

A Bitterly Divided Haiti Is Lurching Toward an Election

By GINGER THOMPSON

The New York Times

October 30, 2005

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti, Oct. 29 - Twenty months after a violent uprising forced President Jean-Bertrand Aristide into exile, the road to new elections here in the hemisphere's poorest nation remains planted with land mines.

A presidential hopeful, Dumarsais Siméus, ran over one last week. With great fanfare, he began a campaign rally in Solino, a crumbling and crime-plagued neighborhood of the Haitian capital. Throngs of people turned the dirty, foul-smelling streets into a party, singing to Mr. Siméus and waving his campaign T-shirts in the air like banners.

Haitian elections, under United Nations supervision, are promised for December. Supporters of René Préval rallied recently in Port-au-Prince.

"Siméus, Siméus, you are the one we have been looking for," they sang. "Now we are free."

The singing followed Mr. Siméus's campaign caravan for miles, until he reached the Bel Air neighborhood, an Aristide stronghold. There, dozens of angry men and women rushed onto the streets, hurling rocks and chunks of concrete at Mr. Siméus's car, forcing him to flee.

"That man has never done anything in this country," Fleurette Pierre shouted from the crowd. "The only one who ever did anything for the poor is Aristide."

"If the world does not want to see blood on the streets," she added, "then they will bring him back."

Despite hundreds of millions of dollars in international aid and the deployment of some 7,000 United Nations peacekeepers, scenes like this show that Haiti remains mired in civil unrest, divided between the elite and a segment of the nation's poor masses that remains fiercely loyal to Mr. Aristide.

Juan Gabriel Valdés, chief of the United Nations Mission to Haiti, said killings and kidnappings by street gangs and corrupt police officers had declined after his troops cracked down on the gangs, known as chimères, last summer, killing several of their top leaders, and after a newly appointed police chief arrested 15 officers suspected of abuses.

However, he acknowledged that the gangs continued to operate in the poorest areas of the city - a peacekeeper was shot to death in the violent Cité Soleil section of the city last week - and that Haiti, a country with almost no functioning institutions, was not ready to stand on its own.

"If we are looking at this election as a magic solution, or as an excuse for the international community to leave Haiti," Mr. Valdés said, "then Haiti is not ready for that."

The United Nations has registered more than 70 percent of eligible voters, authorities here say, but the Haitian government's Provisional Electoral Council, crippled by infighting, has still not made final the slate of candidates or even set a date for the elections except to make vague promises that they will be held sometime in December and that a president will be sworn in on Feb. 7.

Some openly wonder in this polarized and insecure atmosphere whether the country is ready for elections. And a walk through almost any poor neighborhood - past gang members, small mountains of garbage, canals flowing with human waste, into homes as dark and depressing as caves - makes it hard not to wonder whether elections will help solve Haiti's most pressing problems.

People like Garraud Josef, unemployed almost all of his 51 years, keeps hoping. He, his wife and their five children live in Solino, in an overcrowded labyrinth of concrete houses less than a foot apart from one another. His wife makes a about a dollar a day selling rice that she cooks over a charcoal grill in the alley.

They cannot afford to send any of their children to school. One of them, a 17-year-old with a developmental disorder that makes him look 10, sits in a chair in the back of the dank, dark house all day, rocking.

When asked why he planned to vote, Mr. Josef, a determined skeleton of a man, said: "After all the elections, things have not really changed. But you never know. We have to try."

Others seemed fed up. Democracy has given so many so little that the streets rumble faintly with nostalgia for the dictator Jean-Claude Duvalier, forced from power in 1986.

"We can only believe in God," said Jean-Louis Silione, 29, a street merchant. "Every time we vote, but still there is poverty. Every time we vote, but still there is killing. Every time we vote, and still there is misery. So why should we vote?"

Another hard question he faces is whom to vote for. At least 34 people have declared their intention to run, including top officials of past dictatorships, former aides to Mr. Aristide and a former police chief suspected of drug trafficking by the United States.

"I don't care what they said about me," said Guy Philippe, the former police chief. "I am running to serve my country, not the international community."

A Bitterly Divided Haiti Is Lurching Toward an Election

Although Mr. Aristide's hold on the country's poor masses has weakened, the so-called "slum priest," who has been accused of using street gangs to suppress his opponents, remains a kind of phantom force in the elections.

In July, the United States-backed interim government detained the country's most popular political figure and heir to Mr. Aristide's vast Lavalas party, the Rev. Gérard Jean-Juste, on dubious murder charges.

"The people in power stole the government from President Aristide," Father Jean-Juste said in an interview from prison. "They are trying to silence me. This is their way to destroy Lavalas."

Since then, Lavalas has been split, with the leadership backing former Prime Minister Marc Bazin and grass-roots groups supporting former President René Préval.

Mr. Préval, a protégé of Mr. Aristide, is widely considered the most popular candidate in the race, even though he has made almost no public statements about his aspirations or plans for governing. He was the only Haitian president ever to finish a full term, and is widely remembered among the poor for building roads, schools and hospitals.

"Préval doesn't have to say Lavalas; people know him as Lavalas," said a political observer who asked not to be identified because he is working for another candidate. "Lavalas followers continue to be the majority of the country."

Mr. Siméus, the son of Haitian peasants who is now one of America's most successful black entrepreneurs, looks to the poor to help him win the presidency.

As soon as he filed to run for president three months ago, the government announced he was not eligible because he had renounced his Haitian citizenship to become a naturalized citizen of the United States, and had not lived in Haiti for five years before the elections, as required by the Constitution.

Mr. Siméus challenged the decision before the Supreme Court. The five judges unanimously decided in his favor, and ordered the government to allow him to run.

The government has looked for ways to get around that ruling, and political observers said the legal battles against Mr. Siméus could force the elections to be delayed until next year.

"Haitians here have always been afraid of our diaspora," said Micha Gaillard, a political organizer, "because we fear they will come back and replace us."

In an interview in his hotel suite, with his shoes off and the top buttons of his shirt open after a long day of campaigning, Mr. Siméus said the fear driving the opposition to his campaign was only among the elite.

"I represent someone with a big vision to change the status quo and break the backbone of the little clique that has dominated this country for too long," he said.

The stones thrown at his caravan in Bel Air may have dented a car or two, but the songs from the crowds in Solino, he said, rang louder in his ears.

Casimir Jean-Claude, 33, was one of those at the Siméus rally.

"We are not going to give our vote to a poor man anymore," he said. "We did that with Aristide, and he stabbed us in the back. Now we want a man who knows how to make money."

Haiti politics: Stumbling towards elections
COUNTRY BRIEFING
FROM THE ECONOMIST INTELLIGENCE UNIT
The Economist
October 28, 2005

Amid an ongoing political, economic and security crisis, Haiti's interim government has said it will postpone (again) general elections previously slated for November 20th. Around 35 candidates have registered to run for president in a country crippled by political fragmentation, violence and chronic underdevelopment. Given the complexities of organising elections in these conditions, and the logistical challenges facing electoral authorities, they have decided to delay the first round of balloting until December and a second round until January. Even when the voting takes places, the election's credibility could be marred.

Haiti is the poorest and least stable country in the western hemisphere, with limited experience with direct elections. This will be the first presidential and parliamentary voting since the departure of the last elected head of state, President Jean-Bertrand Aristide, in February 2004. Mr Aristide resigned (under pressure from the US) in the midst of a nationwide uprising against his regime. The US then backed a transitional government, led by President Boniface Alexandre and Prime Minister Gérard Latortue.

The violence has continued, however, as 7,000 UN peacekeepers assigned to Haiti have largely failed to disarm former soldiers and organised gangs. There have reportedly been at least 1,000 politically related killings since Mr Aristide went into exile. This has created a climate that is little conducive to a peaceful electoral process. For this reason, many Haitians and human-rights observers pushed for a postponement of elections, at least until the security situation improved.

Set up for failure?

The ability of the Provisional Electoral Council to administer the elections in a timely manner has always been in doubt. According to the UN secretary general, Kofi Annan, the entity suffers from severe structural and operational shortcomings. In late September even US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, during a quick visit to Haiti, urged the authorities to rapidly address various technical difficulties, such as decisions related to the number and location of polling places and the registration of poll workers.

The fairness of the elections is also in question. The Electoral Council is accused of both incompetence and political favouritism. The interim government has been criticised by human-rights groups for keeping its political opponents (mostly members of Mr Aristide's ousted Fanmi Lavalas party) in prison for months without filing charges, while releasing from jail convicted leaders of paramilitary groups and failing to prosecute ex-military men involved in the ouster of Mr Aristide.

Election officials say they have registered some 3m voters, or between two-thirds and four-fifths of the electorate. But with some 35 candidates running for president and 1,300 vying for

the 120 seats in the legislature, the prospects for a strong future government with political legitimacy are dim. The election will go to a run-off if no candidate wins 50% of the vote, which seems unlikely. Whenever the elections take place, Haitian leaders and Washington are determined to oversee a handover of power on February 7th 2006.

Electorate spread thin

Washington is also determined not to allow Mr Aristide to return to Haiti, but his Lavalas party will play an important role in the election. The majority of Haitians are believed to still identify with the party. Its most popular leader, Roman Catholic priest Gérard Jean-Juste, has been jailed since July 21st and was not allowed to register as a presidential candidate. Lavalas ultimately registered no candidate of its own, but two members of Mr Aristide's government will run as independents: former Prime Minister Marc Bazin and former President René Preval.

The remaining field of candidates includes figures that range from a businessman who has been portrayed as a US citizen with few ties to Haiti, to notorious former members of paramilitary groups. The latter include Guy Philippe, an ex-soldier who led the rebellion against Mr Aristide, and other assorted small-time warlords.

