

HAITI NEWS ROUNDUP: NOVEMBER 1 – 13, 2006

2 U.N. Soldiers Die in Haiti

By REUTERS

New York Times

November 13, 2006

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti — Gunmen killed two United Nations peacekeepers from Jordan in an ambush here on Friday night, the United Nations envoy to Haiti said Saturday.

The soldiers were heading back to their base in a truck late on Friday when the gunmen attacked near the Cité Soleil slum in this capital.

At least 14 United Nations soldiers have been killed since the 9,000-member peacekeeping mission arrived in June 2004 to try to help stabilize Haiti after years of political and criminal violence.

“Our troops were in a military truck when they were attacked,” said the United Nations envoy, Edmond Mulet. “They returned fire but two Jordanian soldiers were killed.”

Two UN blue helmets fatally injured in Haiti
UN News Centre
12 November 2006

Two Jordanian soldiers serving with the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) have died from injuries they suffered after being shot at by armed individuals.

The incident took place on Friday evening near the Port-au-Prince airport. One of the two blue helmets died on the way to the hospital while the other took his last breath upon arrival, MINUSTAH said.

The circumstances of the killings are being investigated, the mission said, extending condolences to the families of the deceased and to Jordan.

In another development, MINUSTAH welcomed the decision by the Haitian National Police to undergo an internal verification.

Gunmen kill 2 Jordanian U.N. peacekeepers in Haiti
Associated Press
Los Angeles Times
November 12, 2006

PORT-AU-PRINCE, HAITI — Unidentified gunmen attacked U.N. peacekeepers near a restive slum in Haiti's capital, killing two Jordanian members of the force, officials said Saturday.

The attack came late Friday as peacekeepers headed back to base near the Cite Soleil neighborhood, where well-armed gangs blamed for kidnappings are based, a U.N. police spokesman said. One soldier died en route to a hospital, the other while being treated.

U.N. officials said the slayings appeared premeditated.

The U.N. peacekeeping force of 8,800 troops has been stepping up patrols to quell violence in the Caribbean nation's dense slums.

But there is growing opposition among slum dwellers to the Brazil-led U.N. force, sent to restore order after a bloody February 2004 revolt ousted then-President Jean-Bertrand Aristide.

The residents of the poor neighborhoods have accused U.N. troops of firing indiscriminately during gun battles with gangsters, killing and wounding civilians.

The U.N. denies the charge and says the troops shoot only when attacked. No overall civilian casualty figures were available.

Students and slum dwellers recently have staged street protests calling for withdrawal of the U.N. force.

Nine peacekeepers have died in clashes since the force arrived in June 2004.

Haiti gunmen kill 2 Jordanian U.N. soldiers

11 Nov 2006

Reuters AlertNet

By Joseph Guylar Delva

PORT-AU-PRINCE - Gunmen killed two U.N. peacekeepers from Jordan in an ambush amid a rise in violence in the Haitian capital, the U.N. envoy to Haiti, said on Saturday.

The soldiers were heading back to base in a truck late on Friday when gunmen attacked near an industrial park next to the airport and just outside of the volatile slum of Cite Soleil.

At least 14 U.N. soldiers have been killed since the June 2004 deployment of the 9,000-strong peacekeeping mission to stabilize the Caribbean country of 8 million.

"Our troops were in a military truck when they were attacked," envoy Edmond Mulet told Reuters. "They returned fire but two Jordanian soldiers were killed," giving no further details.

One soldier died while being transported to hospital and the other died while receiving treatment at the U.N. hospital near the airport, the U.N. peacekeeping mission in Haiti said in a communique.

The U.N. force was deployed after a rebellion that ousted President Jean-Bertrand Aristide in February 2004.

Aristide, who faced intense U.S. and French pressure to quit, was replaced by a U.S.-backed interim government that handed power in May to President Rene Preval who won an election in February.

The ambush comes amid an increase in violence and threats from armed gangs in Port-au-Prince after months of relative calm.

The violence has included several incidents involving U.N. troops, criminal gangs and civilians, and police reported 40 kidnappings in October up from 30 the previous month. Many abduction cases go unreported.

A gang called the Revolutionary Army in the Martissant slum told reporters on Thursday it would kill those it described as its enemies, referring to Haitian police and U.N. peacekeepers, following the arrest of one of its members.

The gang blocked a road leading to the south of Haiti and attacked a police car, killing one of its occupants, police said.

"We take those threats very seriously and we will face them with vigor and determination," Haitian police spokesman Frantz Lerebours told Reuters on Saturday, adding police and peacekeepers had a plan to counter the violence.

Hunger Seen as Big Enemy in War on AIDS

By STEVENSON JACOBS

The Associated Press

The Washington Post

Saturday, November 11, 2006

CANGE, Haiti -- AIDS made Marie Lourdes Israel so sick she could barely move her bowed, stick-thin body. The medicine almost killed her. Her plight wasn't due to a problem with the drug, but with something more basic: She had no food, and taking the AIDS cocktail on an empty stomach caused severe stomach aches, dizziness and nausea.

"Sometimes I would eat once a day, sometimes not at all because I couldn't find anything," said Israel, 51, who lost her meager earnings as a schoolteacher after falling ill to the virus that kills 15,000 Haitians each year.

Starvation and malnutrition are fast becoming the twin perils of the AIDS fight, and doctors and health experts say millions of infected people in the developing world are rapidly approaching a tipping point where food will replace drugs as the biggest need.

The U.N. World Food Program has launched nutrition programs in Haiti and 50 other countries with the worst HIV rates, providing monthly food supplements for patients and their families.

Without adequate nutrition, AIDS sufferers cannot absorb the drugs needed to slow the virus. As in Israel's case, side effects from taking the pills without food can lead patients to neglect treatment.

"When you have the meds and don't have the food ... then the bigger problem becomes food security," said Harvard University professor Dr. Paul Farmer, founder of Partners in Health, a pioneering medical mission in Haiti's highlands that gives free treatment to thousands.

Worldwide, an estimated 3.8 million people with AIDS needed food support this year, possibly rising to 6.4 million by 2008, according to the World Food Program.

Hungry people are six times more likely to die when going on AIDS medication than those with good nutrition, according to a study in the British journal *HIV Medicine*.

Robin Jackson, chief of the World Food Program's HIV/AIDS service in Rome, said it was unthinkable to give drugs to a malnourished patient, because "not only will the drug not be very effective, but you're not going to feel well either" because of severe stomach aches and nausea.

"Would you think in the West we would ever give drugs to someone who was malnourished? No, we don't do that," Jackson said.

Many people in Africa and Haiti simply refuse free drugs unless they come with food, leaving little hope for their survival, doctors say.

A recent World Food Program study found that it would cost only 66 cents a day to feed an AIDS patient and family, but health experts say that having poured billions into free drug programs, many donors are reluctant to take on the added costs of food supplements.

At a recent AIDS conference in Toronto, Stephen Lewis, special U.N. envoy for HIV/AIDS in Africa, called the lack of funding for food "madness."

The experts say health workers in the Third World must view food security as being no less important to a person's health than the right drugs and regular checkups.

Although health professionals don't want to be food distributors, Farmer said, "We need to be in the business of handing out food."

The fight against AIDS and malnutrition is evident in Cange, a mountain hamlet in Haiti's barren Central Plateau and ground zero for the Caribbean country's struggle with AIDS.

A three-hour drive from the capital along a spine-jarring, rutted road, the town attracts thousands of people who flock to Farmer's Zanmi Lasante Hospital for free AIDS drugs and, more recently, free food from the World Food Program.

"Before when I had nothing to eat, it was painful to take the drugs. I was suffering," said Jeudy Andre, a 38-year-old mother of six, as she hauled away a sack of rice, beans, meat and oil at a WFP-run food distribution site.

For Israel, months with little food left her weak and so depressed she could barely get out of bed. Now she has regained the weight and has a healthy glow.

"I have hope because I look completely different from before," she said, her braided hair tucked beneath a red ball cap.

Others aren't as lucky.

Inside the infectious disease ward at St. Michel Hospital in Boucan Carre, another Central Plateau town, a man in his 30s lay motionless on a bed, flies buzzing around his emaciated body.

Diagnosed with AIDS two weeks earlier, he should be on his feet once the drugs kick in. But with no way to earn a living in his miserably poor village, finding a meal will be a challenge.

Dr. Chevrin Francky, one of the ward's two physicians, said he has lost several patients this year to the food problem and expects to lose more.

"We have the medicine, but many patients don't have food," Francky said. "The biggest problem is poverty."

New tool in fight against money laundering in Haiti
Monday, November 13, 2006
by Vario Sérant
Caribbean Net News Haiti

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti: The director of Haiti's Financial Information Central Unit (FICU) has announced the implementation of a new reporting system in the fight against money laundering.

The new system is the adoption of software that will henceforth permit FICU to receive electronic declarations from financial institutions regarding the origins of funds and any related suspicions.

FICU's director, Jean Yves Noël justified the adoption of this information transmission and collection system by citing the need for setting effective management tools within the framework of the fight against money laundering linked to illicit drug traffic and other serious offences.

The Haitian financial investigation chief also pointed to "the need for introducing a method and a transparent procedure in order to make available all financial information of the banks and guarantee the impartiality of the anti-corruption machine".

Noël also underlined the importance of setting up the means to control and audit banking transactions comprising significant amounts of money.

According to Noël, this new system offers advantages for the banks, their customers and also FICU.

The Banks Trade Association (BTA) president, Gladys Coupet, concurred and pointed to the importance of new software in "the treatment and the security of information".

Indeed, the banks now have "the possibility of having a compilation of all data that is transmitted to the FICU and of carrying out requests, while minimizing the search times considerably", emphasised Noël.

This project is financed by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), and carried out by a Haitian company called Solution SA, under the control of SRA International.

USAID director, Paul Tuebner, hopes that this new data-processing software will allow the FICU "to exert a better control on money laundering activities in Haiti".

Tuebner indicated that "the American government, through USAID, is delighted to be able to bring its support to the efforts of the Haitian government through the FICU in order to attack effectively the money laundering phenomenon".

The USAID director is also delighted by the support of the American government to the Haitian Finance Ministry in setting up a wireless data processing network allowing the Haitian government to manage integrated public financial information. Such a system will support, added Tuebner, "transparent management of public expenditure and receipts."

Tuebner also justified these contributions by the fact that "one of the great constraints to stability, progress, and security of a people, resides in the weakness of the governments to resolve the plagues which constitute corruption, money laundering, illegal drug trafficking and poverty".

In the latest global corruption classification published by the Berlin based Transparency International (TI) Organisation, Haiti appears at the bottom of the list along side Burma and Iraq. According to the TI report, corruption in these three countries is perceived as endemic.

However, referring to his recent book "Haiti : The Quartered Nation ", the Haitian economist Fritz Déshommes, vice-rector of the Haitian State University, made the point that Haiti does not have the material capacity to deserve the title of " world champion of corruption ". According to him, the classification is the work of "international image makers", but admits that corruption is worrying in Haiti and that it should be fought vigorously.

Growing Concern Over Haitian Criminal Element

By Candia Dames

The Bahama Journal

November 13, 2006

Commissioner of Police Paul Farquharson said on Sunday that there are growing concerns about the Haitian criminal element in The Bahamas.

It's why local authorities are seeking to forge partnerships with Haitian law enforcement authorities, he said.

Mr. Farquharson spoke at a press conference along with Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of National Security Cynthia Pratt at her downtown Nassau office on Sunday afternoon.

Mrs. Pratt said the problem of the Haitian element in crime in The Bahamas is indeed a growing concern.

"This is something that has bothered us and really the police are concerned about the criminal element emanating out of Haiti coming to The Bahamas," she said.

Mrs. Pratt and Mr. Farquharson were giving a report on their trip to Haiti last week, during which time they met with the Haitian president, prime minister, justice minister, commissioner of police and other officials to establish law enforcement contacts and arrange training programmes in The Bahamas for Haitian police officers.

The deputy prime minister said if Haiti does a better job at training its police officers it would benefit The Bahamas.

"The Bahamas then would be a safe Bahamas," she said. "We believe that if there's a safe Haiti we would have a safe Bahamas in this regard."

Mr. Farquharson said Bahamian authorities want to have more insight into criminal activity emanating from Haiti and are seeking to establish the necessary intelligence links in that regard.

"We would be in a better position to fight those activities," he said.

Their trip coincided with the seizure of a large quantity of drugs from a Haitian vessel in the Nassau Harbour last week.

Mrs. Pratt announced that the Haitian commissioner of police will visit The Bahamas next month and four Haitian officers will come to The Bahamas in January for training at the Police College.

