Republican Institute and the Haiti Democracy Project can be proud of the results of their Democracy Enhancement Project in Haiti. They will be invigorated for the trials ahead, including Jamaica, where they have already set up shop.

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Protesters greet Charest's meeting with Haiti's PM
Updated Sat. Mar. 11 2006 11:57 PM ET

Canadian Press
CTV.ca

MONTREAL — Vocal protests greeted interim Haitian Prime Minister Gerard Latortue as he sat down with Quebec Premier Jean Charest on Saturday amid suspicions the Haitian leader's low-key visit had a hidden agenda.

Latortue's meeting with Charest was part of his last visit to Canada as leader of the troubled Caribbean country. He met with Prime Minister Stephen Harper on Friday.

The unelected Latortue is expected to give up power later this month to Rene Preval, who won a turbulent round of presidential elections held Feb. 7.

A spokesperson for Charest said Latortue's visit was "essentially a courtesy call."

Hugo D'Amours said Charest wanted to take advantage of Latortue's final visit to Canada.

"The premier wanted to thank him for what he did for Haiti and get an update on the situation there," D'Amours said before the meeting.

"It was not a meeting where future issues will be discussed."

But critics of the Haitian PM say Charest should not be meeting with an unelected prime minister, who they accuse of orchestrating a violent campaign to repress dissidents in the impoverished country.

Instead of meeting with Charest, activist Yves Engler said he "should be having a meeting with the International Criminal Court."

Engler, a spokesman for Haiti Action Montreal, was among the 60 protesters gathered outside Charest's Montreal office before the meeting.

Carrying signs accusing Latortue of crimes against humanity, and others reading "Canada: Stop subverting Haiti's democracy," demonstrators expressed concerns that the Haitian leader was negotiating agreements that could compromise the country's independence.

According to Engler, a federally-funded think-tank - the Canadian Foundation for the Americas - produced a report recommending Canada and Quebec take an active role in Haiti's environmental and educational programs.

Engler said the concern is that Latortue's visit is an attempt to secure agreements before Preval takes office.

"It's pretty fishy what is going with these secret meetings."

Serge Bouchereau of Resistance Haitienne au Quebec said his group is also alarmed by the secrecy surrounding Latortue's visit.

"We are asking questions about his presence here, what did he come to do, what will Jean Charest concoct with this man?"

While both leaders posed for pictures before and after their meeting, neither Charest nor Latortue spoke with reporters.

Bouchereau, who fled Haiti 37 years ago, said Latortue's visit to Ottawa was a similarly tight-lipped affair.

The meeting with Harper was apparently organized at Latortue's request, with no news conference or photo-op.

Calls to the Prime Minister's Office were not returned Saturday.

Engler meanwhile questioned why Harper chose Latortue as the first foreign leader he met with as prime minister.

"This is the first head of state meeting with Harper," Engler said. "When do prime ministers of countries come to Canada and meet with the Canadian prime minister, and it be secret? That doesn't happen."

While Preval won last month's presidential election, Latortue's successor as prime minister won't be known until legislative elections later this month.

Quebec is home to some 75,000 Haitians, the largest community in Canada. The province has spent nearly \$5 million in aid for Haiti since 1997.

The patience of a people abused

by Stuart Neatby
San Francisco Bay View
March 12, 2006

Haitians, afraid the Provisional Election Commission was about to deny René Préval the victory their votes had given him, on Feb. 12 stormed the upscale Hotel Montana, where the commission was headquartered, to demand justice, shouting, "Préval is president!" Neither the U.N. nor hotel security could hold them back.

Photo: Carlos Barria, Reuters

We are driving in a sea of people walking on both sides of the road, everyone maneuvering and dodging, women balancing loads on their heads, all managing to barely avoid our SUV, but it happens so constantly, that one could consider it a kind of system. The skill level is breathtaking. Our driver and guide, Marc Orel, is complementing the other drivers' and pedestrians' moves with constant turns of the wheel. We are at the edge of our seats much of the time.

Haitians have to get along, sharing roads and facilities that leave so much to be desired that our North American complaints about potholes seems fussy in the extreme. At least we have pavement in which to have potholes. In Haiti - within the capital Port-au-Prince even - you have many roads that have the quality of a riverbed, and steeply climbing the mountainside at that.

The large majority of people are navigating through physical conditions in their day that we cannot quite fathom. What one can see of it in the streets, like the traffic - just getting from here to there - and the patience it requires, is a metaphor of the political struggle to get from rule by wealthy elites and their foreign masters to democratic standards.