The outcome of the race is unpredictable. What is certain, however, is that elections alone will do little if anything to address Haiti's longstanding social ills, economic underdevelopment and environmental degradation. None of the presidential candidates have offered programmatic solutions to these problems. Governability will remain difficult under an administration that will probably lack majority popular support or effective control of the legislature. Post-electoral conflicts, and legislative stalemate, are thus likely. The country will remain desperately poor and its institutions weak. And it will be dependent into the foreseeable future on foreign economic aid and probably foreign security assistance as well.

Brain drain affecting developing countries

The Barbados Advocate

October 27, 2005

A recent World Bank study reveals that the countries of the Caribbean, as well as other developing countries across the globe, are losing large proportions of their college educated workers to wealthy democracies.

The study, "International Migration, Remittances and the Brain Drain", was published last week and based on census and survey data from 30 Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) countries. It traced a massive exodus of professionals from some of the world's most vulnerable low-income countries. For example, eight out of ten Haitians and Jamaicans with college degrees live outside of their respective countries. In Guyana, 89 per cent of the skilled workforce has left the country, the study found.

Other areas hard-hit by the brain drain include Central America and Sub-Saharan Africa. And, some areas of the Caribbean and the Pacific show rates of migration among professionals over 50 per cent, in stark contrast to larger countries like China and India, where only three to five per cent of graduates are abroad. Brazil, India, Indonesia, and the former Soviet Union countries also have low migration rates among the educated.

Despite the fact that many of the emigrants send remittances that may benefit their home countries, the extensive loss of educated people is damaging to small to medium size poor countries. Therefore, the study's co-editors suggest the use of incentives that would reduce the loss of much needed skills, possibly by increasing cooperation between sending and receiving countries in these areas, and by introducing policies that boost potential income for professionals in their home countries.

It was agreed that the exodus of skilled workers from poor countries was a symptom of economic, social, and political problems in their homelands, and often affected areas like health care and education. Another argument in relation to the brain drain issue was that the prospect of migration could actually increase the sending country's level of education and welfare by providing an incentive for people to seek more education in the hopes of improving their employment options as migrants. However, the researchers only found small amounts of evidence supporting this theory, especially since skilled migrants in the US often failed to find jobs that matched their education levels. A

Roker In Immigration Blast

Former PLP minister says that farms helped fuel migration problem in Abaco.

By JASMIN BONIMY

The Nassau Guardian

Bahamas News

October 27, 2005

People's politician Loftus Roker, has accused Abaco residents of fuelling the immigration problem on the island, by allowing migrant workers to stay after their work permits expire.

The former Progressive Liberal Party Minister of Immigration, said that farms were the main culprits for hiring immigrant labourers.

"I sympathise in a half-hearted way with the people of Abaco because they thought they were getting cheap farm labour and now they have their Mudd and Pigeon Pea," Mr Roker said.

He insisted that Haitian labourers brought into Abaco, were being treated like "slaves" and warned that if this practice continued, migrants would overrun Abaco.

"History will also tell you-like the people in Abaco are now learning-that you cannot keep people as slaves forever [because] eventually those slaves will be your masters," he said.

Earlier this month, leader of Abaco's Urban Renewal Programme Jewel Major, said Abaconian residents were to blame for creating the illegal immigration problem on the island.

At a forum entitled, "Bahamian-Haitian Crisis: Where are we now?," she pointed out that much of the immigration difficulties facing Abaconians were a result of farms shutting down and their Haitian workers being left to squat on nearby land.

"One of the farms brought the Haitians to work," she said. "When the season was over, instead of sending them back because their work permit [was] up, they just turned the water supply off.

"This meant [they were] forced from living where their houses were on the farms. So they went into the cities – like Marsh Harbour – to live," she explained. "I think that's what's happening, we are reaping what we've sown."

Ms Major added that Abaconians were helping to further facilitate the problem, by knowingly hiring illegal Haitian immigrants living in the sprawling shantytowns, of The Mudd and Pigeon Peas. She said that some businessmen have even admitted to committing the crime.

"I have spoken personally with these employers and they admit they know that a lot of [Haitians] that they have hired are illegal," she said. "The Marsh Harbor people have to take responsibility for why this is happening."

The large concentration of immigrants has caused the island many problems in the past few months. Most recently, in early September, it was reported that The Mudd and Pigeon Peas settlements were on the verge of exploding, after clashes occurred between illegal and legal Haitians.

But according to Mr Roker, the illegal immigration issue and the problems associated with it, could be cleaned up in a heartbeat, if the government was enforced the laws.

"The problem is not illegal immigration or legal immigration. It's that we have forgotten what the policy ought to be," he said. "The laws are there to deal with these matters [but] we fail to enforce the laws of the land. They are to be upheld and obeyed."

Embezzlement found in Aristide administration
The Independent Online, South Africa
October 28 2005

Port-Au-Prince - A probe of former Haitian president Jean Bertrand Aristide's administration turned up evidence of embezzlement and other irregularities, according to a report by the country's central economic and financial investigation agency.

The agency demanded that Aristide, currently in exile in South Africa, and his former government ministers be called to testify about "assets stemming from drug trafficking and other serious offences, the extraction of public funds, abuse of authority, misappropriation of funds and corruption involving government officials."

The investigation found that nearly \$127-million were spent by the administration between 2001 and 2004, above and beyond the budget, and there were irregularities in spending in the presidential accounts.

Digicel has big plans for Haiti - Delves
By Keith Collister, Staff Reporter
The Jamaica Gleaner
October 28, 2005

Digicel Group Chief Executive Colm Delves says his company is not for sale. This was in response to recent media reports that inferred that Digicel intended to sell out to the Egyptian-based cellular phone operator Orascom, contingent on a successful roll out in Trinidad and Haiti.

Digicel founder, Denis O'Brien, had unsuccessfully bid against Orascom - and seven other companies - for the management contract of a cellular phone company in Lebanon some time ago, according to Mr. Delves, but there had never been any kind of relationship between the two groups.

Mr. Delves said Digicel was doing significantly better than its business plan, and therefore, it would be a ludicrous time to sell the business.

Mr. Delves' assertion appears to be borne out by a report in the respected Irish publication, Business and Finance, which states that Digicel reported EBITDA (earnings before interest tax depreciation and amortisation) of US\$62 million for its first quarter ending of June 2005, a massive 62 per cent increase compared to the same char period last year. For comparison purposes, according to their recent bond offering memorandum, for the entire previous year to March 31, 2005, the company had revenues of US\$477million and reported EBITDA of US\$165 million.

DELVES

The original source quoted by Business and Finance is a research note by leading U.S. investment house Citigroup, which was the lead bank on Digicel's very successful recent \$300 million bond offering. This was massively oversubscribed and Digicel's bonds have consistently traded at a premium to their original offering price.

According to the Citigroup research note, after only four years in business, Digicels' operation is already highly profitable: "Digicel reported better-than- expected 1Q 06 results, highlighted by robust EBITDA growth, consecutive margin improvement, and solid, free cash-flow generation."

Total revenue for the quarter was US\$141.7 million, up 30.59 per cent compared to the same period the previous year and up seven per cent from the previous quarter.

"Free cash-flow generation was strong in the quarter at US\$27.2 million, but we expect that in subsequent quarters, free cash flow may be lumpy because of higher integration expenses related to Cingular assets acquired in the previous quarter," the Citigroup note reveals.

According to Mr. Delves, Digicel is "committed to further growth in the region, and we certainly have the financial wherewithal needed". This appears to be no idle boast, as even without any additional resources from their billionaire shareholder, it is likely that the bond issue and the better-than-budgeted financial performance should allow them to fund the continued rapid expansion of their current footprint. Digicel does not necessarily intend to limit itself to its current footprint however, as their target market now includes the non-English speaking Caribbean with a combined potential of 22 countries. With the international capital markets apparently very receptive to Digicel's debt, a further expansion would not appear to present a funding problem at this time.

According to Mr. Delves' "Digicel's overall objective is to be the number one cellular provider in the Caribbean, which does not just mean the English speaking Caribbean". At the time the Citigroup note was published on August 18, the company had 1.7 million subscribers, but since then, Digicel has received regulatory approval for the acquisition of Cingular Wireless operations in Anguilla, Dominica, St Kitts & Nevis, Bermuda, Grenada, and are near completion of St Vincent & the Grenadines, Antigua & Barbuda and St Lucia. They are also hopeful of receiving regulatory approval in Barbados and the Cayman Islands in the next couple of weeks.

THE TRINIDAD MARKET

Research company Pyramid Research believes that the opening of Trinidad and Tobago's telecommunications market represents one of the last Caribbean markets to open its sector to competition, leaving the Bahamas as the only other closed market in the region. In their opinion, the entrance of Digicel is likely to take significant market share away from the incumbent, TSTT. Trinidad & Tobago is shaping up to be the next battleground between Irish-owned Digicel and Cable & Wireless, which owns a majority stake in the local incumbent, TSTT.

"The current situation in Trinidad & Tobago is similar to that of Jamaica in 2001 when Digicel and another minor operator entered a market controlled by Cable & Wireless and severely eroded the incumbent's market share," says Pyramid Research analyst Thomas Abreu. "While Digicel is unlikely to grab market leadership in less than two years as it did in Jamaica, I do expect the challenger's impact to be significant."

According to Pyramid, Trinidad & Tobago has the potential for explosive growth, with relatively low mobile penetration at 40 per cent considering that Trinidad & Tobago has a relatively high GDP per capita of US\$12,000 and an economy benefiting from the rise in global energy prices. "If any difficulties arise with signing interconnection agreements, users may purchase multiple phones creating a situation similar to that of Jamaica where penetration is above 80 per cent despite a GDP of merely US\$3500" adds Pyramid Research senior analyst Marc Einstein.

