

HAITI NEWS ROUNDUP: SEPTEMBER 4-11, 2005

Life goes on peacefully outside Port-au-Prince

From small villages to Cap-Haitien, Haiti's second-biggest city, daily life continues free from the violence that has plagued the nation's capital.

BY JOE MOZINGO

Miami Herald

Sept. 11, 2005

LABADIE, Haiti - AND JACQUELINE CHARLES

The schoolteacher came up the road, singing a tune under the breadfruit trees. The sky was clear, the town's people were out and about. Children kicked around a plastic container they had turned into a soccer ball. Women washed clothes in the cool, clear water of the creek.

Another afternoon was drawing to a close in the way it does most days in this seaside village and around much of Haiti -- a peaceful counterpoint to the turmoil in the capital, Port-au-Prince.

Often lost in the din of the country's violence after the armed rebellion that ousted President Jean-Bertrand Aristide is the fact that most of the countryside has been functioning normally on its own, beyond the reach of the central government and outside the capital's bubble of political animosity.

In these parts, law and order is enforced as it has been for two centuries, by family bonds and social ties, not police and judges and soldiers.

"There is no police here," said Desir Kersol, the teacher. "It's all like family. Right now in Haiti, the place with problems is Port-au-Prince."

Kersol takes a swim in the ocean every morning, plays soccer every afternoon.

Granted, his north coast town is blessed in ways other Haitian villages are not. It's set in a lush fold of volcanic mountains, and spills into an emerald green bay that still draws the rare foreign tourist to Haiti.

CAP-HAITIEN CARRIES ON

But even nearby CapHaitien, the country's second-biggest city, manages to shrug off the tensions lingering from the rebellion.

The streets and alleyways are frenetic with the hustle of business, with women packing the open-air markets to sell mangos and yams and sugar from the countryside. Workers sweep the city every morning. Hundreds of people line up every day to register to vote in elections scheduled for November. And after dark, the young and well-to-do file into bars and nightclubs, where the beat of kompa and racine throb deep into the balmy night.

Still, the sense of stagnation, hunger and desperation is as sharp as ever for many.

In a slum along the fetid river, Jeanne Fanise, 22, sat one day last week on the concrete roof of her home, with nothing to do but braid her sister's hair and chat with the neighbors below. She goes to beauty school several times a week, but says she'll have to leave the country somehow to ever get a job and save money.

"This country is just hard," she said.

She's just waiting for relatives in Miami to send her the fee to pay a smuggler, she added.

And she fears that as political animosities rev up for the elections, Cap-Haitien could slide into the kind of anarchy that has consumed Port-au-Prince, where cycles of brutal killings and kidnappings blamed on everyone from pro-Aristide gunmen to rogue police to drug lords mark daily life.

News of the crimes saturate the radio waves and strike fear across the country. Residents of Cap-Haitien worry when relatives or friends must travel to the capital.

But for now, their own city is safe -- safe enough to host a visiting symphony from Fort Lauderdale.

ORCHESTRAL VISIT

On Aug. 16, the Arpeggione Chamber Orchestra took the boat from Cap-Haitien to Labadie. There were no armed guards or police escorts. Just 20 musicians sweating in the tropical heat.

The tin-roofed church was not an optimal concert hall. Pigeons flapped between the rafters and two skinny dogs circled each other lustily in the forest of human legs.

But as the musicians tuned up and the reedy twangs of their instruments resonated through town, curious villagers like Kersol began to fill the pews. Some even pried themselves away from a contentious soccer match.

On tiptoes, Michel Angel, 13, peered through an open window to watch. In shorts and sandals, she didn't feel dressed properly to step inside, but she wasn't going to miss the real-life version of the classical music she sees on television.

"We love this," she said. "We're so happy they came."

Eddy Remy, a Haitian-American mortgage broker who organized the cultural exchange as part of a sister-city program, said the goal was not just to introduce symphony to a country that has none, but to show the many aspects of Haiti that are not about violence and calamity.