The current situation, after the election of President René Préval, is an opportunity for that - once again. Haitians had a long "education" in the multitude of experiences of political manipulation over the last decades.

The 5,000 Haitians who stormed the Hotel Montana, play place of the rich, on Feb. 13, cavorted in the pool but did no damage - not even a glass was stolen or broken. They did only what they came to do: ensure that René Préval, the candidate they knew their votes had elected, was declared president.

Photo: Carlos Barria, Reuters

The poor majority is struggling with literacy, still, but they are experts in the real world of political power. That is why they so forcefully claimed their victory after electing René Préval - without violence, it is important to note!

Having had control of the capital at the end of a long week of waiting for election results, they showed amazing restraint and unity in their determination to get what they bargained for. They had already determined their choice with Jean-Bertrand Aristide, twice before, but were cheated out of the fruits of their labor.

Given that backdrop, it is truly a great people that can behave so peacefully. A few hours of poolside R+R at the upscale Hotel Montana, the headquarters of the Provisional Election Commission, known as the CEP, was all they took, as far as "loot" goes. No hostages, no burning, no killing. Downright baffling, if one is steeped in the mainstream media's violent and negative terms of reference for the supporters of constitutional democracy during the two years since Aristide's forced removal.

Now the new democracy is in a position where Haiti's elite, as represented by Group 184 and others in the opposition to Lavalas, Aristide's party - and now also to Préval's Lespwa party - is sawing away at Préval's legitimacy by complaining about both violence and a "negotiated" presidency. As the Kingston, Jamaica, based writer John Maxwell so aptly put it: "They are giving him a basket to carry water!"

This is in concert with the Washington cabal, the masters of all the actions, covert and flagrantly obvious alike, which led to the late February 2004 violence, termed a "popular uprising" by Western media, in total ignorance of the facts. And again, the battle is on for the opinions of citizens of the Western countries which have interfered in Haitian affairs for so long, primarily the United States, but now very importantly also Canada.

It is perhaps a treacherous relaxation of the tension in Haiti, but Haitian leaders like Samba Boukman and William Batiste, in the slums of Bel Air and Cité Soleil, are expressing goodwill for dialogue and reconciliation, but with a clear intent to see some form of justice. Most importantly, an equal form of justice, from high up to the bottom of the ladder. The patience and will to have peace and a better country for all Haitians is in the air around the poor areas of Port-au-Prince.

As we careen through the sun-drenched, dusty streets, the density of people and market vendors increases, and the stench of raw sewage is everywhere. Garbage is lying in heaps in random places, often in the street. Little rivers of grey colored waste run down a gutter at the feet of the people sitting along the road, and the kids are playing all around in bare feet.

The rough houses and shacks form infinitely complex mazes of entrance alleys, stairs and doorways, reaching deep into the blocks. The exhaust fumes belched from all manner of laboring trucks and cars fill the area, as in most parts of the city, but seemingly worse.

We are now in Bel Air, one of the poor sections of the city.

Haiti's hip-hop helper
Wyclef Jean could bring down the house as a recording artist in the 1990s.
By DAVID ADAMS, Times Latin America Correspondent
St. Petersburg Times
Published March 12, 2006

But now he's bringing in talent, money and hope to rebuild his battered homeland.

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti - Standing atop a huge float piled high with music speakers, Haitian-born hip-hop star, Wyclef Jean, tore into his carnival theme song: Van Vire! (The Wind is Turning!)

Even by the eye-popping standards of Haiti's biggest annual festival, Jean made quite a sight, clad in the tricorner hat and sword of Haiti's revolutionary hero, Jean-Jacques Dessalines.

But Jean, 35, wasn't there just to play carnival.

Only days after Haitians elected a new president, Jean improvised his lyrics to address the winner, popular agronomist Rene Preval.

"I called Preval before the show and I said,

Dear President, the Haitian people need food.

Dear President, the Haitian people need jobs.

Dear President, the Haitian people need security."

With the carnival beat reaching a crescendo, Jean delivered his punchline:

"And the President said, "Van vire! Van vire!" "

During the eight-hour procession that wound through streets around the downtown presidential palace, Jean delivered the same words over and over.

There's no doubting the remarkable power of his message: one of Haiti's richest and most famous men offering new hope to fellow citizens of the hemisphere's poorest nation.

On paper, Jean is Haiti's least likely savior.