Digicel was founded by leading Irish billionaire Entrepreneur Denis O'Brien, who had previously founded the Irish Telecom company ESAT in partnership with European based Telenor. After a hostile take-over bid by Telenor for the Nasdaq and Irish Stock Exchange listed ESAT, Mr. O'Brien brought in giant British Telecom (BT) as a white knight, thereby

selling out his stake to BT right at the top of the telecommunications boom in March 2000. Whilst Mr. O'Brien thereby realised an excellent price for himself and his shareholders, and also avoided the stock market crash, in Mr. Delves view, the sale was driven primarily by the hostile take-over bid. In Mr. Delves opinion, Mr. O'Brien is actually a builder of businesses with the objective of maximising their long term value, which would certainly not be achieved through a sale at this time. Mr. Delves is particularly positive on the prospects for Digicel in Haiti, where he believes cell phone penetration could quadruple to 25 per cent over the next two to three years from its current very low level of six per cent combined for both cell phone and fixed line.

I meant to save the world ...

Do not let college distractions get in the way of helping others

The Daily Pennsylvanian

October 25, 2005

It was a tricky question, so I thought about it for a second before saying something to the effect of, "If I were accepted into Penn, I'd like to join its chapter of Amnesty International, fight injustice and save the world." In that order. Now, to my credit, I was only 16 at the time and not entirely aware that it was the interview. I suppose our admissions officers get special training on how not to laugh in the faces of their interviewees. Mine just smiled politely. So far, I haven't been able to check any of those things off my list. Like just about everyone else, I've changed my mind a couple of times about what I'd like to do after graduation. But a shift to a somewhat less idealistic career doesn't necessarily exclude the possibility of accomplishing those last two goals.

I came to this conclusion after attending a talk at Penn's Law School last Thursday. Brandt Goldstein was there for the same reason anyone comes here: to promote his book. However, his ulterior motives (and his book) turned out to be a lot more altruistic than I had expected.

Storming the Court: How a Band of Yale Law Students Sued the President -- and Won is the story of, well, exactly that. In the early 1990s, the United States government was indefinitely detaining about 300 Haitian refugees at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. And when I say government, I mean both the first Bush administration and the Clinton administration. The book focuses on the story of a single refugee referred to by the pseudonym Yvonne Pascal.

What made these refugees different from the tens of thousands of Haitians either granted or denied political asylum? They were infected with HIV. This occurred during the middle of the AIDS scare, when those infected were often as feared as terrorists today. As the title suggests, the law students were able to prove that the refugees had constitutional rights and got them out of Guantanamo. Because they could not practice law just yet, they convinced a law professor to take on the case and put countless hours into preparing the briefs and arguments.

Before he started his talk, Goldstein looked around the room and said that he wanted to show the students that there was no limit to what they could achieve if they dedicated themselves to fighting an injustice.

By sharing his book's story with current Penn law students and others around the country, he hoped that they would take on more public-service projects, if not professionally, then at least during their time at law school.

In the past few years, less than "6 to 10 percent" of Penn's law school graduates have gone into public interest law. They're lumped into the same category as those who go into government, so it's impossible to know the exact figures. What happens at law school is probably the same thing that happens to undergrads. Many students enter school with high

hopes of, say, saving the world but lose sight of that along the way. Maybe their interests change, or maybe the pressure of student loans starts to get to them.

Like Goldstein, I'm not condemning anyone for needing to make good money after finishing school. I don't consider it "selling out" so much as a perfectly reasonable thing to do for the aforementioned reasons. In the meantime though, there's still a lot of good we can achieve. As stressful as college life can be, during these years we have more free time and fewer responsibilities than we probably will ever have for the rest of our lives. We can use the advantages we have to help others.

Of course, undergraduates aren't really ready to sue the president or anything. Hell, we need help to sue the owner of Smokes'. I know too many people who, like me, came to Penn intending to get involved with a group and help change the world, as trite as that sounds. Perhaps they even started going to the meetings, but then something always came up. Class, work, the sophomore slump, organic chemistry lab, another student organization, you name it.

But there's still time. Tonight, I'm going to my very first Penn Amnesty International meeting at Civic House at 8. Because, as Brandt Goldstein said, "There are a thousand Guantanamo Bays and a million Yvonne Pascals out there."

In July, another probe also found evidence of corruption and embezzlement within Aristide's administration, noting that nearly \$20-million in public funds had been diverted to private accounts in Haiti and the United States between February 2001 and February 2004. - Sapa-AFP

OAS continues efforts to assist Haiti in institutional development
Caribbean Net News
Friday, October 28, 2005

BASSETERRE, St. Kitts: The Washington- based Organization of American States (OAS) continues supporting efforts to strengthen security, justice and human rights in Haiti.

So said Secretary General Jose Miguel Insulza on Wednesday as he highlighted the progress achieved and challenges remaining in that country prior to its general elections during a meeting chaired by President of the Council of Permanent Representatives, St. Kitts and Nevis' Ambassador Dr. Izben Williams.

Presenting a quarterly report to the Organisation's 34 member countries, the Secretary General underscored the "great success" of the OAS-supported voter registration campaign, saying that it has led to the registration of some 3.4 million eligible voters to date.

"This means that we now have a system in place with which to carry out the elections," Insulza said. However, the Secretary General expressed concern over certain organisational and logistical difficulties remaining, which have resulted in the postponement of the elections. "The concern of the international community has been to ensure that the election takes place when it is supposed to take place, that is the first week of December," he emphasised.

"The work we're doing to bring about the electoral process in Haiti, the effort we've made at trying to maintain security so that there can be a peaceful transfer of power and that we can begin a new stage in the history of Haiti, is one that has received great support from the OAS," Insulza expressed in a OAS news release.

The Secretary General also emphasised the need for the OAS to remain in that country after the elections, in order to support future democracy building efforts. "The democracy that we're trying to bring to Haiti, the political stability and the security that we want to bring, is important for the rest of the hemisphere," he said.

The OAS Assistant Secretary General, Ambassador Albert Ramdin, informed the Council of the political progress made in terms of the preparations for the elections, saying that "the real challenge at this point is to finalize the electoral calendar, and to determine specifically the dates and the actions to be taken in establishing a date for the election, somewhere in December."

In the meeting, chaired by Ambassador Izben Williams of St. Kitts and Nevis, the representatives of several countries expressed their support for the work carried out by the OAS in Haiti.

Catholic students walk for the poor on Sunday
Hamilton Mountain News, CA
Oct 28, 2005

Hamilton Catholic schools will be taking part in a 10 km pilgrimage walk this Sunday (Oct. 30) at 1 p.m. to raise funds, through pledges, for humanitarian projects in Haiti, the Dominican Republic and Uganda.

The pilgrimage, called Walk with Christ: Justice for the Poor, hopes to raise awareness of Third World poverty among Catholic youth.

At press time some 1,700 students had registered from all seven of the Hamilton-Wentworth Catholic District School Board's secondary schools and 50 from the elementary schools.

The Board will be supplying more than 30 buses to transport students from their home schools to Bayfront Park where the walk will get underway at 1:20 p.m.

Registration goes from 12:30 p.m. to 1 p.m. followed by a rally at 1 p.m. and blessing at 1:20 p.m.

Students will complete the Bayfront loop, then walk the Bayfront Trail to Longwood Avenue for the first 5 km of the pilgrimage, and from there will follow a prescribed route along Main Street West to St. Mary's Catholic Secondary School, where the event will conclude with a Eucharistic Liturgy officiated by Bishop Gerard Bergie.

The first pilgrimage in the spring of 2004 was attended by roughly 400 students and raised \$21,000 in support of Third World projects in the Dominican Republic, Uganda and Rwanda.

**Physician honored
Kansas City Star
October 28, 2005**

Stan Shaffer, a neonatal physician at St. Luke's Hospital who has spent years aiding the people of Haiti, received the UMKC School of Medicine's alumni achievement award Thursday.

Shaffer first traveled to Haiti more than 20 years ago. Last year, he was instrumental in the opening of a birthing center where pregnant Haitian women get medical help.

In Haiti, death rates of both pregnant mothers and their children are extremely high because of the country's dire poverty. Births are often done at home and often with only a machete or a shard of glass to cut the umbilical cord.

Shaffer is a 1979 graduate of the medical school and now also teaches as an associate professor of pediatrics. One alumnus each year is chosen for each of the 12 academic areas of UMKC.

Tropical Storm Alpha Kills 26 in Haiti, Dominican Republic

Reuters

Washington Post

Thursday, October 27, 2005

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti, Oct. 26 -- Tropical Storm Alpha brought torrential rains that killed 26 people in Haiti and the Dominican Republic this week, days after Hurricane Wilma also caused death and destruction in the countries, officials said Wednesday.

Alpha, the 22nd named tropical cyclone of the Atlantic hurricane season, drenched the two countries, which share the Caribbean island of Hispaniola, on Monday and caused flash floods that swept away people, houses and animals.

Mountainous Haiti, where 17 people were reported killed, is especially vulnerable to floods and mudslides because much of the impoverished country has been stripped of trees by desperately poor people whose main source of fuel is charcoal. Nine people died in the Dominican Republic, officials said. Six of the Dominican deaths occurred in the coastal province of Puerto Plata, in the north, when a river broke its banks.

Wilma, which cut across Mexico and the Caribbean last week before striking Florida, killed at least 13 people in Haiti and Jamaica and six in Mexico, authorities reported.

On Mexico's Yucatan Peninsula, meanwhile, at least 20,000 tourists were trying to escape the beach resort of Cancun, heavily damaged by Hurricane Wilma.

Three U.S. commercial airlines ran flights from Cancun for the first time since Wilma tore in last Thursday, and there was chaos at the airport as tourists scrambled to get one of up to 6,000 seats available.