While in Haiti, she and Mr. Farquharson, along with the rest of the Bahamian delegation, toured the Haitian police academy and noted what they said were certain deficiencies.

Mr. Farquharson said his trip to Haiti was the first time a Bahamian commissioner of police traveled to that nation in such a capacity. He said his team will push community policing in Haiti through the Urban Renewal Project.

"It's so powerful and the many social problems that emanate in Haiti...certainly it would be an ideal tool to address some of those problems," he said.

The deputy prime minister also pointed to the benefits of community policing, and she said the Royal Bahamas Police Force was also training officers from the Turks and Caicos Islands and Montserrat.

"The community policing is so powerful because it addresses the problem before it gets to a certain level, and so if we are able to nip it in the bud, so to speak, then the problem won't face us to the level where we're talking about lives being taken," she said.

**Dominican Republic president urges help for
Press Release
Relief Web
Source: Counterpart International, Inc.
12 Nov 2006**

WASHINGTON, DC – Noting the importance of stability on the Caribbean island of Hispaniola, the president of the Dominican Republic has urged international attention to the problems of Haiti, its neighbour.

Speaking at Counterpart International's headquarters in Washington DC, President Leonel Fernández, enjoying his second term as president of the nation which shares the island of Hispaniola with Haiti, said he had urged US President George W. Bush to "help Haiti in any way you can."

A stable and secure Haiti, added President Fernández, whose brilliant political career included schooling in New York City, "helps the United States better fight illicit drugs, terrorism and threats to national security."

President Fernández, a strong supporter of non-governmental organizations, told leaders of non-profit development organizations gathered at Counterpart headquarters this month that Haiti is a top priority for the Dominican Republic. Stressing the importance of a peaceful and democratic Haiti, the president noted the conflict in Haiti has produced an influx of Haitians and a conflict of people in the Dominican Republic. He added, "we do not want to build a fence" separating his country from Haiti.

Asserting it "may have been a mistake" to disband the military, he said the police cannot handle the security challenges in Haiti. He urged the international community to be more involved because President René Préval "cannot do it alone ... we hope Haiti can turn around economically. There is a need for infrastructure. The World Bank and the IDB (Inter-American Development Bank) need to perform on their pledges for Haiti." President Fernández did praise Brazil's President Lula da Silva for committing resources to a more active role in Haiti. "Tensions had to be dealt with in an intelligent way," he added.

In an effort to normalize relations between the island neighbours, President Fernández and President Préval had entered bilateral agreements aimed at harmonizing border control, drug trafficking, and other critical issues.

Commending President Fernández on his commitment to the stabilization of his poorer neighbour, Lelei LeLaulu, president of Counterpart International, recalled asking the newly-re-elected president two years ago to name the three top external priorities for his new administration and being told: "Haiti, Haiti and Haiti."

Haiti remains the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere and one of the poorest in the world. Haiti now ranks 153rd of 177 countries in the 2005 United Nations Human Development Index. About 80% of the population lives in abject poverty.

Counterpart International works closely with FUNGLODE, the Global Foundation for Democracy and Development, on Coral Gardens conservation and other programs. FUNGLODE, a leading non-profit development organization, was set up by President Fernández when he was a private citizen.

Stop denigrating Haiti
Myrtha Désulmé, Contributor
The Jamaica Gleaner
Sunday, November 12, 2006

The Citadelle Laferriere, declared a UN World Heritage Site, is sometimes described as the world's eighth wonder.

Last year, as I started to focus on the integration of Haiti into CARICOM, I decided that this was a momentous event, which was fraught with a great number of challenges, and that I, as a Haitian-Jamaican with a legacy in business and politics, had a duty to play my part in facilitating the process of integration, by attempting to introduce Haitians and Jamaicans to each other's cultures, and fostering links between my two homelands.

To this end, I founded, along with John Maxwell, Cecil Gutzmore, and some other friends and scholars, who have an abiding love for, and interest in, Haiti, an association called the Haiti-Jamaica Society.

Mindful of the fact that the first battle in any war has to be waged for the hearts and minds of the people involved, and conscious that it would take a tremendous uphill battle to counter the centuries of disinformation, vilification, denigration, malignment and consequent prejudice, which existed against Haiti, I decided to write an article, which would marshal and highlight every positive fact and notion, in prose or in verse, about Haiti and its integration into CARICOM, intent as I was on convincing the readership of the wonderful new world of possibilities, which this integration afforded all parties.

Fast forward to a few weeks later, as I sat on my balcony, enjoying a bright and sunny Sunday morning, with a cup of coffee and my Sunday papers. Upon opening The Gleaner, I very nearly fell out of my lounge chair, when I came across my own article ('CARICOM and Haiti: The Raising of the Caribbean's Iron Curtain', October 8, 2006).

Depressing photograph

I was floored to find my 'feel good' article drowned by the most depressing photograph dominating the entire page. The photo depicted a Haitian orphanage, wherein sat a miserable woman, in the most squalid of surroundings, holding an infant on her lap, and flanked by two naked babies, while a hungry and forlorn-looking toddler stood in the forefront - the very image of destitution and abject poverty itself.

I was appalled, owing to my conviction that the picture, being worth a thousand words, had single-handedly torpedoed every word of hope and optimism, which I had so laboriously garnered, by eliciting in the readership the self-same visceral prejudices, which the article sought to counter. When I inquired from the relevant party, what could possibly have inspired the choice of such a disheartening photograph, I was told that searching for a recent picture of Haiti, they had come up with the photo in question, freshly received from Reuters.

Squalor and violence

As I hung up the phone, I reflected on the incident. I realised at that moment, that the problem was much bigger and ran much deeper than I thought. This went far beyond the selection of the particular individual who had actually chosen the picture. It was clear to me that a copy editor in any given news room, searching for a picture of Haiti, would probably be very hard put to find a pleasant one, because news photographers only go to Haiti to record images of disaster, chaos, squalor and violence.

I also realised, then and there, that more important than the cultural, linguistic, judicial, economic, social and political obstacles to be overcome, in order to achieve a successful integration of Haiti into CARICOM, was the deconstruction and reversal of the centuries of systematic vilification.

Let us examine what has brought on this irrational state of affairs. The methodical denigration of Haiti by the media is a 200 year-old tradition, which stems from the campaign of ostracism led by the U.S. and the European powers, appalled and terrified by the success of the Haitian revolution. In Haiti's Impact on the United States Greg Dunkel writes:

"The U.S. bourgeoisie, which was in large part a slavocracy, was completely shocked that the enslaved Africans of Haiti could organise themselves, rise up, smash the old order, kill their masters, and set up a new state, that was able to maintain its independence."

Major threat

This rebellion, which was inconceivable in a political framework totally saturated with racism and the denigration of people of African ancestry, was also a major threat to the existence of the slavocracy. 'The slaves of Haiti had embarked upon an irreversible revolutionary course' Petrified slave owners fled to Cuba, Jamaica, New Orleans, and the United States, the closest havens.

The U.S. press was filled with lurid stories about the 'chaos' that gripped the island, the satanic rites that drove slaves into a rampaging frenzy of destruction, about white slave owners fighting for their lives.

The shadow of St. Domingue haunted the southern press. As early as 1794, the Columbia Herald of South Carolina ran a series of articles drawing the lessons of the slave insurrection. The southern states followed the lead of the Spanish colonies in banning the importation of slaves from St. Domingue, to prevent their enslaved people from learning about Black emancipation and Jacobin ideas of republican government. So terrified were slave owners that some states briefly barred the importation of slaves from anywhere.

Whether the major U.S. slave insurrections led by Gabriel Prosser in 1800, Denmark Vessey in 1822, Nat Turner in 1831, and John Brown in 1859, were inspired by the Haitian Revolution is an open question, but both the abolitionists in the North and the slave-owners' press in the South analysed them in that context.

Profitable institution

"For over 70 years, Haiti was the example that Southern slave owners raised to defend their peculiar and profitable institution against abolition, even to the last days of the Civil War. The image of slaves breaking their chains was burned into their consciousness. (After John Brown's bold attempt in 1859, to seize the arsenal and armoury at Harpers Ferry in Virginia), the Southern press resurrected the themes of the Haitian revolution in lurid, emotionally charged articles, as if these were fresh events, not 60 to 70 years in the past. Even during the Civil War, Confederate propaganda used Haiti as an example of how the Confederacy was needed to protect white families from the evils of Jacobinism and abolition."

This is what the great Black leader, orator, author, and escaped slave, Frederick Douglass had to say about Haiti, in a speech in 1893:

"While slavery existed amongst us, her example was a sharp thorn in our side and a source of alarm and terror. She came into the sisterhood of nations through blood. She was described at the time of her advent, as a very hell of horrors. Her very name was pronounced with a shudder. She was a startling and frightful surprise, and a threat to all slave-holders throughout the world, and the slave-holding world has had its questioning eye upon her career ever since."

We have witnessed in our times the many U.S. efforts to overthrow the Cuban revolution through economic sabotage, blockades, sanctions, encirclement, and military aid for invasions. All of these same tactics were used against the Haitian revolution in an age when Haiti had no allies, and survived in extreme isolation. Even after the American Civil War, which resulted in the Emancipation Proclamation, it remained crucial for the international media to maintain that a black state could not govern itself. Hence, the ongoing propaganda and demonisation.

The name of Haiti is seldom called without the auditor being duly informed that it is indeed "the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere", so infallibly in fact, that one would almost think that that was part of its name.

I have always been disturbed by the fact that the Caribbean media, which one would have expected to be more discerning on the subject than the international media, has not only swallowed the prejudice lock, stock and barrel, but has also created its own tradition of denigration.

I want to hold the media morally accountable, and ask it to subject itself to a critical appraisal of its motives. The actions which we undertake in order to carry out our grander purposes should be based upon the most critical moral reflection. We need to ensure that the unrestricted freedom of expression, which is the prerogative and foundation of an effective media, is not misused to create a parallel universe, which segregates those of us who benefit from this freedom of expression, from those of us who are victimised by it. More often than not, we find that the truth is precisely in what is not said.

Myrtha Désulmé is the President of the Haiti-Jamaica Society.

Haiti's vicious circle of violence and poverty

Reuters

Monday, November 13, 2006

LONDON, England: "They like to shoot people in the hips so they will never walk again. They like to shoot people in the eyes so they can never see again. We've had people come in here with bullets lodged in their eyeballs," says Brian Moller, an Australian working at an emergency hospital run by Medecins Sans Frontieres in Haiti. He's talking about the gangs which, after a period of relative calm, are terrorising the country's capital once again, according to Canada's Toronto Star newspaper.

Kidnappings, which have become an almost daily occurrence, are usually not politically inspired, but carried out by criminals who sometimes murder their victims even if a ransom is paid.

The United Nations with its 6,500-strong force in Haiti believes there are no more than 700 heavily armed gang members in the Port-au-Prince slums. But their advantage is that they know the terrain, so even when U.N. patrols go after them, the international soldiers are more of a target than a force to be reckoned with.

"Please pray for change in my country," pleads Jean-Yves Vigue, a protestant pastor and victim of a vicious gang attack, in the Toronto Star. "All the youth of my country are armed and they have no pity."

After his family fled to the United States, Vigue continued with his work providing potable water in Cite Soleil, one of the capital's most dangerous slums. But that came to an abrupt stop one morning after he was shot in the stomach at his home.

Haiti suffers from a vicious circle in which a lack of security impedes investment and job creation, in turn inspiring more violence.

The United Nations, in collaboration with the government, is trying hard to break at least one of the links in this chain. Under a new initiative, it's offering around \$50 a month to those who hand in their weapons. This may not seem much, but it's a small fortune in a country where half the population lives on less than a dollar a day. The campaign has enjoyed some patchy success, according to the paper.

Disarmament is just one area of focus for Haitian president Rene Preval, who's engaged in a bid to build Haiti from scratch. Constructing roads - in a country where there are only 626 miles (1,007 km) of paved roads, according to CIA statistics - is another. "Without roads, there cannot be development," the Washington Post quotes Preval as saying. Fixing roads that have "jacuzzi-size potholes" will speed up travel and help farmers get their produce to market.

The international community provides Haitians with nearly all their basic services, from medical care and hot meals for schoolchildren to security on the streets. This means donors also set the agenda and determine spending plans. But Preval hopes to change this: "Eventually the government needs to take control of the NGOs...so that people are not doing a bunch of things without oversight. They have to do things in conjunction with the government."

Haiti won't accept convict from U.S.

UPI

November 9, 2006

MIAMI, -- Haiti says it will not accept back on its shores a Haitian man stripped of his U.S. citizenship after serving a lengthy prison sentence for drug dealing.