"This right here is what most of Haiti is," he said. "You go to Jeremie, this is what it is. You go to Les Cayes, La Gonve, Jacmel, it's like this. They may not have electricity or all the resources that modern countries in Europe or America have. What they have is a community that works together to survive."

PRAYER FROM ON HIGH

In Port-de-Paix, on the northeast peninsula, hundreds of people climb a small mountain to pray in a Pentecostal chapel three times a week. They sit on blankets on the dirt floor to get above the city and hear the preacher work himself into a sweat giving the Gospel.

"I come here because it's quieter and more peaceful," said Nana Carol, 24. ``It's closer to God."

In the old northern plantation town of Grande Rivere-du-Nord, the greatest political dispute is over a new schools inspector who has alerted town folks that they won't be able to bribe teachers to ensure that students do well on final exams.

Someone who apparently liked the old method regularly drops leaflets in the streets declaring "war" on the inspector and spray-painting his name in red ink on walls.

2 journalists held for `disrespect'
Chicago Tribune
September 11, 2005

PORT-AU-PRINCE, HAITI -- A Haitian and an American journalist were detained Friday by police searching the church of a jailed priest and potential presidential candidate.

Kevin Pina of the United States was detained after filming the police as they searched the church of Rev. Jean-Juste. Jean Ristil, a Haitian who was working for The Associated Press, was detained as he tried to photograph the arrest.

Both were taken to the police station, where Judge Jean Peres Paul ordered them held on suspicion of "disrespect to a magistrate" and resisting arrest.

The judge said Ristil would probably be freed by Monday, and would not say when Pina would be released.

Peres Paul said Pina struck him as officers tried to remove the reporter from the church. The journalist denies striking the judge.

Imperialist occupation wields deadly force

Roger Annis, Vancouver

Green Left Weekly, Australia

September 11, 2005

Eighteen months after an imperialist invasion that served the overthrow of the elected government of Haiti, a ferocious repression continues to rain down on the people of that country. The three invading countries — the US, France and Canada — appointed an illegal coup regime and have armed and trained rightist gangs and police agencies to enforce its rule.

The coup regime and its armed gangs now rule the streets and countryside of Haiti, together with a United Nations-sponsored occupation force. They are carrying out a bloody campaign to cripple the vast movement of Haitian people opposed to the coup.

The repression is targeting, above all, the Lavalas movement of the overthrown president, Jean-Bertrand Aristide, who was elected in 2000 by a vote of 92%. Two of the latest killing sprees took place in the capital city, Port au Prince, on August 10 and 21.

On August 10, the Haitian National Police entered the Bel Air district accompanied by plain-clothed thugs armed with machetes. As many as 10 people died from police bullets and machetes.

On August 21, police entered a soccer stadium filled with 5000 people and halted a match sponsored by the US government aid agency US Aid. The crowd was ordered to lie on the ground, then police and plain-clothed thugs went through the crowd shooting or hacking with machetes those deemed to be supporters of Lavalas. People who tried to run from the stadium were shot or hacked to death. The death count of this attack is as high as 50 people.

UN attacks

An international outcry followed an operation by United Nations troops in the Cite Soleil district of Port au Prince on July 6. At 3am, UN troops sealed off two neighbourhoods with tanks and troops. Two helicopters flew overhead. At 4.30am, troops went on the offensive, shooting into houses, shacks, a church and a school with machine guns, tank fire and tear gas.

Eyewitnesses reported that when people fled to escape the tear gas, UN troops gunned them down from behind. Journalists and human rights workers who entered Cite Soleil in the hours and days after the attacks also reported bullet holes in the roofs of buildings, confirming eyewitness accounts that the helicopters had fired.

At least 25 people were counted dead in the hours and days after the attack. Witnesses also saw UN forces carting away bodies that could not be found and counted.