He doesn't have a Ph.D in economics. In fact, he went to school on a donkey. He likes to wear his hair braided in corn rows, and isn't much of a dresser - certainly not a suit-and-tie man. He prefers T-shirts and jump suits accented with a large rose gold medallion of Christ's face - his "Jesus piece."

But none of that is an obstacle for Jean, whose band, the Fugees, made him a multimillionaire and an international star when he was in his 20s.

On the contrary, Jean is trying to use his celebrity status as a tool for development, much as Bono, lead singer of U2, has done for Third World debt relief.

Over the past decade, billions of dollars in international aid have flowed to Haiti in a vain attempt at nation-building. But it's achieved little. Life expectancy is only 53 - and dropping. Only 15 percent of workers can find formal jobs; half have no jobs at all.

"People come to Haiti and they don't succeed. They don't study the terrain," said Jean, at the end of a hectic five-day visit this month.

"I am nongovernmental," he added. "You can't understand the country unless you walk with the people, be with the people."

A year ago, Jean started his own development movement, Yele Haiti, in an effort to boost the work of groups already doing good work in Haiti. The organization derives its name from a Creole word meaning a "cry of freedom."

"If you are making all this money, you have to give something back," he said. "Yele Haiti lets me sleep at night."

By investing millions of dollars in student scholarships, street cleaning, hip-hop contests and youth soccer, Yele Haiti is putting Haiti's future in the hands of its poorest citizens, instead of the corrupt or inefficient politicians who have routinely stolen or wasted much of the foreign aid.

In only its first year Yele Haiti has made an impact with a relatively small budget of \$2.5-million and an impressive list of backers including actor Angelina Jolie.

Early doubters suspected it was all a publicity stunt. But he has all but silenced his critics, winning over gang leaders in the poorest slums as well as high-ranking international policymakers. Between recording sessions at his Manhattan studios he recently met with U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan.

"I think he's absolutely genuine," said John Bevan, director of political affairs for the United Nations in Haiti. "He's breaking a lot of stereotypes and challenging a lot of preconceived ideas."

Born in the small village of Laserre, outside the capital, Jean's parents left Haiti when he was 2. He didn't see them again until they returned seven years later to take him to the United States.

Despite growing up in Brooklyn and New Jersey, he clung to his Haitian roots. His father was a Creole-speaking preacher and Jean and his brothers made up the church band.

Success came fronting the Fugees. The name highlighted the sense they were refugees in America.

Jean never took U.S. citizenship. While he has nothing but admiration for the United States - calling it "the greatest country on Earth" - Haiti is where his heart lies. His wife is Haitian. They adopted a Haitian child.

In 1997, he took the Fugees to Haiti for a historic concert. Jean hoped it would be the start of repairing Haiti's world image. But he was soon discouraged. That year a series of protests and strikes plunged the country into a new crisis.

In 2004, he tried to organize another concert. This time nature intervened. In September a flood devastated the port city of Gonaives. Jean jumped on a relief helicopter to survey the destruction.

Haiti needed a lot more than a concert, he realized. So, he sought professional advice. Jean approached Hugh Locke, a veteran United Nations development consultant.

"I look at the people I choose as professors I can learn a lot from," said Jean, sitting at the Haitian TV station he bought recently. "I pair myself with geniuses."

Though Locke had no experience in Haiti, he had worked all over the world with major figures, including Mikhail Gorbachev and the Dalai Lama.

"I didn't know who Wyclef was. I don't follow hip-hop at all," said Locke, 51, a soft-spoken Canadian. He was immediately impressed by Jean's vision of music, art and sports as a model for development.

Jean calls it "the Wyclef strategy," putting his celebrity fundraising capacity at the disposal of people committed to long-term development work.

"I just want to be a liaison for Haiti," he said.

The idea appealed to Locke's belief in promoting sustainable development through modern business methods of branding and corporate partnerships; he calls it "the next generation of nation building."

Locke turned for advice to the World Bank, where officials saw an opportunity. "Wyclef's ability to dialogue across the Haitian spectrum, and especially with slum gang members, is probably unique at the moment," said Caroline Anstey, the bank's Caribbean director.

Things looked bleak when Locke arrived in Haiti in late 2004.

"At first people thought we were (crazy)," he said. The country was still struggling to come to terms with the violent ouster of president Jean-Bertrand Aristide earlier that year. Armed gangs ruled large parts of the capital. Kidnapping was on the rise.

But Yele's timing is turning out well. Preval's election victory last month came on a platform of social healing.

