

HAITI NEWS ROUNDUP: MARCH 22 – 31, 2007

Posted on Mon, Apr. 02, 2007 reprint or license print email HAITIAN AMERICANS

Haitians have high profile, low clout

The Haitian-American community has failed to come together to lobby for immigration reform.

BY JACQUELINE CHARLES AND PABLO BACHELET

Miami Herald

WASHINGTON -- The contrast is stark. Cuban Americans have a powerful Washington lobby that has helped win and maintain favorable treatment for its migrants.

Why can't the Haitian diaspora do the same?

The Haitian community has more friends than ever in high places in Congress, and its diaspora is throwing its muscle around more. But on immigration -- a burning theme for many Haitians -- its voice is muted.

Class and political divisions, some of them carried over from Haiti, hinder its lobbying clout on issues like immigration, several experts say, and explain in part the lack of congressional outcry when the 101 Haitians washed up on Hallandale Beach last Wednesday were immediately detained.

South Florida is home to the largest Haitian community in the country, with an estimated 329,883 of the 694,123 Haitians nationwide. And their status as one of the fastest-growing ethnic groups is reflected in their political gains.

Florida boasts two Haitian-American state lawmakers, and another recently served as secretary of health under former Gov. Jeb Bush, who actively courted the community's votes. In Chicago, Kwame Raoul, the son of Haitian émigrés, now fills Sen. Barack Obama's former state Senate seat. And Pierre-Richard Prosper, the son of Haitian doctors, served as U.S. ambassador-at-large for war crimes after he was nominated by President Bush in January 2001. He ended his term in 2005.

Under heavy lobbying by the U.S. Congressional Black Caucus and some Republicans, Congress last month enacted the HOPE Act, and President Bush signed it. The act provides duty-free imports for some Haitian textiles. The Bush administration also spared Haiti some of the deep aid cuts that hit other Latin American nations.

The Congressional Black Caucus has long been Haiti's strongest advocate, urging more economic aid and criticizing the lack of U.S. support for former Haitian President Jean-Bertrand Aristide, ousted in 2004 amid a violent uprising. And after the elections last November, Democrats active on Haiti issues now hold key posts.

Michigan Rep. John Conyers heads the Judiciary Committee, giving him a key say on immigration and refugee matters. Rep. Charles Rangel of New York now chairs the House Ways and Means Committee, which steers U.S. trade policy, among other matters. One member of that committee is U.S. Rep. Kendrick Meek of Miami, who is traveling to Haiti today to discuss immigration issues with President René Préval and the U.S. ambassador in Port-au-Prince.

"I want to make sure we are doing everything we need to do, and he's doing everything he has to do, to prevent Haitians from taking to the sea," said Meek, who has proposed several fixes in the sweeping immigration reform bill chugging through Congress to help many Haitians already here legalize their status.

UP THE LADDER

Key Haiti supporters outside the Congressional Black Caucus have also advanced to important positions.

Rep. Nita Lowey of New York chairs a subcommittee of the Appropriations Committee that allots money for foreign-aid programs that affect Haiti. Another New Yorker, Rep. Eliot Engel, heads the Western Hemisphere subcommittee of the Committee on Foreign Affairs. Last month, he invited Haitian hip-hop star Wyclef Jean to testify on aid to Haiti before the subcommittee.

'I cannot think of a country or subject more deserving of Congress' full and sustained attention than our neighbor, Haiti," Engel said at the March 13 hearing.

In recent years, the Republican Party has actively courted Haitian Americans, with Jeb Bush forming a task force of prominent Haitians and Haiti supporters to improve relations between Florida and the troubled Caribbean nation, and leading a delegation to Préval's inauguration last year. But while Haitian-American Republicans and Haiti's private sector used their budding clout with the GOP to lobby for the HOPE Act, critics say they failed to focus attention on the strict U.S. policy of returning undocumented migrants to Haiti.

In 2001, the Bush administration changed policy to keep in detention undocumented Haitian migrants who could prove a "credible fear" of persecution if deported, instead of releasing them pending further immigration procedures. "There is no question that the Republican Party basically was paying lip service in its efforts to increase its ranks by seemingly going after the Haitian-American community," said Phillip Brutus, a Haitian-American Democrat and former state lawmaker.

The Black Caucus was no better, Brutus added. "They should have been the ones to put the press release out," after the Hallandale Beach arrivals, he said. "They should have been the ones to say, 'Let's take a stand on behalf of these poor black folk who look like us.' "

DIVISIONS PERSIST

Another part of the problem is the class and political divisions in the Haitian-American community.

There is a small but growing affluent and professional class, with one foot planted in the United States and the other in Haiti and more likely to be Republicans, while the poorer majority is more likely to be aligned with Democrats.

And then there is the rift over Aristide, seen by some as a champion of the poor who was forced out of office by the Bush administration and by others who viewed him as a demagogue.

Regardless of those differences, Haitian migrants deserve better, said Meek, a Democrat who represents the largest bloc of Haitian-American voters and has consistently taken on U.S. immigration policy on behalf of Haitians.

Meek said that while he supports the wet foot/dry foot policy that allows Cuban migrants who set foot on U.S. territory to remain, Haitians should receive equal treatment.

"Those of us who live here in South Florida and Florida . . . get a hard dose of reality every time we have Haitian immigrants get to the shores," he said. "It's polarizing for our community. We need to be patriotic about Haitian nationals."

Last week, Miami Archbishop John C. Favalora called the difference in the U.S. treatment of undocumented Cubans and Haitians an "apartheid situation."

On Sunday, Haitian activists joined with Brothers to the Rescue, a humanitarian group that used to scour the Florida Straits for Cuban rafters, in a prayer vigil and Catholic Mass at Ermita de la Caridad in Coconut Grove on behalf of the Haitian migrants.

Meek's relations with some of the Haitian-American community's most vocal activists have grown lukewarm in recent months, however. Some of the activists supported Meek's Haitian-American challenger in the November election and claimed on Creole-language radio that he has done nothing for the community.

As a result, political observers in South Florida have wondered whether Meek would champion the community's cause with the same passion as in the past.

"My motivations are not political," said Meek, who immediately wrote letters to immigration officials on behalf of the Hallandale Beach arrivals. "I represent a community of struggle that is trying to seek justice when it comes to the application of U.S. law."

Posted on Sun, Apr. 01, 2007 reprint or license print email IMMIGRATION

At rally, calls for allowing 101 Haitian migrants to stay
PROTESTERS GATHER SATURDAY TO DECRY THE POSSIBLE DEPORTATION OF
HAITIANS WHO CAME ASHORE IN BROWARD LAST WEEK
BY TRENTON DANIEL
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Protests to block the deportation of 101 Haitian migrants whose wooden sailboat landed in Hallandale Beach last week spilled into the streets Saturday.

Speaking before a crowd of a few hundred at a busy intersection in Miami, activists, politicians, and religious leaders took turns blasting a federal policy they say discriminates against Haitian migrants who reach U.S. shores.

Among those leading the charge was activist Marleine Bastien, executive director of Haitian Women of Miami.

With a microphone, Bastien roused the crowd with a rapid call-and-response chant.

"What do you want?!" Bastien said, standing in the bed of a white pickup truck.

"Justice!" responded the demonstrators, many of whom waved Haitian flags and placards.

``Deportation?!"

``No!"

Saturday's protest comes three days after 102 migrants from Haiti landed in a small, overloaded sailboat in Hallandale Beach; one man drowned as he tried to swim to shore.

Meanwhile, immigration officials have sent the migrants, many of them recovering from dehydration, to detention facilities. Most are being held at the Broward Transitional Center in Pompano Beach.

Thirteen unaccompanied children were at an undisclosed Miami-Dade hotel and staying during the day at a shelter in custody of the Office of Refugee Resettlement. Many fear the whole group will be sent back to Haiti.

Under U.S. policy, Cuban migrants who reach U.S. soil may apply for residency. All other migrants -- most of whom happen to be Haitian -- are usually sent back to their country of origin. The policy is informally known as Wet Foot, Dry Foot.

Miami Archbishop John C. Favalora implored those at Saturday's rally to voice their concerns to elected officials.

"You need to call them every day," said Favalora, South Florida's highest-ranking Catholic leader.

Favalora on Friday made a plea for the migrants' release, condemning the U.S. policy of detaining undocumented Haitians while releasing Cubans as ``apartheid."

The Rev. Gerard Jean-Juste, a longtime Miami activist for Haitian rights who was once a leading candidate for president of Haiti, also spoke Saturday.

"Dry black foot must stay," Jean-Juste said. ``Black foot, white foot, we're all human beings."

In an effort to keep protesters from blocking traffic, the Miami police department erected metal barriers at the edge of a strip mall, located across from the federal building still known as the "INS" building. Officers kept watch from the other side.

Drivers along Northeast 79th Street honked in support.

The protest was deemed so important by one Haitian American that he felt compelled to drive from Miami Gardens and skip some sleep before leaving for his night-time job.

"How come it's good for one person but not good for another?" Wilford Johnson, 54, wanted to know. "It's a double standard."

Activists plead for Haitians at rally

Archbishop: Church will care for them

By Akilah Johnson
South Florida Sun-Sentinel
Posted April 1 2007

Miami – Haitian activists on Saturday kept up the pressure to win the release of 101 compatriots detained after coming ashore in Hollywood, and Miami's Roman Catholic archbishop offered the U.S. government a deal: free the Haitians, and the Church will care for them.

"The Catholic Church is ready to take all those who are presently being detained, the children, and put them in homes," the Most Rev. John C. Favalora told more than 200 demonstrators outside the 79th Street federal immigration building.

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Before a backdrop of waving Haitian flags, the Catholic prelate branded the U.S. policy of detaining and deporting most Haitian arrivals while allowing Cubans who reach American shores to stay "unjust, unfair and uneven."

"There is no excuse," the archbishop said before blessing the crowd, which included elected officials, college students, community activists, hotel workers, babies in strollers and seniors in wheelchairs.

Wednesday's landing on the Broward County coast of 102 Haitians in a rickety, wooden boat -- one of the passengers, a man, died trying to swim to land -- has reignited a decades-old call by immigration activists for Haitians to be granted what is known as temporary protected status.

That status, awarded to foreigners fleeing natural disasters or political strife, would allow Haitians already in the United States to remain legally and obtain work permits.

"They say there's democracy in Haiti. There's no democracy in Haiti," Nadine Barreau, 40, of Fort Lauderdale, said. "People are being kidnapped. People are being killed. Our country is not stable. That's why people are fleeing."

A Haitian native, Barreau was raised in New York and moved to South Florida about 20 years ago. Her family still owns a house in the Caribbean nation, where she would love her young daughters to spend summers. But she refuses to send them for fear they'll be killed.

"We see others receive the red carpet," North Miami Vice Mayor Jacques Despinosse said, referring to the different welcome customarily given arrivals fleeing communist-ruled Cuba. "They speak to their family the very same day. If they are hungry, they get food. If they are thirsty, they get water. Naked, clothes."

"Us ... handcuffed and thrown in jail," the Haitian-American said.

Speakers at Saturday's rally demanded the release of the 101 Haitians, who are being kept in federal custody as immigration authorities process their cases. The detainees should also have access to Creole-speaking lawyers and remain in South Florida while their cases are reviewed instead of being sent to detention facilities elsewhere, Haitian-American activists said.

State Rep. Ronald A. Brisé, D-North Miami, said, so far, their demands apparently were being met. Immigration and Customs Enforcement officials said most of the Haitians were being housed at the agency's Broward Transitional Center in Pompano Beach. Several remained hospitalized, and 12 unaccompanied minors were being held at an undisclosed location.

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Haitian Activists Prepare For Hunger Strike

POSTED: 9:20 am EDT April 2, 2007

NBC6.net, Florida

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MIAMI -- Haitian community leaders in Miami are hoping a hunger strike will stop more than 100 Haitian refugees from being sent back to the island nation.

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Last week, the group that included men, women and children, arrived on Hallandale Beach after spending three weeks at sea.

Because U.S. immigration policy does not automatically grant asylum to Haitian refugees when they land on American soil, the Haitians will likely be deported.

Activists call the wet-foot, dry-foot policy racist.

"We cannot sit down and let them send them back home without due process," said Hans Mardy, who will participate in the hunger strike.

Five Haitian activists said starting at noon on Monday, they will not eat for a week.