Film footage and eyewitness accounts of the assault were shared with a labour and human rights delegation from the US that entered Cite Soleil the following day. The delegation was sponsored by the San Francisco Labor Council and had been in Haiti to attend the Congress of the Confederation of Haitian Workers (CTH) and to interview Haitian workers, farmers and professionals about the current labour and human rights situation in Haiti.

Seth Donnelly, a member of the delegation, spoke to the Democracy Now radio network on July 11: “We went to the local hospital that serves people from Cite Soleil. It’s run by Doctors Without Borders. It doesn’t charge a fee, so very poor people can go to that hospital ... Their records show an influx of civilian casualties. Starting at 11am on July 6, there were 26 people alone from Cite Soleil that came in, suffering mostly from gunshot wounds. Out of that 26, 20 were women and children.”

The target of the July 6 operation was Lavalas supporter Dread Wilme, who was assassinated by UN troops.

Thousands of political prisoners languish in Haiti’s jails or are in internal exile. Among those in prison since last year are prime minister under Aristide and longtime politician Yvon Neptune; former interior minister Jocelerme Privert; and well-known singer-songwriter Annette Auguste.

Catholic priest Gerard Jean-Juste was apprehended and imprisoned on July 21. He is one of the most well-known figures to oppose the post-coup regime and has travelled and spoken frequently in the US about human-rights violations in Haiti.

Sham election

The foreign occupation forces in Haiti are preparing to stage three rounds of elections — municipal, national legislature and presidential. They hope this will give legitimacy to their neo-colonial rule. They are working intensely, and spending millions of dollars, to create a rightist political party with credibility — if not in Haiti, then at least abroad.

But so far, these elections fall short of having the appearance of legitimacy. Tens of thousands of Haitians have demonstrated for the return of their constitution and their elected government. They have shown they will not accept a sham election. Only 20% of the population, 840,000 out of 4 million people of voting age, have submitted to the occupiers’ voter registration. Municipal elections that were planned for October 9 have been postponed to a later, unspecified date. The legislative and presidential elections have been scheduled for November 20.

The Lavalas movement threatened to boycott the elections unless a series of minimal conditions are met. These include the release of political prisoners, an end to the repression, disarming of rightist gangs, and a commitment for the withdrawal of foreign troops and police. One thousand people demonstrated for these demands on August 21 in Cap Haitien, Haiti’s second largest city. Their demands also included the resignation of the coup regime and the right of return of all exiles, including Aristide.

On September 5, Lavalas announced that it would register Jean-Juste as its presidential candidate.

As in Iraq, the occupation authorities have failed to bring improvement to the lives of ordinary Haitians. In fact, life has become much harder. Poverty and unemployment are nearly universal. Violence is endemic, coming directly from the actions of police, rightist thugs and UN forces, or indirectly from desperate social conditions and the breakdown of the judicial system. Many social services have been dismantled.

The imperialist powers invaded Haiti in order to crush the popular movement that backed Aristide and brought him to power. The Haitian people used Aristide's election in 1990 and again in 2000 to try to improve their lot. That spirit animates the continued protests against the coup regime and the demands for the return of the ousted government and constitution.

Aristide's first government bent to the pressures and threats of imperialism. It accepted important concessions in economic and social policy as a condition of Aristide's restoration to power in 1994, following the first coup against him in 1991. But these concessions were not good enough for Haiti's neo-colonial lords in Washington, Paris and Ottawa. They refused to accept the results of the election in 2000 and embarked on a course to overthrow Aristide's government. Aid money was sharply cut or eliminated.

Growing solidarity

There is a growing awareness of, and movement in solidarity with, Haiti. On July 21, protests against the July 6 massacre were mounted in 13 US cities, five Canadian cities, and in Paris and Brazil. Many of the protests targeted embassies or consulates of Brazil because of that country's role as leader of the military component of the UN occupation force. Solidarity committees across the US and Canada are gaining support and awareness as they campaign in support of the basic demands of the Haitian people.