"The armed groups have pulled back so there's a chance to move in and make a difference socially," said Bobby Duval, founder of L'Athletique d'Haiti, a Yele-backed soccer program.

Yele Haiti's model is also helping clean the capital's garbage-clogged streets, through a cooperative effort with the Pan American Development Foundation.

"We decided to bring Wyclef in to brand it. That way we would have fewer people shooting at us," said John Currelly, PADF's Haiti director, another Canadian with 25 years experience working in Haiti.

Under the deal, PADF teamed up with Jean, a local cell phone company and the United States Agency for International Development to hire 1,400 street cleaners at \$2 a day. While that is barely enough for anyone to get by on in Haiti, it's twice what many of the poor make.

Yele and PADF also joined forces to repair 20 storm-damaged schools in Gonaives. Through another educational group, Yele was able to arrange 3,600 scholarships. A third group agreed to provide teacher training to end corporal punishment.

This year Yele plans to double its scholarship program. Other projects include the conversion of a derelict former baseball factory into a music school and a hip-hop recording studio for young artists.

Yele Haiti's development approach contrasts with larger international donors who tend to choose short-term projects for quick results, rather than more beneficial longer-term wealth generation ideas.

"Development has been going on for a long time, but it has been top-down," Currelly said. "We are building democracy from the bottom up. Wyclef understands that."

One day last week Jean led a group of New York friends, relatives and fellow musicians into Cite Soleil, Haiti's most notorious gang-infested slum.

Jean wanted to prove that the area was not impossible to work in. They declined a U.N. offer of bullet-proof vehicles and armed military escort.

Standing side-by-side with slum gang leaders, Jean held his arm aloft together with a white Haitian singer, Roberto Martino, lead singer of T-Vice, one of Haiti's most popular compas rock bands.

"I want this division of color to end," Jean shouted through a megaphone to the crowd, referring to the chasm between poor blacks in the slums and the rich white minority in the hills overlooking the city.

His message seemed to resonate.

"Wyclef's visit will change things in Cite Soleil," said Ti Blanc, one of the most feared gang leaders. "The tension between the bourgeoisie and the poor will soon clear up."

But many in the crowd wanted to know what Jean planned to do for them materially.

"We did a lot of (bad) things because we were hungry," said Smith Delva, 21, who works in a local market hauling goods. "Hope is good, but we need food."

That evening at a press conference, Jean issued a challenge to relief agencies working in Haiti to get food supplies moving.

"We tell you that the guys are willing to put down their guns," he added.

Yele Haiti hopes this month to set up a new project bringing together women street cooks to create community kitchens to feed schoolchildren. Jean has already won the backing of the United Nations World Food Program, which feeds 800,000 people in Haiti - almost 10 percent of the country's population.

One of Jean's biggest dreams is to bring tourism back to the island. One plan involves building a resort off Haiti's coast, styled after Atlantis, the Bahamian megahotel and casino.

Some of his ideas may seem outlandish. One involves shipping his 1958 Rolls Royce Silver Shadow, valued at around \$125,000, to Haiti to be erected as a monument symbolizing human potential.

Jean says the government must step up with its own major programs. If it doesn't, he might just have to take over himself. His ability to operate at different levels, from poor slum dwellers to World Bank economists, could be a winning combination.

For now, he considers himself "too young" to run for president, but doesn't rule it out in the future.

"I want to build my island first," he said.

Courage and hope in Haiti

A long road ahead for democratic, economic revitalization

Bishop Thomas Wenski | Special to the Sentinel
Orlando Sentinel
Posted March 13, 2006

Twenty years have passed since the end of the Duvalier dictatorships, 15 years since Haiti saw its first truly democratic election. Today, however, Haiti still awaits a functioning government.

The Haitian proverb *Ki mele pis grangou chen* (What concern is it to the flea that the dog is hungry) has too accurately described the failure of Haiti's political class to live up to the aspirations of the Haitian people for democracy.

Hopefully, last month's presidential election signals the dawning of a new day. In a display of courage that parallels the courage of the Iraqis in their recent elections, the Haitian people voted to elect a new president. They deserve our admiration. They have refused to give up -- either on themselves or on the promise of democracy. Despite insecurity and other obstacles, there was a surprisingly substantial turnout; and, despite a few bumps along the road, a president was decisively elected. If Haiti is to overcome two centuries of despotic misrule, an equally successful runoff election for members of the two houses of Parliament scheduled for later this month will be crucial.