Haiti's consul general in Miami, Ralph Latortue, said convicted felon Lionel Jean-Baptiste cannot be sent back to the Caribbean nation because it is forbidden by the Haitian constitution, the Miami Herald reported Thursday.

"Once he renounced his Haitian citizenship, he no longer was a Haitian citizen and we cannot give him travel papers," said Latortue. "According to our constitution, he is not entitled to have a Haitian document. As soon as he opted for another nationality, he automatically lost the Haitian nationality."

Jean-Baptiste is the first naturalized U.S. citizen ordered deported in almost 45 years.

Haiti denies repatriation of convict

The fate of a Haitian-born U.S. citizen convicted of a felony and ordered deported is in limbo, now that Haiti says it won't take him back.

BY ALFONSO CHARDY

Miami Herald

November 9, 2006

Haiti has formally advised the United States it will not take back a Haitian-born man stripped of his U.S. citizenship after a Miami federal jury convicted him of drug-trafficking.

Ralph Latortue, the Haitian consul general in Miami, told The Miami Herald Wednesday that he had notified U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement last week, advising the agency his government will not allow Lionel Jean-Baptiste to return because the Haitian constitution prohibits it.

"Once he renounced his Haitian citizenship, he no longer was a Haitian citizen and we cannot give him travel papers," said Latortue. "According to our constitution, he is not entitled to have a Haitian document. As soon as he opted for another nationality, he automatically lost the Haitian nationality."

The decision marks yet another chapter in the convoluted Jean-Baptiste saga. He fled Haiti in 1980 aboard a refugee boat that sank near South Florida.

Locked up at Krome, Jean-Baptiste eventually was released, became a resident and then a U.S. citizen -- but was convicted of drug-trafficking and stripped of citizenship after the U.S. Supreme Court refused to hear his case last year.

He is the first denaturalized American ordered deported after a drug conviction since an Italian also was ordered deported after his U.S. citizenship was revoked in 1962 following a drug conviction. That case, known in legal circles as Matter of Rossi, was cited in Jean-Baptiste's immigration court proceedings as the basis for ordering his deportation.

The U.S. government can try to change Haiti's stance by appealing to higher authorities in Port-au-Prince, or try to find a third country willing to take Jean-Baptiste.

If that fails, U.S. immigration authorities will have to release Jean-Baptiste -- unless officials classify him a danger to the community. A 2001 U.S. Supreme Court ruling bars indefinite detention for non citizens who cannot be deported, though it exempts cases of "special circumstance."

Barbara Gonzalez, a Miami spokeswoman for U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, said: "The case is still under review. Our obligation as a law enforcement agency is to carry out orders of removal as issued by immigration judges."

The Jean-Baptiste case departs from the norm in which immigration officials revoke naturalized Americans' citizenship if they are found to have lied about a criminal record or some other material fact.

Jean-Baptiste, 58, did not lie when he applied for citizenship in October 1994. He swore allegiance to the United States in April 1996.

About six months later, Jean-Baptiste was charged with trafficking in crack cocaine. He went to trial and was found guilty in January 1997 and served seven years in prison.

In 2002, immigration authorities moved to revoke Jean-Baptiste's citizenship.

In June, after Jean-Baptiste had been out of prison almost two years, U.S. immigration agents detained him and sent him to Krome for deportation proceedings. U.S. immigration Judge Kenneth S. Hurewitz on Sept. 12 ordered Jean-Baptiste deported to Haiti.

Three weeks ago, Latortue first told U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement that his government would not issue travel papers.

Latortue said the government based its refusal on the 19-year-old Haitian constitution.

The immigration agency asked Latortue to reconsider. He contacted the Haitian foreign minister, who then asked the ministry's legal department to research the issue. The answer remained the same.

Haiti refuses return of convicted drug dealer

BY ALFONSO CHARDY

Miami Herald

November 8, 2006

Haiti has formally advised the United States it will not take back a Haitian-born man stripped of his U.S. citizenship after a Miami federal jury convicted him of drug-trafficking.

Ralph Latortue, the Haitian consul general in Miami, told The Miami Herald Wednesday that he notified U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement last week, advising the agency his government will not allow Lionel Jean-Baptiste to return because the Haitian constitution prohibits it.

"Once he renounced his Haitian citizenship, he no longer was a Haitian citizen and we cannot give him travel papers," said Latortue. "According to our constitution, he is not entitled to have a Haitian document. As soon as he opted for another nationality, he automatically lost the Haitian nationality."

The decision marks yet another chapter in the convoluted Jean-Baptiste saga. He fled Haiti in 1980 aboard a refugee boat that sank near South Florida.

Locked up at Krome, Jean-Baptiste was eventually released, became a resident and then a U.S. citizen -- but was convicted of drug-trafficking and stripped of citizenship after the U.S. Supreme Court refused to hear his case last year.

He is the first denaturalized American ordered deported after a drug conviction in more than 40 years, since an Italian was ordered deported after his U.S. citizenship was revoked in 1962 following a drug conviction. That case, known in legal circles as Matter of Rossi, was cited in Jean-Baptiste's immigration court proceedings as the basis for ordering his deportation.

The U.S. government can now try to change Haiti's stance by appealing to higher authorities in Port-au-Prince, or try to find a third country willing to take Jean-Baptiste.

If that fails, U.S. immigration authorities will have to release Jean-Baptiste -- unless officials classify him a danger to the community. A 2001 U.S. Supreme Court ruling bars indefinite detention for non citizens who cannot be deported, though it exempts cases of "special circumstance."

Barbara Gonzalez, a Miami spokeswoman for U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, said: "The case is still under review. Our obligation as a law enforcement agency is to carry out orders of removal as issued by immigration judges."

The Jean-Baptiste case departs from the norm, in which immigration officials revoke naturalized Americans' citizenship if they are found to have lied about a criminal record or some other material fact.

Jean-Baptiste, 58, did not lie when he applied for citizenship in October 1994. He swore allegiance to the United States in April 1996.

About six months later, Jean-Baptiste was charged with trafficking in crack cocaine. He went to trial and was found guilty in January 1997 and served seven years in prison.

In 2002, immigration authorities moved to revoke Jean-Baptiste's citizenship.

In June, after Jean-Baptiste had been out of prison almost two years, U.S. immigration agents detained him and sent him to Krome for deportation proceedings. U.S. immigration Judge Kenneth S. Hurewitz on Sept. 12 ordered Jean-Baptiste deported to Haiti.

Three weeks ago, Latortue first told U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement that his government would not issue travel papers. Latortue said the government based its refusal on the 19-year-old Haitian constitution.

The immigration agency asked Latortue to reconsider. He contacted the Haitian foreign minister who then asked the ministry's legal department to research the issue. The answer remained the same.

Haiti's vicious circle of violence and poverty

AlertNet

10 Nov 2006

"They like to shoot people in the hips so they will never walk again. They like to shoot people in the eyes so they can never see again. We've had people come in here with bullets lodged in their eyeballs," says Brian Moller, an Australian working at an emergency hospital run by Medecins Sans Frontieres in Haiti. He's talking about the gangs which, after a period of relative calm, are terrorising the country's capital once again, according to Canada's Toronto Star newspaper.

Kidnappings, which have become an almost daily occurrence, are usually not politically inspired, but carried out by criminals who sometimes murder their victims even if a ransom is paid.

The United Nations with its 6,500-strong force in Haiti believes there are no more than 700 heavily armed gang members in the Port-au-Prince slums. But their advantage is that they know the terrain, so even when U.N. patrols go after them, the international soldiers are more of a target than a force to be reckoned with.

"Please pray for change in my country," pleads Jean-Yves Vigue, a protestant pastor and victim of a vicious gang attack, in the Toronto Star. "All the youth of my country are armed and they have no pity."

After his family fled to the United States, Vigue continued with his work providing potable water in Cite Soleil, one of the capital's most dangerous slums. But that came to an abrupt stop one morning after he was shot in the stomach at his home.

Haiti suffers from a vicious circle in which a lack of security impedes investment and job creation, in turn inspiring more violence.

The United Nations, in collaboration with the government, is trying hard to break at least one of the links in this chain. Under a new initiative, it's offering around \$50 a month to those who hand in their weapons. This may not seem much, but it's a small fortune in a country where half the population lives on less than a dollar a day. The campaign has enjoyed some patchy success, according to the paper.

Disarmament is just one area of focus for Haitian president Rene Preval, who's engaged in a bid to build Haiti from scratch. Constructing roads - in a country where there are only 626 miles (1,007 km) of paved roads, according to CIA statistics - is another. "Without roads, there cannot be development," the Washington Post quotes Preval as saying. Fixing roads that have "jacuzzi-size potholes" will speed up travel and help farmers get their produce to market.

The international community provides Haitians with nearly all their basic services, from medical care and hot meals for schoolchildren to security on the streets. This means donors also set the agenda and determine spending plans. But Preval hopes to change this: "Eventually the government needs to take control of the NGOs...so that people are not doing a bunch of things without oversight. They have to do things in conjunction with the government."

To view the Toronto Star's audio slideshow of violence in Haiti, [click here](#). The paper also has a slideshow depicting the aftermath of a kidnapping in Port-au-Prince.

Clowns Without Borders in Haiti

10 Nov 2006

Source: WFP

As the stereo blasts out music, the clowns enter the schoolyard. Some of the children have never seen such a sight and run to the nuns for comfort.

Three clowns from the Spanish branch of the NGO Clowns without Borders (Payasos sin Fronteras) are in town to offer laughter as an outlet to Haiti's children.

They will allow the 525 kids of Jean Paul II School in the Tabarre suburb of Port-au-Prince to forget the tensions that darken their daily lives in a country which is the poorest in the western hemisphere and has been marred by decades of political and social unrest.

Most of the children sit completely spellbound for the next couple of hours and watch the clowns as the show unfolds.

Tricks

They burst out laughing as one of them repeatedly falls over her massive shoes and applaud loudly as another makes a handkerchief disappear just to make it reappear from the pocket of one of the school boys' trousers.

With the support of the Spanish Cooperation in Haiti, the three Clowns without Borders are touring some 20 schools throughout Haiti – the majority of them supported by WFP through its school feeding activity.

School feeding, to which Spanish Cooperation is an important donor, allows school children to have one nutritious meal a day.

Improved attendance

The meals make school more attractive, boost enrolment, promote regular attendance and enhance the performances of the 290,000 primary schoolchildren fed by WFP in Haiti.

Haiti's education sector is one of the least developed in the world. More than one third of school-aged children have no access to school. On a national level, it is estimated that about 500,000 children have no basic education.

Even though food and education are important cornerstones for the future of a child, there are other children's rights that are as equally important, such as the right to laughter and the right to play, according to the Spanish Cooperation.

Dreams

Sister Perpétue Noël, head of Jean Paul II, agrees: “This is a rare moment of happiness and dreams for these children who come from very difficult neighbourhoods. Look how happy they are. It is good for their health.”

After almost two hours, the show is over and the clowns get surrounded by kids all eager to pull on their red noses.

It is the first time that Paul Kemsey, 13, has met a clown: “You have to promise that you will bring them back here. They have to come back. Many, many times.”

Deeply fascinated by the magical handkerchief, 11-year-old Samantina Gabriel wants to know how it is possible to make it disappear and to make it change colour.

“It’s simple,” explains one of the clowns, “the only thing you need to do is to work real hard. As you do in school”.

Warning on Flood Danger in Haiti
Prensa Latina
November 9, 2006

Port-au-Prince, Inhabitants of several towns in northern Haiti demanded the intervention of local authorities Thursday to face floods caused by rivers threatening to devastate agricultural land and populated areas.

Some inhabitants said they live "in the most absolute fear, since the floods October 24 to 26, because of strong winds, accompanied by a tropical wave."

An official report issued in the last hours said that a similar wave is stationary off the south of Haiti since Wednesday.

The waters of several Haitian rivers, particularly the Mancelle River, flooded the whole region at the end of October, and two people disappeared, while there was damage to houses.

Now, 34 zones of the region of Gros Morne are in danger and exposed to landslides, without conditions to cope with floods.

The reports also called attention to the vulnerability of dikes protecting the coast.

Early Sex Initiation and AIDS
Diógenes Pina
Inter Press Service News Agency
November 9, 2006

SANTO DOMINGO,- Early sexual initiation and a lack of prevention policies are sowing the seeds of AIDS proliferation, warns a UNICEF study carried out at locations straddling the border between the Dominican Republic and Haiti.