"Some of us will be praying. Some of us will be just completely stop eating for a week," said activist Lucie Tondreau. "Hopefully, again, we will touch the lawmakers for them to change their policy."

On Sunday, Haitians joined Cubans for a Mass at the Cuban church La Hermita de la Caridad.

Cuban activist Jose Basulto said it's important for Miami's Cuban community to support Haitian issues.

"That group of Haitians that are detained, for them we want them to be freed," Basulto said.

Under the U.S.'s wet-foot, dry-foot policy, Cubans who reach American soil are allowed to stay in the country. Haitian activist Marleine Bastien said that is not fair.

"I think what people need to do is call Gov. Charlie Crist and ask him to do his part," Bastien said.

The Haitian refugees are being held at detention centers in South Florida. Immigration attorneys were expected to meet with them on Monday.

Previous Stories:

Posted on Sun, Apr. 01, 2007 email this print this reprint or license this
Cuban group planning vigil for Haitians
By ANDREA TORRES
Miami Herald
MIAMI

- Brothers to the Rescue is lending support to the Haitian community today with a Catholic Mass and a vigil for 101 newly arrived migrants who are being detained.

"The Cuban community has been deeply touched by the suffering of the Haitians who have been detained," said the group's president Jose Basulto. "We are asking the U.S. government for justice and allow them to stay in the United States."

The group adds its voice to an escalating call to free the migrants, who landed on Hallandale Beach in a wooden boat, and change U.S. immigration policy.

On Friday, Archbishop of Miami John Favalora called the U.S. policy of detaining undocumented Haitians while releasing Cubans who arrive by sea "apartheid."

The event will begin with a cannon blast toward the bay at 5 p.m. followed by a mass and candle vigil at the Ermita de la Caridad.

Haitian refugees' supporters speak out for their release

By Ruth Morris
South Florida Sun-Sentinel
Posted March 31 2007

Advocates, community leaders and radio personalities stepped up efforts Friday to win the release of 101 Haitians who slogged ashore in Hollywood Beach, while lawyers pushed for better access to the group.

"I cannot change laws. I can only say what is morally correct," said Miami Archbishop John Favalora, who planned to attend a protest today at 3 p.m. at the 79th Street federal immigration building in Miami to support the Haitians. "These people came out of despair. They didn't come because they wanted to make a journey across the sea for the fun of it."

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Immigration lawyers eager to represent the Haitians said they were concerned the men and women who leapt from a flimsy sailboat Wednesday may be asked to sign statements underscoring economic reasons why they made the journey, weakening any eventual asylum pleas.

Authorities took several of the refugees to the hospital when they arrived, dehydrated and famished. The rest remain in federal custody as authorities process and send them to a Pompano Beach detention center.

The Immigration and Customs Enforcement agency will allow lawyers to talk to the Haitians on Monday to explain their rights, including the minimum standards for entering an asylum plea.

Randy McGrorty, executive director of Catholic Charities Legal Services in Miami, said refugees in this situation sometimes don't understand the gravity of immigration agents' questions, which might work against them later. This is especially true if they state economic rather than political reasons for taking to the seas.

"The focus of these questions is always why they came to the United States. They (might say they) came for a better life or because they're poor. But that does not touch at the specific reasons they left, and there are many political underpinnings for that decision," he said.

Wednesday's landing and the political momentum it generated also tests a 2003 attorney general ruling that has long chafed Haitian advocates. The decision cited security concerns in directing immigration judges to detain all Haitians who arrive here by boat, rather than release them with electronic monitoring devices or entrust them to family members.

"We need to have a new policy. They should be given equal and fair treatment under the law," said U.S. Rep. Kendrick Meek, who repeatedly has pushed for an immigration shield for Haitians based on Haiti's crippling poverty and political strife.

Meek, D-Miami, also questioned why the agents who rounded up the Haitians on Wednesday had no Creole-speaking translators, forcing them to rely on a nearby hotel worker who volunteered to help.

Creole radio host Yeye Boul was less diplomatic, taking direct aim at the so-called wet foot-dry foot policy that fast-tracks Cubans to a green card application if they set foot on U.S. soil. He said it's unfair to give special treatment to one group of refugees because they come from a communist island, then turn away Haitians who endure deep economic hardship and rampant violence.

"When you shoot bullets through cardboard houses, people die," he said.

The Cuban-American Brothers to the Rescue group, along with the Haitian Women of Miami grassroots organization, will offer a Mass in support of the Haitians in Miami on Sunday, followed by a blank cannon blast to "awaken our community."

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Weekend Edition
March 31 / April 1, 2007

"They Came Here to Terrorize the Population"
Time for Lula to Stop Doing Bush's Dirty Work in Haiti
By BEN TERRALL
Counterpunch.com

When Brazilian President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, better known as "Lula", visits Washington on March 31, he will likely spend most of his time with President Bush discussing ethanol, a relatively safe subject for the two leaders. Earlier this month, Brazil and the United States, the world's two top ethanol producers, announced the creation of an international forum to help turn biofuels into a globally traded commodity. Brazil, unlike the U.S., has spent thirty years developing its ethanol technology, and is producing a surplus of a sugar-based version of that fuel.

Lula has been criticized for following the Bush Administration on foreign trade policy, but he may be in even more hot water for following Bush on a foreign military adventure. When President Lula relieved U.S. Marines in Haiti by having Brazil take the lead of the UN peacekeeping mission (MINUSTAH) in early 2004, he got Bush, whose troops were spread thin, out of a tight spot. Lula also

earned brownie points for Brazil's bid for a permanent seat on a potentially-expanded UN Security Council.

But all this came at a price. MINUSTAH was the only UN peacekeeping mission in history deployed without a peace agreement. Its true purpose was to consolidate the February 29, 2004 coup against the democratically-elected government of Jean-Bertrand Aristide. This genesis put MINUSTAH in a quandary from the beginning. In order to fulfill its mission of supporting the illegitimate, unpopular and brutal Interim Government of Haiti (led by a Bush supporter flown in from Florida), MINUSTAH was forced to join the dictatorship's attacks on poor neighborhoods that would never accept the overthrow of their democracy.

In August 2006, the British Medical Journal *The Lancet* published a mortality study that concluded 8,000 people were killed in the first twenty-two months of the coup. In almost half of the reported deaths, the perpetrators were identified as security agents of the coup government, former soldiers or armed anti-Lavalas groups. No murders were attributed to Lavalas members. Although the government and its paramilitary allies did the lion's share of the killings, MINUSTAH participated as well. In a July 6, 2005 raid, MINUSTAH soldiers shot 22,000 bullets (by the UN's own count) into the thin walls of the poor Cite Soleil neighborhood. Up to sixty civilians were killed, dozens more wounded, but none received help from the "peacekeepers."

Although a democratic government was inaugurated last May, MINUSTAH continues to kill civilians. In the early morning of December 22, 2006, 400 Brazilian-led MINUSTAH troops in armored vehicles carried out a massive assault on the Bois Neuf and Drouillard districts of Cite Soleil in Port-au-Prince. The military operation, which claimed the lives of dozens of area residents, took place near the site of the July, 2005 raid.

"They came here to terrorize the population," resident Rose Martel told Reuters, referring to UN troops and police. "I don't think they really killed any bandits, unless they consider all of us as bandits."

The president of the Human Rights Commission of the Haitian Senate described the operation as "a crime against humanity." The Bureau des Avocats Internationaux, a Haitian human rights group, documented more than twenty killed, including children and elderly.

Once again, the UN showed little interest in its "collateral damage." UN spokesperson Sophie De la Combe could not offer information on Haitians killed or wounded, just that "no one was killed on our side."

When journalists and human rights groups asked MINUSTAH head Edmond Mulet about the killings, he attacked the messengers, writing, "I am appalled to see how some people support criminal, violent, human-rights violation activities in Haiti and oppose the rule of law. Gangsters, killers, kidnapers, rapist [sic] of young girls should and will be brought to justice."

But if the UN operation was intended to uphold the rule of law or bringing alleged criminals to justice, there should have been valid warrants authorizing MINUSTAH and the PNH to make arrests, as required by Haiti's constitution and international law. Mulet presented no indication of such warrants,

or any evidence that the victims, including an elderly man killed while en route to work and a pregnant woman who lost her fetus, were gangsters, killers, kidnappers or rapists.

Human rights activist Seth Donnelly, who investigated the July 6, 2005 Cite Soleil assault, told me, "Mulet's [statement] echoes the response I received when I interviewed Lt. Augusto Heleno and Colonel Moraneau just days after the July 6 massacre. They told me that a handful of 'bandits' had been killed and that the UN fired only after they had been fired upon. These statements were contradicted by evidence provided by Doctors Without Borders staff at the hospital that treated the July 6 victims. The MINUSTAH claims were also contradicted by eyewitness testimony we gathered in affidavits. Among the survivors we spoke to was a young woman who also lost her baby and a father who witnessed the killing of his wife and two young children."

In early January, Brazilian Major General Carlos Alberto Dos Santos became the fourth commander of the UN force in Haiti (consisting of 8,360 total uniformed personnel, as of 30 November 2006). Dos Santos said, 'We are going to work in the same way as we have worked before. Nothing has changed about our mission or our obligations.' Since Dos Santos made that commitment, UN military operations have killed seven-year-old Stephanie Lubin, four-year-old Alexandra Lubin, and nine-year-old Boadley Bewence Germain, all guilty of living in the crossroads of George W. Bush's foreign policy.

More and more Brazilians are appalled at their country's role in MINUSTAH. On February 7 of this year, 6,000 protestors, mostly youth, marched through Rio de Janeiro's city center to demand the immediate withdrawal of Brazil's troops from Haiti. By continuing to do Bush's dirty work in Haiti, Lula has tied his country's destiny to a sinking ship. Before it is too late, he needs to join the rest of the world in recognizing that the Bush Administration's policies of global dominance are both morally wrong and unlikely to bring positive results.

Ben Terrall is a freelance writer whose work has appeared in the San Francisco Chronicle, In These Times, Counterpunch, Lip Magazine, and other publications. He has visited Haiti four times since the February 29, 2004 coup which forced out the democratically-elected Aristide government. He can be reached at btterrall@igc.org

Former Trinidad diplomat appointed next OAS representative in Haiti
Published on Saturday, March 31, 2007 [Email To Friend](#) [Print Version](#)

WASHINGTON, USA: Assistant Secretary General Albert Ramdin on Friday hailed the appointment of Arthur Gray, a Trinidad and Tobago diplomat and former official of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), to be the next Organization of American States (OAS) country representative in Haiti. Gray's appointment, made by OAS Secretary General José Miguel Insulza, becomes effective on April 1.

New OAS representative in Haiti, Arthur Gray

In welcoming the appointment, Ambassador Ramdin, who chairs the Organization's Haiti Task Force, commended Gray's CARICOM experience as an asset that complements his experience with the inter-American system.

"His management skills, his leadership and his understanding of the challenges Haiti is facing will provide the OAS an opportunity to continue to deliver the best services to the country and to the people of Haiti," Ramdin said, noting also Gray's experience with the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC).

Gray's most recent appointments include consultancies with CARICOM and with the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS). Prior to that, he served as regional economic advisor for the Caribbean subregional headquarters of ECLAC, based in Port-of-Spain, Trinidad and Tobago.

On secondment from the Trinidad and Tobago Foreign Service, he served the CARICOM Secretariat as Director of Foreign Policy and External Economic Relations, among other posts. Gray joined his country's foreign service in 1973, serving in several capacities at headquarters and at the embassy in Venezuela, the High Commission in London, and the Permanent Mission to the UN in Geneva.

His academic credentials include a Bachelor's degree in economics; a Master of Arts in Latin American government and politics; and a Master of Science in international relations, the latter from the University of the West Indies. Besides his native English, he speaks Spanish and French, among other languages.

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Famed Haitian brewer Michael Madsen dies at 65

One of Haiti's most prominent businessmen, Michael Madsen, died of a heart attack at 68.

BY JACQUELINE CHARLES

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He was a visionary and entrepreneur whose devotion to Haiti led him to form his own political party and give the country one of its best-known commercial exports: Prestige beer.

Michael Madsen, the man who transformed countless of Haitians into beer drinkers, died Saturday of a heart attack while entertaining friends at his mountain home near Kenscoff, a suburb just outside of Haiti's capital Port-au-Prince. He was 65.

