

## **HAITI NEWS ROUNDUP: SEPTEMBER 1-6, 2006**

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### **Haitian business leaders urge force if U.N.-backed gang disarmament fails**

**The Associated Press**

**International Herald Tribune**

**September 5, 2006**

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti A U.N.-backed plan to disarm hundreds of gangsters with offers of money and jobs drew tepid support Tuesday from Haiti's powerful business sector, which urged police and peacekeepers to respond with force if the bid fails.

Up to 1,000 rank-and-file gang members who voluntarily lay down arms and rejoin society will be eligible for the program, the biggest disarmament effort of the two-year-old U.N. peacekeeping mission. Haiti's most wanted gangs leaders won't be eligible.

"We support the approach of offering people a chance to hand in their weapons. However, if people do not respect the program, U.N. (troops) and police have to use stronger methods," said Reginald Boulos, Haitian Chamber of Commerce president.

President Rene Preval is this week expected to appoint a seven-member commission to decide who can join the program, scheduled to begin this month.

Boulos said private sector members haven't been asked to help the commission but that "we would be ready to participate."

The U.N.-backed "Disarm, Demobilize and Reinsert" program is the latest in a string of efforts to neutralize street gangs blamed for a wave of kidnappings and killings since a bloody revolt ousted President Jean-Bertrand Aristide in February 2004. Preval last month warned gangsters, some whom are loyal to Aristide, to lay down their guns or face death.

Rene Max Auguste, a factory owner and board member of the American Chamber of Commerce in Haiti, said he doubted the plan would work, citing the international community's poor track record in disarming Haitian militants over the last decade.

"It has never worked. I am very pessimistic," said Auguste, who also called for "tougher measures" against gangs if the plan fails.

Charles Henri Baker, a wealthy industrialist who finished third in February's presidential election and has advocated a hardline approach to gangs, said the program was too limited and wouldn't reduce violence.

"No one knows how many arms are out there. We might have more than 30,000 weapons and disarming only 1,000 (gangsters) is only a drop in a bucket," Baker said.

U.N. envoy Edmond Mulet said Monday he believes between 500 to 700 gangsters are behind recent violence.

Mulet said program participants will get ID cards, money, food for their families and training for jobs such as construction workers and garbage collectors.

Support from business owners will be crucial for the plan's success, but Baker said he doesn't know if he would "welcome former criminals to work for my company."

"It will depend on who he is, how many crimes he has committed, how many people he has killed and what he was involved in before," he said.

**The lost children of Haiti**  
**The New York Times Editorial**  
**Published: September 5, 2006**

Haiti, founded two centuries ago by former slaves who fought to regain their freedom, has again become a hub of human trafficking.

Today, tens of thousands of Haitian children live lives of modern-day bondage. Under the system known as "restavek," a Creole word meaning "stay with," these children work for wealthier families in exchange for education and shelter. They frequently end up cruelly overworked, physically or sexually abused, and without access to education.

The most effective way to root out this deeply oppressive but deeply ingrained system would be to attack the conditions that sustain it - chiefly impoverished, environmentally unsustainable agriculture and a severe shortage of rural schools.

This is an area in which America can and should help. Washington has been quick to respond to political turmoil in Haiti, with its accompanying fears of uncontrollable refugee flows. But the frenzied flurries of international crisis management that follow typically leave no lasting results.

A wiser, more promising alternative would be to help create long-term economic options by improving access to schools and creating sustainable agriculture. Meanwhile, the United States should work with nongovernmental organizations to battle the resigned acceptance by many Haitians of the restavek system. They could, for example, help local radio stations broadcast programs of open dialogue about how damaging the system is, and include restavek survivors or human-rights experts.

The primary responsibility for eliminating the restavek system lies with the Haitian people and their government. After years of political crisis, there is a new democratically elected government. Eradicating the restavek system should be one of its top priorities, combining law enforcement efforts with attacks on the root social and economic causes.

The former slaves who won Haiti's freedom 200 years ago dreamed of something better for their children than restavek bondage. The time is overdue for helping those dreams become reality.

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## **Haiti's Political Prisoners: Not Preval's Fault, But His Problem**

### **Forum**

**By Brian Concannon Jr., Guest Columnist**

**The Jurist, Legal News and Research**

**University of Pittsburgh School of Law**

JURIST Special Guest Columnist Brian Concannon Jr., Director of the Institute for Justice and Democracy in Haiti, says that although the political prisoners lingering in Haiti's squalid jails are not the byproduct of the policies of incoming President René Préval, they are certainly his problem, drawing criticism with each passing day not only from international human rights groups, but also from Haiti's urban poor...

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Haiti's new government issued a democracy dividend on August 14 with the acquittal and release of four political prisoners. Three months into constitutional President René Préval's term, most of the high-profile members of Haiti's Lavalas movement jailed by the brutal Interim Government of Haiti over two years have been released. But if the cases demonstrate the democratic transition's promise, they also illustrate its pitfalls.

The high-profile cases were all easy calls from a legal standpoint. They were in some ways easy from a political standpoint as well, because President Préval comes from the same Lavalas movement. Nevertheless, the new government took three months to release the prisoners, because of strong resistance within both the justice system and Haitian civil society. That resistance spells delays, and trouble, as Préval's government tackles the much harder and more numerous cases of low-profile political prisoners.