The challenges ahead are enormous and will require the cooperation of all sectors of Haitian society. The president, members of the legislature and the new prime minister, when installed, must immediately move to bring about significant and early improvements in the standard of living of all Haitians. This is best accomplished by seeking the active participation of political parties, the private sector, academia, the many vibrant organizations of civil society, the Haitian Diaspora and Haiti's numerous friends throughout the world.

The Catholic Church in Haiti will continue to fulfill its essential mission of fostering unity, peace and reconciliation. Statements of the Haitian bishops in recent years as well as Pope Benedict XVI's 2006 Lenten Message, which addresses development, offer sage counsel to those who wish to work so that

Haiti can offer a better future to its citizens. "Those who act according to the logic of the Gospel," the pope wrote, "live the faith as friendship with God Incarnate and, like Him, bear the burden of the material and spiritual needs of their neighbors."

The international community must clearly increase its assistance and partner in the development of capacity for sustained economic growth and social transformation. As political stability, personal security and democratic practices and accountability are strengthened, the largely unemployed and underemployed Haitian work force must be able to count on continued foreign and domestic investment to create employment opportunities.

Specifically, the United States ought to help enable the apparel industry to thrive again. The U.S. Congress ought to act soon in moving stalled legislation that would grant meaningful trade preferences to Haiti, and thereby create thousands of new jobs. It is the least this great country can do to aid a neighbor in need.

The people of Haiti have taken an important step forward in electing a president. Now the United States and the international community must take additional steps to accompany the Haitian people as they walk the long road to a future of democratic and economic revitalization.

Thomas Wenski is the bishop of the Diocese of Orlando. He visited Haiti last July and met with the prime minister, U.S. ambassador and others.

Will election help Haiti?
By SABINA ARNOTT
Kamloops This Week, Canada
Mar 12 2006

This column's title, World Watch, leaves a fairly open tableau to explore.

It is difficult to know on which global news event of the week to focus.

How about genetically spliced glow-in-the-dark pig/jellyfish from Taiwan?

Perhaps the Chinese development of Tibet?

What of Halliburton contracts in Iraq?

While all are column-worthy happenings, during last couple of weeks the news from Haiti has struck me as the most relevant to our region and to our budget, given our relationship with the United States.

When the priest Jean-Bertrand Aristide was overthrown in Haiti a couple of years ago, there was suspicion in the media that the U.S., Canada and France were also involved.

The three countries had not supported the Aristide government, even with its reported 90 per cent popularity among the poor.

True, Aristide had not done anything to alleviate poverty in the Western hemisphere's poorest nation, but his popularity among the people was greater than the support for the royal dynasty that plummeted them into poverty in the first place.

Along with issues concerning democratic reform and severe privatization requirements, Aristide's government was required to pay back Haiti's debt arrears to the World Bank one year after his popular return.

One might say that all people must pay back loans, but when the world's largest development bank makes more money than it gives out and still keeps a big sign in its lobby saying "A WORLD FREE OF POVERTY," one has to wonder at the logic involved.

In South Africa, claims have been made that the U.S. and France contributed to the ousting of the Aristide government unduly.

Naomi Klein reported in the August 2005 edition of The Nation that USAID was pouring money into Aristide's opposition.

In fact, she accuses UN troops of killing women and children in Haiti's notorious Cite Soleil during the President's exile (www.thenation.com/doc/20050801/klein).

Perhaps this is why South Africa allows him to live there in exile and why the CBC has reported that Archbishop Desmond Tutu was in Haiti to congratulate the new Aristide-friendly government of Rene Preval.

In fact, Tutu was airlifted onto the balcony rail of the posh Hotel Montana in Port-au-Prince to deliver his comments to the crowd of Preval supporters there.

Maybe Tutu was there because the Haitian struggle has been as long as its slave-trade history.

Haiti was the wealthiest French colony until it became the world's first black nation after a slave rebellion in 1804.

Even this new election has the taste of this centuries-old rivalry among the owners and the exploited.

Today Haiti has oil and wealth, but is too divided to be a strong economy. Only its small elite have the power to exploit Haitian resources.

The new government has the important support of Hugo Chavez in Venezuela, causing Canadians and Americans to keep a close watch on these oil-producing islands, with overtures of independence from American-dominated industries.

But for Haiti, as with other poor nations, it will be a tricky road to travel when it requires access to big Western markets but will not accept those market's controls.

I would like to stress that all views are a permanent work in progress.

I am open to all discussion that any wandering reader may want to exchange.