"Haiti was his life. Haiti was his blood. All he did was to make Haiti better," said Dorothy Chancy, longtime friend and marketing director for Brasserie Nationale d'Haiti, Madsen's company.

Though well-known in Haiti's small but elite business community, Madsen made international headlines in 2000 when Prestige bested 19 other beers to win the international Gold Medal at the World Beer Cup. Four years later, Madsen announced expansion to Miami, Turks and Caicos and Haiti.

Madsen's family emigrated to the Caribbean island from Denmark in 1896.

After attending school in France and Georgetown University in Washington, D.C., Madsen returned to Haiti and in 1973 founded the brewery. As a wealthy industrialist, he was often attacked by critics for not adequately paying his workers.

But Seth Joseph, his Miami attorney and friend, said as one of the largest employers in Haiti, Madsen ``kept people on when they couldn't work, when they were unable to find other jobs. He was a sucker for a sad story."

The other was his political involvement.

Madsen believed it was his duty to get involved and a few years ago formed the Haitian Liberal Party.

Published: March 30, 2007

U.N. to help fight kidnappings in Haiti

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti, March 30 (UPI) -- The U.N. peacekeeping mission in Haiti will help local police fight a resurgence in the kidnapping of young children.

"These barbarous acts surpass the limits of human comprehension," U.N. Stabilization Mission in Haiti spokeswoman Sophie Boutaud de la Combe said Thursday in Port-au-Prince.

After a period of significant improvement earlier this year, five girls and three boys, most of them younger than 4, have recently been kidnapped, said the mission, known by its French acronym MINUSTAH.

The mission has been helping Haitian police crack down on armed criminal gangs and aided in capturing 400 gangsters this year. MINUSTAH was set up in 2004 to help re-establish peace in the impoverished Caribbean country after an insurgency forced President Jean-Bertrand Aristide into exile.

MINUSTAH has had some success in bringing security to one of the country's most dangerous areas, the Cite Soleil neighborhood in the capital, Port-au-Prince. Cite Soleil now has a mayor, who was officially installed Wednesday, the mission said.

"This is a new page for Cite Soleil, but there is still a long way to go and MINUSTAH will continue to support the Haitian authorities," said Boutaud de la Combe.

Transferring detained Haitian migrants infringes on rights, activists say
The Associated Press
Published: March 29, 2007
International Herald Tribune

MIAMI: Activists urged U.S. officials not to ship 101 illegal Haitian migrants out of Florida as they await deportation hearings, arguing it could hurt their ability to make asylum claims.

The migrants arrived on South Florida shores Wednesday after a nearly three-week, 700-mile (1126.5-kilometer) sea voyage on a rickety, overloaded sailboat with little food or drink. One man drowned as the boat neared shore. Relatives want the migrants to remain near them and Creole-speaking attorneys as they plead their case to U.S. officials.

But increasingly, U.S. immigration authorities are housing migrants hundreds and even thousands of miles from where they were detained, making it difficult to maintain contact with family and lawyers.

For the Haitians, moving out of state is often even more complicated, as few attorneys outside of South Florida speak their native language of Creole.

"We have agencies here used to working with Haitian refugees," Marleine Bastien, head of Haitian Women of Miami, said Thursday. "When people have good representation, they have a better chance of presenting their cases appropriately."

Today in Americas

A star strategist offers Democrats a new vision With tariffs, U.S. steps up economic pressure on China
U.S. still in the wrong with Web gambling ban, WTO says
U.S. Representative Kendrick Meek has written to U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement officials urging them to allow the Haitians to remain in Florida.

ICE spokeswoman Barbara Gonzalez said at least 30 of the migrants were transferred from local to federal custody and were undergoing medical screening.

Gonzalez said the department had no plans to move the migrants.

"All will have due process under law and will remain in ICE custody awaiting the outcome of their case," Gonzalez said.

ICE officials declined Thursday to release the number of detained immigrants who are moved out of Florida and other states.

Unlike Cubans, who are generally allowed to stay if they reach U.S. soil illegally, most Haitians who land on U.S. shores are sent back. And unlike Cubans, Haitians are generally detained until a decision is made. The administration of President George W. Bush — citing national security concerns — started that policy after 200 Haitians landed just off the coast of Miami in 2002.

Haitians are not the only ones who are transferred.

Following a recent immigration raid at a factory in Massachusetts, many of those detained were sent to facilities in Texas.

University of California, Davis, law professor and immigration expert Kevin Johnson said the issue of moving detainees is not new. In the 1980s, Central American immigrants successfully sued the government, arguing in part that being moved long distances affected their legal right to representation.

Asylum seekers are entitled to legal representation that does not cost the government, which often means lawyers volunteering their time.

Johnson said the government often transfers detainees to areas where it is cheaper to house them or because of overcrowding at local facilities. Overcrowding has become a serious problem as the Bush administration has sought to halt the long-standing "catch and release" policy, whereby immigrants were released until their deportation hearings and often disappeared.

But Johnson said moving immigrants out of state does not necessarily violate their rights.

"It depends on where they're transferring them to, what their access to counsel is and whether the detention facilities are full here," he said.

Relatives of the Haitian migrants just want to know whether their loved ones are OK. Amos Petitfrere, 28, saw TV news footage of a man on the boat he believes is his younger brother Maxim.

"I just want to know if he's alive and healthy," said Petitfrere, who came to the U.S. by boat a decade ago and is now a legal resident. Petitfrere said he is scared to return to his country because of increased violence in recent years.

"People say, 'Oh, you're from Miami, you have money,' and they want to kidnap you," he said.

Crossing to US ends in death for 1 Haitian, detention for 101

By Laura Wides-Munoz, Associated Press | March 29, 2007

Boston Globe

http://www.boston.com/news/nation/articles/2007/03/29/crossing_to_us_ends_in_death_for_1_haitian_detention_for_101/

MIAMI -- More than 100 Haitian migrants reached south Florida yesterday after spending at least three weeks at sea in a dilapidated sailboat, officials said. One man died in the crossing, and three people were in critical condition from dehydration.

Many of the 101 migrants looked gaunt and exhausted as they were taken into custody by local and state officials. Nearly a dozen minors, including a 10-year-old boy, were among the group. The body of one man washed ashore, and officials said they believed he drowned.

"Our condolences go out to anyone who was on the boat who actually knew the individual," said Zach Mann, a spokesman for US Customs and Border Protection in Miami.

The migrants reached land at Hallandale Beach, about 15 miles north of downtown Miami. Haiti is about 700 miles southeast of Miami.

At least 11 people were taken to a hospital. Besides the three in critical condition, four were in serious condition and two were in good condition, Mann said. He did not know the condition of the other two.

The migrants told officials they had been at sea for about three weeks.

Unlike Cubans, who are generally allowed to stay once they reach US soil, most Haitians who illegally make it are sent back.

US Representative Kendrick Meek, a Democrat, urged immigration officials not to send the migrants out of Florida until their cases are reviewed.

Florida Governor Charlie Crist promised that at least while the migrants remain in Florida, they will be treated well.

"As the grandson of an immigrant, I appreciate people's yearning for freedom and a better opportunity for themselves and their family. We have a federal policy that's a little bit different from that," said Crist, a Republican.

Ludner Ermitus, 26, who said he helped sail the boat, told the South Florida Sun-Sentinel: "I know (the United States) is a big power. They help most countries in the world. I come to see what they can do for me."

Immigration and Customs Enforcement spokeswoman Barbara Gonzalez said the agency was investigating whether the migrants were part of a human smuggling operation. "This is why the US government discourages illegal migration, not only because it's illegal but more importantly it can be deadly, as we witnessed today," she said.

Last year, Coast Guard agents patrolling the waters of South Carolina, Florida, and the Caribbean stopped 6,093 migrants, 769 of them from Haiti.

Marleine Bastien, who heads the nonprofit Haitian Women of Miami, has long urged the government to allow more Haitians to stay. She argues that deporting people who have lived here for years and are sending money to family only makes those in Haiti more desperate. Haiti needs time to recover from hurricanes, flooding, and political upheaval, she said.

Bastien wants at least temporary legal status for Haitians -- as was given to illegal immigrants from Nicaragua, Honduras, and El Salvador after natural disasters in 1998 and 2001. That temporary status has been repeatedly renewed since, and some lawmakers are now calling for similar protection for Venezuelans.

Haitians in the United States sent about \$1.17 billion in remittances to the impoverished island last year, far exceeding foreign aid, according to the Inter-American Development Bank.

Posted on Thu, Mar. 29, 2007 reprint or license print email How could Haitians go unnoticed?
Haitian migrants' arrival aboard a rickety sailboat revived debate about the Coast Guard's ability to protect Florida's shores.

BY ALFONSO CHARDY

achardy@MiamiHerald.com

<http://www.miamiherald.com/569/story/56314.html>

How could 102 Haitians crammed on a 40-foot wooden boat sail hundreds of miles for 22 days without the U.S. Coast Guard having a clue until the desperate migrants' chaotic landing at Hallandale Beach? That question was paramount in many people's minds Wednesday -- particularly because the landing came exactly three weeks after Operation Vigilant Sentry, a mock exercise to prevent an unexpected influx of immigrants from Cuba, Haiti or any other Caribbean hot spot to Florida's porous shores.

Rear Adm. David W. Kunkel, head of the Coast Guard in Miami and leader of the Homeland Security exercise, said then that the U.S. government's goal is to block 95 percent of those trying to enter the country.

But Wednesday, as TV crews in helicopters captured the emotional scene of dozens of people jumping into the water to reach U.S. shores, the Coast Guard appeared to have failed its first big test.

A 2006 report by the Government Accountability Office found that a \$24 billion program to modernize the Coast Guard's deep-water vessels has suffered hundreds of millions of dollars in cost overruns and shoddy work by contractors.

And the GAO and some members of Congress who track Coast Guard operations have been warning for months that U.S. border protection has been compromised as other missions have multiplied or taken precedence.

'SIGNIFICANT FLOWS'

"The upshot of all this is that we're beginning to see significant flows of both drugs and human beings back into South Florida," said Bruce Bagley, professor and chair of the department of international studies at the University of Miami. Bagley has been monitoring Coast Guard operations for years.

Coast Guard officials maintain that the recent removal of eight Key West-based cutters for repairs and the deployment of at least two vessels from South Florida to Iraq have not adversely affected the Coast Guard's mission, which spans 1.8 million square miles from the South Carolina coast to the Caribbean.

Coast Guard spokesman Dana Warr said that the agency still has enough vessels to meet operational demands and that the district here often deploys cutters and aircraft from other areas to cover temporary needs.

"Our district is so busy that our assets come from other parts of the country," Warr said. "We have cutters from Boston; Maine; Portsmouth, Va., and North Carolina deployed in the Caribbean for months at a time."

In December, Coast Guard Cmdr. Thad Allen took eight of 10 Key West-based cutters off duty because of structural problems. The deployment of six Coast Guard vessels -- at least two from South Florida -- to Iraq also has raised questions about the Coast Guard's efficiency and ability to deal with a massive exodus of migrants.

Warr said he is prohibited from revealing precisely how many cutters and aircraft are operating along South Florida shores and in the region's three key migrant routes: the Florida Straits and the sea passages between Haiti and Cuba and between the Dominican Republic and Puerto Rico.

The Coast Guard has about 40 cutters and 40 aircraft in the district, out of a fleet of more than 200 cutters and almost 200 aircraft, Warr said.

Even redeploying the entire fleet to the district that includes South Florida would not be enough to stop all migrant boats, Warr said.

"We can't cover all of it all the time," he said.

In the mass-migration simulation, Coast Guard officials said that in a real exodus, some would make it ashore.

ORIGIN UNCLEAR

Whether Wednesday's 102 migrants sailed the 700-plus miles from Haiti was not known for sure, although initial evidence indicated that they may have come from either Port-de-Paix or La Tortue island off Haiti's northwest coast.

One aboard died, marking the third time this month that authorities have reported migrants dying at sea while trying to leave Haiti.

On March 1, the Coast Guard reported that eight dead Haitians and two survivors -- badly burned and dehydrated -- had been found near the Dominican Republic. They were among 54 Haitians aboard a ship that had burned and sunk. The 44 others were presumed dead.

A week later, 10 more Haitians were found dead at sea near Exuma in the Bahamas after trying to enter that country illegally. Seventeen others were arrested by Bahamian police.