A focus of this work is demanding the release of political prisoners. Twenty-nine members of the US Congress have signed an appeal to the US government, stating "We write to express our profound concerns about the unjust imprisonment of Father Gerard Jean-Juste in Haiti. We urge you to take action at once to seek his immediate and unconditional release from prison."

In an August 31 statement from exile in South Africa, President Aristide called the release of Jean-Juste and all other political prisoners a precondition to the holding of any elections in Haiti.

[Roger Annis is a Haiti solidarity activist in Vancouver, Canada and a member of the International Association of Machinists.]

From Green Left Weekly, September 14, 2005.
Visit the Green Left Weekly home page.

EU may lift Haiti sanctions by October
AP
Jamaica Observer
Sunday, September 11, 2005

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti (AP) - The European Union (EU) plans to lift economic sanctions against Haiti by early next month, EU officials said yesterday.

EU spokesman Martin Selmayr said the final decision on lifting the aid restrictions is expected by early October. He said the 25 EU governments are currently discussing the details of a proposal made by the European Commission in August to lift restrictions against the Caribbean nation.

Earlier yesterday, the EU spokesman in Haiti, Vincenzo Collarino, said sanctions had already been lifted. He later said that he had misspoken.

The EU's head office suggested the restrictions be lifted after Haiti's interim government made commitments on elections and other democratic reforms to the EU's Development Commissioner Louis Michel when he visited Haiti in March.

The EU in January 2001 froze payments to Haiti after allegedly flawed elections, claiming the government of former President Jean-Bertrand Aristide wasn't complying with the "democratic principles" of the Cotonou Agreement, which governs the EU's relations with African, Caribbean and Pacific nations.

**Aristide expresses solidarity with the people of Louisiana and with Fr. Jean-Juste
by President Jean-Bertrand Aristide
San Francisco Bay View
Sept. 10, 2005**

Pretoria, South Africa – The historic ties between Haiti and Louisiana are rooted in its namesake land purchase occasioned by the Haitian Revolution. Today this connection has expanded. It finds new root in a shared human suffering caused by this week's catastrophic storm and ensuing floods.

Our sincere condolences for the loss of life, injury, suffering and great pain that has befallen the people of the United States.

The grieving faces that we see so resemble the grieving faces of Haitians who have faced similar waters that swept away lives and engulfed tiny boats overloaded with people fleeing the political repression following the coup d'état/kidnapping of Feb. 29, 2004.

Human suffering transcends nationality, color, religion and class. It can leave no individual indifferent. We reiterate our expression of sympathy in this time of pain.

To Fr. Jean-Juste

After more than a month in jail, the health of Rev. Fr. Gérard Jean Juste is deteriorating. Once again I join my voice to the voices of many calling for his release. His unlawful detention, alongside the unlawful detention of thousands of political prisoners in Haiti, demonstrates a clear determination to exclude Lavalas, or the huge majority of Haitian people, from participating in free, fair and democratic elections.

Again we must ask: 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?

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

1. The thousands of Lavalas who are in jail and in exile must be free to return home.
2. The repression that has already killed over 10,000 people must end immediately.
3. Then, there must be national dialogue.

Fr. Jean Juste too has echoed this call for dialogue and peace. He must be freed.

All the political prisoners must be freed.

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.

Police in Haiti arrest two journalists
By ALFRED DE MONTESQUIOU
ASSOCIATED PRESS WRITER
Seattle Post-Intelligencer
September 9, 2005

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti -- A Haitian and American journalist were detained Friday by police searching the church of a jailed priest who is considered a potential presidential candidate.

Kevin Pina of the United States was detained after filming the police as they searched the church of the Rev. Jean-Juste. Jean Ristil, a Haitian who was working for The Associated Press, was detained as he tried to photograph the arrest.

Both men were taken to the police station, where Judge Jean Peres Paul ordered them held on suspicion of "disrespect to a magistrate" and resisting arrest.