### **The "Easy Cases"**

Activist and folksinger Annette Auguste (known as So Ann) was released on August 14 after more than 27 months in jail. Ms. Auguste was arrested illegally in May 2004, without a warrant and in the middle of the night, by U.S. Marines who had entered the country in the wake of Haiti's February 2004 coup d'état. The Marines claimed she was threatening U.S. troops, but never presented any proof. The IGH claimed she was involved in sorcery and in violence during demonstrations at the State University (Université de l'Etat Haïtien, or "UEH") in December 2003. But after investigating for two years, all the while refusing motions for pre-trial release, the IGH was not able to present a single witness or item of proof that Ms. Auguste had anything to do with the UEH violence. In the meantime, justice advocates in Haiti regularly protested the unjust detention, and human rights groups like Amnesty International campaigned abroad for her release or trial.

Last March, the Leny Fredd'Herck, the chief prosecutor in Port-au-Prince's trial court, conceded that there was "no evidence, no indication and no presumption of any involvement" by Ms. Auguste in the UEH incidents, and recommended dropping the charges. But a judge allied with the IGH sent the case to trial anyway, claiming that Ms. Auguste's admission that she regularly organized demonstrations for Lavalas was sufficient grounds to find her responsible for the UEH violence, which allegedly involved some Lavalas partisans. The defendants appealed, and at the appeals court another prosecutor advocated sending the case to trial, without citing any evidence. The Appeals Court agreed with the latter recommendation, without explaining why, and on August 14, the case went to trial. At trial, no

evidence was presented against Ms. Auguste or any of her five co-defendants, not a single witness appeared against them. A third prosecutor, noting the obvious, asked the judge to acquit all, which he did.

Former Prime Minister Yvon Neptune was provisionally released on July 27 after twenty-five months in prison, most of it on a limited hunger strike. He turned himself in to police twice: the first time in June 2004, after hearing about a warrant for his arrest on the radio, the second time in February 2005, after he was forced from the prison at gunpoint during a prison break. Mr. Neptune was so determined to clear his name through the justice system that in late 2004 he refused a government offer to fly him out of the country for medical treatment, fearing he would not be allowed back into the country (and prison) following the treatment.

Haiti's Constitution guarantees all prisoners an initial hearing within 48 hours of arrest, but Mr. Neptune did not get his for a year. He was formally charged 15 months after the arrest, in September 2005. The UN human rights mission in Haiti quickly called the charging document unconstitutional on its face. His codefendants appealed, and although they were entitled to a hearing and decision within a few weeks, the appeals court declined to hear the case for seven months. The court finally held a hearing in May, where the prosecutor recommended dropping all charges against Mr. Neptune, citing procedural irregularities and an absence of proof. But the court has still not yet issued a decision, 11 months after the appeal.

In the meantime, calls for Mr. Neptune's release came from UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan, human rights groups throughout the world, and even from the United States, the IGH's principal international patron. The IGH managed to deflect the protests, claiming deference to the judicial system. Haiti's elected government, installed last June 6, found these calls, and the even louder calls coming from its own grassroots supporters, harder to resist. In late July, the Minister of Justice asked the prosecutor to request the appeals court to provisionally release Mr. Neptune on humanitarian grounds, to seek medical treatment. The court granted this request, and Mr. Neptune was transferred to a hospital run by UN peacekeepers.

### Unfinished Transition

In most contexts, the pre-trial release of a prisoner who had twice turned himself in and once refused to leave the country, or the acquittal of a defendant against whom no evidence was presented, would be routine. But the Neptune and Auguste cases count as hard-won victories in today's Haiti. Although the legal merits of the decisions were uncontestable, a powerful constituency installed within the justice system and without by the IGH and its allies survived Haiti's democratic transition, and continues to resist the liberation of political prisoners.

The most obvious resistance to freeing prisoners lies within the judiciary itself. The IGH won no power in this year's Presidential and Legislative elections, but it maintained power in the judicial branch by packing the courts with sympathetic judges throughout its two-year reign. In 2004 and 2005, the Minister of Justice illegally pushed out trial judges appointed by Haiti's democratic governments and replaced them with people willing to do the IGH's bidding. In December, 2005, in what has been dubbed "the Friday Night Massacre", the Prime Minister replaced half of the Supreme Court in one fell swoop, after the Court ruled against the IGH in a controversial case. Both the firings and the

executive's unilateral naming of replacements were as unconstitutional in Haiti as they would have been in the United States. But the judges remain on the bench

President Préval has been reluctant to respond to complaints about the IGH's judges, declaring that he will not answer the IGH's interference with judicial independence with his own interference. But respect for the separation of powers does not require acceptance of the illegal status quo. To the contrary, the Constitution requires action, to ensure that current judges have been approved through its procedures. Supreme Court judges, for example, must be chosen by the President from a list of three candidates per seat proposed by the Senate. The judges named to the seats vacated by the Friday Night Massacre were simply appointed by the Prime Minister, with no parliamentary consultation. Now that Haiti has a constitutional Senate and a constitutional President, it should have constitutionally-appointed judges.

There is also a constituency within Haitian civil society for keeping the political prisoners in jail. Some student groups, including the Haitian Federation of University Students (FEUH) had been active in the campaign that led to the February 2004 coup d'état, and had filed complaints in the case against Annette Auguste and her co-defendants. But when the judge investigating the accusations summoned the students to testify, they refused. They also failed to appear at trial on August 14. But three days after the acquittal, FEUH members organized a well-attended press conference to protest the decision.