Posted on Thu, Mar. 29, 2007 reprint or license print email HALLANDALE BEACH

A desperate landing, a plea for compassion

More than 100 Haitians came ashore in Hallandale Beach, prompting activists to protest the treatment of Haitian migrants.

BY TRENTON DANIEL AND KATHLEEN McGRORY

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DANNY NASSI

<http://www.miamiherald.com/884/story/56313.html>

The 102 Haitians -- many bruised and scraped from the crowded conditions aboard their flimsy 40-foot sailboat -- endured their perilous journey for 12 more days with toothpaste and saltwater, all anyone had.

The famished migrants, 12 children among them, spotted the pre-dawn glint of Hallandale Beach's high-rise condos on Wednesday. As the boat lurched closer to land, some jumped off, sloshing through waves and staggering ashore.

"They were afraid, trembling and crying, 'Are they going to send me back?' " said Marie Erlande Steril, a North Miami councilwoman who said she helped interview migrants at a nearby fire station after they made it to shore. "They were complaining about how much they risked their lives."

Indeed, one man didn't make it, washing up dead on the sand. Paramedics pried a second loose from a shipboard rope and carried him to the beach on a stretcher.

The migrants told authorities they had spent 22 days aboard the vessel. Their landing spurred local Haitian leaders to protest what they say is unfair treatment of Haitian migrants, who typically are returned to their impoverished homeland.

The boat, with a tiny dinghy attached, left the northern coast of Haiti more than three weeks ago -- possibly from Port-de-Paix but most likely the island of La Tortue, officials said.

It landed around 7:30 a.m. Wednesday near Hallandale Beach Boulevard, behind a row of high-rise condos and hotels including the Westin Diplomat Resort & Spa, which dominates the shoreline in nearby Hollywood.

A crowd of hotel guests and condo dwellers quickly gathered. Wielding binoculars, some stared down from balconies.

News choppers hovered overhead, broadcasting the scene into living rooms in a live reminder of 2002, when 220 Haitians splashed onto Miami's Rickenbacker Causeway.

DEPORTATION LOOMS

Unlike some other immigrants, Haitians are not eligible for Temporary Protected Status, or TPS, which temporarily suspends deportations and enables recipients to get work permits.

Haitian community activists from Pembroke Pines to Miami on Wednesday renewed their demand that the Bush administration grant undocumented Haitian migrants temporary immigration status so they can avoid deportation.

In Little Haiti, about a dozen Haitian leaders gathered Wednesday afternoon to decry the wet-foot/dry-foot policy, which requires most migrants picked up at sea to be repatriated. But the policy allows Cubans who make it to land apply for residency. Others often are sent back.

"It's unsafe and unfair to send any Haitians back to their country," said Marleine Bastien, executive director of Haitian Women of Miami. "There is no rule of law to speak of."

No decision has been made on where Wednesday's migrants will be detained, said Barbara Gonzalez, a Miami spokeswoman for U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement. She noted they could be housed anywhere in the country.

U.S. Rep. Kendrick B. Meek wrote letters to Julie Myers, the head of ICE, and to Michael Rozos, the agency's field office director in Florida, asking that the migrants not be sent to detention centers outside South Florida.

DRAMATIC LANDING

Early Wednesday's scene was one of desperation and drama.

The boat was run-down, with its sail tattered and its blue and white paint chipped.

"The vessel was obviously unseaworthy and grossly overloaded," said Coast Guard Petty Officer Jennifer Johnson. ``Nobody should have embarked on a voyage of that length on a vessel like that."

Before the sailboat reached land, a few passengers jumped into the water and swam several hundred yards to shore. A local lifeguard waded in to help.

Those who remained onboard crowded the deck and watched -- until the sailboat ran aground about half an hour later. That unleashed a mad scramble through waist-deep water.

At that point, police, fire rescue and Coast Guard personnel arrived. Ambulances rushed in.

"It was intense," said Hugo Paez, who ran down to the beach with his camera. ``You could tell they really wanted to come to this country."

All told, Hallandale Beach Fire Rescue ushered 101 migrants to a firehouse at Hallandale Beach Boulevard and State Road A1A; the man who died was covered with a maroon blanket and taken away on a stretcher. The survivors were given food and water, said Andrew Casper, a police spokesman.

Dozens of migrants, many draped in white blankets, a few in camouflage, crowded into the firetruck bay.

IN POOR CONDITION

"Some of them looked very, very bad," said Kenol Obnis, a Diplomat hotel waiter who rushed to the firehouse after he saw the boat from a fourth-floor window. Bruises marked the backs of some, he said.

Steril, the North Miami councilwoman and a native of Haiti, also pitched in at the firehouse after seeing the dramatic landing at home on TV.

Steril's cellphone enabled migrant Jean Monestime to call his half-brother Ricardo Francois, a Hollywood delivery driver. The brothers had not seen each other since Francois made a 2001 trip to Port-de-Paix.

"He told me he's here, he didn't die," Francois, 43, said outside the firehouse, waiting to catch a glimpse of his sibling. ``I don't know what they're going to do to him."

Seven men and four women were taken to the hospital, with three listed in serious condition. Others were dehydrated and weak from hunger, police said.

Police and paramedics later escorted the remaining migrants onto large passenger buses, some bearing U.S. Department of Homeland Security insignias. The migrants were taken to the Border Patrol facility in Pembroke Pines.

Not all boarded the bus.

Police officers were seen isolating one man, taking him to an underground parking garage.

"Sa ou gen?!" Obnis yelled in Creole, meaning, ``What's the matter?!"

The man didn't respond and vanished into the garage.

Onlookers suspected the man may have been singled out as the ship's captain, but a Border Patrol spokesman said authorities had not found that person.

"I do not believe the captain has been positively identified," said Victor Colón, a spokesman for U.S. Customs and Border Protection.

Miami Herald staff writers Erika Bolstad, Alfonso Chardy, Mary Ellen Klas and Ani Martinez contributed to this report.

Arrival of Haitians brings relief to refugees' families, anger on U.S. policy

By Ruth Morris and Tal Abbady

South Florida Sun-Sentinel

Posted March 30 2007

<http://www.sun-sentinel.com/news/local/broward/sfl-chaitians30mar30,0,7662331.story?coll=sfla-news-broward>

The frantic text messages from Ricardo Francois' brother began a month ago.

"Please call me," they said.

LocalLinks

But when he tried calling his brother in Port de Paix, Haiti, 27-year-old Jean Ferdinand was nowhere to be found.

Then Wednesday, Francois got word that his brother and eight cousins were just miles from the shuttered room he rents in Hollywood, survivors of a torturous sea crossing on a wooden boat with no fresh water and almost no food.

"I pulled some clothes on and ran out," said Francois, 43. He managed to reach the Hallandale Beach fire station where the men -- all in their 20s -- huddled under white sheets. Authorities would not let him approach, so he waved.

As immigration authorities began screening 101 Haitians who landed in Hollywood this week, their U.S. family members and advocates struggled for access to the group, with community leaders launching a full-scale battle to keep them in the United States.

Immigration authorities processed at least 40 of the survivors Thursday, a day after they arrived in a shivering, dehydrated mass. Immigration and Customs Enforcement agency spokeswoman Barbara Gonzalez said officials took the men and women to the Broward Transitional Center in Pompano Beach.

Authorities will continue examinations and processing today, in the largest apprehension of Haitians since a similar landing off Key Biscayne in 2002.

Cheryl Little, executive director of the Florida Immigrant Advocacy Center, said immigration authorities agreed to allow her group to inform the Haitians of their rights on Monday. Advocates will tell the Haitians they must have a credible fear of persecution in their homeland to have a chance at winning an asylum hearing.

"We're assuming a great number, if not all, will want to apply for asylum," she said.

Little's group also will visit 12 unaccompanied minors who were on the boat and are now at an undisclosed location.

Creole radio stations broadcast numerous angry calls from listeners who complained about what they perceive as unfair treatment of Haitian immigrants, particularly those who arrive by sea. In the aftermath of the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks, then-U.S. Attorney General John Ashcroft ruled Haitians should not be freed while they seek permission to remain here -- a measure some say singles out Haitians for especially strict enforcement.

"We don't have a country in Haiti. We don't have a country anywhere," Francois said. "They keep the Cubans here and send the Haitians back. I don't know why."

For their part, some community activists called for a Saturday rally at the 79th Street federal immigration building in Miami to demand that federal officials free the detainees on bond while their cases move forward.

Protesters gathered Thursday outside a U.S. Customs and Border Protection office in Pembroke Pines where officials processed the first few dozen arrivals. They lined the sidewalk shouting, "Give them freedom!" and holding signs that read: "Let my people go!"

Haitian Consul General Ralph Latortue, of Miami, said he visited 73 men and 15 women at the office Thursday morning. He said most of them were young people, in their 20s. "They were pretty tired, and in shock, most of them, but otherwise they looked OK," he said.

Some members of the group told him the trip was not planned, Latortue said, and that they had stolen the boat.

It was unclear how many days the Haitians spent at sea, or precisely how they veered from what they said was their original destination: Nassau.

Coast Guard spokesman James Judge said it was unlikely the boat drifted for 22 days as some of the people on board reported, although many seemed confused themselves as to how long the journey lasted. Taking into account the vessel's height in the water, Judge said northerly currents and winds would have carried it on the 600-mile journey in less time.

The 40-foot wooden boat had no engine and was described by the Coast Guard as a Haitian sail freighter used to carry light cargo between Caribbean islands.

Judge also rejected suggestions that repairs to several of the agency's 123-foot cutters had crippled its ability to reach the Haitians before they landed. He said cutters from other locations had been dispatched to fill the void, while crews tag-teamed on some boats to make up for the smaller number of vessels.

"The United States has a lot of coastline," Judge said. "We have people patrolling but they can't be everywhere all the time."

Overall, he said, the operation was a success because all the Haitians were apprehended.

Wednesday's landing also re-ignited a longstanding call by Haitians and their supporters for temporary protected status. The benefit, awarded to immigrants fleeing natural disasters and political strife, would allow Haitians already here to legally remain and obtain work permits.

Little said it was unclear whether today's new political context might help their case.

"It's difficult to be optimistic, because this administration has refused to grant TPS to Haitians," she said. "On the other hand, we have a new attorney general and a democratically-led Congress, so we have to hope that things have changed and Haitians will be treated fairly."

Staff Writers Juan Ortega and Alva James-Johnson contributed to this report.

Ruth Morris can be reached at rmorris@sun-sentinel.com or 305-810-5012.

Processing continues for 101 Haitians who survived arduous voyage

South Florida Sun-Sentinel staff

Posted March 29, 2007, 3:36 PM EDT

<http://www.orlandosentinel.com/news/local/state/sfl-328migrantlanding,0,985735.story?coll=orl-home-headlines>

Most of the 101 Haitians who survived a weeks-long trek from Haiti to Hollywood continued being relocated to detention facilities across South Florida, federal Customs and Border Protection officials said on Thursday.

Forty migrants remained at the Pembroke Pines Border Patrol station were in various stages of having their documentation processed by immigration officials, while more than 50, including 13 teens and 15 women, had been taken to separate facilities in Miami-Dade County by early Thursday, said Victor Colon, a spokesman for Customs and Border Protection.

One man thought to be in his 20s, Lufaité Lully, drowned in the surf when he jumped off the boat before it ran aground on a Hollywood beach, officials said. Another person remained in an intensive-care unit Thursday at a Broward hospital, Colon said.

Colon said officials hoped to interview and document almost everyone's personal information by Thursday, taking sworn statements and documenting their fingerprints.

"We really don't have a timetable for processing. There's a litany of concerns," Colon said.

Some passengers described their trip as a harrowing almost three-week-long journey at sea. The survivors were 88 adults and 13 teenagers, Colon said.

Many were bruised and dazed, their bodies parched from a diet of seawater, their lips whispering Creole prayers.

Thursday morning, Ralph Latortue, Haiti's consul general in Miami, met with Border Patrol officials in Pembroke Pines as a handful of advocates protested the possibility the Haitians would be summarily deported back to their homeland. Most of the migrants said they left Haiti because they had no economic futures.

A day earlier, another advocate, Cheryl Little, head of the Florida Immigrant Advocacy Center, said she was concerned immigration officials would send the Haitians to detention facilities outside of South Florida, making it difficult for local lawyers to represent them.