Field surveys at Ouanaminthe (Wanamant), a Haitian town 245 kilometres from Port-au-Prince, and Dajabón, 300 kilometres from Santo Domingo, found that 61.9 percent of those interviewed said they knew an HIV-carrier, 30.3 percent had a friend who was infected, and 14.6 percent had a close relative living with HIV.

The study by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the community organisation Catholic Relief Services also found that 93 percent of those interviewed had heard about AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases.

The aim of the research was, in effect, to determine knowledge and perception of the risk of infection with HIV/AIDS among children and adolescents in these two towns, located on one of the border crossings between Haiti and the Dominican Republic. They were chosen as a sample to represent the scope of the health problem among young people on the Caribbean island of Hispaniola, shared by the two countries.

Tad Palac, the UNICEF representative in Santo Domingo, warned that if preventive action against HIV/AIDS is not taken now, the consequences will have to be paid for later.

At the public presentation of the survey, Palac said there was an urgent need to reinforce strategies for the prevention of HIV infection and to increase investment in this priority area.

He highlighted other efforts to fight the AIDS pandemic, such as workshops and publications, but said that it was necessary to go further and ask how many young people were being influenced to postpone their first sexual experience.

Palac's concern arises from a key result of the study. Nearly 27 percent of teenagers aged 10 to 17 from both survey areas said they had already had sexual intercourse.

The Baseline Survey on Knowledge, Attitudes and Practices of Sexual Health and HIV/AIDS among 1,302 boys, girls and adolescents in Dajabón and Wanament found that, out of the 26.9 percent of respondents who had had sexual relations, 27.8 percent said they had their first such experience before the age of 10.

Another central result was that barely 11 percent of the youngsters interviewed had used protection during sexual intercourse.

The behaviour of those interviewed was different according to their place of origin, the study found. In Dajabón, only 8.8 percent had experience of sexual intercourse, while in Ouanaminthe the proportion was 45.6 percent.

The representative of Catholic Relief Services said at the Nov. 1 presentation of the study that adolescence and youth were preparative stages for the future, and that the survey data were food for thought for institutions working with children, to focus more of their action on working with children's biological and foster families.

About 3,000 Dominican children suffer from AIDS, and another 33,000 have been orphaned by the disease.

Adult HIV prevalence is estimated at 1.7 percent in the Dominican Republic, which has a population of 8.5 million. According to official records, 2,490 Dominicans needed antiretroviral therapy for advanced stages of AIDS last year. This number represents 26 percent of all those who required antiretroviral medicines.

In contrast, in Haiti which has a population of eight million, HIV prevalence among adults is 5.6 percent, the highest rate of infection in the world outside of Africa, as the study authors confirmed.

The number of people in the Caribbean region affected by the HIV/AIDS pandemic is estimated by international organisations at around 430,000, 2.3 percent of the adult population. But 85 percent of these cases are concentrated in the Dominican Republic and Haiti.

That is the reason why projects that include both countries must be carried out, in order to attack the root causes of the problem directly, UNICEF and Catholic Relief Services stated in the introduction to the study.

The survey sample was taken from schoolchildren aged 10 to 17 years in June 2005, attending San Martín de Porres and La Altagracia schools in Dajabón, and Toussaint L'Ouverture and La Estrella schools in Ouanaminthe.

Questionnaires were also sent to the directors of health services in the two border towns, asking how many HIV tests had been carried out in the last year, and how many positive cases were found. Out of 1,224 people tested in Dajabón, 86 were HIV positive (7.0 percent), while in Ouanaminthe, 277 people were infected out of the 2,808 studied (9.8 percent). (END/2006)

Haiti, Iraq rated as most corrupt
Reuters
November 6, 2006

BERLIN, Germany -- Iraq, racked by violence since the 2003 U.S.-led invasion, and impoverished Haiti, Myanmar and Guinea are ranked as the most corrupt countries in the world in a new survey.

Finland, Iceland and New Zealand are ranked as the least corrupt, with Denmark, Singapore and Sweden just behind.

Berlin-based corruption watchdog Transparency International (TI) ranks 163 countries based on perceived levels of corruption among public officials and politicians in its 2006 Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI).

Haiti, the poorest country in the Americas, was ranked last, just below Iraq, Myanmar and Guinea, reflecting what TI said was a high correlation between violence, poverty and corruption.

"This survey suggests that corruption in Iraq is very bad," TI Chief Executive David Nussbaum told Reuters.

"When you have high levels of violence, not only does security break down, but so do checks and balances, law enforcement and the functioning of institutions like the judiciary and legislature. If all that is under strain the very system that works to prevent corruption is undermined."

Iraq has suffered rising sectarian violence and bloodshed since the invasion, heaping pressure on U.S. President George W. Bush ahead of congressional elections on Tuesday.

Nussbaum pointed to U.S. engineering giant Bechtel Corp's decision last week to pull out of Iraq as a sign of how bad the security situation had become. Fifty-two Bechtel employees have been killed in Iraq since 2003.

Haiti is plagued by armed gangs despite the presence of U.N. forces brought in after the 2004 ousting of former President Jean-Bertrand Aristide.

Just ahead of Haiti and Iraq at the bottom of the rankings, stood Sudan, Democratic Republic of Congo, Chad and Bangladesh.

Worsening ratings

TI said several countries had a significant worsening of their ratings, including Brazil, Cuba, Israel, Jordan, Laos, Seychelles, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia and the United States.

Countries which saw a major improvement included Algeria, the Czech Republic, India, Japan, Latvia, Lebanon, Mauritius, Paraguay, Slovenia, Turkey, Turkmenistan and Uruguay.

Nussbaum, noting the recent Enron trial, said U.S. court cases had highlighted the scale of corruption there and may have contributed to the deterioration in the U.S. score. The United States was ranked 20th, next to Belgium and Chile.

Enron's former chief executive Jeff Skilling was sentenced last month to 24 years in prison after being found guilty of defrauding investors by using off-the-books deals to hide debt and inflate profits. Once the seventh largest U.S. firm, Enron collapsed into bankruptcy in 2001 when the deals were disclosed.

Fort Pierce company fined over coral rock
By SARAH PROHASKA
Palm Beach Post
Wednesday, November 08, 2006

A Fort Pierce-based aquarium supply company must make a \$25,000 "community service payment" to help a coral nursery program after it was accused of illegally importing more than 42,000 pounds of protected coral rock from Haiti.

Both Carib Sea Inc., and its president Richard Greenfield, 46, of Fort Pierce, pleaded guilty in federal court in Miami on Tuesday to a charge of not having the proper permit when the company attempted in March to import into Miami a cargo-container load of coral rock, which federal prosecutors say has a market value of about \$75,000.

Betsey Moore, vice president of Carib Sea, on Wednesday stressed the rock the company tried to import was mined from land and not the ocean. She said it's used in construction and decorative material for aquariums.

She said the company is very "ecologically minded," and it made a mistake by not having the correct permit to import the coral rock.

"I want to stress this was coral rock and not coral. There's a huge difference," Moore said. "It's perfectly legal with a simple permit, which we've obtained since." U.S. Magistrate Judge Marcia Cooke sentenced both Greenfield and Carib Sea to three years of probation. The company must pay \$25,000 to the South Florida National Park Trust to help pay for a coral nursery program in Biscayne National Park. Greenfield also must pay a \$25,000 fine.

The company also was ordered to publish notices in three publications related to the aquarium trade explaining how it violated the requirements of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora.

All types of coral rock are covered under those requirements, established when 150 counties banded together to provide protection to a variety of species, prosecutors said. To legally import coral rock into the U.S., the importer must show the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service proper permits and documentation, according to prosecutors.

The coral rock involved in this case will be turned over to Harbor Branch Oceanographic Institute, and Moore said it will probably be broken down and used in conch study projects.

"This was a very expensive mistake for us," Moore said. "We've been in business for 35 years and have no other marks on our record."

Crime, chaos in Haiti

Nov. 5, 2006

TIM HARPER

The Toronto Star

Port-au-Prince.

They came calling at the Termonfice residence late in the afternoon, carrying with them enough bravado and heavy weaponry that they saw no need to wait for the cover nightfall would bring.

Vengeance was their goal and 17-year-old Achlin Termonfice was their intended prey.

Fifteen of them, some as young as 13, wielding pistols and long guns, quickly scaled the craggy rock and garbage-strewn path up to the one-room shack in search of the teenager.

When they discovered their target had fled, they took a consolation prize.

They snatched Achel Julien, the youth's middle-aged aunt, firing their weapons to chase away onlookers and dragging the screaming woman down the blind alleys and hairpin turns of the slum known as Ti Bois.

They vowed to return to burn down the shack under cover of Port-au-Prince's inky, humid night.

Julien Termonfice, mother of Achlin and sister of the abducted Achel, let out intermittent wails as she told her story of the attack. Her face contorted in grief, she said her son was not a gang member and might have been targeted for his reluctance to become one.

Five-year-old Jose said nothing, his eyes wide with fear and wonder at the commotion around him.

He had just watched his mother's abduction.

Chronicling this tragedy, their guns drawn for what would prove to be a futile search, is a United Nations patrol composed of 29-year-old Patrick Tremblay, a highway patrol officer for the Sûreté du Québec, his Filipino partner Freddie Ergo, two Haitian police officers, a handful of Sri Lankan peacekeepers and a heavily armed Nigerian SWAT team.

Here in Ti Bois, says Tremblay, "they don't kidnap for money — they kidnap to kill."

The peacekeepers in Ti Bois this day are among the 6,500 UN troops currently in Haiti, members of a stabilization force known by its French acronym, MINUSTAH. They patrol Port-au-Prince, setting up checkpoints in areas where gangs trade gunfire by night and do murder and abductions in broad daylight.

MINUSTAH troops come from Benin, Nigeria, Brazil, Jordan, Sri Lanka and a number of other nations. But not Canada.

The Canadian presence here is limited to fewer than 100 police officers, at a cost of \$20 million, as part of the 1,600-strong UNPOL program to rebuild a Haitian police force that has been stripped of essential equipment and is shot through with corruption.

The Canadians' mandate is to "coach, advise and train," meaning they have little investigative power.

When 450 Canadian troops, support personnel and six CH-146 Griffon helicopters packed up and left two years ago, Gen. Rick Hillier, chief of defence staff, assured the Paul Martin government they could return if needed.

Canadians could also head to Darfur if required, he said.

But the Afghanistan mission has eaten up the assurances.

Haiti is not engulfed in a traditional or insurgent war, the types of conflict in Iraq or Afghanistan with which the world is familiar.

Some call it an urban war.

With no security here, there can be no investment.

No investment, no jobs.

No jobs, more violence — and the cycle continues.

There are an estimated 200,000 privately owned guns in Haiti now, but the UN thinks there are no more than 700 heavily armed gangsters in the capital's slums.

According to the leading Haitian human rights organization, the National Human Rights Defence Network, 150 civilians and 11 police officers were killed in May and June of this year.

July and August showed a significant spike in murders and kidnappings, with attacks and shootings reported even in the hills of Petionville, the relatively secure enclave of Port-au-Prince.

Twenty-one residents were massacred in Gran Ravine on one night of terror in July and nine bodies were found dumped in that area one morning during the last week of September.

The emergency ward at the downtown Médecins Sans Frontières hospital treated more than 200 gunshot wounds in July.

In August, there were more than 100 reported kidnappings, but the number was likely twice that because relatives of the victims often negotiate with the kidnappers themselves, avoiding the police.

In Haiti, even missions of mercy are often an invitation to violence.

"Please pray for change in my country," urges Protestant pastor Jean-Yves Vigue, victim of a vicious attack in his suburban home. "All the youth of my country are armed and they have no pity."

Vigue sent his family to safety in the United States but stayed on because he thought the work he was doing, delivering potable water in the notorious Cité Soleil slum, was too important to abandon.

The water deliveries ended when a gunman burst into his Croix-des-Bouquets home at 3 a.m. and pumped a couple of rounds into his stomach.

Today, Vigue lies in a sweltering hospital recovery room filled with gunshot victims, moaning in pain, his face bathed in sweat, seeking international help for his country but despairing of the future.

"I was targeted because I am a preacher and I help people and I am radically against violence," he says.

Vigue doesn't think there are enough police and troops to protect the people.

"When one gang chief is dead, 200 more are there to take his place and they are even more dangerous," he says.

The kidnappings here have become sloppier — acts of desperate criminals, not political ideologues — and failure to pay a ransom is usually met with murder.

Sometimes, even paid ransoms are met with murder.

"Some are very innovative with firearms," says Brian Moller, an Australian who is the director of nursing at the emergency hospital operated by Médecins Sans Frontières.

"They like to shoot people in the hips so they will never walk again. They like to shoot people in the eyes so they can never see again. We've had people come in here with bullets lodged in their eyeballs."