Another organization, the Réseau National de Defense des Droits Humains, (RNDDH) is playing a similar role in Mr. Neptune's prosecution. RNDDH used to be known as NCHR-Haiti, and developed a good reputation for human rights work during Haiti's 1991-1994 de facto dictatorship. But the organization became increasingly politicized, and in the wake of the 2004 coup d'état it cooperated with the IGH in persecuting Lavalas activists. The persecution became so flagrant that NCHR-Haiti's former parent organization, New York-based NCHR, publicly repudiated the Haitian group and asked it to change its name. RNDDH changed its name, but maintained its dogged pursuit of Mr. Neptune and other Lavalas members. The organization filed a suit on behalf of a group of people claiming to be victims of a massacre a few days before the coup, with the help of a substantial grant from the Canadian government. RNDDH's legal team tenaciously opposed, in court and in the press, the prosecutor's recommendation to drop the case, and even the request for humanitarian release.

### Political Obstacles

Beyond this political polarization, Haiti is now afflicted with an increase in violent common crime. The crime wave has many causes, including demographics, poverty, urbanization and the IGH's diversion of police energy to persecution of political dissidents. But its effect is public outrage, especially among middle-class Haitians, and urgent calls for the government to re-establish security.

Pressure to get tough on crime, combined with the resistance to freeing the political prisoners, will make tackling the remaining political prisoner cases extremely difficult for Haiti's government. Hundreds of people, mostly young men from the poor neighborhoods that support Lavalas, sit in Haiti's jails with no justification for their detention. Under the IGH, police routinely swept through neighborhoods, arresting young men by the dozens. The police, and even UN Peacekeepers, routinely made warrantless arrests based on uncorroborated tips from informers.

## The Hard Cases

Some of these prisoners were arrested because they were suspected Lavalas activists, others because they were suspected criminals. The problem for the low-profile political prisoners is that it is not easy to tell the illegally-held suspected dissidents from the illegally-held suspected common criminals. Most of the low-profile political prisoners were involved in politics at the neighborhood level, where organizing is informal. They may not have an official position or title that clearly establishes their political role, so it is harder to establish a political motive for their arrest.

Haiti's Constitution and international law do not distinguish among types of illegally-held prisoners. Instead, they require that all prisoners who are not detained for a legally adequate reason be released immediately. But a general, large-scale release would be politically difficult for the government. It would inevitably put some criminals on the street, adding to the reality of the crime problem, but more important, providing government critics an opportunity to blame any crime committed over the next few months on the releases.

The government could sharply reduce the number of political prisoners by installing a fast-track procedure for prosecutors to review cases of alleged political persecution and recommend dismissals where appropriate. In Haiti's notoriously slow and corrupt justice system, expedited procedures would require the Ministry of Justice to lean hard on its prosecutors, but the Ministry would be leaning with popular support. Grassroots human rights organizations recently delivered a tool to help identify and prioritize political prisoner cases: on August 24, a coalition of groups presented officials with a list of political prisoners. The human rights organizations' conclusions will need to be confirmed through an independent judicial process, but the list is certainly a good place to start, and will provide a yardstick for measuring the progress of releases.

## Conclusion

Political prisoners are not President Préval's fault, but they are very much his problem. Every day they spend in Haiti's squalid prisons exposes his government to more criticism, from international human rights groups, but also from Haiti's urban poor, who are the strongest constituency for the both the political prisoners, and numerically, for the new government. They understand the difficulties of the justice system, and will be patient, but only as long as they believe that the system is moving in the right direction.

The release of the prominent political prisoners in July and August provided some proof that the new government was moving in the right direction. But the goodwill they generated will not last forever. President Préval and his government must show more proof, by moving quickly to submit illegally-appointed judges to a constitutional approval process and by instructing prosecutors to prioritize the files where there is a credible claim that the defendant was arrested for his political activities.

Human rights lawyer Brian Concannon Jr. directs the Institute for Justice & Democracy in Haiti, [www.ijdh.org](http://www.ijdh.org)

## **Haiti Rape Victims' walk held to demand justice**

**By AP**

**Edmonton Sun, Canada**

**September 2, 2006**

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti -- Wearing white dresses and black masks, 150 rape victims marched through Haiti's capital yesterday to demand justice and an end to discrimination against them.

Chants of "We will not give up the fight!" rose up as the protesters, including teenagers and elderly women, walked slowly to Haiti's National Palace. It was the first public demonstration in years by women calling attention to rape, which is rarely prosecuted in Haiti and carries a stigma against victims.

## **Haiti: Truckers strike at border; UN troops shoot**

**By G. Dunkel**

**Workers World Online**

**August 31, 2006**

When Haitians in the United States heard that the truck drivers who bring supplies from the Dominican Republic to Port-au-Prince went on strike to demand the firing of Jeantal Clervil, the director of customs at Malpasse (Malpaso in Spanish), they suspected Clervil was enforcing all of the required import duties, and perhaps imposing some additional ones that he made up.

They were certain this was the case when they heard that Clervil has raised the collection of duties from 9 million to 57 million Haitian gourdes a month. (38.4 gourdes equal \$1 U.S.)

But then the strike lasted a month. And the strikers pushed back the cops from Haiti's national police SWAT team with barricades of burning tires, rocks, bottles and gunfire. The workers had no intention of folding and taking down their barricades. They also ignored a couple of armored personnel carriers from the United Nation's MINUSTAH occupation force parked near the border post.

Not only were the import businesses in Port-au-Prince and the export businesses in Santo Domingo hurting, but custom duties—a major source of income for the Haitian state—were lagging. Striking workers told Ives Marie Chanel, a special correspondent for Haiti's AlterPress Agency, that they had a chance of winning.