The migrants said they sailed almost three weeks ago from a town on the Ile de la Tortue, an island off Haiti's northwestern coast.

On Wednesday, they scrambled off the rickety 35-foot-long boat and struggled ashore through rough surf to the beach just north of Hallandale Beach Boulevard and State Road A1A.

"God is the only reason we didn't die," said Cynthia Toussaint, 24, who boarded the sailboat in Haiti with her cousin, said of the voyage.

Covered in blankets, but still shivering, the Haitians told tales of hope and despair as they rested at the Hallandale Beach Fire-Rescue station within sight of where their boat had landed. Some lay face down on the floor, clutching white blankets around their heads. Many of their faces were bruised and bloodied from the run to shore or the fights over food as the boat pitched its way to Florida.

Several Haitians gave different estimates of the time spent at sea, from seven to 22 days. They said plans for the trip floated through their villages over a period of weeks -- until one Thursday, when they set sail for Nassau, Bahamas.

"I left because of hardship," said Maxene Lorama, 25. "We were going to Nassau. But we got disoriented. We lost our direction."

Lorama, who said he has an uncle in Miami, had a red right eye and bumps along his right temple from a fight during the journey. Tired and hungry, he was among those later taken to the hospital.

For many Haitians in South Florida, the dramatic landing underscored fears that their homeland, an island nation of 8 million, remains mired in turmoil.

In 2006, Haitians elected President René Prévval to office, hopeful that he would stabilize the country. His administration replaced an interim government installed after a bloody rebellion that helped depose former President Jean-Bertrand Aristide. Under Prévval's leadership, Haiti remains a fragile nation, plagued by random kidnappings and political instability.

One passenger on the sailboat, Dorvil Noel, 38, said he was scared to stay in Haiti because of random killings. And there are no jobs to feed his seven children and wife, he said.

"The country isn't any good," Noel said. "It's death over there."

Emergency personnel took 14 Haitians to Memorial Regional Hospital in Hollywood for dehydration and other symptoms. Doctors treated nine and released them to authorities, then admitted five for further care.

Federal officials were investigating whether the journey was a smuggling operation and whether smugglers were on board.

"We continue to ask individuals who are contemplating taking to the seas not to do so. Not only is it illegal, but it can have deadly consequences as we've unfortunately witnessed today," said Barbara Gonzalez, spokeswoman for Immigration and Customs Enforcement.

Gonzalez did not release information about how many are seeking political asylum.

Immigration advocates and attorneys mobilized quickly Wednesday. Many expressed long-held criticisms of a federal policy that allows Cubans to remain if they reach U.S. soil. Haitians, they say, are usually summarily deported.

Little, of the Florida Immigrant Advocacy Center, said her agency was coordinating efforts to provide the Haitians with legal representation.

"We're hoping our government will not shamelessly single out the Haitians for special discriminatory treatment," Little said.

Little on Wednesday said she was concerned immigration officials would send the Haitians to detention facilities outside of South Florida, making it difficult for local lawyers to represent them.

She said that if immigration officials do not release the Haitians to family members or sponsors, her attorneys would ask immigration judges for bonds.

But that strategy largely failed for more than 200 Haitians, many dressed in their Sunday best, who landed ashore in 2002 and sprawled onto a Miami highway. Authorities detained most, and when judges granted bonds for their release, immigration officials successfully appealed, citing national security concerns that prevailed after the Sept. 11 terror attacks. Federal authorities eventually deported most of the Haitians.

Echoing Little's concerns, U.S. Rep. Kendrick Meek, D-Miami, wrote letters to Homeland Security officials in Miami and Washington, D.C., asking that the Haitians who arrived Wednesday not be detained outside of South Florida.

At a news conference, Marleine Bastien, head of the advocacy group Haitian Women of Miami, asked officials to release the Haitians on their own recognizance so they could pursue their cases in court. The group organized an evening prayer vigil outside the Border Protection office in Pembroke Pines.

Responding to advocates' concerns that the Haitians would be summarily deported, Gonzalez said, "Everyone is entitled to due process under the law. Each case will be handled individually."

She said immigration officials sometimes hold detainees in facilities in other states for space reasons.

Jocelyn McCalla, former director of the New York City-based National Coalition for Haitian Rights, said U.S. officials have ignored the root problems of poverty and violence that compel Haitians to risk their lives at sea.

"Haiti is for all practical purposes a failed state. All it's been able to do is hold elections. People make a living out of very little and that very little keeps getting smaller," McCalla said.

Last year, Coast Guard agents patrolling the waters off South Carolina, Florida and the Caribbean stopped 6,061 people, 769 of them from Haiti.

Relatives of the boat passengers Wednesday were stunned to learn their loved ones had arrived.

Julio Joseph, 34, of Miami, said his Haitian girlfriend Prisca Zidor, in her mid-20s, had planned to pay thousands of dollars for a spot on a vessel sailing to the Bahamas.

Wednesday morning, he got a call that told him she was with the group of new arrivals. "I really hope they give them a chance," Joseph said. "They've already made it."

Joseph made a similar journey by sea in 1996 and was granted permission to stay.

"Things are harder now," he said.

Zidor, he said, hoped to finish high school in the United States and start a life with him. They've been dating for five years.

Resting at the Hallandale Beach fire station, faith and fatigue marked the words of Toussaint, whose cousin, Ludner Ermitus, 26, helped steer the boat.

"We were praying to God that we would make it," Toussaint said. "I prayed and prayed and called on the name of Jesus, `If it's your will, we'll make it.'"

Staff Writers Juan Ortega, Macollvie Jean-François, Tal Abbady, Alva James-Johnson, Ihosvani Rodriguez, Marlene Naanes and Robert Nolin contributed to this report.

Tal Abbady can be reached at tabbady@sun-sentinel.com or 954-356-4523.

Migrant's body washes on shore

AP

The Cay Compass

Thursday 29th March, 2007 Posted: 15:46 CIT (20:46 GMT)

> Comment on this story

MIAMI (AP) – More than 100 Haitian migrants reached South Florida on Wednesday after spending at least three weeks at sea in a dilapidated sailboat, officials said. One man died in the crossing, and three people were in critical condition from dehydration.

Many of the 101 migrants looked gaunt and exhausted as they were taken into custody by local and state officials. Nearly a dozen minors, including a 10-year-old boy, were among the group. The body of one man washed ashore, and officials said they believed he drowned.

The migrants reached land at Hallandale Beach, about 15 miles (24 kilometers) north of downtown Miami. Haiti is about 700 miles (1,126 kilometers) southeast of Miami.

At least 11 people were taken to a hospital. Besides the three in critical condition, four were in serious condition. Two were in good condition, Mann said. He did not know the condition of the other two.

The migrants told officials they had been at sea for about three weeks.

Unlike Cubans, who are generally allowed to stay once they reach U.S. soil, most Haitians who illegally make it to the U.S. are sent back.

U.S. Rep. Kendrick Meek urged immigration officials not to send the migrants out of Florida as their cases are reviewed.

Florida Gov. Charlie Crist promised that at least while the migrants remain in Florida, they will be cared for and treated well.

"As the grandson of an immigrant, I appreciate people's yearning for freedom and a better opportunity for themselves and their family. We have a federal policy that's a little bit different from that," Crist said.

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Bastien wants at least temporary legal status for Haitians – as was given to illegal immigrants from Nicaragua, Honduras and El Salvador after natural disasters in 1998 and 2001. That temporary status has been repeatedly renewed since, and some lawmakers are now calling for similar protection for Venezuelans.

She labeled current U.S. policy racist: "Keep the Haitians out at all costs."

"The administration says that if it awards Temporary Protected Status to Haitians, it will open the floodgates. Our argument is that denying TPS is a sure way to get people here as the ones who came today," she said.

Haitians in the U.S. sent about \$1.17 billion in remittances to the impoverished island last year, far exceeding foreign aid, according to the Inter–American Development Bank.

Mar 29, 2007 11:55 pm US/Eastern

Man Talks About Cousin's Tragic Trip From Haiti
Haitians Protest U.S. Immigration Policy
cbs4.com

FAST FACTS: Wet Foot-Dry Foot Policy

(CBS4) MIAMI A South Florida man is mourning the death of his cousin, who like him, tried making it to a land of opportunity and freedom, but the dangerous journey was more than he can handle.

With a look of disillusionment, Ricardo Francois spoke about his 24-year-old cousin Liphelle Lilly, who was the migrant who died during a 22-day voyage aboard a small wooden boat with 101 other Haitians trying to make it to Florida. With several of the migrants dehydrated, the boat arrived on the shores of Hallandale Beach, with many being taken to the hospital with injuries and other taken to Border Patrol to be processed.

Francois made a similar voyage to South Florida 18 years ago, but was successful. Lilly was pronounced dead at 8:15 a.m. on Wednesday, which was about 45 minutes after the flimsy 40-foot sailboat landed.

"Oh that's so sad for me, you know," said Francois. "You try to get a better life; you can't find it. You die," he said. "When I left Haiti he was a little guy."

The Broward Medical Examiner's Office ruled that the cause of death was asphyxia due to drowning.

Posted on Fri, Mar. 30, 2007 reprint or license print email HALLANDALE BEACH

Migrants begin another journey -- through legal system

The Haitian migrants who came to shore Wednesday face several hurdles in their quest to stay in the United States.

By TRENTON DANIEL AND ALFONSO CHARDY

tdaniel@MiamiHerald.com

<http://www.miamiherald.com/884/story/57687.html>

MARSHA HALPER/MIAMI HERALD STAFF

Ricardo Francois holds an old photo of his half-brother, Jean-Ferdinand Monstime, who was among the 101 Haitians who arrived on Wednesday.

Slide show | Migrants ashore, protests

Video | Immigration policy protest

A day after Jean-Ferdinand Monestime came ashore in Hallandale Beach with a hundred other Haitians, Ricardo Francois already fears the worst: His half-brother will be sent back to a dangerous island rife with abductions and street crime.

"They almost kidnapped my mother," said Francois, 43, a Hollywood pizza delivery driver whose mother lives in northwest Haiti. "People know I send money."

Francois' half-brother is among the 101 migrants, including at least 13 unaccompanied children, whom police and border patrol officers rounded up Wednesday after their flimsy wooden sailboat came to shore in a journey they said took 22 days. One man in his 20s died.

If history is any guide, most survivors will convince asylum officers that they have a credible fear of persecution if they go back. But after that, their bids for asylum will take divergent paths, with immigration judges likely to send most of them back.

PREVIOUS ARRIVALS

That's what happened in October 2002 when a ship with more than 200 Haitians arrived at the Rickenbacker Causeway -- about a third of them were allowed to stay.

Among those granted asylum were a married couple with two small children, but it wasn't easy. An immigration judge accepted the husband's argument that he faced political persecution in Haiti, but another judge turned the man's wife down. She eventually avoided deportation by qualifying to stay under his asylum grant.

Monestime and his shipmates face a web of U.S. immigration law and policies Haitian-American advocates say favor Cubans.

Under the so-called "wet-foot/dry-foot" policy, Cuban migrants who reach land -- at least 3,076 in fiscal year 2006 -- can stay without asking for asylum, but those interdicted at sea -- at least 2,293 last year -- are generally returned to Cuba. Those picked up at sea who can persuade asylum officers they have a credible fear are sent to Guantánamo Bay and then to resettle in other countries.

"In a sense, Haitians are discriminated against," said Mark Krikorian, executive director of the Center for Immigration Studies, a Washington think tank that supports tighter controls on immigration. "But they're not being singled out. If the Chinese washed up there, they would be treated the same as the Haitians."

U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement concluded Thursday "there was no evidence" that the vessel that came ashore Wednesday was part of a smuggling operation, said agency spokeswoman Barbara Gonzalez.

Forty Haitian migrants were taken to the Broward Transitional Center, a detention facility in Pompano Beach, and the rest are being processed at the Border Patrol facility in Pembroke Pines, Gonzalez said. "Every case will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis," she said.

The Broward Medical Examiner's Office said a cousin identified the man who drowned Wednesday as Lufaité Lully, believed to be about 25. .

Also on Thursday, about a dozen protesters waved placards outside the Border Patrol facility in Pembroke Pines. Of concern: their inability to interview the migrants.