Many were willing to fly almost anywhere after spending six nights sleeping alongside strangers in grim shelters with no electricity, little food or drinking water, overflowing toilets and intense heat.

Some complained that they were abandoned by their governments.

"I haven't seen any American help anywhere," said Bud Botzon, 44, who owns an auto repair shop in Spokane, Wash., and was waiting with his wife for word on flights home.

Anti-war movement challenges Canada's war on Haitian democracy

October 27, 2005

Derrick O'Keefe

Seven Oaks Magazine

Anti-war activists from across the country will meet in Ottawa November 11-13 at the 20th anniversary conference of the Canadian Peace Alliance.

The weekend event's theme, 'Challenging Canada's Role in Empire', is most appropriate at this dangerous juncture. Paul Martin's government is quickly moving to a more openly aggressive foreign policy, and meeting little opposition from elected officials in parliament.

Chief of Defence Staff, Rick Hillier, with his bellicose comments about Afghan "scumbags", fired the opening salvo of the marketing campaign aimed at selling the shift in Canada's military role in the world. Two thousand Canadian troops are on their way into combat in Afghanistan, shedding any pretence of "peace-keeping" in that occupied country.

Meanwhile, in Haiti, Canada continues to be a key player in an even more brazen and blatantly illegal intervention: the ousting of the democratically elected government of Jean-Bertrand Aristide.

Canadian Special Forces secured the airport on the night that Aristide was whisked out of Haiti -- he described it, aptly, as being "kidnapped" -- and into forced exile. French, U.S. and Canadian troops have since been buttressed by a United Nations "peace-keeping" force. The Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP), with their long history of colonizing missions, have taken a leading role in training the Haitian National Police (HNP), who have been waging a campaign of murder and terror against supporters of the ousted president and his Lavalas Party. Numerous independent human rights reports have borne witness to what some have called a 'campaign of extermination' against the political party that has been the historic choice of the country's poor majority.

Meanwhile, a number of prominent figures in Aristide's party and government languish in prison, including Prime Minister Yvon Neptune and noted Catholic priest and activist Father Jean Juste. The latter's incarceration is a transparent move to prevent him from running in the upcoming "elections" in which Canada is playing a key planning role. President Aristide recently observed that, with his party effectively banned and persecuted, the process is better termed "selections".

That Ottawa, Washington and France orchestrated the regime change in Port-au-Prince is no longer disputed -- at least by any credible observers. Instead, though, a host of bureaucrats, compromised spokespeople for 'Non' Governmental Organizations (NGOs), and top Liberal government ministers continue to push an explicitly imperial discourse: Canada, they insist, is disinterestedly helping the Haitian people build democracy and stand on their own two feet.

Cracks in this wall of lies, erected with the help of a largely subservient media, are beginning to appear. Haiti solidarity events are taking place across the country, and not just in the major

centres. The issue of Canada's role in the disastrous human rights situation faced by Haitians, and of the Liberal government's leading role in this colonial venture, is becoming a major focus of anti-war rallies and events.

A recent article in the TheTyee.ca asserted that Haiti is becoming Canada's Iraq. Ottawa's venture has yet to reach the same level of mass unpopularity as Bush's war in the Middle East. But, then, people in Canada are only just becoming aware of what has been done in their name.

The anti-war movement may be ebbing right now, in terms of the numbers that are participating in demonstrations. But the fact that we are starting to sharply confront this aggression perpetrated by our own government bodes very well for the future.

At the Ottawa conference, on Saturday November 12, delegates from across the country will join a Haiti solidarity rally on Parliament Hill, as part of a week of action called to expose the sham elections and the illegal regime change. With a government rapidly dropping its peace-keeper mask, an Ottawa rally for Haiti is an ideal venue for those of us in Canada to really put forward a challenge to empire.

Derrick O'Keefe is a co-chair of StopWar.ca and a founding editor of [Seven Oaks](http://SevenOaksMag.com) (www.SevenOaksMag.com), an on-line journal of politics, culture and resistance.

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Free This Priest

Father Gerard Jean-Juste is no outlaw. He's a Magic City hero.

By Chuck Strouse

Thursday, October 27, 2005

Miami New Times

Letters

Letters from the Issue of , 2002

First a rock smashed the front window. Then, after a metal shutter was slammed shut, a bottle exploded against it. Then another. And another.

A thousand Haitians burst through a police barricade one steamy summer Saturday in 1990 and swarmed a storefront off Biscayne Boulevard. Inside, as muscular Cuban-American shopkeeper Luis Reyes snapped on a bulletproof vest, one Miami cop loaded his shotgun while another pulled his pistol. I sat on a box in the rear, terrified. "They've moved the Dumpster against the back door," Reyes said. "They're starting a fire."

Early in the day, after a store clerk had pummeled a Haitian-American shopper, Kreyol-language radio announcers egged on the attack at the Rapid Transit Factory Outlet on 79th Street. A mob gathered. I was there. Then a young news reporter, I had heard the broadcasts and wandered inside just before the violence began.

After several hours, when there was a lull and the fire had been extinguished, one of the cops decided I should leave. "It might get ugly," he said. "You'll be safer outside." So I tucked my notebook in my pocket, cracked the door, and exited. I was the target for a fuming crowd. "Journaliste," I shouted, hands aloft. "Reporter."

Several men crouched. One moved toward me. I distinctly recall his angry expression and bloodshot eyes.

Then there was a hand on my shoulder, the word friend was spoken in Kreyol, and in an instant the mood changed. The crowd embraced me.

The hand and the word belonged to Rev. Gerard Jean-Juste, whose actions saved me and the others in the store that day. Speaking through a megaphone, he eventually, peacefully, helped end the attack.

Now Jean-Juste — a puckish, pudgy-faced, twelve-year South Florida resident who left Miami soon after the riot and has ministered to Haiti's poor children ever since — is stuck in a prison cell in Port-au-Prince. Falsely accused of participating in the killing of his cousin, journalist Jacques Roche, he has become a martyr. Amnesty International has declared him a prisoner of conscience. Thirty-four members of Congress have called for his release. And 400 clergy of all stripes signed a petition demanding his freedom.

The man ultimately responsible for jailing Jean-Juste on the trumped-up charges — he was in Miami at the time Roche was kidnapped — is long-time Boca Raton radio commentator Gerard Latortue, who's now the country's interim prime minister.

The dispute is a distinctly South Florida affair.

"Jean-Juste is still a hero here," comments Dufirstson Neree, a thrice-minted Ivy League grad and Haitian American who's running for Congress from an area that includes Little Haiti. "No one can defend the position that he is a terrorist or a menace to society."

Three decades ago, Jean-Juste became the first Haitian ordained as a Roman Catholic priest in the United States. In 1978, just two years before a huge wave of his countrymen transformed Miami in a boatlift, he helped establish the Haitian Refugee Center, a group that has fought all the way to the U.S. Supreme Court for the rights of people from the world's first independent black republic.

Jack Lieberman, another HRC cofounder, remembers that Jean-Juste manned the center in Liberty City and helped keep the peace during the many Eighties riots that shook the Magic City. "When he first came to the Haitian Refugee Center, most of the church agencies wanted to treat the Haitian refugee issue as one of charity," Lieberman says. "Jean-Juste pointed out that there was an injustice. Cubans were treated better than Haitians."

In the years that followed, Jean-Juste organized marches against Haiti's Duvalier regime, bad U.S. immigration law, and discriminatory policies in everything from housing to blood donation. For the Miami Herald I covered a half-dozen protests he led with megaphone in hand. I studied Kreyol and sat with him in the empty office of Veye Yo, a political meeting house on 54th Street he helped create.

He often spoke of Martin Luther King, Jr., and Gandhi. He was a true leader.

Of course, he was a rabble-rouser. Archbishop Edward McCarthy was suspicious of Jean-Juste's Liberation Theology leaning and denied him a pulpit. In response, Jean-Juste termed McCarthy a racist. After several drowned Haitian boat people washed up on a South Florida beach, Jean-Juste sued, claimed the bodies, and turned the burial into a protest.

In 1991, after Jean-Bertrand Aristide took power in a rare democratic election in Haiti, he returned home. "After all the years in exile, he needed to go back to minister to his people," comments Lavarice Gaudin, director of Veye Yo today. "He's always been a nonviolent man, but one who will nevertheless push for what is right."

He also gained political power as Aristide appointed him minister/liaison for Haitians living abroad. Then, only seven months after Jean-Juste had arrived on the island, Aristide was ousted by a bloody military coup. Jean-Juste went into hiding for three years.

He turned up on the island again in 1994, after U.N. forces returned Aristide to power. For the next ten years, he traveled often between the United States and Haiti, paying particular attention to South Florida, where more than 250,000 Haitians live. He visited his sister Francine, who lives in Broward County, and sometimes led protests. At a demonstration in Washington, D.C., in 1997, the year the Florida Marlins won the World Series, he told the

assembled thousands: "The same way all of us came together in Miami to celebrate the Marlins — black, white, and brown — let us all come together for justice, peace, and fairness."

In 1998, on his radio show from Port-au-Prince, Ginen, he helped authorities find the parents of a twelve-year-old girl who was gunned down in an Allapattah flea market.

In Haiti he ministered to a parish of 80,000 Haitian families in a church on a dirt road outside Port-au-Prince. He organized a program to feed 600 youngsters twice a week. And, of course, he politicked, pushing relentlessly for Aristide, even after the president was overthrown in a bloody coup in February 2004.

Jean-Juste's serious problems began in October of last year. Armed security officers dressed in black and wearing black ski masks arrived at his church, broke through iron bars and windows, and then dragged him away on suspicion of inciting violence and hiding pro-Aristide gunmen.