Chanel talked to a group of Haitian drivers on the Dominican side of the border. They said that the impulse for the strike was Clervil's abuse of authority and over-taxation.

While representatives of the strikers have talked with President René Préval, who is also in charge of internal security, it appears that the government has adopted a "wait-them-out" policy.

### **Political prisoners freed**

On the political front, Préval's government did not appeal a judge's ruling that freed four prominent Lavalas militants: Paul Raymond, Georges Honoré, Yvon Antoine, whose nickname is Zapap, and Annette Auguste, who is better known as Sò Ann.

At a news conference held after their liberation, according to the August 23-29 weekly *Haïti-Progress*, the four expressed satisfaction over their liberation, as well as their intent to continue struggling for justice and reparation in order to achieve "unity, peace and national reconciliation."

Lavalas is the party that supports ex-President Jean-Bertrand Aristide. The four demanded the return of Aristide, the rehiring of thousands of employees fired because they were Lavalas supporters, and the release of significant numbers of Lavalas supporters who were thrown into prison on trumped-up charges by the previous, illegitimate government.

### **Human-rights abuses**

An International Human Rights Delegation was in Haiti in late August to examine the current situation and to see if significant changes in the human-rights situation had taken place since Préval assumed power May 15.

At an Aug. 25 news conference, they reported how United Nations “peace keepers” attacked the community Simond Pele, in the commune of Cité Soleil, on the morning of Aug. 24

Six of the international observers witnessed this attack at close range. They said Brazilian MINUSTAH troops in four APCs fired multiple rounds of heavy-caliber ammunition in a densely populated residential area. The only other presence seen on the streets were unarmed civilians, including small children.

U.S. trade unionist David Welsh, a member of the delegation, said: “The indiscriminate UN attacks on civilians in the poor neighborhoods have got to stop. The residents of Cité Soleil have repeatedly said they want an end to the violent repression of the country’s poor by Haitian police and the UN occupying force.”

The delegation also witnessed MINUSTAH sealing off Simond Pele in a fashion that was used when paramilitary forces employed by the previous illegitimate government conducted massacres.

“Representatives of popular organizations we spoke with said they want all political prisoners freed and they want their constitutional government returned to office, which is why they voted en masse for René Préval,” said Pauline Wynter, representative of the Congolese Ota Benga Alliance, “and for the return of Jean-Bertrand Aristide, and the reinstatement of government officials and civil servants sacked by the coup government.”

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## **Police and political groups linked to Haiti sex attacks**

**By Andrew Buncombe in Washington**

**The Independent, UK**

**04 September 2006**

More than 30,000 women and girls - half under the age of 18 - were raped in Haiti's capital city in the chaotic two years following the ousting of the country's democratically elected president, a survey has suggested. About 8,000 people were killed during the same period.

The survey highlights the extraordinary violence at a time when the country was headed by an interim government imposed by the international community, following the enforced departure of Jean-Bertrand Aristide. "Our results indicate that crime and systematic abuse of human rights were common in [the capital] Port-au-Prince," the researchers from Wayne State University in Michigan said. "Although criminals were the most identified perpetrators of violations, political actors and UN soldiers were also frequently identified.

"These findings suggest the need for a systematic response from the newly elected Haitian government, the UN and social service organisations to address the ... consequences of human rights abuses."

Mr Aristide was forced from power in February 2004 by a coalition of former soldiers, members of the business community and US-backed political opponents. Following elections earlier this year, Rene Preval, a former president, was chosen to again lead the country.

The survey, based on random sampling and extrapolation, suggests that between February 2004 and December 2005, a total of 35,000 women were sexually assaulted. Of those attacks, 90 per cent involved rapes. The survey, published in *The Lancet*, does not make any comparison to the incidence of rape and killing prior to Mr Aristide's ousting. However, both the report's authors and other human rights workers said they believe the level of rape is directly linked to a high level of general violence and lawlessness - conditions that existed in abundance during the interim government period.

"Unfortunately, I think the rates are higher than we had anticipated," said one of the study's authors, Professor Royce Hutson.

He said that, while around half of rape perpetrators were identified as "general criminals", about 14 per cent were members of the Haitian National Police (HNP), a further 12 per cent as members of anti-Aristide groups, with about 25 per cent unidentified. He said the involvement of people with political links and the police suggested something "systematic" may have been taking place.

Of the 8,000 killings - a rate that would give the interim government one of the worst human rights records in the hemisphere - 22 per cent were committed by the police, 26 per cent by the demobilised army or armed anti-Aristide groups and 48 per cent by criminals. Both the HNP and members of the demobilised army acted against supporters of Mr Aristide and his Lavalas party.

Despite the election of Mr Preval, violence and rape has continued. Last Friday several hundred rape victims marched through the centre of Port-au-Prince, their faces covered by veils, to highlight the

ongoing crisis. Organiser Eramithe Delva, of the Commission of Women Victims for Victims (KOFAVIV), said: "We are veiling our faces because this is how they come to our homes to rape us, beat us, destroy our homes, burn our things."

Anne Sosin, of the group Vizyon Dwa Ayisyen (Haiti Rights Vision), said: "Cases of rape have increased dramatically during the past two years. Rape is not being used a tool of political repression in the way it was during the 1991-94 period, where women were targeted because of their political activities or that of their husbands. These rapes are happening in the context of the current political crisis and are being perpetrated by groups that often have links to political actors."