"There are conflicting reports -- we need to get in touch with them to get a clear idea of what happened," said Lucie Tondreau, a Haitian activist from Miami.

South Florida immigration lawyers and advocates said Thursday they hoped the outcome for the newly arrived Haitians will be happier than it was in 2002.

"For once, the Haitians should be treated fairly and provided a meaningful opportunity to obtain release and challenge their deportation," said Cheryl Little, executive director of the Miami-based Florida Immigrant Advocacy Center, which helped handle the Haitian couple's case.

The experience of the Rickenbacker migrants can serve as a road map for what the Hallandale Beach migrants will face.

'CREDIBLE FEAR'

When a foreign national is given asylum, he or she may apply for permanent residence and later citizenship.

In the case of the Hallandale Beach migrants, who were placed in expedited proceedings, the "credible fear" hurdle will be key.

If an asylum officer does not find a claim of fear credible, the migrant can be deported without an immigration court hearing. If a judge agrees with the officer's finding, the migrant is deported.

Those who clear credible-fear interviews could, in the past, pursue their asylum cases under supervised release. But the Bush administration changed the rules in 2002 for all sea-arriving migrants -- except Cubans.

"I hope the newly arrived Haitians are given the full protection the law requires, and a full opportunity to seek asylum" said Randolph McGrorty, executive director of Catholic Charities Legal Services.

THE PROCESS

Once asylum-seekers appear before an immigration judge, the standard is higher than credible fear. To win asylum, they must convince the judge they have a well-founded fear of persecution based on race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group or political opinion.

Little and McGrorty said they were trying to assemble attorneys to represent each Hallandale Beach migrant. The Rickenbacker couple show why that's important: The husband, who won asylum, had an attorney from the outset. The wife did not.

Back in Francois' tiny bedroom in Hollywood, a radio with static reception crackled with the latest news on the ordeal. Francois gave friends in Haiti updates on his cellphone. He worried about his half-brother.

"I feel so sad, man. What can I do? I don't want them to return him to Haiti."

Michael Mayo

Editorial

South Florida Sun-Sentinel

March 28, 2007

<http://www.sun-sentinel.com/news/columnists/sfl-cmayocol29mar29,0,161308.column>

RECENT COLUMNS

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E-MAIL
Michael Mayo

Haitians' desperation met with double standard
Published March 29, 2007

There are some images you never get used to, even though we've seen them in South Florida over and over again. A ship runs aground and lists. People packed aboard spill into the surf and scramble ashore. Their faces are etched with fear, exhaustion and relief.

Then the authorities round them up and the inconsistencies play out.

If they're Cuban, and they make it to land, they get to stay.

If they're Haitian, they're out of luck.

The latest boatload to come ashore, in Hollywood on Wednesday morning, was from Haiti. It means the 102 survivors might soon get one-way trips back to the troubled nation.

"Look at that boat," said Hans Ottinot, 38, a city attorney for Sunny Isles Beach who rushed to the scene. "All you see is desperation."

It's the same desperation that sent more than 200 Haitians, including women and children, scrambling across the Rickenbacker Causeway from a rickety wooden boat in October 2002.

It's the same desperation that brought 43 Haitians by cabin cruiser to Hillsboro Beach last April.

A sense of compassion and solidarity brought Ottinot to the latest heart-wrenching landing scene, near Hallandale Beach Boulevard. His family came to the United States from Haiti when he was 5.

"Every Haitian sees themselves through them, because we know the conditions they're living in," Ottinot said.

Haiti has long been plagued with abject poverty, instability and politically motivated street violence. Governments come and go, but the misery remains.

The question the Haitians kept asking as U.S. immigration officials descended upon the Hallandale Beach Fire-Rescue station near the beach: "Will they send us back to Haiti?"

If recent history is a guide, the answer is almost certainly yes.

The Rev. Gerard Jean-Juste, a Catholic priest released from a Haitian prison last year for cancer treatment in South Florida, decried the double standards that Haitians face.

"We're all human beings," Jean-Juste said Wednesday. "Cubans arrive here and we accept them. Black refugees arrive [from Haiti] in the same condition and they're not welcomed."

It would be one thing if all gatecrashers to the United States were treated the same way. But they're not.

Cubans who make it onto American soil are generally allowed to stay under the Cuban Adjustment Act of 1996, better known as the Wet Foot/Dry Foot policy.

Those from certain Central American countries ravaged by war, political strife or natural disasters have gotten Temporary Protected Status, which allows for work permits.

The protection has been granted to Nicaraguans, Hondurans and Salvadorans, but not to Haitians.

Haitians who enter the United States illegally usually get a quick boot home.

Technically, Haitians have the same chance at asylum as everyone else. Asylum hearings are given those who can show they have a "credible fear of persecution" in their homeland.

But only 11 percent of Haitians won asylum in U.S. immigration courts from 1999-2004, according to the U.S. Department of Justice. Their chances fell to 5.5 percent if they made their bid at Krome detention center in Miami, where two judges approved only 19 of 345 cases.

For those who have no sympathy for immigrants who arrive illegally, those numbers might seem right.

But it takes a cold heart to look at all those desperate faces Wednesday without feeling a twinge of compassion.

Each has a story. Each has a dream. And each must have had a pretty compelling reason to risk everything for an uncertain trip to Anywhere Else.

Try to see through their eyes before slamming the door in their faces.

Macollvie Jean-François and Alva James-Johnson contributed to this column.

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Posted on Thu, Mar. 29, 2007 reprint or license print email Migrant who drowned is identified

BY TRENTON DANIEL

tdaniel@MiamiHerald.com

<http://www.miamiherald.com/416/story/57224.html>

The Broward Medical Examiner's Office Thursday identified the Haitian migrant who drowned after the crowded sailboat in which he was riding with about 100 others ran shore in Hallandale Beach on Wednesday morning.

Lufaité Lully is believed to be around 24, authorities said. A cousin named Jimmy Lully identified him.

The medical examiner's office ruled that the cause of death was asphyxia due to drowning.

Lully was pronounced dead at 8:15 a.m. -- about 45 minutes after the flimsy 40-foot sailboat landed.

A little more than 100 Haitian migrants, believed to have departed from northwestern Haiti, were aboard the wooden vessel.

Authorities detained the migrants at a Hallandale Beach Fire Rescue firehouse before the Border Patrol detained the migrants for processing.

Also on Thursday, Haitian leaders resumed a second day of protests outside a Border Patrol facility in Pembroke Pines, condemning a disparity of treatment for Haitian migrants who are generally deported.

Chavez in Haiti
By G. Dunkel
Worker's World
Published Mar 29, 2007

Haiti is still under U.N. military occupation, with U.N. forces still occupying poor communities like Cité Soleil. Support for exiled former President Jean-Bertrand Aristide and his Lavalas Party is still strong, but it is very hard to show it.

Demonstrations and protests are met with violence and murder, either from the U.N. forces or from the gangs, directed by the most viciously brutal elements of the Haitian bourgeoisie. These groups, with deep ties to the Tonton Macoutes created by the Duvaliers, were used to overthrow the Aristide government after being trained and armed by the U.S.

So when President Hugo Chávez of Venezuela came to Port-au-Prince March 13 to finish up his tour answering Bush's Latin American visit, crowds of people lined the streets in enthusiastic joy, waving home-made Venezuelan flags and shouting: "Down with Bush! Long live Chávez! Long live the return of Aristide!"

Since Venezuela already has an oil deal with Haiti that saves Haiti \$150 million a year, President René Préval had no choice about this demonstration. Haiti, Venezuela and Cuba took the occasion of Chavez's visit to announce a tripartite agreement covering health, energy and oil.

Venezuela already has a program in Haiti where units of its army help repair Haiti's infrastructure.

At the press conference after the agreement announcement, Chávez recalled the substantial aid Haiti gave to Simón Bolívar and José Martí. Préval said that President Fidel Castro of Cuba had participated in the discussions by phone from Havana.

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Haiti Support Group calls on donors to honour pledges to support the government's rapid impact social and economic programme

jeudi 29 mars 2007

Press release of the Haiti Support Group

Submitted to AlterPresse on 29 March 2007

The British solidarity organisation, the Haiti Support Group, is very concerned about the slow disbursement of international assistance for the government of Haiti's programme to urgently address social and economic needs in the most impoverished and conflict-prone areas.

The Haitian government unveiled its Social Appeasement Programme (in French : Programme d'Apaisement Social, PAS) in June 2006, and it received strong support from participants at international donor conferences on Haiti in July and November of that year. During the latter part of 2006, a number of countries pledged to disburse assistance to support the PAS. However, government ministers have subsequently complained that much of the funding has not been disbursed.

As recently as mid-February, Haiti's Prime Minister, Jacques Edouard Alexis, told a heads of government CARICOM meeting that the expected results of the PAS had been delayed by the slow disbursement of pledged financial support. Following that meeting, CARICOM called on the donor community to be responsive to the concerns of the Haitian Government on this critical question. The same concerns were voiced by the UN secretary-general in his report on Haiti published in December. That report concluded that "the implementation of the proposal by the Prime Minister for a Programme d'Apaisement Social has not advanced significantly" even though the "tangible improvements

envisaged in the programme...are crucial in order to promote stability and encourage further political progress”.

In the same vein, but more recently, the Rio Group of Latin American and Caribbean nations meeting at the beginning of March 2007 noted that it was “important for the donor community to honour its obligations in co-operation projects geared towards the eradication of poverty, the improvement of basic health care, and the promotion of strengthening Haitian institutions”.

Following a meeting between bilateral and multilateral donors and representatives of the Haitian government in Washington DC last weekend, the Haiti Support Group (HSG) understands follow-up missions will soon be sent to Port-au-Prince. In this context, the HSG calls on those donors that have already pledged funds for the PAS to urgently prioritise the release of this assistance. If, for whatever reason, these bilateral donors are unable to keep to their pledges, the HSG believes that, as a matter of the utmost urgency, the multilateral donors must fill the breach.

The HSG’s Charles Arthur said, “We have heard a lot from the international community about how it wants to help Haiti. There is a democratic government in place with an approved programme to address some of the fundamental causes of division and instability in the country. There is really no excuse for the donors to withhold promised funding.”

Arthur continued, “Most of the funding to support the government’s PAS is supposed to come in the form of bilateral assistance, and we understand that some projects funded by Belgium, Brazil, Canada, and the USA are underway. However, eight months since the government appealed for - and was promised - financial support for the programme, large amounts have still not been released. Unless there is immediate action to remedy this situation, there is a real danger that the Haitian authorities will miss out on a rare opportunity to intervene and break the cycle of poverty, hopelessness and violence, and to show the excluded and marginalized sections of society that there is some point in having an elected government.”

Background

The Programme d’Apaisement Social (PAS) is one of the main priorities of the new government that came to power in June 2006. The PAS, as well as allocating funds for public-sector salary arrears, for training and job opportunities for recently dismissed public-sector employees, and for payments to former soldiers, will fund a host of small projects at the level of the country’s administrative communes. These small projects, that will cost a total US\$50m over five years but which the government hopes to implement as soon as possible, are intended to address the immediate needs of the poorest members of the population. Spending will be focused on three main objectives :

Increasing basic services provision in general, including projects to provide drinking water, sanitation, electricity supply, health care and education.

Increasing access of the most disadvantaged sectors of society to services, including the establishment of community canteens, initiatives to reintegrate street children, management of public places for leisure activities for youth, humanitarian aid, and initiatives to boost economic renewal.

Initiatives to stimulate national production. This will include encouraging the use of local resources to produce goods and provide services, the provision of inputs and credit for agricultural producers and artisans, and job creation for unskilled workers.

Some South Florida Haitians far removed from the struggles in Haiti

Broward community not as politically active

Alva James-Johnson

South Florida Sun-Sentinel

Posted March 30 2007

<http://www.sun-sentinel.com/news/local/broward/sfl-cadvocates30mar30,0,1898634.story?coll=sfla-news-broward>

When Haitian refugees reach the shores of Miami-Dade and Palm Beach counties, community leaders have traditionally rushed to the scene to serve as advocates.

But in Broward County, Haitians are more reserved. Many of those speaking loudest on behalf of the boatload of Haitians who landed on Hollywood's beach Wednesday are from Miami.

That's because Haitians in Broward -- many living in the western suburbs of the county -- tend to be less politically active and more concerned with upward mobility, said some Haitian community leaders. Those who are the children of Haitian immigrants have little connection to people escaping Haiti by boat. Their community is not consumed by the politics of their homeland, or organized to receive new arrivals.