The judge said the Haitian journalist would probably be freed by Monday, though he did not explain the reasons, and would not say when Pina would be released.

Peres Paul said Pina struck him as officers tried to remove the reporter from the church. The journalist denies striking the judge.

Pina has been reporting from Haiti for 10 years for "Flashpoints," a daily program produced by radio station KPFA in Berkeley, Calif., and distributed to other stations by the Pacifica Radio Network, said Dennis Bernstein, the show's executive producer.

The two journalists and a few others went to the St. Claire church in Cazeau, a poor neighborhood of Port-au-Prince, the capital after learning that police were searching the building. Officials refused to disclose reason for the operation, but police at the scene said they were looking for weapons.

Jean-Juste, a supporter of ousted President Jean-Bertrand Aristide, has been held since July on suspicion of involvement in the slaying of a well-known journalist, Jacques Roche. Jean-Juste, who has not been charged, denies the allegations.

The Roman Catholic priest is considered a possible presidential candidate for Aristide's Lavalas Family party in Nov. 20 elections.

Haiti journalists Kevin Pina and Jean Ristil arrested by masked police at Father Jean-Juste's church

Haiti Information Project

Sept. 9, 2005

Port au Prince, Haiti (HIP) - International journalist and Flashpoints Radio correspondent, Kevin Pina, was arrested at about 5:00 PM today according to Jean Ristil, another Haitian reporter, who was arrested shortly after he reported on the situation from St. Claire's Church in the Delmas district. Haitian Lawyers Leadership chair, Marguerite Laurent, Esq., stated that Kevin Pina is in "extreme danger" and concerned people should call the U.S. Embassy (011-509-222-0200 / 011-509-222-0354 / 011-509-223-4711 from USA) and demand his release and safety.

Heavily armed and masked SWAT members of The Police Nationale d'Haiti (PNH) had arrived at Rev. Fr. Gerard Jean-Juste's church to serve a search warrant today with a juge d'instruction and juge de paix. The PNH were ostensibly "searching for weapons" at the church where 600 - 800 children are fed. Many children were present when the SWAT police began destroying the rectory as they were "terrorizing the parishioners" with their search. Pina and Restil had arrived separately after they were called by members of St. Claire's.

Kevin Pina began questioning the officials of the coup government as to why they were destroying the church property and was arrested. "You're nothing but a troublemaker! Your friends in California are always causing us trouble ..." claimed the officials as they put Pina under arrest. Reporter Jean Ristil was present during this and was reporting the scene to Marguerite Laurent when he said that he couldn't talk anymore and was also arrested.

Concerned friends and colleagues of the two reporters managed to track them to where they are being held in the police lockup at Delmas 33 in Port-au-Prince. Two U.S.reporters, a U.S.based human rights observer, a U.S.nun and two Haitian observers went to the holding facility to attempt to clarify the reasons for the arrest and to alert the police that their treatment of the two men is being closely monitored.

Pina and Restil are being held in a small cell with approximately 7 other men. Pina was able to give the following description of events:

"We went to cover the PNH search of Fr. Jean-Juste's church for guns. The police were clearly initimidating the boys in the presbytery. I scaled a wall to enter the compound, but a policeman outside said nothing to stop me from doing so, and I would have stopped had he done so. I also have an open invitation from both Fr. Jean-Juste and the priest who has been conducting the feeding program while Jean-Juste is in prison to come to the church as I please.

"When both Jean and arrived the judge of instruction supervising the police operation began screaming at me, saying that I was a foreign terrorist and with Lavalas. He told the police to take my camera, which I would not let them do. I told them that before they did anything else I wanted to see a representative of my embassy. They then handcuffed me and put me in the back of a police car. Now the judge claimed I hit him. I have been covering Haiti since 1989 and I have never raised my hands to anyone in authority, and would never do so."