The survey does not identify Lavalas supporters as being involved in any rapes or killings, although such people could be included in other categories. Brian Concannon, of the Institute for Justice and Democracy in Haiti, said: "There are cases where family members have reported, during the same period, that Lavalas supporters and foreign soldiers are responsible for killings. The cases must be infrequent enough to not necessarily show up on this type of survey."

### History of rape and murder

Sexual assault as a form of political repression has a long history in Haiti. A court in New York last week heard evidence against Emmanuel "Toto" Constant, a Haitian now living in the US, who led military death squads that raped and tortured followers of President Jean-Bertrand Aristide in the early 1990s.

Under the military regime that ruled Haiti between 1991-94, the paramilitary group Front for the Advancement and Progress of Haiti (FRAPH) was responsible for a wave of killing and rape. In 2004, three unidentified women filed a lawsuit against Mr Constant. The hearing in New York was to determine whether Mr Constant owes damages to three women. He is in prison on mortgage fraud charges and did not attend the hearing.

One of the three woman told the court that masked men had burst into her home in Port-au-Prince in 1994 and raped her while her children saw "everything that was being done to me". She gave her evidence through a translator and from behind a screen, to hide her identity.

In 1996 the US State Department allowed Mr Constant to avoid deportation to Haiti and live freely in the US despite his position as head of FRAPH. Mr Constant says he worked for the CIA at the time.

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The survey does not identify Lavalas supporters as being involved in any rapes or killings, although such people could be included in other categories. Brian Concannon, of the Institute for Justice and Democracy in Haiti, said: "There are cases where family members have reported, during the same period, that Lavalas supporters and foreign soldiers are responsible for killings. The cases must be infrequent enough to not necessarily show up on this type of survey."

## History of rape and murder

Sexual assault as a form of political repression has a long history in Haiti. A court in New York last week heard evidence against Emmanuel " Toto" Constant, a Haitian now living in the US, who led military death squads that raped and tortured followers of President Jean-Bertrand Aristide in the early 1990s.

Under the military regime that ruled Haiti between 1991-94, the paramilitary group Front for the Advancement and Progress of Haiti (FRAPH) was responsible for a wave of killing and rape. In 2004, three unidentified women filed a lawsuit against Mr Constant. The hearing in New York was to determine whether Mr Constant owes damages to three women. He is in prison on mortgage fraud charges and did not attend the hearing.

One of the three woman told the court that masked men had burst into her home in Port-au-Prince in 1994 and raped her while her children saw " everything that was being done to me". She gave her evidence through a translator and from behind a screen, to hide her identity.

In 1996 the US State Department allowed Mr Constant to avoid deportation to Haiti and live freely in the US despite his position as head of FRAPH. Mr Constant says he worked for the CIA at the time.

**Haiti sets guns-for-food swap**  
**New York Daily News**  
**September 5, 2006**

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti - Haiti's government and UN peacekeepers will launch a major campaign seeking to persuade hundreds of gangsters to disarm with promises of money, food and job training, but top gang leaders won't be eligible, the UN envoy said yesterday.

Officials will begin airing radio and TV ads to inform the public about the plan - the most sweeping effort since UN troops arrived two years ago to restore order following a February 2004 revolt.

## **Haiti, U.N. to Disarm Gang Members**

**Associated Press**

**By STEVENSON JACOBS**

**Forbes.com**

**09.04.2006**

Haiti's government and U.N. peacekeepers will launch a major campaign seeking to persuade hundreds of gangsters to disarm with promises of money, food and job training, but top gang leaders will not be eligible, the U.N. envoy said Monday.

In an exclusive interview with The Associated Press, special U.N. envoy Edmond Mulet said officials will begin airing radio and television ads in coming days to inform the public about the disarmament plan.

The move represents the most sweeping effort to persuade well-armed gangsters to lay down their weapons and rejoin society since U.N. troops arrived in the troubled Caribbean nation two years ago to restore order following a February 2004 revolt.

"We are ready to receive 1,000 armed people who would willingly give up their weapons and arms," Mulet said. "We have kits to provide for their families, food and economic assistance. The whole package is ready and we're going to bring that in place in the following days."

Last month, President Rene Preval warned gangs based in the sprawling slums of Port-au-Prince to disarm or face death.

The gangs, some of which are loyal to ousted President Jean-Bertrand Aristide, are blamed for a recent surge of kidnappings and shootings that officials say are partly aimed at pressuring Preval to make concessions.

The initiative targets only rank-and-file gang members, Mulet said. Top gang leaders in the capital's volatile Cite Soleil slum have indicated a willingness to disarm, and the decision to leave them out sets up a potential showdown with the government.

"This is not for the big people responsible for human rights violence or criminal activities or killings or kidnappings. That we have to deal with in a different way," Mulet said in his office inside the fortified U.N. compound.

Top gang leaders in the capital's volatile Cite Soleil slum have indicated a willingness to disarm, but Mulet said the initiative will target low-ranking gang members.

"This is not for the big people responsible for human rights violence or criminal activities or killings or kidnappings. That we have to deal with in a different way," he said.

It will be up to a new, seven-member commission to decide who is eligible, Mulet said. Preval will appoint the commission this week in a presidential decree, Mulet said, adding that he expected its membership to include people "from all different sectors" of Haitian society.

Preval's office declined to comment.

Gang members participating in the program will receive ID cards entitling them to money, medical assistance, food for their families and training for manual-labor jobs such as construction workers, garbage collectors and farm workers, Mulet said.

Jobs are not plentiful in this Caribbean nation, which is the Western Hemisphere's poorest.