Moller has served in combat zones and sees Haiti as one of them.

"This is a war," he says. "We sit out on our terrace at night and listen to the gunfire."

Some of the brutality here is so random, so senseless, that it shakes officers who've been trained to respond to violence.

"I have seen many people killed. For nothing," says the Sri Lankan captain who leads the command post in the slum of Gran Ravine.

One man, he said, was killed because he would not hand over one Haitian gourde, the basic unit of local currency and worth less than a penny.

With the Afghanistan mission taking precedence, the Canadian presence here is limited to fewer than 100 police officers

The UN, in concert with a newly formed Haitian disarmament commission, is offering money — about \$50 per month in a country where half the people live on less than \$1 a day — to those who will lay down their arms. There appears to be some early, sporadic successes.

The people of Cité Soleil report two occasions in September when gang members in the slum turned in guns — 30 weapons one day, 20 on another.

Real weapons, they say. Machine guns, not rusty relics.

President René Préal is personally negotiating with gang leaders and has told officials privately that some of the most notorious of the men want to lay down their arms.

But diplomats and UN officials warn that this is a perilous program that has been made more so with Préal taking the lead hand rather than delegating negotiations to mid-level authorities closer to the communities.

"If he fails, there is no higher level to move these talks," one diplomat said.

The plan is to disarm those who work for the gang leaders, leaving the bosses vulnerable if the slums are stormed.

Many of the leaders would face murder charges if they lay down their guns.

If they aren't given amnesty, asks one UN worker, "why would they disarm?"

Alix Fils-Aimé, who heads the Haitian national disarmament commission, says an amnesty plan has not been rejected, but then wonders aloud whether the sight of someone who has perhaps killed your mother or raped your sister walking cockily out of the slums might just spark more killing.

"Sometimes, the cost of peace is higher than the cost of war," he says. "While we will not promote amnesty, we must weigh our responsibility to shut down those guns."

Some gang leaders like to style themselves as freedom fighters, but authorities are not buying it.

"There are no Robin Hoods in there," says Fils-Aimé, who is trying to foster an "ambience of non-violence" by appealing to all sectors to lay down their arms, including the business sector, which is now heavily armed for its own defence.

"The security situation here is a serious concern," he says.

"People are scared. People are afraid to take their children to school. They are afraid to go out at night, to go out and shop.

"We have to loosen the grip of criminality in the city and allow room for investment to come to Haiti."

Right now, the gang leaders are the de facto political leaders in places like Cité Soleil, Cité Militaire and Martissant.

When they hijack a rice truck or take over a supply of water at gunpoint, they distribute the plunder among the inhabitants of their slum to curry favour and maintain support.

"They have the sweet and they have the sour, too, because they control the weapons," Fils-Aimé says.

The Ti Bois kidnapping is a textbook example of the enormous task facing UN peacekeepers.

Had they stumbled upon their quarry, they would have been outgunned.

As the incident unfolded, they had difficulty communicating with the Haitian police and motivating them to help pursue the abductors.

With guns drawn, the UN team uncertainly followed the lead of a 10-year-old known to all as "Love," the abducted woman's nephew, and Achlin's brother, as he led them down the warren of blind turns and rain-slick rocky paths.

He knows these guys and he will help catch them, the boy said.

At each home, curtains were drawn, but frightened eyes peered out warily at the unfolding drama. The kidnapers were likely hiding nearby, but no one would say where. They could have been drawing a bead on the UN force at any time.

This was the home turf of the criminals. They knew the terrain. The peacekeepers were more vulnerable than effective, more targets than sleuths.

Could a 10-year-old lead peacekeepers into a trap?

When the team left the neighbourhood — the search having encountered a dead end — the local people came out on the street.

In their midst were some members of the next generation of Haitian gangsters — kids who seem to be just hanging out but are actually spies for the gang leaders, paid to identify neighbours who speak to the police.

Those who aid the law can expect a lethal visit from gang assassins.

When the UN team returned to the scene of the Achel Julien kidnapping, the relatives of the abducted woman and her missing nephew were already packing their things. And as the peacekeepers departed, the family was trudging down the unpaved road of Ti Bois.

While the Star was in Haiti, there was no further word on the fate of the kidnapping victim. Nor did the missing youth, Achlin Termonfice, surface.

There would be no police report, in any case. There are no local police in Ti Bois.

If one slum is pacified, killings flare in another, in the manner of a tropical storm that abates in the south but gains steam in the north. Sometimes, the most dangerous criminals are merely dispersed.

Much of the real danger now lies in Gran Ravine, perhaps the most dangerous of all the Port-au-Prince slums.

The July massacre here was blamed on members of the Ti Machete gang, named for the weapon they used to hack spectators fleeing a police and firefighters' soccer game a year ago.

At least 21 men, women and children were slaughtered — including a woman who was shot in her mouth at point-blank range and a boy whose head was split open.

It was that atrocity that served as a wake-up call for Préval and shattered a time of relative calm in Port-au-Prince's slums.

On this day, however, a man who calls himself Max explains to visitors that residents are happy after the arrest the night before of a notorious gangster in the neighbourhood, a man who goes by the name Apoupam.

He was arrested by Sri Lankan peacekeepers, who didn't know his identity when they found him in a shack after a gunfight with rivals.

But as he takes visitors into the hills to display the homes the gangs burned down after the mass slayings, Max says people in the slum are still fearful that Haiti's dysfunctional justice system will just spit Apoupam back onto the streets.

And even if he were to face jail time, his henchmen would return to take vengeance.

"We want peace," Max says. "Tell the world our neighbourhood needs peace.

"We want our children to go to school. Now, if you give a kid in this neighbourhood \$10 to kill someone, he will do it.

"He has no hope. But we want some hope.

"This is no way to live."

Corruption: Latin America Worse

Brazil and Mexico have become more corrupt, but Haiti remains the worst in Latin America.

Latin Business Chronicle

November 6, 2006

A majority of countries in Latin America have become more corrupt the past year, while only a few have improved, according to a new survey from Transparency International. The 2006 Corruptions Perceptions Index tracks various corruption polls in 163 countries worldwide, including 20 in Latin America.

Brazil and Mexico, Latin America's two largest economies, both saw declines, while Argentina (the third-largest economy) improved. Chile kept its position as the least-corrupt country in the region, while Haiti remains the worst.

All in all, 11 nations saw declines in their score, while only five jumped and four kept the same score, according to a Latin Business Chronicle analysis of data from Transparency International. However, due to changes worldwide, nine Latin American countries actually improved their global ranking compared to last year, while 11 fell.

PANAMA AND ECUADOR DECLINE MOST

Panama saw the strongest decline in its score (by 0.4), followed by Brazil and Cuba (both down 0.3). Other countries that saw their scores fall include Colombia, Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Honduras, Mexico and Peru.

Paraguay, a country long infamous for rampant corruption, saw the strongest improvement, along with Uruguay (both up 0.5). Other countries that improved their scores include Argentina, Bolivia and Guatemala.

Chile, Haiti, Nicaragua and Venezuela kept the same score as last year.

Measured by rankings, Ecuador posted the worst decline — a fall 21 places, followed by Panama, which fell by 19 places. Other countries that saw significant declines in their global rankings include the Dominican Republic and Honduras (both down 14 places to 121st place), while Brazil, Venezuela and Haiti all fell by eight places. Also Cuba, Mexico, Peru and Nicaragua fell compared to the rankings last year.

PARAGUAY AND URUGUAY IMPROVE MOST

Paraguay noted the strongest increase in the rankings — up 33 places, followed by Bolivia, which jumped 12 places. Other countries with improved rankings include Argentina, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala and Uruguay.

Chile is now more transparent than the United States thanks keeping its score, while the U.S. score fell. Chile is also less corrupt than countries like Spain, Portugal and Barbados.

Despite keeping its score from last year, Haiti has managed to worsen its global rank. It no longer is the fifth-worst country worldwide, but has replaced Chad as the worst. That means its worse than countries like Myanmar, Iraq and Congo.

**What Future for Haiti?
An Interview with Patrick Elie
Patrick Elie interviewed by Reed Lindsay
Znet Magazine
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In February 2004, U.S. Marines whisked away then-President Jean-Bertrand Aristide from Haiti amid an armed rebellion led by disgruntled former soldiers and paramilitary actors. Despite the presence of a United Nations peacekeeping force, violence and poverty increased under the U.S.-backed interim government led by Interim Prime Minister Gérard Latortue, which courted the elite and its international backers while alienating Haiti's overwhelming poor majority. The crisis hit a low point last December and January, with daily shootings in the poor neighborhood of Cité Soleil and an outbreak of kidnappings.

President René Préval's electoral victory on February 7 suddenly brought peace and hope to Haiti for the first time in two years. Haiti's poor flooded the polls to vote, and one week later they blockaded nearly every major road in the country to demand that the electoral council name Préval the victor in the first round. Préval has formed a coalition government and has courted all sides of the political spectrum, including both pro-Aristide militants from Cité Soleil as well as light-skinned elites. He has taken a similar approach in his foreign policy, seeking help from the United States and France but also Cuba and Venezuela. It is uncertain how long he will be able to juggle these different interests, and more than six months into his presidency, Préval continues to remain largely an enigma.

Patrick Elie has been an activist in Haiti since 1986, when the nation's popular movements drove former dictator Jean-Claude Duvalier from the country. In the late 1980s, he participated in these movements alongside René Préval, Jean-Bertrand Aristide and Antoine Izmyer, among other pro-democracy activists struggling against the military governments that assumed power after Duvalier's ouster. Elie was head of Aristide's security detail during his first presidential campaign in 1990. When the former priest became the country's first democratically elected leader, Elie assumed the position of anti-narcotics chief. He went into exile after the military coup and returned to become secretary of state for defense when Aristide was restored to power in 1994. Since 1995, he has not served in government but has remained politically active, and is a founding member of SOS (Citizens' Watchdog Center), a group that seeks to promote the creation of a national network of grassroots organizations.

Interview with Patrick Elie and introduction by Reed Lindsay.

Reed Lindsay: How accurate is the characterization of Haiti as a country with a history or a culture of violence?

Patrick Elie: It is an image of Haiti that is grossly distorted. The so-called level of violence in Haiti pales in comparison with violence in at least half the countries in the world. Compare the history of Haiti with that of England, France and the U.S. and Germany. Don't go back to the 1200s. Look back to 1804 and you have more violence in those countries than in Haiti. So the characterization of Haiti as

a violent country is a bunch of hogwash. Why is there tension and instability in Haiti? It is simply because in Haiti you have 5 percent of the population controlling 60 percent of the national wealth, while 80 percent live in poverty. If you had such a situation in any other country you'd have a massacre or a civil war but that hasn't happened in Haiti, which speaks to the self-restraint of the Haitian population. The instability of the last 20 to 25 years has been caused essentially by this elite as well as their foreign allies who cannot truly accept the principal of one citizen-one vote because it would mean that they would lose their privileges and influence. They have tried to quench the will of the poor majority of Haiti and tried to change the rules of the game because they've lost in elections. If it were up to the Haitian people (and when I say Haitian people I'm talking about the vast majority of Haitians who are poor) there would be both democracy and stability. If you look at recent history, the Haitian people have chosen to vote rather than to riot. They voted four times in a row for the same political family, the same political leaning, the same agenda. They consistently have picked both democracy and stability.

RL: How does the United States government's role in Haiti compare to its role in other countries in Latin America?

PE: The role of the U.S. in Haiti is no different than what it is in other countries in Latin America in that the U.S. is interested in dominating Haiti and dictating its policy. That's the reason why they cannot stand the idea of somebody being elected with a large majority because that means the government will not be easy to manipulate as one that has very little popular legitimacy and from the get-go this was the United States' problem with Aristide and Lavalas. The role of the U.S. in all of Haitian history has been egregious. The U.S. occupied the country for 20 years from 1915 to 1934 and left us with a repressive army. But this pattern was not particular to Haiti. Go to the DR, and they did the same thing with Trujillo, and the same thing in Nicaragua with Somoza. When the U.S. said it would support democracies rather than military dictatorships, the Haitians did not play along because they did not want the type of democracy that the U.S. wanted to impose. The Haitians, that is, the 80 percent of Haitians who have been excluded for two centuries, wanted a true democracy, where they would define the agenda and get to pick who they wanted rather than be forced to choose between candidates they don't like. Why has the U.S. occupied the country three times? There are many reasons. There are economic reasons, but even if you don't concede to that, Haiti has been a powerful symbol for having overthrown slavery and becoming independent and for what it's doing now, which is proving that the poorest people in the hemisphere, mostly illiterate, can know more about democracy than the people who are pretending to be beacons of civilization. And they can stand up to the will of the U.S. The movement that you see now in Latin America, the new large social movements that are sweeping away the traditional political parties, that also started in a way in Haiti. For the U.S., Haiti is an example that must be crushed, that must be made to fail. That's the principal interest of the U.S. in Haiti.