The fact that police were searching Fr. Jean-Juste's church 6 weeks after they arrested him on trumped-up charges, at the same time that the activist priest is widely assumed to be the one presidential candidate aside from Jean-Bertrand Aristide that can generate mass support suggests an attempt to create further basis for attacks on Jean-Juste. In addition, arresting two independent journalists just days before an announced mass demonstration in Port-au-Prince is a blatant example of press censorship on the part of the U.S.-backed Haitian coup regime.

Even though the "search" may have been considered legal, it was obvious that the PNH weren't expecting to find any weapons. These searches have been served at St. Claire's several times since the US-sponsored Coup d'État of February 29, 2004 with the same charges that security weapons were not returned to the coup government. One search was made when Fr. Jean-Juste was imprisoned for a 40¢ crime for six weeks after his arrest October 16, 2004 when a couple of children who were being fed were shot.

"Kevin Pina, he's that lone voice in the wilderness ..." stated Laurent on KPFA-Berkeley Flashpoints program. Since the USA has been trying to force Haiti to conduct presidential elections this November, pro-democracy activists have put Fr. Jean Juste's name on the ballot as their choice for president even though he has been in solitary confinement since July 21, 2005. The official leaders of Fanmi Lavalas have considered the coup government and this election to be constitutionally illegal and refuse to participate in the sham elections.

Today Pere Jean-Juste stated from his imprisonment that he is "... with the poor and has heard their call ..." It's also reported that his condition is improving and that he's healing from the injuries that he sustained previously when he was taken into "protected custody" by UN troops and imprisoned. There have been rumors recently that Fr. Jean-Juste would be released before the elections as there are no credible charges by the Latortue government against him. It is thought that the stated objective of today's "search" was a pretense, with the real purpose being to fabricate charges to keep him in custody until after the elections.

Fanmi Lavalas is the overwhelming choice of Haiti's citizens, with support estimated at higher than sixty percent of the population. Many Lavalas leaders have been imprisoned, forced into exile or assassinated since the coup d'État. Kevin Pina has been reporting on this situation from the beginning and is one of the subjects of a Haiti Information Project documentary — Haiti: The Untold Story — that was released last month, it focuses on the repressive and murderous role of the UN occupation acting as a proxy for U.S. interests. The documentary contains graphic footage showing victims of the recent Cité Soliel massacres conducted by the UN (MINUSTAH) forces. It is currently being screened internationally.

US, France grant more aid money to Haiti ahead of elections

AP

Saturday, September 10, 2005

Jamaica Observer

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti (AP) - A top US diplomat yesterday awarded US\$5 million (euro4.03 million) to Haiti ahead of national elections set for this fall.

Charge d'Affaires Tim Carney signed the grant agreement, bringing total US funding for the elections to US\$31 million (euro24.9 million), the US Embassy said in a statement.

"The United States government recognises the importance of credible elections for the Haitian people, and is committed to supporting the new government," the embassy statement said.

The winners of the November 6 presidential and legislative elections will replace the interim government in power since a bloody rebellion ousted former president Jean-Bertrand Aristide in February 2004.

Separately yesterday, visiting French Cooperation Minister Brigitte Girardin announced a donation worth US\$1.24 million (euro1 million) to help Haitian schools, along with a US\$1.24 million (euro1 million) food grant.

**Haiti Action Montreal: BOOK LAUNCH -- Waging War on the Poor Majority: Canada in Haiti
CMAQ
Anonyme, mardi, 06/09/2005**

Heure:

Début:mardi, 13/09/2005 - 18:30

Fin:mardi, 13/09/2005 - 21:30

Lieu:

Le Salon Vert (FREE)

5386 St-Laurent (corner St-Viateur)

Join us for the Montreal launch of the newly published "Waging War on the Poor Majority: Canada in Haiti" (Red/Fernwood Publishing), co-authored by Yves Engler and Anthony Fenton.