Mulet, a Guatemalan diplomat who took over leadership of the 8,800-soldier U.N. peacekeeping force three months ago, called the disarmament campaign a "long-term" plan and said it would provide a "big improvement" to Haiti's security if successful.

"We believe 500, 600, maybe 700 people are involved in this kind of illegal activities ... so I think if we're able to disarm most of them and include them into society and give them some training and assistance in this transition, that's going to be very positive."

The international community is desperate to stabilize Haiti after a decade of failed peacekeeping missions and fruitless efforts to disarm militants. A bid to take weapons off the streets after the 2004 revolt that toppled Aristide yielded mostly dilapidated guns held together by tape - not the high-powered AK-47s and M-16 routinely used by gangs.

Mulet acknowledged the challenge but said "we have to try this."

"This is not a traditional disarmament that you would see anywhere else in the world where you have a clear leadership or a subversive group or a military insurgency that you can make deals with. This is more like a one-on-one approach. Each (gang member) has different motivations," he said.

One challenge will be gaining the support of Haiti's business community, which has taken a hard line on the gangs that it blames for driving foreign investment away from the deeply impoverished nation.

Mulet predicted business leaders would back the plan, saying they recognize the problem of gang activity. "Any measure to incorporate these people into society is more than welcome to them," he said.

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**Canadian troops in Haiti accused of making death, rape threats**  
**Jeff Heinrich, CanWest News Service**  
**Edmonton Journal**  
**Saturday, September 02, 2006**

MONTREAL -- Canadian troops and police with the United Nations in Haiti made death threats during house raids and made sexual threats against women while drunk and off-duty, according to Haitians interviewed as part of a meticulous human-rights survey by U.S. researchers in December 2005 published this week in the British medical journal *The Lancet*.

The study, which estimated that 8,000 Haitians have been murdered and 35,000 women and girls raped since the ouster of President Jean-Bertrand Aristide in early 2004, did not mention Canadians specifically, blaming only Brazilian and Jordanian troops for making threats.

But in an interview Friday, the study's lead author said Haitians interviewed for the peer-reviewed survey did pinpoint Canadians as among those UN personnel who threatened them physically or sexually over the 22 months studied.

"Canadians were definitely blamed for death threats and threats of physical and sexual violence," said Athena Kolbe, 30, an expert on Haiti who speaks Creole. She has visited Haiti often and is doing her master's degree at Wayne State University's School of Social Work, in Detroit.

One family was interviewed at their home in Delmas, an eastern suburb of the capital, Port-au-Prince.

"Canadian troops came to their house, and they said they were looking for (pro-Aristide) Lavalas chimeres, and threatened to kill the head of household, who was the father, if he didn't name names of people in their neighbourhood who were Lavalas chimeres or Lavalas supporters," Kolbe said by phone from San Francisco. (Chimeres is a Creole word meaning ``spooks" and refers to armed groups funded by the pro-Aristide Lavalas movement.)

"And he refused to, because, as he told us, he didn't know anyone."

How did he recognize the soldiers were Canadians?

"From the flag on the uniform," Kolbe said.

How did he remember the incident so precisely?

"Because the family was traumatized by it."

That incident was alleged to have taken place around the time of Aristide's departure in February 2004.

In another incident, "one woman said a Canadian soldier tried to have sex with her, that this soldier was drunk and she didn't want to, and that he was threatening her and grabbing at her when she didn't want to," Kolbe said.

The woman was out with her friends near a Canadian base, on a street where drunk and off-duty Canadian soldiers in uniform tried to pick up local women.

"She tried to tell him she wasn't interested, but he spoke French and she spoke Creole, so she didn't think that he really got it, and he wouldn't stop holding on to her."

Of the women in the study who complained of sexual threats, drunk and off-duty Canadian and American soldiers were most often blamed as the perpetrators, Kolbe said. "But regarding Brazilian and Jordanian troops, a lot of the sexual threats were actually when they were on patrol."

Canada sent 450 soldiers and other personnel along with six CH-146 Griffon helicopters to Haiti in March 2004 as part of a UN peacekeeping force of 6,700 military personnel and 1,600 police. The Canadian soldiers left in August of that year, but Canada still has 66 police officers in Haiti leading the UN's police

Overall, the survey of 5,720 randomly selected Haitians living in and around the capital found that 97 had received death threats, 232 had been threatened physically and 86 sexually. One-third of the perpetrators were criminals, about 20 per cent were Haitian National Police and other government security agents, and another 20 per cent were foreign soldiers.

Most soldiers were identified by the flag of their country displayed on their blue UN helmet or on their uniform sleeve over the upper arm. Other UN personnel, especially those on patrol with the Canadian-led CIVPOL police force or working in other units doing crowd control or training were harder to identify by country; they had blue helmets but no flags.

The allegations of misconduct indicate that UN troops in Haiti need to be reined in, Kolbe said.

"These instances are pretty much indicative of soldiers not having proper supervision or training."

Canadians would likely have been more frequently cited if the study hadn't been restricted to the greater Port-au-Prince area, where Canadian troops patrol less than elsewhere in Haiti, Kolbe added.

Told of the allegations after Kolbe related them late Friday afternoon, a spokesman for the Department of National Defence said they sounded specific and serious but needed verification before any comment could be made.

"Is there any way that you could give us time to comment?" said Lieut. Adam Thomson, asking publication of the allegations be delayed until after the Labour Day weekend.

Also in Ottawa Friday, Rejean Beaulieu, the Foreign Affairs Department spokesman for Haiti, refused comment, offering instead only an off-the-record, not-for attribution "deep background briefing" on Canada's role in Haiti.