Back then, only 20 of 1000 inmates in the prison where Jean-Juste was housed had even seen a judge, according to Bill Quigley, a Loyola University law professor who has represented Jean-Juste in Haitian courts. "In jail," Quigley says, there were "no beds, no blankets, and no water to bathe."

The priest was released after seven weeks for lack of evidence. "It is a big mistake of trying to lock up this guy who is speaking truth," Quigley adds. "He has never said anything about violence; he has never raised a gun."

This past July, Jean-Juste visited South Florida and led a demonstration at the Brazilian Consulate in Miami. The protestors urged that nation — which is led by a former union organizer named Luiz Inácio da Silva — to speak out against the United Nations' role in 23 killings in Cité Soleil on the island. "He came to town, said we had this massacre occur, conditions are horrible, please do something," Lieberman says. "So we went to the consulate and basically pleaded our case."

A couple of days later, Jean-Juste headed back to Haiti. Three Veye Yo members I spoke with said a pro-government Kreyol-language radio host in Miami called for violence toward Jean-Juste back on the island. "Before Father Jean-Juste left, everybody knew something would happen to him," Veye Yo's Gaudin comments. "But he said he had a mission."

In Haiti, Jean-Juste — along with Quigley, who was visiting — decided to attend the funeral of the murdered journalist Roche, a supporter of the interim government whose family is related to Jean-Juste's. There the crowd beat them and chased them into a toilet stall before Jean-Juste was arrested and thrown into a jail, where he has remained ever since.

Amnesty International termed him a political prisoner a few days later. This past August, Jean-Juste fell ill and nearly died in the prison. Recently recovered, he now sleeps on a

rubber mat on a concrete floor beneath a picture of murdered Salvadoran priest Oscar Romero.

In September a group of U.S. Representatives including Kendrick Meek, Robert Wexler, and Alcee Hastings — all Democrats — sent a letter to Prime Minister Latortue calling for Jean-Juste's freedom. Referring to the release of a convicted murderer, Louis Jodel Chamblain, Meek said, "It is a sad day when a respected community leader, committed to helping the poor, is locked away in a prison cell while a convicted human rights abuser walks free."

In Little Haiti, Jean-Juste's supporters have hung pictures emblazoned with "Free Jean-Juste" in many restaurants and businesses. "Jean-Juste is my best friend," says Merus Benoit, who owns Ben Photo studio on NE 54th Street. "He suggested I go to Miami Dade College to learn English. Any time he needed a picture taken, I took it. I'd do anything for him"

At the urging of the Bush administration, elections in Haiti were scheduled for November (though they were recently postponed until December) and more than a half-dozen Haitian presidential candidates have raised money in South Florida. Jean-Juste has even pondered a try; on August 25, he told the Associated Press he would run for president "if Aristide approves my candidacy." But then, after the Archdiocese in Haiti disciplined him, he withdrew.

The problem in Haiti is not quick elections (just as that is not the answer in George W. Bush's more distant morass, Iraq). The answer is more U.S. aid to Haiti, more help to beleaguered U.N. troops there, and a concerted campaign to free Jean-Juste and jailed former Prime Minister Yvon Neptune. Miami, more than any other U.S. city, has a strong tie to the island nation. And to many of the Haitians here, Jean-Juste's imprisonment is the top issue.

"Jean-Juste is a black eye on the government of Haiti," Neree says. "As long as he is in jail, there can be no free and fair elections."

France offers Dominica assistance to combat human trafficking

AP

Jamaica Observer

Thursday, October 27, 2005

ROSEAU, Dominica (AP) - Dominica signed a co-operation agreement with France yesterday to help combat human trafficking in this Caribbean island nation.

Dominica's Prime Minister Roosevelt Skerrit said the agreement involves, "Joint patrols by the French and Dominican coast guards and the sharing of intelligence between the police departments of Guadeloupe and Martinique and Dominica."

Two years ago, Dominica began requiring visitors from Haiti and the Dominican Republic to pay a US\$400 (euro330) deposit upon their arrival in Dominica.

But critics have said the government was merely profiting from the trade, having made some US\$4 million (euro3.3 million) in unclaimed deposits since the measure was imposed.

The visitors were supposed to have collected the money before their departure, but some 11,000 Haitians never did and most likely left the island illegally.

Over the years, hundreds of migrants from Haiti, the Dominican Republic, Cuba and China have reportedly entered the islands legally, but left illegally to neighbouring islands as they sought reach wealthier islands or the United States.

In struggling Haiti, some long for ex-dictator
Tepid campaign frustrates voters
By Indira A.R. Lakshmanan, Globe Staff
Boston Globe
October 27, 2005

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti -- As the poorest, most unstable state in the Western Hemisphere stumbles toward long-awaited elections with more than 30 lackluster presidential candidates, some exasperated voters have started to pine for an exiled despot: Jean-Claude "Baby Doc" Duvalier.

In a sprawling middle-income neighborhood here in the capital, black-and-white 1980s-era photos went up this week bearing the pudgy face of the deposed playboy-dictator whose regime was synonymous with graft, state-sponsored murder, and repression.

Alphonse Altena, 47, who hustles to find work every day, despised Duvalier and voted for populist Jean-Bertrand Aristide in 1990. But what has followed was so much worse, he said, that he and many others now look back on the dictator's era as a time when roads were built, tourists came, and garbage got collected. A Gallup Poll released last month found Haitians consider Duvalier the best president of the last two decades -- a sorry comment on the failed governments since.

Since a bloody revolt toppled Aristide last year, the Bush administration has banked on the upcoming elections to solve the problems of its violence-prone neighbor. But unlike Iraq or Afghanistan, other nation-building projects of the United States, Haiti is no stranger to voting.

Half a dozen elections followed Duvalier's ouster in 1986. But instead of real democracy, Haiti got more corruption, demagoguery, incompetence, and coups. The promise of democracy has withered, many

Haiti: School kits for 3,000 disadvantaged children paid for by Ronaldo and Zidane

Source: United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)

Date: 25 Oct 2005

Reuters, ReliefWeb

Port-au-Prince, 25 October 2005 - A recent donation of US\$120,000 from soccer stars Ronaldo and Zidane, both of them Goodwill Ambassadors of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), made it possible to provide school materials and supplies to some 3,000 children, most of them from disadvantaged families with few resources, if any, living in the most populated slum area in Haiti.

Over 3,000 children attending 25 different schools, whose parents were for the most already in dire straits before the crisis ensuing from the resignation and exile of President Jean-Bertrand Aristide in 2004, which resulted in further worsening their situation, benefited from this humanitarian rapid-impact project in the Cité Soleil neighbourhood. Humanitarian interventions by the international community had significantly reduced the size of this slum area, in the northern section of the capital Port-au-Prince, with sub-standard living conditions and rising violence and insecurity.

The project titled Education: First Emergence - Cité Soleil is aimed at shoring up the right to education, in particular by encouraging and supporting school attendance and teachers' training, in addition to outreach actions including educational and recreational activities. Financing for the project, in the amount of US\$70,000, is provided by the US\$120,000 donation made to Haiti in July by Ronaldo and Zidane, representing the proceeds of the Match Against Poverty (video) which took place in Madrid, Spain, in December 2004, within the UNDP campaign "Teams to End Poverty."

The project was implemented by Associazione Volontari per il Servizio Internazionale (AVSI), an Italian Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) which, under a separate, parallel project, contributed to the training of some 150 teachers, in various subjects, assigned to the beneficiary schools in Cité Soleil. Project execution was supervised by the Humanitarian and Development Coordination Section (HDCS) of the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH). Its successful completion is also the result of effective cooperation between the Government of the Republic of Haiti, development organizations based in the Cité Soleil community and UN system agencies in Haiti, such as UNDP, UNICEF and UNESCO.

At an official ceremony held in Cité Soleil on 25 October 2005 to celebrate the completion of the project, as a symbolic gesture, the implementing agency AVSI distributed the last batch of school kits to a group of 20 students. Present at the ceremony were representatives of various partner agencies as well as the Haitian Minister of National Education and a delegation of representatives of the beneficiary schools.

The balance of the funds donated by Ronaldo and Zidane, US\$50,000, is used to fund a project in the health and sanitation area, also in the City Soleil community. At the time of both projects' approval, earlier this year, Haitian Prime Minister Gérard Latortue and UNDP

Resident Representative in Haiti Adama Guindo had issued a written invitation to both soccer stars to visit Haiti and see the impact of their contribution for themselves.

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UNDP is the UN's global development network, an organization advocating for change and connecting countries to knowledge, experience and resources to help people build a better life. We are on the ground in 166 countries, working with them on their own solutions to global and national development challenges. As they develop local capacity, they draw on the people of UNDP and our wide range of partners

Soccer greats Ronaldo and Zidane score goals for UN education project in Haiti
Soccer stars Ronaldo and Zidane
UN News Centre
October 27, 2005

Soccer stars Ronaldo and Zidane, Goodwill Ambassadors of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), have scored golden goals for 3,000 disadvantaged children in a Haitian slum, donating \$120,000 to provide school materials as well as health and sanitation supplies.

An official ceremony in Cité Soleil in the Haitian capital of Port-au-Prince yesterday marked the completion of the project, funded by the Brazilian and French internationals, representing the proceeds of the Match Against Poverty held in Madrid, Spain, last December as part of UNDP's campaign "Teams to End Poverty."

Over 3,000 children attending 25 different schools, whose parents were already in dire straits before the crisis ensuing from the resignation and exile of President Jean-Bertrand Aristide in 2004, benefited from this humanitarian rapid-impact project titled Education: First Emergence - Cité Soleil.

Seeking to shore up the right to education, in particular by encouraging and supporting school attendance and teachers' training in addition to outreach actions such as educational and recreational activities, the project received \$70,000 of the donation, with the remainder going to health and sanitation in City Soleil.