RL: But the U.S. hasn't been the only first world country to play a major role in Haiti in recent years. What about France and Canada?

PE: France's role in Haiti is a direct result of the demand for reparation that President Aristide put forward. Also, I think France could never get over the defeat of 1804. In all of Haitian history, never has a French president set foot in Haiti. And Santo Domingue is probably the French colony that played the greatest role in French history. It was the richest colony by far, and caused them to lose

Louisiana. With Canada, I can point to a number of reasons why they have switched directions in Haitian policy. One is that Canada is aligning its policy with that of the U.S. more and more after Iraq where they refused to participate because the Chretien government would have been defeated if Canada had gone into Iraq. Haiti was an easy way to please the U.S. Haiti's a country with no army and no possibility to resist regime change.

RL: How would you characterize the role of Brazil, Argentina and Chile in the UN peacekeeping mission in Haiti?

PE: The Latin American countries had their own reasons and interests. Brazil wants to be recognized as an emerging power and wanted a seat in the UN Security Council. For countries like Argentina and Chile, they wanted to show that they are countries that count. Despite the fact that I'm against the occupation, if I had to choose to be occupied by U.S. Marines, the French Legionnaires or the Latin American countries and the UN, I'd pick the latter, but the positive thing that could emerge from this crisis is that Latin America will discover Haiti and remember that Haiti is at the origin of their own independence. Also, I believe that Haiti will have the possibility of reorienting its diplomacy toward the Caribbean and Latin America rather than be prisoner of its destructive relationship with the United States.

RL: What about the allegations that UN troops tolerated and sometimes committed abuses in the poor neighborhoods of Port-au-Prince?

PE: I think there were some people within the UN that were truly sympathetic to the Haitian people. We cannot forget the excesses of the UN, especially in the popular neighborhoods like Cite Soleil. But we also must recognize that the UN troops did not go all out in military operations in poor neighborhoods as they were being encouraged to do by the Haitian elite and the governments of the U.S., France and Canada. As President Préval has said, I would like to see the UN mission continue. But we don't need all those men with guns. We'd rather see doctors and technicians helping us.

RL: Can you evaluate the last two years of rule by the interim government of Primer Minister Gérard Latortue?

PE: I prefer to call it a de facto regime or puppet regime because that's truly what it was. It was forced upon the Haitian people by the intervention of February 29, 2004, and it was formed with hostility. It was a government that was to be hostile to Lavalas and to help eliminate the movement from the political scene. It was a government that was a model of the kind of government that the three countries that intervened in Haiti would like to see at the helm of the country: a government that answers not to the population of the country but to foreign interests and international organizations like the IMF. As for an assessment of the last two years, I'm 56 years old, and these have easily been the most difficult and terrible years for the country I've ever seen.

First of all, there's the level of repression against the poor people, against Lavalas. This government has allowed ex killers and killers from the army to integrate into the police into units that were nothing else but death squads and go into popular neighborhoods and assassinate people. And the economy has been a disaster. The thing the government did was fire 4,000 to 5000 people in a country with 70

percent unemployment. Of course this is not the type of government the Haitian people would like to see at the helm of the country.

RL: How does Haiti's popular movement compare to those in other countries in Latin America?

PE: When Jean-Claude Duvalier was forced to leave the country in 1986, nobody expected that after 30 years of repression, the first 15 of which were sheer terror, that there would be this profound movement within the Haitian population that would turn into thousands of grassroots organizations. It was this movement that was the origin of the Haitian saga of the last 20 years. It was this movement rather than the political parties that stood up against the return of dictatorship. It was this movement that confronted the military government when it tried to control the election in 1987 and this movement that swept Aristide into power in 1990. And it was not the political parties, but again this movement that elected René Préval. Don't believe for one minute that Lespwa [the coalition of political parties and organizations on whose ticket Préval ran for president] has been anything but a label that has been used for the election and a nice slogan, but it was that vast social movement that swept Préval into power. And I think that this movement that literally exploded onto the scene in 1986 preceded what we've seen in Venezuela, in Bolivia, and what may be appearing in Mexico and maybe it is the wave of the future for countries like Haiti in Latin America. Instead of trying to mimic countries of Europe, maybe we can forge regional tools for regional democracies. And I think that is what Haitians are trying to do.

RL: Has this popular movement grown stronger or weaker in the last 20 years?

PE: The popular movement in Haiti is very much alive, but it is already a bit better organized because it is battle scarred but battle hardened also. I've seen the crowds in 1986 and 1987, and the ones I've seen out lately are different. It's already starting to resemble an army. There is more organization, there is more discipline, and I think there is more ability to stay the course. Of course, much remains to be done, for example, there is no substitute for a national coordination for such a movement. It should exist. For the moment, it is a very loose coordination. That's where the new political leadership will emerge from. If anything, the last election signals the end of Haiti's traditional political class. When I say traditional, I mean both those who come from the traditional right and the traditional left. You've seen the electoral results of the so-called socialists such as Paul Denis and Serge Gilles. They have been rejected by the Haitian people.

RL: What is the future of Aristide and his Fanmi Lavalas party in Haiti?

PE: Aristide has played a key historical role in the struggle of the Haitian people to define their own democracy, and I'm sure he will continue to be an influence in the future. Fanmi Lavalas is a political organization. But I don't think it will be able to survive as a political organization simply because it really has no real autonomy. You could see how it became totally in disarray after president Aristide was kidnapped. It was what I would describe as a charismatic organization, one that depends strictly on its leader and after that you have nothing in terms of structure and in terms of capacity to formulate a political strategy. A new grassroots movement will have to form that comes from the street and grassroots mobilizations. Lavalas is this movement, but Lavalas and Fanmi Lavalas, although related, are different things. Fanmi Lavalas is a political organization. Lavalas is a political philosophy, not a party. Lavalas and the popular movement are one in the same. It was the name coined for it by

President Aristide. But he did not invent the reality of it, he just put a name on it. He doesn't own it. It owns him.

RL: What lessons can be drawn from the overthrow of Aristide in February 2004 and the ensuing two years?

PE: The lesson to be drawn is that it's not enough to vote for somebody who is sympathetic to your cause. If you do not stay mobilized and define your political agenda and support that political agenda, what will happen is that either the president or the senators you elected are going to be extremely vulnerable to pressure exerted on them from the powers that be or they'll start drifting to a more traditional type of power and start having their own agenda. And of course both things can happen. It's obvious when you look at the last years of President Aristide, all the senators and deputies had their own personal agenda and were completely removed from what the people themselves wanted. So politicians, no matter what label they are under, have to be kept on a leash. And the leash is the grassroots movements permanently mobilized. That is one thing that the popular movement has learned.

RL: Would you include René Préval among the new group of leaders in Latin America who are pushing for regional integration and challenging U.S. hegemony in the region?

PE: Préval is a branch from the same tree. Préval started out like all of us, a Marxist, but he's been really forged or transformed by the popular movement itself. He was very close to it. We went to school in the popular movement at the same time. He has a good feel for what the people of Haiti want and need. As a leader he does not have the charisma of Aristide, nor is he inclined or able to communicate with them the same way that President Aristide could. But I think that he has the trust of the Haitian people, which is very important. But if the Haitian people do not keep up their mobilization and continue to build it as a structured movement, he will fail. That is a certainty. He will fail because it is the fate of any leadership that is left by itself and does not have behind it a strong organized people. He might be pushed so far away from the original agenda and what the people want that it would be the equivalent of him being overthrown.

RL: What will Préval be able to accomplish?

PE: From what Préval has indicated, he will address the problems of the poor majority of Haiti, including the most urgent issues such as terminating that exclusion, that quasi-apartheid that predominates in this country. His biggest obstacle might come from those within the Haitian elite and the traditional politicians, who will try to embrace him after failing to block his way. A president only has so much power, and he's not the one actually doing everything. He depends on a team, and he depends on popular support.

The members of the elite and political parties could have too much influence. What they couldn't win in the election, they could win by buddying up to Préval. I've heard that everywhere he's gone, he's gone with members of the moneyed elite. That's all fine and dandy, he cannot actually govern against the elite all out, but he cannot govern for the elite either. I hope they won't try to destabilize in the same way they tried to destabilize Aristide. The last two years have been such a fiasco, I don't know if they have the stomach for something as terrible and disastrous. But Préval will certainly be facing a lot

of pressure. And I think somehow the Haitian people know that. All I expect from his presidency is to have the space to organize rather than facing a truly hostile government. But he will be under a lot of constraints.

RL: How can Préval push through reforms that benefit the poor majority without the elite sabotaging his effort?

PE: We start maybe by having the kind of dialogue with the moneyed elite that the people of the South African majority had with the white minority when the one person-one vote principal was being adopted. Obviously the elite want some protection, but they will only have it by exchanging their privileges for rights. It is obvious that things cannot continue as they are, so if there are people who are reasonable within this elite, some compromise might be reached between them and the vast majority of people who have been excluded. The priorities should be set right. Education, health care, production. These should be the priorities. We must have a country that produces. The elite must be engaged in production of wealth rather than being truly parasites. Laws must be voted by the new parliament and be acted upon to close progressively that horrible gap that exists between the tiny elite and the huge majority. That's the only way to go. And if the elite persist in trying to stand in the way of progress I think they will have to go the way of the Cuban elites that had a field day until Fidel came along. Maybe they are more ready to be persuaded after the last two years. It was the last desperate attempt to stem the flow of history. The last two years have not been particularly happy for the Haitian elites either. The Haitian people as a whole have suffered the consequences of Aristide's overthrow.

Reed Lindsay is a freelance journalist who has been based in Port-au-Prince since October 2004.

Should Canada be doing more in Haiti?

By Tim Harper

The Toronto Star

November 5, 2006

With a country in Canada's backyard courting collapse and getting no international help, it is legitimate to ask whether a NATO mission in a distant land should have prevented Ottawa — a leader in the UN ideal of "protecting" the weak of the world — from providing more help so close to home.

A Canadian official, who is prohibited from speaking on the record, said Canada is squandering a historic opportunity to have the military on the ground in Haiti, and the natural affinity between Canadians and Haitians, whose official languages are French and Creole, could pay huge dividends with a relatively small military presence.

Canadian ambassador Claude Boucher thinks Ottawa made the right decision.

"The military presence, we hope, will be short term, but the training of the police is essential to this country's future," Boucher said.

"This will be solved the Haitian way. Yes, this can be a scary place. Yes, it is volatile. The next two months will be crucial and I am confident we will succeed."

Graham Muir, the RCMP chief superintendent who headed the United Nations police force in Haiti for a year, said the UN police operation is 30 per cent below what it was mandated, "so all countries of the UN would do well to revisit commitments and Canada in particular, where there is a clear nexus between its foreign-policy agenda and Haiti, would be well advised to review its commitment as soon as possible.

"If there is one place Canada must stay the course, it is Haiti."

Carlo Dade, an analyst with the Canadian Association of the Americas, known by its French acronym FOCAL, has just returned from Haiti.

He says he believes there is a lack of urgency at the RCMP to get officers down to the country and he believes Canada has underestimated the task at hand.

The best Dade will say about Haiti right now is that "it's not getting any worse.

"When you look at Canada's hard interests, Haiti fits the bill, Afghanistan doesn't.

"A problem in Haiti is going to show up in Montreal."

Canada has been a leader among donor nations and this country of 8.3 million is the greatest beneficiary of Canadian aid in the Americas.

Ottawa has a long history of trying to keep Haiti afloat, supplying personnel for two UN peacekeeping missions during the 1990s and spending more than \$700 million in development assistance over almost four decades.

In June, Foreign Affairs Minister Peter MacKay announced a contribution of \$15 million more to support the René Prével government, which was elected in February.

Prével, who also served as president from 1996 to 2001, was returned to power after a particularly bloody period during which Gérard Latortue led a transition government after populist president Jean-Bertrand Aristide was ousted in a 2004 armed rebellion.

Haiti ranked 153rd out of 177 countries in the UN's latest report on quality of life, behind Sudan, where the Darfur crisis continues, and Zimbabwe. And a recent World Bank report lists Haiti as one of 26 states at risk of collapse.

If it were to become a failed state, it could also become a destabilizing element in the Caribbean, where it shares Hispaniola island with the Dominican Republic.

Washington has sent more than \$600 million (U.S.) to Haiti since 2004 and President George W. Bush has requested almost \$200 million more for the country next year.