Any suggestions for stories are also welcome.

Please e-mail me at sabina@ocis.net

In any case, for more on the glow-in-the-dark pig/jellyfish, go to <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/4605202.stm>.

UN agency retreats on plan for Haitian police

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Author: Tim Pelzer

People's Weekly World Newspaper, 03/16/06 16:54

The United Nations mission in Haiti has decided to postpone a tentative agreement that would have placed the Haitian National Police under direct UN control. The move, announced on March 10, came

in the wake of widespread criticism that the agreement, if implemented, would undermine Haiti's sovereignty.

On Feb. 22, Gerard Latortue, the U.S.-installed Haitian prime minister, and Juan Gabriel Valdes, head of the UN stabilization forces in Haiti (Minustah), signed the accord in New York City. The agreement would have obligated the Haitian National Police (HNP) to consult with Minustah before undertaking police operations, and would have given the UN agency veto power over police promotions.

The new pact would have also given Minustah access to the files of any government or court official or entity relating to the HNP, including the private papers of the president, for example, as well as unrestricted access to police offices and prisons. It further stipulated that future governments would be obligated to honor the accord.

As popular pressure against the accord mounted, President Boniface Alexandre, Foreign Minister Herard Abraham and Justice Minister Henri Dorleans condemned it, claiming Latortue never informed them he was going to sign it. The Haitian News Agency reported that Alexandre asked Abraham on March 6 to write to the UN, asking that the accord's implementation be halted until its unconstitutional provisions were removed. The UN action on March 10 was apparently a response to that request.

According to Brian Concannon Jr. of the Oregon-based Institute for Justice and Democracy in Haiti, the deal, if it were to go through, would decrease the powers of President-elect Rene Preval and give the international community much more leverage over him.

"The deal was signed a week after the announcement of Preval's victory, and five weeks before his [then] scheduled inauguration," Concannon said. "If the agreement was appropriate to negotiate at all, it would have been appropriate to negotiate it with the president who would have to abide by it, and who also had the electoral and constitutional legitimacy to bind his country."

"There was no reason why the deal could not have been negotiated with elected president, other than a fear that the voters' choice would not agree to it," he said. "The UN should be above such underhanded stunts."

Concannon continued: "Time and again Minustah stood by while the police massacred prisoners, invaded neighborhoods and made illegal arrests, insisting that their mandate prevented them from interfering in the police force's internal affairs." He said the UN mission did not issue a single investigative report in almost two years of Latortue's reign, yet now it sought extraordinary powers, including the right to read Preval's personal diary if it touches on police matters.

Human rights groups such as Amnesty International have accused the HNP of carrying out widespread illegal arrests and extrajudicial killings.

In response to critics, Latortue said that when he signed the document, which he admitted is unconstitutional and "places the HNP further under the tutelage of Minustah," he did not understand all of its provisions. He later said the UN corrected any would-be problems in the agreement, and that Haiti should "move forward."

Minustah's Valdes defended the accord, saying it was not intended to put Haiti under international tutelage, but merely to ensure that anything the government does is in harmony with the HNP's development.

Anthony Fenton, a Canada-based journalist who closely follows developments in Haiti, said the proposed agreement "appears to be the first official acknowledgment that Haiti is under a foreign tutelage similar to the 'Kosovo model.'" He noted that such ideas have been floated before, notably at a high-level meeting in January 2003 in Ottawa, Canada. "Of course, the reality is that Haiti has been under a de facto trusteeship since Feb. 29, 2004," he said, referring to the date of Aristide's ouster by U.S. Marines.

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Dorrell: Dual mission in Haiti: clean water, and hope
Waco Tribune Herald, Texas

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Sunday, March 12, 2006

Jimmy Dorrell Board on Contributors

There is nothing quite so haunting as the incessant drumbeat of the voodoo rituals in the eerie nights of Haiti.

For hours and hours, one can hear chanting, singing and dancing in the distance and only wonder what really goes on.

We're off to find out. On Saturday several of us left for Haiti. Our 19-passenger plane by now has entered a world where poverty, spiritism, instability and hopelessness seem to reign supreme.

I know it well from a stay in the 1980s with World Hunger Relief: The drive from the second largest city in this tiny island nation, shared on the other side with the Dominican Republic, to the small village of Ferrier, is tortuous.

Huge potholes and various animals in the road make the 50-mile trip in the back of a taptap (a brightly painted truck with wooden benches in the back) extend for three hours or more.