At yesterday's ceremony, UNDP's implementing agency, the Italian non-governmental organization (NGO) Associazione Volontari per il Servizio Internazionale (AVSI), distributed the last batch of school kits to a group of 20 students.

Representatives of various partner agencies as well as the Haitian Minister of National Education and a delegation of representatives of the beneficiary schools attended.

OAS PERMANENT COUNCIL HEARS REPORTS ON HAITI

Oct. 26 2005

Press Release - Organization of American States

The Organization of American States (OAS) continues supporting efforts to strengthen security, justice and human rights in Haiti, Secretary General Jose Miguel Insulza said today as he highlighted the progress achieved and challenges remaining in that country prior to its general elections.

Presenting a quarterly report to the Organization's 34 member countries, the Secretary General underscored the "great success" of the OAS-supported voter registration campaign, saying that it has led to the registration of some 3.4 million eligible voters to date.

"This means that we now have a system in place with which to carry out the elections," Insulza said. However, the Secretary General expressed concern over certain organizational and logistical difficulties remaining, which have resulted in the postponement of the elections. "The concern of the international community has been to ensure that the election takes place when it is supposed to take place, that is the first week of December," he emphasized.

"The work we're doing to bring about the electoral process in Haiti, the effort we've made at trying to maintain security so that there can be a peaceful transfer of power and that we can begin a new stage in the history of Haiti, is one that has received great support from the OAS," Insulza expressed.

The Secretary General also emphasized the need for the OAS to remain in that country after the elections, in order to support future democracy building efforts. "The democracy that we're trying to bring to Haiti, the political stability and the security that we want to bring, is important for the rest of the hemisphere," he said.

The OAS Assistant Secretary General, Ambassador Albert Ramdin, informed the Council of the political progress made in terms of the preparations for the elections, saying that "the real challenge at this point is to finalize the electoral calendar, and to determine specifically the dates and the actions to be taken in establishing a date for the election, somewhere in December."

In the meeting, chaired by Ambassador Izben Williams of Saint Kitts and Nevis, the representatives of several countries expressed their support for the work carried out by the OAS in Haiti.

Aristide 'legitimate president'

26/10/2005

News24.com, SA

Johannesburg - The United States civil rights leader Jesse Jackson on Wednesday voiced strong support for Jean-Bertrand Aristide after meeting with the ousted Haitian leader, saying he was a "legitimate" president who had been overthrown by Washington.

Jackson said: "The people didn't remove him, the US government removed him."

He said after meeting with South Africa's anti-apartheid icon Nelson Mandela.

Jackson said: "He didn't finish his term. He was a legitimate democratic elected leader.

"I've known him for a long time. We regard him as a democrat."

Political violence

Aristide swept to power in Haiti in 1990, only to be overthrown in a coup eight months later.

With backing from the US, he returned to power in 1994, but fell from grace amid claims of vote-rigging in the 2000 elections and political violence.

Faced with an armed insurrection and large street protests, Aristide bowed to pressure from the US, France and Canada and fled Haiti on February 29 last year.

He had been living in exile since May 31 with his wife and two daughters.

President Aristide's position on the 'elections' being imposed on Haiti
The San Francisco Bay View
October 26, 2005

Dr. Maryse Narcisse just came back from a trip to South Africa, where she consulted with President Jean-Bertrand Aristide on the future of the political organization Fanmi Lavalas and current events in Haiti. The president's spokesperson is pleased to transmit President Aristide's message to the people of Haiti and particularly to members and supporters of the political organization Fanmi Lavalas.

His Excellency Jean-Bertrand Aristide, president of the Republic of Haiti and national representative of the political organization Fanmi Lavalas, is sending his well wishes and a special salute to the people of Haiti who are going through some very difficult times. To the members and supporters of Fanmi Lavalas: A fraternal embrace.

Dr. Narcisse is pleased to inform the public that President Aristide and his family are doing well. The people and the government of South Africa consider them Africa's son and daughters. But the president's spirit has not forgotten his home. President Aristide and his wife are teaching and conducting research studies on African Renaissance at the University of South Africa.

Dr. Narcisse takes this opportunity to denounce the attempt by some politicians to mislead the Haitian people by lying and spreading false rumors on President Aristide's position regarding the elections. Dr. Narcisse also states that any claim that President Aristide sent letters or audio messages or met with representatives of any candidate looking for support in the elections-by-selection that the unconstitutional government is trying to organize is false.

The spokesperson wants to reiterate that President Aristide's statements in regard to elections have been clear and consistent. Quoting from his messages:

"In 1994, who could have expected free, fair and democratic elections in South Africa with Nelson Mandela, Govan Mbeki, Oliver Tambo and other leaders and members of the African National Congress in jail, exile or in hiding? Today in 2005, who could have expected free, fair and democratic elections in Haiti with thousands of Lavalas members and supporters in jail, exile and hiding?"

"In Haiti, in order to have elections and not a 'selection,' the following steps must be taken:

" The thousands of Lavalas who are in jail and in exile must be free to return home.

" The repression that has already killed over 10,000 people must end immediately.

" Then, there must be national dialogue.

"Dialogue leading to peace through the restoration of constitutional order - this is the will of the Haitian people. After 200 years of independence, it is clear that from this dialogue will emerge a new Haiti."

President Aristide asks every member of Fanmi Lavalas to ponder over the following statement, found on the first page of the organization's Charter and Statutes:

"A Lavalas is a patriot. A good Lavalas is a good patriot. Unity is strength. This is Lavalas."

This press release was originally posted at www.hayti.net, the official website of Fanmi Lavalas, the party of the great majority of the people of Haiti.

US Civil Rights Leader Jackson Meets With Haiti's Aristide

By VOA News

26 October 2005

Jesse Jackson, right, speaks to journalists as former South African President Nelson Mandela, left, looks on after meeting in Johannesburg

U.S. civil rights leader Jesse Jackson says he regards deposed Haitian President Jean-Bertrand Aristide as the Caribbean nation's legitimate leader.

Mr. Jackson said Wednesday he has met with the exiled ex-Haitian president in South Africa and says Mr. Aristide, who was democratically elected twice, was removed from office by the United States.

Mr. Aristide has lived in exile in South Africa since a popular uprising forced his departure as president in early 2004.

He said U.S. forces kidnapped him and forced him to leave Haiti, but the United States says Mr. Aristide requested U.S. aid in leaving Haiti.

Presidential elections are scheduled for December to replace a transitional government.

On Wednesday, Mr. Jackson also met with former South African President Nelson Mandela to discuss the HIV/AIDS pandemic in South Africa.

Woodruff police chief resigns to take job in Haiti
By Dean S. Acheson - Daily News staff
The Rhinelander Daily News, WI
October 26, 2005

Woodruff Police Chief Steve Pribis has resigned from the department, effective November 3, to pursue a job with the United Nations as a peacekeeper in Haiti.

Nearly 7,600 U.N. troops and police in Haiti are trying to re-establish order in advance of elections to replace the transitional government imposed after the February 2004 ouster of President Jean-Bertrand Aristide over allegations of vote-rigging in the 2000 elections and political violence.

Large street protests and armed insurrection, along with pressure from several former allies, convinced Aristide to leave Haiti for exile in South Africa. Aristide's supporters as well as rival gangs in the slums of Cite du Soliel and Bel Air have contributed to the unrest in the Caribbean nation.

This is not Pribis' first job with the U.N.

He oversaw a contingent of about 150 personnel when he served in Kosovo under the U.N. flag from February 2000 to February, 2001. The Woodruff Town Board allowed him to take a one year leave of absence for that assignment.

Pribis said he "enjoyed the challenge" of the U.N. missions. "It's a good way to close out my career." said the 48-year-old police chief. He is now eligible for retirement as a Wisconsin police officer.

Whereas he will be a member of a 25 member American police contingent, he said the state department did not want him to release further mission details.

Town Chairman Larry Greschner said he's known for about a month that Pribis was seeking the U.N. job. But it was only about a week ago that the selection process advanced quickly. There were 150 candidates for the one-year posting, 12 were selected for training in Virginia and four were chosen. Pribis has the option of extending his service in Haiti for another year.

Pribis was slated to leave Oct. 22, but the mission was delayed because of the pending arrival of Hurricane Wilma created congestion at Florida airports.

The town board Tuesday accepted Pribis' resignation and directed that the chief's job be posted only within the department. Greschner said it was a reflection of the confidence the board has in its police department, including the five full time officers.

The chief vacancy will be filled November 3 and one of the three part-time officers will move up to full time, the town chairman said. In the meantime, Don Majewski will be named officer-in-charge of the department.

Greschner said he will be miss Pribis, who, he said, was also a friend. Greschner was editor of The Lakeland Times in 1982 and wrote the story about the hiring of Pribis as a Woodruff officer. Then in 1992, Greschner swore in Pribis as police chief.

SOA Grad and Former Pinochet Operative Leading Forces in Haiti
CMI Santiago
Thursday, Oct. 27, 2005

On October 17th, the Chilean Government admitted that Gen. Eduardo Aldunate, second in command of its military forces in Haiti, was linked to the disbanded National Intelligence Central (CNI), oppressive military forces that operated under the dictatorship of Augusto Pinochet (1973-1990). The charge was initially denied by the Minister of Defense and the Army Chief.

SOA Watch records show that "Aldunate Herman Eduardo" took the Basic Officer Orientation at the School of the Americas in 1974. To date, there are at least 10 other former high-ranking officials under Pinochet who attended or taught at the SOA. Among them are the former heads of the CNI and DINA secret police, the officers who tortured and murdered a U.N. official, those who participated in the assault on the residence of president Salvador Allende, and who operated the Villa Grimaldi, Tres Alamos and Cuatro Alamos concentration camps for political prisoners.