Earlier, Beaulieu referred questions to the the UN, which he said "should be in a better position to answer since our people in Haiti were and are working under this umbrella."

In Montreal, a spokesman for Premier Jean Charest \_ who visited Haiti in June 2005 and received its controversial prime minister Gerard Latortue at his Montreal office last March \_ also declined comment.

"The type of relationship we have with Haiti is through humanitarian projects" \_ in education, in civil service training and such, not peacekeeping or policing, which is Ottawa's jurisdiction, said Hugo d'Amours.

Ridiculous, retorted Marie-Dominik Langlois, co-ordinator of the Christian Committee for Human Rights in Latin America, a Montreal advocacy group founded in 1976 that promotes human rights in the region, including Haiti and other Caribbean countries.

"There are lots of humanitarian projects in Haiti that only serve to legitimize so-called community leaders" who had a role in the undemocratic removal of Aristide, and Quebec is involved with them, she said.

But one Montreal Haitian community group took an opposite view

"Impunity (from justice) reigns like a king in Haiti, but in my opinion, things would be even worse without the UN presence," said Marjorie Villefranche, director of programs at the Maison d'Haiti, a community centre founded in 1972 that serves some of the 70,000 Haitians here.

"The security situation has been getting worse in the last two years, and it's deplorable," she added.

"There has been an acceleration of violence. But it's an acceleration caused by armed groups, not foreign soldiers. The real mistake was that the UN didn't disarm everyone when they arrived."

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Montreal Gazette

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**Open season on Haiti's poor, study finds  
UN soldiers often identified as perpetrators  
JEFF HEINRICH  
The Montreal Gazette  
Friday, September 01, 2006**

A study in the prestigious British medical journal The Lancet suggests that, despite the presence of a Canadian-led United Nations police force and UN peacekeepers, 8,000 people have been killed and 35,000 women and girls raped in Port-au-Prince alone since the ouster of then-president Jean-Bertrand Aristide in February 2004.

Montreal Haitian groups say the peer-reviewed study by U.S. social workers confirms what the Canadian and Quebec governments have always denied: a massive campaign of repression against Haiti's poor under the post-Aristide regime of Gerard Latortue, the country's U.S.-appointed prime minister, from March 2004 to last June.

Haiti Action Montreal, an advocacy group, decried the violence yesterday and what it says is Canada's role in perpetuating it.

"Canada helped overthrow the elected government (of Aristide), provided significant aid to the installed regime (of Latortue) and led the UN police contingent, yet refuses to take any responsibility for the vast human rights abuses in Haiti over the past two years," the group said in a news release.

In the study, published online in The Lancet yesterday, two researchers at Wayne State University's School of Social Work, in Detroit, interviewed 5,720 people in 1,260 Haitian households in December 2005, asking questions about their lives in the 22 months since Aristide's fall.

The families lived in and around the capital, Port-au-Prince. They were selected randomly by GPS location, an unusual but necessary method for health and human rights surveys in countries like Haiti.

Phones are few and address lists and census data are unreliable.

(In another Lancet study, published in 2004, GPS tracking was used in Iraq to survey people and measure death rates before and after the U.S.-led invasion there in 2003.)

Of the 1,260 households studied in Haiti, 23 had lost family members in assassinations and killing since February 2004, and 94 had experienced sexual assault - in some cases, multiple sexual assault.

Extrapolated to the estimated 471,000 households in the greater Port-au-Prince area, the survey findings suggest 8,000 Haitians were murdered since Aristide's overthrow - about 12 a day.

Almost half of them were killed by government forces or "outside political actors" - mostly armed gangs opposed to Aristide and his Lavalas political party.

The study also estimated that 35,000 women and girls were sexually assaulted, more than half of them younger than 18 years old - a "shocking" rate of one in 40 girls, the researchers wrote.

Most of the perpetrators were believed to be criminals, but also cited were the Haitian National Police (14 per cent) and armed anti-Lavalas groups (11 per cent).

Many of the victims were so-called restaveks - unpaid child domestic servants from rural areas who work and live in the city.

And 90 per cent of all assaults involved penetration, sometimes multiple and sometimes with crude objects like a piece of metal.

Kidnappings and extrajudicial detentions, physical assaults, death threats, physical threats and threats of sexual violence were also common, the study found.

Fourteen per cent of the people interviewed accused foreign soldiers, including UN personnel, of all three types of threats.

The UN threats were direct and verbal; simply pointing a weapon in someone's direction in the course of duty was not considered a threat.

Of the UN soldiers blamed, half were identified as being from Brazil or Jordan; the study did not indicate whether Canadian personnel were involved.

In Ottawa, Foreign Affairs spokesperson Rejean Beaulieu, who specializes in Haiti and other Caribbean countries, said he was unaware of the study. Sent a copy by email and asked for comment, he did not respond.

A follow-up email last night also went unanswered.

Researchers Athena Kolbe and Royce Hutson concluded "that crime and systematic abuse of human rights were common in Port-au-Prince."

"Although criminals were the most identified perpetrators of violations, political actors and UN soldiers were also frequently identified.

"These findings suggest the need for a systematic response from the newly elected Haitian government (of President Rene Preval), the UN and social service organizations to address the legal, medical, psychological and economic consequences of widespread human rights abuses and crime."

In an editorial, The Lancet lent its influential voice to the researchers' conclusions, especially as regards the behaviour of the UN soldiers.