Dust fills the lungs. I remember constant starting and stopping, causing many of us to look for an escape route past the luggage, should our stomachs turn on us.

Haiti is the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere.

In Ferrier, half-naked children, many with only a torn T-shirt, fill the streets.

Women carry huge pots of water on their heads, often from the bacteria-infested rivers.

Men and boys chop away with their machetes and primitive hoes at the crusty earth on rented plots of farmland.

Within minutes of arriving in Haiti, one becomes silent with disbelief. How could such a country still exist anywhere in the world, and certainly only a few hours from the richest nation on the globe?

The good news is that we bring good news into all this bad news, just like Jesus read about in the temple when he quoted the Prophet Isaiah:

“He has anointed me to bring good news to the poor; He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free and proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.”

Beyond words, wishes

We'll offer more than words and wishes. We'll offer the resources to help the locals drill a water well to provide clean water in their village.

A small medical team from our free clinic team at Mission Waco will provide some health services and pharmaceuticals.

We'll take coloring books, soccer balls and toys for poor children, who will learn to play with Baylor students from the world of wealth, even without a common language.

Few of the possessions like clothes and shoes will return home with us, because it makes no sense to anyone to keep what we have when they have virtually nothing.

And each night we'll sit out on the porches, peering into the marvelous starlit sky, seeing only what can be seen in a village where there is no electricity to distort God's majesty in the heavens.

We'll talk about the events of the day, the folks we met, the work that was done and the ironies of life.

“Why, God?” we'll ask. “Why do I have so much when they have so little?” Why, God, why was I born into opportunity and stability when the innocent ones had no choice in their geography, politics or economics?”

“What, God, what am I supposed to do with these painful contradictions?”

And just before the voodoo drums begin their nightly ritual, we'll hear in the distance the songs of the Christians, sung in their traditional, cultural Caribbean beat.

Their rhythmic voices will fill the night, forgetting all the pain, hunger and sorrow of the day. They will proclaim joy and victory and trust in the same living God many of us worship. They'll thank him for the good news of the day. But somehow their songs are much sweeter when they sing them.

Jimmy Dorrell is a member of the Board of Contributors, Central Texans who write columns regularly for the Tribune-Herald. He is director of Mission Waco. John Young's column will return soon.

3/16/2006

SRCA team travels to Haiti to serve mission

SOUTH RIDGE CHRISTIAN ACADEMY

Star Beacon

CONNEAUT - Several students and staff from South Ridge Christian Academy participated in a recent mission trip to Haiti. The mission team was to have flown out on Feb. 7; however, it was moved up to Feb. 6 due to Haiti's unrest anticipated for the election day.

After the long van ride to Missionary Flights International in West Palm Beach, Fla., the missions team climbed aboard the plane and was off to Haiti. After arriving and going through customs the team members began the last leg of their journey as they hopped on trucks loaded with supplies they were taking to the Eglise Baptiste Armee du Christ Orphanage and home of the missionaries Kathy Wise and Alice Gauker. Once there the team got busy working on the orphanage, painting, building school desks, reorganizing the merit store and organizing the library, along with other tasks. One of the bigger jobs was sorting the PACE (Packet of Accelerated Christian Education) room, which was headed by Eleanor Huston, South Ridge Christian Academy PACE room supervisor.

"I feel God needs to do a lot of work in Haiti. I really appreciate the work that missionaries Alice Wise and Kathy Gauker are doing at the orphanage," said Huston.

Other activities they were able to participate in was helping in a seminar, attending church services, going with a witness team to the interior and having lots of good fellowship and fun.

When asked if they were ever in danger, Roger Hogle, SRCA administrator, said, "The U.N.'s presence was everywhere. One never feels safer than in the security of the Lord's service and in his calling. God called us to serve the orphans in Cap Haitian and he protected us."

Two SRCA students had the privilege to experience the lifestyle of Haitians.

"I felt sorry that the week was so quickly over," said Caleb Rzeszutek. "I have a burden for the people of Haiti. It was really different from a previous trip that I had taken to Mexico. There was so much poverty."

Melissa Walker, a freshman, said she really liked going. "It was a good experience for me to see missionaries and what they do. The children's English was really good. It's pretty sad to see how they live, but we just have to pray that things will get better," she said.

"To see that the work is still going on is a blessing. Being able to be communicate with the kids and make friends was also a great blessing," said Rick Walker, Melissa's father.