"People are busier than in Miami-Dade and Palm Beach, working two jobs," said the Rev. Gerard Jean-Juste, a Haitian Catholic priest now living in Fort Lauderdale. "In Broward they play low profile."

On Thursday, Haitian Women of Miami led protesters to the U.S. Customs and Border Protection center in Pembroke Pines, where officials held the refugees. They called for federal authorities to release the Haitians on their own recognizance and grant them due process.

Lavarice Gaudin, chairman of Veye Yo, a Miami group affiliated with the Lavalas political party of former Haitian President Jean-Bertrand Aristide, said the growing Haitian population in Broward needs a political voice. He said his organization plans to develop programs to help mobilize the Broward community.

But Edna LaRoche, a spokeswoman for Minority Development and Empowerment Inc., the largest agency serving the Haitian population in the county, said Broward Haitians are not silent on such issues. They simply have a more subtle approach.

She said Minority Development asked elected officials Wednesday and Thursday to intervene on behalf of the Haitians.

"We do appreciate everything that the Miami community is doing, and we think that will have an effect," she said. "But by the same token, so will our efforts."

Miami-Dade has long been an entry point for Haitian immigrants.

Refugees came in droves when life under the regime of Jean-Claude "Baby Doc" Duvalier became unbearable, and settled in Miami's Lemon City, now known as Little Haiti. In the 1990s, another wave of refugees arrived when a military coup overthrew Aristide, the country's first democratically elected president.

Some also made it to the shores of Palm Beach County, where community activists in Delray Beach and other communities with large Haitian populations welcomed them, said Daniella Henry, a community activist who helped settle many through the Haitian Chamber of Commerce in Delray Beach.

Those who settled in Miami in the 1970s and 1980s laid the foundation for grassroots leadership, which paved the way for Haitians to win political office and encouraged political activism.

But as many gained upward mobility, they migrated into Broward, settling in Miramar, Pembroke Pines, Pompano Beach and other areas.

Jean Jabouin, a Haitian radio talk show host who recently moved from Broward to Palm Beach County, said their lives are now far removed from the struggles in Haiti.

"Broward's population is a bit different. Reaction is not going to be same like in Miami-Dade or Palm Beach," he said. "It's a different phenomenon. As much as we say we can understand, we really can't understand how people would risk their lives to come here."

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UPDATED: 07:48, March 29, 2007

China to send fifth group of riot police to Haiti
People's Daily Online

China will send the fifth group of riot police totaling 125 members to Haiti next month for an eight-month peace-keeping mission.

All the riot police officers were picked from south China's Guangdong Provincial Armed Police Corps of Frontier Defense, a spokesman of the corps said.

They had received five months of intensive training on language, shooting, driving, and combat skills since last October, the spokesman said.

The first contingent of 30 members will leave for Haiti on April 3 and the rest on April 12, he said.

They will bring the total number of riot police officers sent by China to Haiti since October 2004 to more than 1,000, he said.

Source: Xinhua

U.S. pledges help in Caribbean drug fight amid enforcement shift

The Associated Press

Published:
International Herald Tribune

March 29, 2007

<http://www.ihrt.com/articles/ap/2007/03/29/news/CB-GEN-Dominican-US-Drugs.php>

SANTO DOMINGO, Dominican Republic: The chief of the U.S. Southern Command pledged support for efforts to reduce drug trafficking in the Caribbean while acknowledging on Thursday that the global war on terror had diverted some American resources from the fight.

The visit by Navy Adm. James Stavridis, who took command of U.S. military operations in Latin America and the Caribbean in October, follows criticism by Dominican President Leonel Fernandez that the U.S. had abandoned the region's efforts against drugs.

"There is a global war on terrorism and there is a global war on drugs ... and in fighting both of these wars, resources must be prioritized," Stavridis said at a news conference following his brief meeting with Fernandez.

The admiral said drug trafficking was the region's "primary threat" and that the U.S. has tried to compensate for shifting of some personnel and equipment out of the Caribbean, in part by seeking help from allies in the region.

"We can always bring more resources to bear but I think we are making progress," he said.

With tariffs, U.S. steps up economic pressure on China Historian documents Japan's role in sex slavery Iranian TV shows another British sailor apologizing U.S. authorities recently singled out Hispaniola — the island shared by Haiti and the Dominican Republic — as a major source of cocaine and other drugs moving from South America to the United States, Canada and Europe.

A State Department report said that 9 percent of the more than 500 tons of cocaine smuggled yearly to the U.S. from South America now moves through Hispaniola, and that illegal flights thought to be carrying the drug from Venezuela increased by 167 percent in 2006.

The U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration also recently pledged a joint effort with Haiti and the Dominican Republic to curb the growing traffic.

Dominican President Leonel Fernandez told a March 16 drug conference that the U.S. focus on terrorism had resulted in "an abandonment in the region" regarding the drug trade.

Meeting later with Dominican military officials, Stavridis pledged help in securing the 362-kilometer (225-mile) border between Haiti and the Dominican Republic, which is frequently crossed by drug traffickers and migrant smugglers.

Security along the border, along with the status of 500,000 to 1 million people of Haitian descent who live in the Dominican Republic, is a divisive issue on the island.

"This is an entirely Dominican effort but we want to be helpful with advice and resources where we can," Stavridis said.

from the March 28, 2007 edition

Toward a better life: At a drop-in center in Cap-Haïtien run by Project Pierre Toussaint, street children play games between breakfast and lunch.

melanie stetson freeman – staff
A home for street kids in Cap-Haïtien, Haiti
Christian Science Monitor

Haiti's street kids given a lift
How the efforts of a few have changed the lives of many Haitians.
By Melanie Stetson Freeman | Staff photographer
Page 1 of 3

Studying hard: If the children stay for school, they can receive dinner as well.

melanie stetson freeman – staff
A home for street kids in Cap-Haïtien, Haiti
CAP-HAÏTIEN, HAITI - They are derisively called "sangine," which in Creole means "one without soul." Sleeping in alleys and living in the shadows, the street children of Haiti spend their days skipping school, hustling to get enough food to survive, often running afoul of the law, and getting high on paint thinner to try to forget their lot. Their communities and families, if they have them, are too poor to help.

The children are among the most visible signs of Haiti's poverty, even more apparent than the nation's 65 percent unemployment rate. Foreigners visiting the nation are often overwhelmed by the sight of them. But not American Douglas Perlitz.

About 10 years ago, Mr. Perlitz visited Cap-Haïtien – Haiti's second-largest city – where he was soon being followed by "a pile of street kids," he says.

Perlitz, a pastoral minister and volunteer at a nearby hospital, would occasionally come back to town to get to know the kids. Although he didn't speak the language, Perlitz would play basketball and soccer

with them, befriending the friendless. One child, Wilnaud Pierre, only 8 years old, especially touched his heart.

"He was going through the initiation of being a street kid. He was tiny, the littlest one, and the others were mean to him," Perlitz says. "He pulled me aside and said 'Would you send me to school? I want to learn to read and write.' For four or five months, he kept at me."

Wilnaud, now about 18 (many street children don't know their own birth dates), recalls that time. "I asked Douglas because I did not want to stay ignorant ... someone who knows nothing," he writes in an e-mail. "School would show me how to live."

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[Living](#)

from the March 28, 2007 edition

Lunch is served: At the drop-in center operated by Project Pierre Toussaint, plates of rice with a vegetable sauce are prepared for the street children.

melanie stetson freeman – staff

A home for street kids in Cap-Haïtien, Haiti

'I saw that they had the desire to go to school. They were focused. I knew they could do a lot.'

– Doug Perlitz, founder of Project Pierre Toussaint

melanie stetson freeman – staff

A home for street kids in Cap-Haïtien, Haiti

Perlitz talked to some local priests who offered him space in an old building behind their church to start a school. He told Wilnaud to tell his friends to come on Nov. 3, 1997, and he would teach them. Some 25 to 30 kids, ages 8 to 17, were waiting for him when he arrived.

"I gave them paper and crayons," Perlitz says. "You could hear a pin drop. They drew stuff – trees, boats, houses. Some didn't even know how to hold crayons. I saw that they had the desire to go to school. They were focused. I knew they could do a lot.... They came regularly, so I got more teachers and started giving them food."

Within a year, the school grew into Project Pierre Toussaint, named after a Haitian slave who cared for the poor in New York City in the early 1800s. Today, the school helps about 120 kids a day at a drop-in center, where they can get three hot meals and schooling.

Children participating in the project aspire to one day enter the Village, a residential program on the outskirts of town with space for 50 kids who have proven themselves responsible and committed to excel. There, children are offered a wide variety of vocational training, including sewing, driving, welding, woodworking, and tailoring.

"This program is evidence of one person making a difference against incredible odds," says Paul Carrier, a chaplain at Fairfield University in Connecticut. Father Carrier encourages Fairfield students – including Perlitz, who first visited Haiti in 1991 – to do community service work in the third world.

Carrier supports Perlitz's program through visits and constant fundraising. He once brought down 70 pairs of donated shoes – each designated for a specific child.

"I work with a lot of different organizations," says consultant Amber Elizabeth Gray, who has worked in the international human service field for 20 years. "Doug's program is consistently the program that I can say is honest, true, community-based, meaningful, humanitarian work. It has managed to avoid the usual bureaucratic snares and tangles. The program grows in direct response to the kids."

In addition to helping street children, the project provides jobs for 35 Haitian men and women, who have been taught to be role models, teachers, counselors, cooks, drivers, social workers. They learn to avoid violence when disciplining.

"Everyone in Haiti has witnessed violence on a large scale," says Perlitz. "Those over 25 have woken up four different times to a coup, surrounded by violence. People internalize that, and it becomes an accepted way of life. All the schools here use the whip – not ours."

Some staff members, like Francilien Jean Charles, went through the program themselves. Francilien was one of the boys who came to Perlitz's original school. Although learning disabled, he got his primary school certificate.

"He is one of our best staff because of his ability to understand the kids and what they're dealing with," says Perlitz.

"You have to have realistic goals," says Perlitz. "They live in a country with high unemployment. I can't pretend they'll all get jobs. We hope the time they spend with us will make them better fathers and neighbors. We hope they become good citizens of Haiti with solid ideas of right and wrong."

Wilnaud can now read and write, and he hopes to become a mechanic.

"I lived on the street," Wilnaud remembers, "like someone who walks but does not know where he is going ... [but then] I started to see my life change. After two or three years, people forgot the old me.... I became a new Wilnaud."

Associated Press
Brazil to Promote Haiti Aid, Biodiesel
VIVIAN SEQUERA 03.26.07, 7:15 PM ET
Forbes.com, AP
High-Security, High-End Homes

Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva said Monday that he will propose investments to strengthen Haiti's floundering economy when he meets with President Bush in the United States next weekend.

Silva also plans to talk with Bush about the possibility of a joint Brazil-U.S. effort to help poor African countries start producing biodiesel and ethanol, alternative energy fuels gaining popularity worldwide.

The Brazilian leader will meet with Bush Saturday, less than a month after the American president visited Silva in Brazil, where the two forged an ethanol alliance aimed at promoting the fuel and reducing international dependence on fossil fuels.

Brazil leads an 8,800-member U.N. peacekeeping force in Haiti that arrived more than two years ago to restore order after a violent uprising toppled former president Jean-Bertrand Aristide.

Silva said Haiti is now a democracy, but the nation's economy is in tatters, and the Brazilian leader said it's time for "an investment of money so we can work on projects to strengthen Haiti's economy.

Silva didn't provide other details in his biweekly "Coffee with the President" radio show.

Bush and Silva argued earlier this month that alternative fuels lead to more jobs, a cleaner environment and greater independence from the oil market. In Brazil, nearly eight in 10 new cars already run on fuel made from sugar cane. Ethanol in the United States is made from corn.

The U.S. and Brazil also want to create global ethanol quality standards so the fuel can be traded as a commodity, like oil.

The U.S. is the world's largest ethanol producer. Brazil is No. 2, but is the biggest exporter and has much more agricultural land than the U.S. that could be used to ramp up production. Brazil is increasing biodiesel production, but the nation's ethanol industry is much more advanced.