Noting that UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan "has spoken out firmly against exploitative behaviour by UN peacekeepers" worldwide, the journal's editors said the new study is a reminder that "severely traumatized populations (like Haiti's) remain vulnerable, and as Kolbe and Hutson show, suffering does not stop when peacekeepers arrive."

"UN peacekeepers must no longer add to that suffering."

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Online Extra: Are Haitian immigrants to the United States treated differently simply because they are black?

[montrealgazette.com](http://montrealgazette.com)

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## **CAMPAIGN 2006**

### **Polarized Haitians to impact elections**

**Political and class infighting among factions of South Florida's Haitian-American community could affect the outcome of several races Tuesday.**

**BY TERE FIGUERAS NEGRETE AND JACQUELINE CHARLES**

**Miami Herald**

**September 3, 2006**

This election season, the Haitian community could pull off a political trifecta: Haitian-born candidates are on the ballot for the Florida Legislature, Dade School Board and the County Commission.

But infighting among factions of the community could thwart that achievement. A vestige of the class and political tensions plaguing the island, the bickering is frustrating some who say it only squanders political capital that transplanted Haitians have amassed in their adopted homeland.

The drama is being played out over the airwaves, with Creole-language radio hosts accusing some candidates of supporting the 2004 ouster of former President Jean-Bertrand Aristide -- still a contentious issue in Haitian circles. Election day is Tuesday.

"It's really gotten out of hand," Haitian-American community activist Marleine Bastien said. "You have this small group causing a lot of division."

Miami-Dade commission candidate Phillip Brutus, a state representative, has been subjected to outlandish accusations that he conspired with the Bush administration to kidnap Aristide, who lives in exile in South Africa with his wife and children.

School Board candidate Gepsie Metellus also has been accused of being anti-Aristide, and therefore lacking compassion for the poor and illiterate, Aristide's base of support. State Rep. Yolly Roberson is being taken to task not for her record in Tallahassee, but for her perceived support of Haiti's former U.S.-backed prime minister, Gérard Latortue. Latortue, a South Florida resident, was tapped to fill the political vacuum left by Aristide.

"You cannot win with them," Roberson said of the pro-Aristide radio hosts.

She's fought back by running ads on WLQY-AM (1320) at the top of the hour during one of her harshest critics' morning shows.

The most outspoken critics of the trio are on-air radio personalities Nelson "Piman Bouk" Voltaire of WLQY-AM (1320) and Lavarice Gaudin, whose pro-Aristide grass-roots organization Veye Yo controls several hours of airtime on WLQY and WSRF-AM (1580). They have portrayed the U.S.-educated candidates as out of touch with their mostly poor listeners -- tapping into class divisions that polarize Haitian society.

At least one nonHaitian candidate is trying to take advantage of the infighting.

Miami-Dade County Commissioner Dorrin Rolle, who narrowly avoided a runoff in 2002 against a Haitian-American candidate, has spent thousands of dollars on Creole-language ads during pro-Aristide programs in his battle against Brutus.

The prodigious amount of money Rolle has spent buying time on Haitian radio programs such as Radio Alternative Veye Yo, Radio Pep La (The People's Radio) and Yeye Variete & Vibration has also bought him influence, Bastien said. In addition to the ads, hosts devote considerable airtime demonizing Brutus.

Rolle, who did not return calls for comment, has said in the past that he has tried to reach out to the emerging Haitian community in his district.

In the past year, he has been visible at a number of Haitian events in Little Haiti and North Miami and supported various Haitian causes.

The growing influence of Haitian voters is reflected in his campaign expenditures: Since June, Rolle has spent nearly \$30,000 buying time on local radio.

Radio host Voltaire received \$5,000 from Rolle's campaign to air radio ads. Voltaire leases almost 30 hours of prime-time airtime a week on WLQY-AM (1320).

Voltaire personally has taken to championing Rolle during his Radio Pep La morning program -- cheering on callers who phone in to disparage Brutus.

"This is freedom of speech," said Voltaire, claiming that Brutus has ``never come to tell us what he is doing in Tallahassee.'

"I am not supporting anybody for the money," Voltaire said. ``I am supporting [Rolle] because he's been there for a long time. He's done a lot of work."

With the exceptions of Brutus, Metellus and Roberson, Voltaire said he's supporting all other Haitian-born candidates who are seeking office this election season, including state House candidates Alain Jean from Broward and Ronald Brise, who is vying for Brutus' House seat.

Voltaire's support, or lack thereof, can help tilt a race. Last year, the radio host campaigned against Haitian-born North Miami mayoral candidate Jean Monestime -- a factor many observers say cost Monestime the election, and the Haitian majority on the City Council.

Brutus, who has raised \$58,000 compared to Rolle's \$378,160, called the attacks ``counterproductive."

"They should be talking about the importance of representation, about the issues," Brutus said.

Brutus said he has been accused not only of plotting to kidnap Aristide, ``but also that I have called Haitians dog vomit. I did neither."

Wooing politically powerful radio hosts is nothing new in Miami, where Spanish-language stations have always crackled with the intrigues of election season. Cuban-born candidates for local office are often lauded or lambasted for their stances on foreign policy.

Bastien says it's unfair to draw too close a comparison, noting there has never been a Haitian American in countywide office or on the School Board.

"Cuban Americans have representation. They know their voices are being heard," Bastien said. ``We are a voice that is falling on deaf ears."

Bastien has taken to Creole-language radio to support the three Haitian-born candidates but has been blasted by callers questioning her views on Haitian politics.