Star Beacon Advertisements

"Many of the Christians are committed to Christ, however they are inexperienced in the word of God and not grounded in doctrine," said Jonathan Pulaski, senior high supervisor. "Therefore, they are swayed by popular trends and a mixture of old voodoo ways. This was the most enjoyable trip, being able to be personally involved in the witness meetings, the seminar and Sunday services were a thrill!"

Tourino, Italy, had nothing on Conneaut because on Feb. 17 the Primary Class had its own exciting Kids Olympics. After marching in their own opening ceremony, complete with the Olympic theme song and signs showing what city there were representing, Phylis Good said, "Let the games begin!" The students enjoyed many fun-filled games.

Games consisted of the cardboard box lounge, where students took turns speeding down the gym in cardboard boxes propelled by fellow classmates, and speed skating where they zoomed around the gym with one hand behind their backs, just like Apollo Onuo. The ice hockey game was a "nail-biter" but was finally won by the girls team with a score of 3-2. Students were involved in other events such as curling, a snowball relay and the day was finished with a beautiful freestyle figure skating performance by the entire class. Just before the closing ceremony each Olympian received a medal with his name on it. The closing ceremony ended the festivities and all Olympians were rewarded with a snow cone.

Eight schools from all around Ohio came together to compete in the 2006 Christian Schools of Ohio Basketball Tournament in Cincinnati. The tournament tipped off Feb. 23 with SRCA Patriots winning their first game against the Winton Place Eagles. The Patriots went on to play again in the afternoon and after going into overtime, they once again found victory against Belpre Christian Academy. The next day the Patriot guys faced off with the Temple Christian Tigers for first place. After a long, hard game, the Patriots came home with the second place CSO basketball trophy.

"It was interesting to be going to a large city and playing different teams," said Jeff Cole. "I thought the other teams were pretty good, so I was surprised when we got second place."

The team also participated in a tournament March 9 to 11 at Family First Sports Park in Erie, Pa.

Students are getting excited as they prepare for the academic spring tour April 20 and 21. The highlights of this year's spring tour are a stop at Cabela's in Dundee, Mich., a huge sporting goods and outdoor merchandise store which has lots of educational displays. Next on the list is a stop at the IMAX Theater, also in Michigan, where the students will watch "Nascar," a science, speed and safety show. Dinner at Henry Ford Estate will be the next destination which will be followed by a tour of the

national historic landmark. The next day they will be able to explore the Henry Ford Museum and Greenfield Village.

March 15, 2006 08:10 pm

Gospel sing, auction to benefit Haiti missions

By Sally Petty, Staff Writer
Washington Times Herald

Proverbs 28:27 says that whoever gives to the poor will be blessed.

Don Graber and Graber Post want to give everyone in Daviess County a chance to receive that blessing as they give through the acapella gospel sing and seventh annual Haiti benefit auction and supper this week.

“This will give everybody the opportunity to help,” said Graber. “It gives you a good feeling when you help somebody we know is in need. Not only that, but God’s going to repay you.”

The gospel sing is set for 6:30 p.m. Thursday, with a supper at 6 p.m. at Dinky Auction Center in Montgomery. Singers from Salem and local groups will perform, and a Haitian meal of rice and beans, nachos and cheese and pie and ice cream will be served. There will also be a presentation on Haiti missions.

Then, a quilt auction will begin at Dinkys at 3 p.m. Saturday. Furniture and crafts will also be sold, and a grilled turkey and sausage dinner will be served starting at 2 p.m.

Meals are served for donations, and even those who can’t pay are welcome to eat.

Since all items, even the food, are donated, 100 percent of the money locals do spend at these events will go to International Faith Mission and Blue Ridge Mission, providing schools, medical care and clean, healthy food and water to the impoverished in Haiti. The auction has raised an average of \$50,000 in past years, said Graber.

Not only is IFM working to establish a hospital, but it and other missions run schools for Haitian children, providing education and at least one hot meal a day — which is sometimes the only meal for those children.

In addition, Graber Post has been working with other area business to donate a truck to IFM.

Graber, who is directly involved with IFM, visited the mission in October, and a combination of bad roads and the scarcity of mechanics had left its truck in bad condition. The new truck will be used to haul supplies and transport people, including work teams who build homes and churches in Haiti.

Those who donated to ready the truck include Glen Graber, Myer Truck Equipment, Saladin Trailers, Graber Equipment and Ruxer Ford. The mission is still responsible for the shipping costs of the truck,

which are estimated at \$4,500, and anyone who wants to donate towards that cost can contact Don Graber at Graber Post, at 687-7508.