Brazil and the U.S. remain at odds over the 54-cent-a-gallon U.S. tariff on imports of Brazilian ethanol. Silva didn't mention the tariff during his radio interview.

During his meeting with Bush, Silva is also expected to speak in favor of an extension of U.S. trade preferences for Ecuador, Foreign Minister Celso Amorim said on Monday after meeting with that country's Foreign Minister, Maria Fernanda Espinosa.

The trade preferences allow Ecuador to export hundreds of products to the United States without paying import duties as a reward for cooperating in the fight against drug trafficking.

"The matter will be brought up during the meeting between the two presidents," Amorim said adding that the extension of trade preferences for Ecuador has Brazil's "support."

The trade preferences expired Dec.31 and were extended for another six months. But Ecuador wants them to be extended for a longer period of time.

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Special attention is needed for Venezuela, says IACHR
El Universal, Venezuela

March 29, 2007

Venezuela, in addition to Colombia, Cuba and Haiti, should be paid "special attention" in terms of human rights, said the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR).

These four countries are in a separate chapter of the annual report submitted Thursday by IACHR, a body in the Organization of American States (OAS) for the promotion and protection of human rights.

The report collects the strides and shortcomings in 2006 with regard to human rights in the hemisphere, Efe reported.

The IACHR expressed concern about Venezuela for the killings and serious damages suffered by hundred people held in captivity.

According to the paper, such a situation is the result, in part, of poor monitoring to prevent weapons from reaching prisons, lack of skilled security staff, heavy caseload and inmates' poor conditions.

The Commission remembered also that since its last visit to Venezuela in 2002, it has requested unsuccessfully the Venezuelan government's clearance to come back again.

March, 23 - 3:07 PM
The Dominican Today

Haiti's forests have lost their ecologic function, David Luther says

SANTO DOMINGO.- Haiti's forests lost their the economic significance as a renewable resource a long time ago, and quickly loses its ecological function, affirmed today the executive secretary of the Dominican Integral Development Institute (IDDI), David Luther.

He said that though the economic loss can be conceivable and compensated, the forest ecosystem has enormous repercussions that would affect the subsistence of millions of people who live in both sides of the border.

The expert said that "years back, Haiti was covered with exuberant forests with ecological variations, defined in terms of different types of forestry, but those wooded areas have been reduced drastically, covering today only 5.7% of the total surface in that country."

Luther spoke during the inaugural of the directors in the new IDDI branch in Haiti, located near the north coast city Cape Haitien.

The non-profit organization's funding comes from the United Nations, the Agency for International Development (AID) and the business sector.

Luther said that the IDDI develops integral development projects in the border aimed at controlling deforestation of areas, and noted that the new office "will take advantage of the economic resources more rationally."

He pointed out that the Haitian and Dominican governments must include in their bilateral protocols effective components oriented to preserve the island's natural resources.

A IDDI study found that in Haiti, more than 38% of the forested area is of pines which "has been degraded from a bad exploitation, forest fires and the conversion into grazing zones."

The IDDI director also revealed that in the border areas at Bánica and Pedro Santana (west) deserted land areas are being used for a project to produce "jastrofa," a tree of Mexican origin, to produce biodiesel at a low cost.

Luther also announced that the IDDI will organize an event with local investors to propose a project for the border, to control deforestation and preserve the natural resources.

French presidential hopeful backs Haiti conference

POSTED: 10:09 a.m. EDT, March 23, 2007

CNN.com

Story Highlights• French presidential candidate Nicolas Sarkozy visits Guadeloupe and Martinique

- Conservative pledges to back conference on peace and development in Haiti
- Most polls show Sarkozy leading the presidential race

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LES ABYMES, Guadeloupe (AP) -- French presidential candidate Nicolas Sarkozy pledged during a visit to the French Caribbean to press for a conference on peace and economic development in Haiti if he is elected.

Sarkozy, a conservative, was making a two-day trip to Guadeloupe and Martinique as part of his campaign for the April 22-May 6 elections. Currently the French interior minister, he is to step down Monday from that post and fully concentrate on the presidential race.

In Guadeloupe on Thursday, he addressed the problems of nearby Haiti, saying he would launch a conference on peace and development in the destitute Caribbean nation of 8 million, in liaison with the international community.

Peacekeepers arrived in Haiti in 2004 to quell unrest sparked by an uprising that ousted former President Jean-Bertrand Aristide.

"Cooperation in the Caribbean basin is an absolute necessity," Sarkozy said in Les Abymes, Guadeloupe. He was to stop in Martinique for several hours Friday before heading home.

Most polls show Sarkozy leading the presidential race. A survey by the CSA agency for Le Parisien newspaper suggested that he and Socialist Segolene Royal would each garner 50 percent of the vote in the final round.

Pollsters talked to 894 people age 18 and up on March 21 and 22. No margin of error was provided, but for polls of this size it usually falls in the 3 percent range.

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Chavez courts Haiti with aid to broaden anti-U.S. kingdom
By DAVID ADAMS, Times Latin America Correspondant
Published March 22, 2007
St. Petersburg Times, Florida

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Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez has opened a new front in his anti-American offensive: Haiti.

Long overlooked by Venezuela's burgeoning foreign aid program in Latin America, Haiti received a visit last week by Chavez. It was the first time he had set foot in the Caribbean nation.

He left after signing a \$100-million assistance package, including cheap oil, medical support, airport construction and electricity generation.

The announcement is part of Chavez's aggressive effort to use his country's oil wealth to wean countries in the hemisphere off Washington's influence.

U.S. officials don't sound too worried about Chavez's latest push. The United States is Haiti's largest foreign aid donor, handing out \$600-million since 2004. American aid programs provide food to 335,000 poor Haitians, as well as funding for school textbooks, HIV-AIDS treatment and other things.

In a major boost to Haitian clothing manufacturers, President Bush signed into law this week a measure giving Haiti duty-free entry into the United States for locally sewn apparel.

But Venezuela's aid package is far from insignificant. Haitian officials say the oil deal, offered at concessionary rates, will save Haiti about \$150-million a year.

Chavez's visit came just as Bush was finishing up his own six-day tour of the region, bird-dogged every step of the way by his Venezuelan nemesis.

Bush is expected to make his first trip to Haiti next month amid growing concern over a surge in drug trafficking through Haiti and the neighboring Dominican Republic.

U.S. officials may be wary of the close ties between Castro and Haiti's left-leaning president, Rene Preval. But Washington has no reservations about Preval's democratic credentials.

The Haitian leader is widely considered to be a moderate. His relationship with Cuba is as much ideological as personal, stemming from his treatment for prostate cancer in Cuba for a number of years.

Pragmatic policy

"Haitian foreign policy under Preval has shown a lot of pragmatism," said Robert Maguire, a Haiti expert at Trinity College in Washington, D.C. "He's not putting his eggs in one basket."

While relations between Preval and the Bush administration are good, Haiti is upset over the number of Haitians being deported from the United States to Haiti. Some are hardened criminals accused of violence and kidnapping in Haiti's slums.

Besides receiving international economic aid valued at \$1.3-billion in the last three years, Haiti hosts a U.N. security force of troops from Brazil, Argentina and Chile.

While outside help has helped Haiti get back on its feet, the country remains highly vulnerable to political instability.

Haiti is the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere; 80 percent of the population lives in poverty. One out of two is illiterate. Life expectancy is 51 years.

Keeping a distance

Despite their geographic proximity to Haiti, Cuba and Venezuela have never gotten deeply involved the French-speaking country, which has long-standing ties to the United States, France and Canada.

During a previous term in office in the 1990s, Preval signed a cooperation agreement with Cuba to provide doctors in rural communities lacking primary health care. Cuba has since sent hundreds of doctors to Haiti, as well as offering free education for 800 Haitian students at Cuba's Latin American School for Medicine in Havana.

During his daylong visit to Haiti last week, Chavez was accompanied by a high-level Cuban delegation, including Cuban Vice President Esteban Lazo. Cuba's ailing president, Fidel Castro, also checked in on the trilateral talks, reportedly making four phone calls to Haiti's presidential palace.

Haiti's 'atomic' youth

In a transcript of one of the calls released by Cuba, Chavez described the crowds who thronged his motorcade on the drive from Haiti's airport to the presidential palace.

Chavez compared Haiti's youths to "an atomic bomb" needing social workers "to organize this force."

Later in the day Haiti, Venezuela and Cuba signed an agreement to open a joint "cooperation office" in Haiti to administer a new trilateral aid program. This includes a \$21-million humanitarian fund for medical support as well as improving Haiti's electrical generating capacity.

About \$57-million was pledged for improvements to Haiti's airports to boost tourism. Venezuela also agreed to double its petroleum supplies to Haiti, to 14,000 barrels a day.

In a press conference Chavez blasted the United States, describing it as "the cruelest, most terrible, most cynical, most murderous empire to have existed in the entire history."

In his remarks moments later, Preval thanked Cuba and Venezuela for their support while making no mention of his relations with Washington.

Haiti's foreign policy had always been "timid," he said, but that is changing as his government seeks cooperation with any country whose help might benefit the Haitian people.

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Positive trends in Haiti need to be sustained by job creation, says OAS
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Caribbean Net News

WASHINGTON, USA: In surveying a series of developments in Haiti, the Secretary General of the Organization of American States (OAS), José Miguel Insulza, said on Wednesday that the ability to maintain the generally positive trend “will depend on the prospects for job creation,” among other factors.

He told the member state ambassadors and the observers at the Permanent Council meeting that the OAS is now more optimistic than ever before, as “some funds have started to flow” to help address the most urgent needs of Haitians.

OAS Secretary General, José Miguel Insulza. OAS Photo

Insulza noted that the OAS is coordinating a trade and investment forum that will be held in Haiti in early May, to help attract investment in tourism and other economic sectors and to spur greater opportunities for Haitians. The Secretary General also pointed to ongoing issues such as the problem of slow execution of projects in Haiti, the high cost of holding elections and some security concerns.

The strides made by Haiti were detailed against the backdrop of the OAS bi-annual report on the situation in that country, which Secretary General Insulza delivered to the Permanent Council meeting, chaired by St Kitts and Nevis Ambassador Izben Williams, the Council’s Vice Chair.

Among the positive developments highlighted in the report—which covered the last six months of 2006—was the formation and installation of a historic 18-member multi-party cabinet within three weeks of President René Préval taking office last May.

The cabinet brought together the Lespwa, Fanmi Lavalas, OPL, Fusion, MIDH and Alyans parties, led by Prime Minister Jacques Édouard Alexis. State modernization and the creation of economic opportunity were given renewed priority, and a Social Appeasement Program was created to fast-track community development.

Secretary General Insulza noted that municipal and local government elections as well as legislative elections were held, completing the electoral cycle begun with the vote that brought President Préval to power earlier in the year. Another significant development that Insulza noted was Haiti’s reincorporation into the Caribbean Community (CARICOM).

“There was also a period of relative calm,” the Secretary General told the Permanent Council. President Préval’s call for dialogue seems to have had some effect, Insulza said, although he noted the concern about rising violence as the year came to a close. Referring to “ambitions plans for police training in Haiti,” Insulza said that overall, “our efforts in Haiti have borne fruit,” from a security standpoint.

OAS Assistant Secretary General Albert R. Ramdin, who has just returned from a two-day mission to Haiti, touched on the upcoming trade and investment forum and other developments, including a range of programs the OAS has supported. These include the civil registry project, under which the OAS has assisted with the production and distribution of identification cards.

Ramdin said in view of upcoming elections, this effort will need to continue as new voters must also be registered. He reported that in recent days the final results of the local and legislative elections held late last year were announced, an important development with respect to the appointment of members of the Provisional Electoral Council.

Haiti's Permanent Representative to the OAS, Ambassador Duly Brutus, expressed the government's appreciation for the report and noted a series of other positive developments his country has experienced. Other member state representatives, meanwhile, expressed their full support for OAS efforts to assist Haiti, while expressing satisfaction with the developments reported.

During the same meeting today, the new Permanent Representative of Suriname, Ambassador Jacques Kross, delivered his maiden address to the Permanent Council, highlighting his government's priority attention to the Inter-American Democratic Charter as well as hemispheric security issues and the initiative of a hemispheric Social Charter being negotiated among the member states.

Ambassador Kross praised the OAS for its assistance to his country over the years, primarily on projects related to post-conflict resolution, good governance, security, human rights promotion and fellowships.