But some analysts there question the effectiveness of the commitment.

"If the foundation of a functioning state is a monopoly on the use of force, and force is only to be employed to uphold the law, then Haiti is not yet a functioning state," Mark Schneider, a senior vice-president at the non-partisan International Crisis Group told a House of Representatives committee in Washington recently.

"There are too many guns in the hands of too many gangs and too many criminals using the cover of the Haitian National Police to carry out kidnappings, drug trafficking and assaults."

DEVELOPMENT: U.S. Teens Take a Virtual Journey to Haiti

By Amy Bracken

IPS

November 8, 2006

NEW YORK - Brooklyn's South Shore High School is no walk in the park. Low test scores combined with periodic stabbings, beatings and theft have made it one of New York's most troubled schools. All but two percent of the more than 2,000 students are minority. Many are low-income and almost half never graduate.

So it was strange to hear some students there talk about how fortunate they are.

It was a Monday evening in October and they were in their weekly after-school class called Playing 4 Keeps, a video game design programme run by the New York-based non-profit citizenship education organisation Global Kids.

The 24 teens in the programme had just launched their latest creation, a game that teaches players about global poverty.

In "Ayiti: The Cost of Life", the player heads a family in rural Haiti, and, with extremely limited resources, must figure out how to achieve happiness, money, health and/or education. One goal is often sacrificed for another, and few players ever achieve all four.

Educational, or "serious", video games are on the rise. Recent years have seen the development of games in which the player tries to dispense food in a war zone, tries to make peace between Israel and Palestine, tries to escape warlords in Darfur, and much more.

But even in this pack of progressive educational tools, Ayiti stands out. It was actually designed by kids. And not only did student designers develop computer literacy in the process, they were forced to develop a deep understanding of the subject matter in order to build a game around it.

"It was a lengthy process," said Global Kids Senior Trainer Afi French about how the students decided on a theme for the video game. She began the class last fall by helping the students understand the concept of human rights. They studied the U.N.'s Universal Declaration of Human Rights and explored rights violations that relate to poverty, such as violence, racism and barriers to education.

For the past 11 years, Global Kids has worked with the New York City schools to help youths be better students and global change agents. But Playing 4 Keeps at South Shore High only began last year with a 500,000-dollar grant from Microsoft Corporation. Ayiti, launched this fall, is the first game to be developed in the programme.

French, who grew up in this part of Brooklyn but has lived as far afield as Mozambique, said the students chose to focus on poverty because they live in an economically depressed area, but learning about the degree of poverty in Haiti seemed to change their world views.

"Exploring [global poverty] really made them look at the opportunities available to them," she said.

Nineteen-year-old Sanji Johnson agreed. She described her current surroundings as drug-infested and violent, but she said designing Ayiti taught her to not take her education for granted, and she wishes her friends would play the game too. "I want them to see what it's like to not have an education, and what it's like to not have any money, what it's like not to have anywhere to go," she said.

Haiti has few free schools, and with an average per capita income of less than two dollars a day, most children never make it to the fifth grade.

Though some Playing 4 Keeps students have Haitian family or friends, many entered the programme last year knowing little about the country or about conditions in the developing world.

Nineteen-year-old Dewayne Baker said the programme taught him to be more respectful of those suffering in Haiti and elsewhere. "I was one of those stereotype persons," he said, referring to those who look down on people from poorer countries. "But you know, stereotypes can be very wrong, so doing all the research and going deep into what Haiti's really about and knowing about the Haiti people, it changed my whole mentality."

Such introspection is fairly common among Ayiti's designers, but Monday's class included 28 new students in a different mental place. For some of them, Ayiti was just one of many games they love to play. Some go back and forth between peaceful role-playing games and extremely violent shoot-'em-ups.

Some even like the wildly popular game Vice City, one segment of which instructs the player to "Kill the Haitians".

Sixteen-year-old Diondra Bailey likes all kinds of games. Belying her polite manner, she enjoys blowing people away in a game called "Bush Shoot-Out", in which U.S. President George W. Bush and Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice defend the White House against terrorists, but she also likes the challenge of keeping a family alive in Ayiti.

Barry Joseph, director of Global Kids' Online Leadership Programme, sees no contradiction here. To him, video games, whatever the type, have an essential common goal: They must be fun. Besides, he said, "I think it's hard to argue that Ayiti is not a violent game. Your family gets attacked by disease and hurricanes and robbers and whatnot, and they die, and in many games you get three lives and you come back. In Ayiti, you don't come back."

In the first class of the second year of Playing 4 Keeps, Joseph described the challenge of making a game educational and fun.

"We were talking about a pretty heavy issue with Ayiti," he told the class. "We were talking about poverty in Haiti... How do you do that without making it so depressing you don't want to play it? How do you keep it fun? Serious games have a responsibility to not only reflect the real world in a way that doesn't trivialise the issue, but [also to still be] fun to play. That's what it's all about, so it's kind of hard to make serious games that work."

Reviewers widely call Ayiti fun, but many also complain that it's too hard, and gratification is suspended long enough to be discouraging. Indeed, in spite of the upbeat music and colorful graphics, Ayiti can be extremely frustrating. Others claim this just means the game accurately represents reality.

But in addition to being fun (and educational for the player), Joseph said serious games can be a powerful teaching tool for their designers. In Ayiti, if one has fun at Carnival, there might not be enough money to go to a doctor when sick. That might lead to the loss of more money when that family member can't go to school. But spending money on a bike might make it possible to take a far-away job.

"When you make a video game, you are making a model of a system," Joseph said, "and to make a model of a system means you have to understand the constituent parts of that system and how they inter-relate. What better way to motivate young people to learn about a real-world issue?"

Ayiti is available for free on gaming sites for kids, educational sites for teachers, and the UNICEF site for non-profits and other organizations. It is accompanied by workshops, lesson plans, and other materials, including the U.N. Convention on the Rights of the Child and a map of Haiti. (END/2006)

**Valley man makes Haiti his mission
Reed Lindsay helps a neighborhood come together
By DANA DUGAN
Idaho Mountain Express
November 3, 2006**

When Reed Lindsay graduated with a degree in philosophy, it was uncertain where he would go with his education. Helping to organize a neighborhood council, throwing a block party and forming a school on a troubled Caribbean island were probably not high on his lists of possibilities. And yet, Lindsay, 31, who grew up in Sun Valley, has managed it all and more.

A correspondent for the new 24-hour Spanish-language television news network Telesur, Lindsay reports on Haiti, where he lives. The Latin American television network is based in Caracas, Venezuela, and is funded jointly by Venezuela, Argentina, Cuba, Uruguay, Brazil and Bolivia.

The son of Barbi Reed, owner of the Anne Reed Gallery in Ketchum, Lindsay graduated from The Community School in 1994. He graduated magna cum laude from Williams College in 1998. After studying in Spain and Argentina, he interned for the Council on Hemispheric Affairs in Washington, D.C., where he began writing about Latin America.

"I really liked writing about the issues on U.S. policy in Latin America. But I wanted to live in Latin America instead of being removed."

Lindsay moved to Mexico City where he began doing his first real journalism. Self-taught, he managed, as a freelancer, to cover " a lot of different subjects."

In 2001, he moved to Argentina after the uprising that resulted in the withdrawal of millions of pesos and dollars from banks. There was plenty going on. He filed at least 20 freelance stories over a two-year period, for such publications as Houston Chronicle, Newsday, The Observer, The Toronto Star, San Francisco Chronicle and The Scotsman.

But in March 2004, his direction changed when he traveled to Haiti three days before Haitian President Jean-Bertrand Aristide left the country escorted by U.S. soldiers.

Lindsay was there for three weeks and vowed to return.

"It was a real experience for me, totally different, there was a zoo of journalists with bullet-proof vests. But I didn't speak the language. It's a fascinating country, so misunderstood and mis-portrayed by the media, so much yellow journalism that makes it out to be such a violent place.

"I've sought out stories my colleagues are not doing. They're so much censoring themselves. I went back in October 2004. On my first day, four bodies were found executed."

The dead men had been Aristide supporters and witnesses claimed the police had committed the murders as a warning to other supporters.

"That story got more attention than three years of freelance work," Lindsay said. "I felt like I could work here and really make a difference."

He stayed on, began to learn the language and found a place to live in a poor but safe area of Port-au-Prince, called Jacquet. The streets are dirt and pothole-ridden, and there is no running water.

There is a pump from which he can fill a basin of water for use in his home. He also has a generator-inverter for electricity and a satellite dish, both things necessary for him to do his job.

He sold stories on human rights abuses, and at one point was the only journalist who was able to get inside the penitentiary after a massacre. Despite professional success, he said the country's poverty is overwhelming.

"At first, there was no place to look for hope. I was depressed."

In April 2005, along with some other neighbors, Lindsay and a young Haitian named Reagan Lolo, 22, who worked with him as an interpreter, started Asanble Vwazen Jake (Creole), or Neighborhood Assembly of Jacquet. The idea was that by organizing and working together they could improve conditions in Jacquet.

"I wanted to do something for the neighborhood," Lindsay said. "They had no jobs and the kids weren't in school. I needed to give back and show them I wasn't just there for the cheap real estate."

Lindsay and Lolo ultimately decided that the community organization, which they call AVJ, would be "democratic and participatory, without a president, or all-powerful committee that could later be susceptible to corruption," he said.

"Instead, any neighbor could participate and everyone would have the same voice and vote. Any actions taken by individuals or particular working committees within AVJ would be held accountable to all the neighbors of Jacquet in the weekly Sunday assembly.

"Some weeks, we'd have five to 10 people in our house for a meeting. Sometimes there were as many as 40 people gathered in a driveway or the street."

Their first official function for the community was a DJ and basketball block party.

"More than 1,000 people showed up. We put up a hoop, and built a stage. Kids play there all the time now. After that we did a street cleaning thing but there's no trash pick up. I was questioning the whole thing when the guys said, 'Let's do a school.'"

It was an "a-ha" moment and the result has grown beyond any of their expectations.

In Haiti, approximately 90 percent of the schools are private and only one out of every 50 students actually graduates. Often, students are well into their adult years by the time they are able to graduate. In order to pay the school fees, many of them quit to work. Jacquet has no public school at all.

"They value education so much," Lindsay said. "It's so important to them."

When the school began a year ago, there were 12 to 15 students and school was held in a private school after their classes were out. When that fell through, classes were held at Lindsay's house.

"I was super busy and there'd be 30 kids on the floor, just learning basic stuff. Thirty to 40 percent don't know how to read or write."

Finally, another private school let them have space three to four hours a day, five days a week in the afternoon. They added a sports program on Saturdays taught by a former pro-basketball player.

Most of the children are between 7 and 11 years old. The classes are taught in Creole, the language spoken by the vast majority of Haitians, while the advanced classes learn French. They also teach Haitian history and culture, something the private schools do not, concentrating instead on France instead.

The AVJ organizers also have plans to add garden projects, to encourage dental hygiene by providing children with toothbrushes and "to give back to the community since the community is giving them an education," Lindsay said.

By the end of the school year, this past June, there were as many as 130 students. There are 15 volunteer teachers aged 16 to 30, most of whom are students at other schools themselves.

"They want this to be a model for Haiti. They want there to be neighborhood committees all over Haiti," Lindsay said. "It's so inspiring. They have hope for their country. There's so much enthusiasm. It's made me believe in humanity."

"It just needed the spark—me and Lolo and a couple other guys—now there are 15 guys, and some women are starting to get more involved. Older people are also starting to come to the meetings, expressing themselves. But it's hard in Haiti just getting stuff done. Writing a letter can take weeks for them, the level of education is so low."

Bringing renewed hope to the country was the controversial election in February 2006 of former President René Préval. He was elected with 51 percent of the vote.

"The poor see him as an ally," said Lindsay, who once interviewed him at his home in a poor neighborhood.

Lindsay was in the valley recently and spoke to students at The Community School about how he became a journalist and about the AVJ school.

Donations to help the school may be made to a non-profit umbrella organization for the neighborhood assemblies in Haiti called "Friends of SODA." There is an account at Bank of America. Lindsay said AVJ has applied to the Global Fund for Children for a grant to pay for water, food, materials, and books, but until they receive a grant they are in need of help.

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U.S./HAITI: Top Republicans Leave Telecom Accused of Bribery

Lucy Komisar

IPS

November 6, 2006

NEW YORK - Five nationally prominent U.S. Republicans, the independent board members of a corporation that has been charged with paying hundreds of thousands of dollars in bribes to get a sweetheart telecom deal in Haiti, are leaving its board.

The company is IDT, the world's third-ranked international phone company.