The associations are made more grave in light comments by rebel leader turned Haitian Police force top, Guy Philippe, stating his admiration of the former dictator, adding, "Pinochet made Chile what it is." A 1994 report by the National Commission on Political Imprisonment and Torture (known as the Valech Commission) catalogued more than 27,000 confirmed cases of imprisonment and the most grotesque forms of torture under Pinochet.

There is no word yet regarding whether the general will continue in Chile's military intervention in Haiti, in the wake of the ouster of Constitutional President Jean Bertrand Aristide in 2004. Carmen Soria, daughter of a Spanish diplomat who was tortured and killed in 1976, who first made the Aldunate accusation, plans to appeal to UN Secretary General Kofi Annan to have Aldunate replaced, and demanded the resignation of Chilean Minister of Defense Jaime Rabinet.

To view the initial article from the Prensa Latina, visit:
<http://www.plenglish.com/Article.asp?ID=%7B562AC5FB-5E4E-49FC-8A06-6B2F81DE4315%7D&language=EN>

www.soaw.org/new/

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UN Jordanian peacekeeper dies of gunshot wounds in Haiti
UN News Centre
24 October 2005

A Jordanian peacekeeper serving with the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) has become the latest blue helmet to lose his life for the cause of peace after dying today of a gunshot wound sustained at the weekend during an operation to seize a stolen vehicle and find a kidnapped woman.

Muhammed Khalaf died at a hospital in the Dominican Republic, where he had been evacuated for treatment.

The shooting took place on Saturday in Cité Soleil, the sprawling low-income suburb of Haiti's capital, Port-au-Prince, according to MINUSTAH.

Three Haitian Presidential Candidates Hold US Debate

By Amy Bracken

Boston

VOA News

25 October 2005

Three of the candidates in Haiti's upcoming presidential election faced off in a rare public debate Sunday in the U.S. city of Boston. The three-hour debate was an unusual political exercise for Haitian presidential candidates, who are struggling to distinguish themselves in a crowded field of 34 people running in the election.

Two of the three visiting candidates bear the scars of their country's tormented political history.

Judith Roi, a vocal critic of ousted president Jean-Bertrand Aristide, was jailed for eight months in 2003 on charges of plotting a violent insurrection. She is only the second female presidential candidate in Haitian history.

Evans Paul, was jailed and tortured for speaking out against the military dictatorship of General Prosper Avril in the 1980s.

Charles Romain is a former minister of education and former member of the council that oversees elections.

Through 10-minute opening statements and two-minute responses to questions, the three attempted to explain how they hope to rescue the poorest and most unstable country in the Americas from political, economic and environmental ruin.

All three agreed on the need to rebuild the country from scratch, differing only in what should come first.

Mr. Paul said that first and foremost Haiti must part with its long history of violent government overthrow.

"Haiti can't jump start the economy or improve social integration without creating the atmosphere of political stability, without democracy or justice," he said.

For Ms. Roi, the political situation is secondary to a more pressing problem: an unemployment rate she estimates at 80 percent.

"We must, above all, curb unemployment," she said. "The common denominator of all Haiti's problems is unemployment. All the other problems - delinquency, social crime, political crime - come after."

One of the toughest questions in the debate came from moderator Yves Cajuste, of the Boston-based French Center for Haitian Studies.

Mr. Cajuste says the candidates have repeatedly mentioned the phrase, "We must create, we must ameliorate, we must develop," and asks them, "Where will you find the money for this?"

The responses were vague. Ms. Roi said the money won't come from the sky, but offered no concrete alternatives. Mr. Paul said people will invest in Haiti as soon as the country is more stable, and candidate Charles Romain replied the money should come primarily from within Haiti.

Many potential Haiti investors say they are waiting for the stability they hope will follow elections, but some worry the vote will be sabotaged by boycotts, violence or fraud. Because of logistical problems, elections have already been postponed, and the vote for president is now only tentatively set for some time in December.

Haiti Turning into Canada's Iraq

Unrest after Aristide ousted 'Peacekeeper' image at risk as violence, repression mount.

By Jared Ferrie

TheTyee.ca

October 25, 2005

The political meltdown around a coming election in Haiti could tarnish Canada's peacekeeping reputation. Canada is taking a lead role in Haiti's reconstruction, but increasing violence and political repression is making free and fair elections impossible, critics warn.

Canada is the third largest donor to Haiti, after the United States and the European Union. Canada has contributed \$180 million for Haiti's reconstruction over the next two years, including over \$26 million for the upcoming elections.

But there are thousands of political prisoners in Haiti, according to journalist Kevin Pina, and Canada has the daunting task of reforming the police, court and prison systems

"The situation is horrible right now," said Pina, an American who has lived in Haiti for the past six years. "You have a situation where the majority political party is basically confronting a campaign of extermination. It's a nightmare situation and Canada is up to its neck in it."

Pina was in Vancouver on Friday to screen his documentary Haiti: The Untold Story.

Growing criticism

Activists have been crying foul ever since a coup overthrew Jean Bertrand Aristide in February 2004, but criticism is building from human rights groups and other observers as conditions in the western hemisphere's poorest country go from bad to worse.

Supporters of Aristide's Lavalas party "have been targeted in police sweeps across poor neighbourhoods of the capital where support for their party is strong," according to Amnesty International.

The human rights watchdog reported in July that Reverend Gerard Jean-Juste, an outspoken Aristide supporter, "was taken to Pétionville police station by officers from the Haitian police and the UN civilian police force, CIVPOL."

Canada has contributed 100 police officers to CIVPOL, which is in charge of training the Haitian police.

Jean-Juste remains in prison, along with other Lavalas leaders including former Prime Minister Yvon Neptune.

The Brussels-based think tank International Crisis Group has also accused the transitional government of using "its power to persecute former Lavalas leaders and supporters, such as Yvon Neptune, mostly without charge or trial."

In a written response to The Tyee, Foreign Affairs spokesperson Pamela Greenwell said, "Canada believes that in the interest of national reconciliation in Haiti, the case of former Prime Minister Neptune must continue to follow the legal course."

Neptune has been held without trial since June 2004.

When asked about Canada's ability to lobby for the release of political prisoners, Greenwell responded, "Given the weakness of Haiti's judicial system in this regard, Canada is working to help define priorities that would lead to significant improvements."

Elections at risk

Reports of political repression are casting a shadow over the December elections, which Canada, along with other countries involved in the preparations, hope to hold up as a symbol of their successful attempt to rebuild the country.

"The whole point of elections is that they are free and fair, and if they're not free and fair then we shouldn't be there supporting the process," said Michael Byers of UBC's Liu Institute for Global Issues.

Byers, an international law expert, said that although the UN authorized military intervention, the Security Council resolution was careful neither to condone nor condemn the coup that initiated the current crisis.

"Certainly, there's reason to be very concerned about the fact that Aristide was forced or felt it necessary to leave the country," Byers added. "He was a democratically elected president."

Democracy undone

Some critics say that countries including Canada put pressure on Haiti by withholding aid and then rushed in to support the unelected opposition when Aristide's government fell. They claim the strategy was led by the United States and backed up by Canada and France.

"(Canada's) foreign policy was in lock step with the Bush administration when they destabilized the government by freezing aid," said Pina.

Byers noted that Canada followed America's lead in getting involved in the imbroglio of post-coup Haiti.

"It is fairly clear that Canada was acting at the request of the United States, that the Canadian government saw this as an opportunity to play a constructive role in assisting our nearest ally in a situation that was considerably less controversial than Iraq," he said.

This is not Canada's first sojourn into the perpetually troubled country. Canada participated in the UN-sanctioned intervention in the mid-1990s that restored Aristide to power after he was

overthrown the first time. Retired Canadian Forces Major Roy Thomas, who took part in the mission, said that venture was ill fated.

"We invested the troops, time, and money to put Aristide back in power then stood by when he was sent again into exile," said Thomas, adding that a decade later it appears, "nothing has changed."

In the lead-up to the coup that toppled Aristide, human rights abuses and deteriorating security were cited by the US, Canadian and French foreign ministers as reasons that Aristide should step down.

AI: 'a major setback'

But activists point out that human rights have taken a step backwards since Aristide's departure.

"The scale of which human rights abuses are taking place - there's no comparison," said Anthony Fenton, a Vancouver-based activist and co-author of the recently published *Canada in Haiti: Waging War on the Poor Majority*.

"This was a very young democracy that was overthrown and there were problems, but the seeds for democracy were being planted," said Fenton who returned from a two-week visit to the country on October 4th. "Now those seeds have been torn out and the soil has been overturned. Haiti's gone back 50 years."

A May 3rd Supreme Court decision mirrors Fenton's words: the sentences of 15 members of the military and a paramilitary organization, who had participated in a massacre of pro-Aristide villagers, were rescinded.

At the time of their convictions, in 2000, the UN called the ruling a "landmark for justice in Haiti."

Amnesty International said that the decision to overturn the sentences "constitutes a major setback in the fight against impunity in Haiti."

Thomas pointed out that Aristide's government was not without its problems, including widespread corruption and abuse of power. Still, he said, Lavalas came to power democratically.

"But this election is a bit of theatre," he said.

Reputation at risk

Pina accused Canada, along with the US, France and the UN, of supporting a transitional government of elites who are using the police, courts and prisons to repress political freedoms in order to maintain their grip on power.

"I think that ultimately (the Canadian) government's reputation is going to be irreparably harmed, irreparably tarnished when all is said and done and the truth comes to light," said Pina.

Jared Ferrie is a regular contributor to The Tyee.

Oxfam and Partners Assess Damage from Wilma and Alpha
Oxfam America News
25 October, 2005

The Farmworker Association of Florida, an Oxfam partner, examines the affect of the latest storms on area farm workers.

On Monday afternoon, when Tirso Moreno reached Immokalee, Florida, after Hurricane Wilma had blasted across this southern community of poor migrant farm workers, he summed up what he saw in one grim sentence.

"Immokalee is destroyed," said Moreno, executive director of the Farmworker Association of Florida, a local organization with which Oxfam America partners.

With winds lashing the rural agricultural region at up to 110 miles per hour, Wilma caused extensive damage to the substandard housing in which many farm workers live. For many who are unable to afford anything better, home is often just a flimsy trailer—sometimes with as many as 12 men crowded inside.

Though Moreno did not have time to complete a full assessment, he reported that property damage in the area appeared to be extensive, including to the association's satellite office. The storm blew off half its roof, causing the ceiling to collapse and soaking the interior with rain.

In addition to causing structural devastation, the hurricane may have harmed the job prospects of countless farm workers. Oranges and tomatoes are two of the main crops grown in the region, and the tomato harvest was just getting under way, said Moreno. He fears that the storm may have caused extensive crop damage.

And since many of the farm workers in Immokalee and the surrounding areas of More Heaven and Belle Glade are undocumented immigrants, Moreno is also concerned that their access to relief assistance from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) may be limited.

Already many of the workers in the area earn wages that keep them well below the poverty line, and they have few independent resources on which to fall back.

Pickers typically average between \$7,500 and \$10,000 a year and do not receive benefits such as overtime pay, health insurance, or paid vacations.

While Moreno planned to continue his assessment of local needs today, the Associated Press reported that in one public housing complex where more than 600 farm workers live, Wilma had swamped the parking lot with waist-deep water, partially drowning residents' cars and making it impossible for them to leave in search of food.

Alpha Hits Haiti

Meanwhile, Reuters reported that Alpha—the record-breaking 22nd tropical storm of the Atlantic season—pummeled parts of Hispaniola, the island shared by Haiti and the Dominican Republic, with up to 15 inches of rain. The news service said the downpours led to the deaths of 11 people in Haiti.

The storm has forced the closing of the main road between Port au Prince and Hinche. It also caused La Quinte, a river in the city of Gonaives, to flood three neighborhoods. An Oxfam assessment team sent to the region yesterday reported that water in the houses in one neighborhood, Ka Soleil, had reached nearly a foot in height. Officials have closed all the schools in the area for the week.

A little more than a year ago, Gonaives suffered from extensive flooding when tropical storm Jeanne hit the city, reportedly taking the lives of about 3,000 residents in the area. At that time, Oxfam rushed emergency relief into the region and some of the reconstruction work it undertook has now been flooded again, including latrines at four schools.

U.S. Official Hails Voter Registration Process in Haiti
State's Patrick Duddy says process is most open in nation's history
By Eric Green
Washington File Staff Writer
US Department of State
October 24, 2005

Washington -- The voter registration process for elections scheduled in Haiti later in 2005 is the "most comprehensive, transparent, and fraud-free ever conducted" in the history of the Caribbean nation, says Patrick Duddy, deputy assistant secretary of state for Western Hemisphere affairs.

Speaking at an October 20-21 international donors' conference for Haiti, held in Brussels, Belgium, Duddy added that some 3.2 million Haitians have registered to vote, "setting the stage for broad participation" in the elections. Duddy led the U.S. delegation to the conference in Brussels. (See related article.)

Two rounds of legislative and presidential elections in Haiti tentatively are scheduled to take place on November 20 and in January 2006, with local and municipal elections scheduled to take place December 11. The State Department says the dates for Haiti's elections remain tentative, due to the complexity of arranging the vote, but a new Haitian president should be sworn in by February 7, 2006. Elections for Haiti's president and Parliament, which will be supervised by the United Nations, originally were scheduled for October and then postponed to November 20.

Duddy said that international donors and Haiti's interim government are "strongly committed" to ensuring the Haitian elections take place within the country's "constitutional timetable," and that the elections are peaceful, open, inclusive, and fair. Haiti's government, he added, "must take all necessary steps to implement a workplan that results in the inauguration" of a new Haitian president on February 7.

But Duddy also said that the United States is "deeply concerned" about continual delays in preparations for the elections, and the Bush administration has made those concerns clear to Haiti's government and to an independent Haitian body called the Provisional Electoral Council.

Key steps must be taken to ensure that Haiti's new president will be inaugurated on February 7, 2006, said Duddy. The most "time-sensitive" steps, he said, are publishing lists of the candidates running in the elections and identifying centers where voters can cast their ballots in the elections.

SECURITY ISSUES, BUDGETARY CONCERNS

Duddy said that security has improved in much of Haiti, as the U.N. stabilization mission in that country -- known by the acronym MINUSTAH -- has broadened its presence and "asserted its authority."

Haiti's global partners must take care "to prevent those who would disrupt the electoral process from gaining any currency" in Haiti, he said, adding that MINUSTAH and the Haitian national police must work together very closely to ensure security in the nation, particularly in those areas where gang leaders pushing "anti-democratic agendas may seek to restrict" the right to vote in the upcoming elections.

Budgetary concerns also remain a problem for the elections due to the delays in holding the vote, said Duddy. The United States, he said, already has contributed more than \$30 million to the electoral process and is hopeful that "our partners here today" in Brussels will look seriously at closing the remaining gap of some \$8 million for the electoral process.

Haiti's economic situation remains "fragile," said Duddy, "but we are hopeful that the foundations laid" by Haiti's interim government will lead to increased economic growth in 2006.

Duddy said the United States, as the world's most generous donor to Haiti, is committed to restoring democratic governance in the Caribbean nation, to ensuring security and human rights for all Haitians and to building the foundations of a sustainable economy.

Beyond the elections in Haiti, he said, the country's global partners will "stand alongside the Haitian people and their new institutions to maintain security and address the most urgent social needs," build "basic infrastructure" and generate economic activity.

In Haiti's post-electoral period, said Duddy, "it is particularly important that we renew our commitment to ensure security throughout the country." The United States, he said, will support a renewal of the MINUSTAH mandate to remain in the country and to increase a program to train the Haitian national police.

Good governance is another key issue for Haiti, Duddy indicated. He said the U.S. Agency for International Development is prepared to support Haiti's new institutions at all levels, such as within key Haitian government ministries and in the nation's parliament.

Duddy said that after February 7, 2006, it will be "crucial" to provide Haiti's newly elected government with sufficient resources to address the challenges it faces.

On that score, Duddy said the United States will provide Haiti with \$7 million in budget support. But that is not enough, he said. The Bush administration expects all donors to Haiti to "step forward" and help Haiti's next government close the country's budget gap, now estimated at \$31 million, said Duddy.

The Brussels donors' conference for Haiti, he said, was important because it offered international donors the "critical chance to begin now to focus on the support we must provide to a legitimately elected Haitian government."

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

Additional information about MINUSTAH is available on the U.N. Web site.

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

U.S. Should Have Clung to Aristide to the End
Originally: Statement before House Western Hemisphere Affairs Subcommittee

Arturo Valenzuela, former Latin America security adviser for President Clinton. With a comment by James Morrell for this web page

October 25, 2005

Haiti Democracy Project web page item #3290 (<http://www.haitipolicy.org>)

Haiti testimony of a leading U.S. scholar and opinion-maker in the Democratic Party, Arturo Valenzuela, former Latin America national security adviser to President Clinton. From testimony to House Subcommittee on Western Hemisphere, September 28, 2005. Followed by comment by James R. Morrell, executive director of Haiti Democracy Project, for this web page.

Finally, in Haiti the unwillingness of the administration to engage the daunting problems of the island and its personal distaste for the elected leader contributed to the severe deterioration of public order and the forced ouster of another elected president, setting back the unfinished if limited progress that country made in struggling to establish institutional order. When Haiti was overrun by rebels associated with the remnants of the disbanded Haitian army, Secretary of State Colin Powell correctly argued that the solution to the Haitian crisis required a respect for the constitutional order and the legitimacy of its elected president. But the State Department's efforts to mediate the crisis were half-hearted at best and when the opposition refused to accept its terms the administration made it clear that there would be no support for the beleaguered president from the international community thereby encouraging his ouster in 2004. "I am happy he is gone. He'd worn out his welcome with the Haitian people," proclaimed Vice President Dick Cheney.

By turning its back on Haiti the administration also turned its back on the Organization of American States and the efforts by other Caribbean states to mediate the political conflict on the island. The departure of President Aristide and his replacement with an ad hoc government rather than resolving the problems of the country only made them worse. By encouraging the removal of a figure, however flawed and controversial, who was the legitimate head of state and continues to command strong allegiance Washington aggravated the polarization of the country and made more difficult the restructuring of a semblance of institutional order.

Comment.

It is one thing to make a mistake, another to cling to it to the very end in a vain attempt to redeem it. The attempt with Aristide was perhaps worth making, considering his 1990 electoral legitimacy and the bleak alternatives at the time, but once it had gone bad, the United States needed to move as quickly as possible to the sort of democratic transition, with U.N. assistance, that is now being attempted. Optimally this should have been done under Clinton, and under the very able guidance of Arturo Valenzuela himself at the National Security Council! But at the very least, by the first years of the Bush administration. To wait, as did Bush, until the situation completely unraveled was to insure that the men with the guns

would prevail. It also gave too much time for armed gangs to spread like a cancer into the fabric of a society that had been, at the popular level, one of the most peaceful in the world.

There is a valid critique of the Bush administration's policy to be made, but Valenzuela has not made it here. His rejection of the struggling transition is very dangerous both for Haiti and for the capacity of the Democrats to assume a factually-based and morally sympathetic position. The example is not far to find. It is Bill Clinton himself during 1992-94.