The Republicans are Rudy Boschwitz, former senator from Minnesota; James S. Gilmore III, former Virginia governor; Thomas Slade Gorton III, former senator from Washington State; Jack Kemp, former congressman from New York and 1996 vice presidential nominee; and Jeane Kirkpatrick, the former U.S. ambassador to the U.N. under President Ronald Reagan.

They are not included among nominees on the IDT proxy statement filed with the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) Oct. 30. Two other independent board members, Warren Blaker and Saul K. Fenster, are also leaving, and four company board members are stepping down, whilst three others are coming on, reducing the board from 15 to seven members, with the independents at a one-person majority.

IDT is run by James Courter, a former Republican congressman from New Jersey. The company is under investigation by the SEC, the United States Attorney in Newark, New Jersey, and a U.S. federal grand jury for allegedly paying bribes to Jean-Bertrand Aristide, former president of Haiti.

The five board members either declined or did not respond to requests for comment. The Oppenheimer Fund, the largest institutional investor in IDT, also chose not to comment.

However, Herb Denton, president of Providence Capital, a New York investment firm with stock in the company until March, said, "Kirkpatrick, Gordon, Gilmore, Kemp and Boschwitz were pals and friends of James Courter," he told IPS. "Why do you put very powerful politicians on your board? Because you like them, you think they're capable, and they buy you protection."

Of the independents, only Marc J. Oppenheimer, president of Octagon Associates, Inc., a banking and financial strategy firm, currently serves on the board. The new members will be James R. Mellor, former CEO of General Dynamics; Alan Claman, former president of an aerospace company; and Judah Schorr, who owns an anesthesia supplier.

Denton noted that other than Mellor, the new board nominees had never sat on other company boards, which was unusual. He explained, "You want business people with public company board experience."

IDT spokesperson Gil Nielsen said that the company two weeks ago had told the SEC it planned to reduce the size of its board "as part of a cost saving and restructuring plan". He said, "Clearly, the fact that several board members will not stand for re-election is only a result of the proposed reduction in

the number of board seats." Nielsen did not explain why IDT, while removing some members, added three new people to its board.

He said, "As far as any allegations concerning Haiti, IDT continues to maintain that any such claims are false and without merit and are the result of a former disgruntled employee."

Bribery allegations were first raised by a former IDT executive, Michael Jewett, who said that IDT made a deal to pay off Aristide in return for a lucrative contract to provide phone service to Haiti, paying nine cents a minute instead of the legally mandated 23 cents. He said that the money was paid to a secret offshore bank account controlled by Aristide and listed in the name of a shell company in the Turks and Caicos Islands. Jewett says that when he refused to go along with the deal, he was fired. In October 2005, he sued the company in U.S. court for wrongful dismissal.

Following the Jewett allegations, in November 2005, the government of Haiti and the phone company, Teleco, filed a RICO (Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organisations Act) lawsuit in Miami against the former president and his alleged collaborators. It says that in one six-month period, February to April 2004, IDT paid 302,588 dollars in kickbacks to the Aristide group.

Through his lawyer, Ira Kurzban, Aristide has denied all charges and described them as a "political investigation".

Regarding the recent shake-up of the board, Denton said, "I speculate there's something rotten in Denmark." He said he thought the departure of the Republican board members "goes back to the 27 million dollars this company spent over three years on Bill Weld's law firm [McDermott, Weld and Emery]."

Until he resigned in fall 2005, William F. Weld, the former Republican governor of Massachusetts, was a member of the IDT board and chairman of its corporate governance committee.

Denton said, "We have no investment in this company at this moment. We used to own stock in the company until we started to wonder why the company spent nine million dollars a year on Bill Weld's law firm. There was something they were investigating, in my opinion. We got out of it this year." Weld did not respond to a request for comment.

Denton explained, "This company acquired licenses to do telecommunications in a lot of strange parts of the world. 'Notoriously corrupt' are the words that come to mind. I think Weld's law firm was looking at dozens of other countries that are notoriously corrupt, such as Russia, the Caribbean, South America, where this company does business. I asked Courter 'How did they get all these licenses?' He said, 'We swarm all over them'."

Denton said, "I don't think so; that doesn't sound plausible to me. This company was put together in 1993 and they sprung up like mushrooms all over the world getting telecom licenses in notoriously corrupt places. I don't think Teleco Haiti gave a darn whether they were 'swarmed'. They cared that Aristide got paid off."

He noted, "The Foreign Corrupt Practices Act goes right to the board of directors. [The Act bans bribery and kickbacks.] Gorton, Kemp, Kirkpatrick, Boschwitz and Gilmore have reputations to protect. Why do they leave all at one time?"

After Weld's departure, his fellow Republicans were the sole members of the corporate governance committee. Boschwitz was also on the audit committee, which investigated the Haiti bribery charge and concluded that there was no wrongdoing.

The directors are paid 25,000 dollars, plus 15,000 dollars if they are directors of IDT subsidiaries. They also get stock options. Denton said that the only serious new candidate who replaced them was James Mellor, the former General Dynamics CEO, who is on a committee of Net-to-Phone, an IDT subsidiary.

The IDT's shareholder's meeting will be Dec. 14 at the company's headquarters in Newark, New Jersey. Denton said he would be there. He said, "I wouldn't miss this for the world."

*Lucy Komisar is a New York-based investigative journalist writing a book on the international impact of the offshore bank and corporate secrecy system.

4 military officers in Haiti

Nov. 6, 2006

Letter to the Editor

The Toronto Star

Haiti cover story

Nov. 5.

I applaud Tim Harper's efforts to bring the situation in Haiti into more light than the story normally gets in the media. The strife the population endures on a daily basis was well presented and provides the reader with a feel for Haiti's troubles.

However, there was a group of Canadians who were omitted from the article. The focus was on Canada's contribution to MINUSTAH by way of 100 police officers and that there was no military presence in the country. In fact, there are four Canadian military officers working in the MINUSTAH headquarters, positioned in such a way as to greatly influence the military operations in that country.

How do I know this? It's simple, I was one of the officers who deployed from October 2005 to April 2006 and have provided briefings to others who have deployed, or will soon deploy over the next several weeks, since my return home.

The influence Canadian officers have on the mission cannot be understated. Canada provides the mission's chief of staff, a colonel who directs the headquarters and provides advice to the force commander. There is also an operational planning officer, logistics officer and an assistant to the chief of staff.

Having deployed as the planner, I know exactly what Canadians bring to the mission and how our training and abilities assist in multiplying the effects of the various contingents in Haiti.

Does this bring peace and security to the country immediately? Absolutely not. But saying that the violence isn't getting any worse is a step in the right direction and only with time, continued effort and support on the part of the international community, and the Haitians themselves, will this country avoid failure and continued gang violence.

Major Paul Brunberg, Toronto

Work permit scam - Haitians obtain bogus documents from Labour Ministry staff

Mark Titus, Freelance Writer

The Jamaica Gleaner News

November 10, 2006

Several employees of the Ministry of Labour and Social Security have reportedly been sent on leave following reports that a number of Haitian immigrants have been issued work exemption certificates to gain employment as security guards.

Queries to the Labour Ministry were met with a wall of silence as personnel were said to be unavailable for comment.

Sources within the Labour Ministry also told The Gleaner that there is a directive that no one should speak to the media on the matter.

At least four local security companies are said to have Haitians in their workforce, a revelation that shocked Permanent Secretary Alvin McIntosh when he was contacted a week ago.

"It cannot be so because the job of a security guard does not require any special skill that we cannot find in Jamaica," he declared. "This will be immediately investigated."

The Gleaner has, however, received a duplicate of what is believed to be an official document from the ministry: an exemption certificate issued to a Haitian security guard in accordance with the Foreign Nationals and Commonwealth Citizens (Employment) Regulation 1964.

The certificate, which is valid until September 30, 2008 and means the immigrant is exempt from the requirements of a work permit, bears two signatures for the permanent secretary.

Haitian security guards

A director at one of the companies that has Haitian security guards said he was unaware of any foreign employee, but subsequently disclosed that work documents had been presented for them.

Under Jamaican labour laws, in order for these Haitians to be employed in the position, they would either have to be married to a Jamaican national or deemed a skilled person under the Caribbean Community (Free Movement of Skilled Persons) Act 1997.

Thousands of Haitians have fled their homeland since 2004, with more than 600 of them landing on Jamaican shores since the ouster of then President Jean-Bertrand Aristide, in February of that year.

The first such group to arrive comprised 10 heavily armed policemen who landed in Manchioneal, Portland that same month.

While hundreds were repatriated, some have subsequently set up homes here and are said to be part of the informal workforce.

Alex Thompson, Commissioner of Immigration, said there is a growing problem of illegal immigrants in Jamaica.

"The system has not been stringent as it should be. But I notice that efforts are now being made to improve the monitoring and screening process of applicants for work permits," he said.

Dominican Republic mission to focus on stateless Haitians
Caribbean Net News
Thursday, November 9, 2006

WASHINGTON, USA: Refugees International (RI) and Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service (LIRS) are conducting a joint visit to Haiti and the Dominican Republic from November 6 to 17.

The primary purpose of the visit to the island is to focus on the situation of stateless persons of Haitian origin in the Dominican Republic, with particular attention to the vulnerabilities of children, and to identify what steps both countries are undertaking to prevent and reduce statelessness.

Over the years, RI missions to Hispaniola have focused on the protection of Haitian refugees in neighboring countries, refoulement and repatriation of asylum seekers to Haiti, as well as conducting assessments on internal displacement and the UN peace operation in Haiti.

LIRS and RI will also focus on the need for durable solutions for undocumented Haitians in the Dominican Republic, including individuals who continue to meet the refugee definition.

LIRS, which is a leading refugee resettlement agency based in Baltimore, is particularly concerned about the barriers which currently prevent Haitian refugees from accessing family reunification/P-3 resettlement in the US refugee program.

The team will also work to identify the factors forcing people to move within the region and to urge both countries to uphold every persons' right to a nationality and to enjoy protection.

DeWine's defeat is a loss for Haitians
South Florida Sun-Sentinel
Editorial Board
November 8, 2006

The defeat of Sen. Mike DeWine, R-Ohio, in Tuesday's elections deals another blow to the interests of Haiti and Haitians in the United States. DeWine had joined with former Sen. Bob Graham, D-Fla., in an effort to pass legislation friendly to the impoverished Caribbean nation and its expatriates.

Now both men are gone. Graham retired from the Senate in 2005, and DeWine was beaten Tuesday by Democratic U.S. Rep. Sherrod Brown. Graham and DeWine sponsored the Haiti Economic Recovery and Opportunity Act, which would use trade incentives like duty-free status for Haitian apparel to spur reforms in Haiti and encourage foreign investment. The Senate has passed the measure, but the House has yet to do so.

It should now be time for supportive South Florida members of the House, such as Rep. Kendrick Meek, D-Miami, to step up to the plate and deliver this long-overdue legislation.

44 Cubans and 4 Haitians arrested by ICE in Puerto Rico and USVI for illegally entering the U.S.

U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement

November 6, 2006

CULEBRA, Puerto Rico - Forty-eight aliens from Cuba and Haiti who illegally entered the United States were arrested here and St. Thomas, United States Virgin Islands (USVI) today by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) special agents.

The group arrested in Culebra, a small island off the eastern coast of Puerto Rico, consisted of 20 Cuban nationals (19 males and one female) and four Haitians (three females and one male). They were spotted by Puerto Rico Police Department police officers as they tried to beach the fragile boat in which they allegedly traveled from St. Maarten, Netherlands Antilles.

The second group of illegal aliens, consisting of 24 Cuban nationals, was apprehended in St. Thomas, USVI. According to the ICE investigation they arrived directly from Cuba and allegedly paid \$10,000 for their illegal trip to the United States.

"Smugglers are finding out that using the Caribbean Basin for their smuggling ventures is no longer an option," said Manuel Oyola Torres, special agent-in-charge of ICE investigations in Puerto Rico. ICE will continue using its resources to halt illegal immigration to the United States through Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands."

All 48 illegal aliens will be transferred to the ICE detention center in Aguadilla, Puerto Rico where they will be processed.

This enforcement action was part of the Secure Border Initiative (SBI), a comprehensive multi-year plan launched by the Department of Homeland Security to secure America's borders and reduce illegal migration. Under SBI, Homeland Security seeks to gain operational control of both the northern and southern borders, while re-engineering the detention and removal system to ensure that illegal aliens are removed from the country quickly and efficiently. SBI also involves strong interior enforcement efforts, including enhanced worksite enforcement investigations and intensified efforts to track down and remove illegal aliens inside this country.