This evening event includes:

* Exclusive video footage from the upcoming documentary "Haiti: The Untold Story" by Haiti-based journalist Kevin Pina;

* Video footage of June 17, 2005 civil disobedience action against Canadian Foreign Minister Pierre Pettigrew;

* Remarks by "Canada in Haiti" co-authors, Yves Engler and Anthony Fenton;

* Presentation by Magalie X of Vwa Zanset ("Voice of the Ancestors") and Haiti Action Montreal.

The event is free, with discounted copies of "Canada in Haiti" available for sale.

Organized by Haiti Action Montreal.

The story of Haiti is one of resistance, of a spirit that exists inside us all, to assert our essential humanity. Unfortunately the story is also one of how much the rich and powerful feel threatened by this spirit and how far they are prepared to go to crush it. While Canadians prefer to see their government as a force for good in the world, the reality is that it most often sides with the rich and powerful. "Canada in Haiti" is a powerful cry for justice and a warning about what can be done in our name when we aren't looking.

"In both their writings and activism, Yves Engler and Anthony Fenton have done some of the most important work in exposing Canada's shameful role in Haiti."

-- Naomi Klein, author No Logo.

"Yves and Anthony's book is a crucial weapon in understanding, and acting, on the paternalistic and neo-colonial role the Canadian government, and its NGO allies, plays in Haiti."

-- Jaggi Singh, Montreal-area activist and writer.

"Most Canadians will find the revelations of this book shocking, disturbing, revolting but absolutely undeniable. In graphic detail, Fenton and Engler describe how, contrary to rhetoric, the neo-colonial "responsibility to protect" doctrine has in fact translated into a cynical and deadly socio-political experiment conducted on and against Haitians."

-- Jean Saint-Vil, Ottawa-based Haiti solidarity activist.

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Police vigilantes, machetes and murder

OUR OPINION: BETTER SECURITY CRITICAL TO HAITI'S UPCOMING ELECTIONS

Miami Herald

Sept. 8, 2005

The reappearance of a death squad in Haiti is the latest sign of the island's abysmal security situation. A United Nations peacekeeping force there since June 2004 still hasn't staunched the violence in lawless Port-au-Prince. The stakes are high on both human and political levels. Any escalation in killings could threaten general elections planned for November, which could delay or derail the rebuilding of Haiti's government.

Brazen attacks

One alarming detail about the new killers: They are aided and abetted by Haitian police. In the latest incident on Aug. 20, some 5,000 people attended a soccer match sponsored by the U.S. Agency for International Development. The aim was to "Play for Peace" in Martissant, a hillside slum. Instead, witnesses and U.N. investigators say, black-masked police accompanied by machete-wielding thugs stormed the stadium, ultimately shooting and hacking people to death. Witnesses said pro-Lavalas Party gang members were targeted. At least six died.

This brazen attack follows at least two other incidents in which masked police and civilian thugs teamed up to murder and torch homes. Some fear the attacks signal the resurgence of death squads directed by a political player, a bloody phenomenon that historically has plagued Haitian elections.

The alleged police brutality isn't new, either. Reports suggest that police-vigilante raids have killed dozens of people in slums that are strongholds of support for Lavalas, former President Jean-Bertrand Aristide's party.

While such police actions rarely have been investigated, this may be changing. Mario Andresol, Haiti's new police chief, told The Herald that several police officers were being questioned about the Martissant killings and would likely be arrested. We hope this is a first step toward cleaning up and professionalizing the police force. The U.N. chief in Haiti, Juan Gabriel Valdés, also vowed to work with the interim government and police to end vigilante action.

Release critics

Redoubled security efforts are past due. Those who are profiting from Haiti's instability will find it in their interest to disrupt the November 20 elections. Yet half of Haiti's four million voters already have registered to vote. Political parties are filing to qualify their candidates. And Lavalas just announced its intended presidential candidate: the Rev. Gerard Jean-Juste. He has been jailed since July on suspicion of involvement in a murder committed when he was in Miami.

The provisional government creates doubt about itself, and possibly the elections, by questionably jailing critics. Haitians are used to risky elections, but good security and a broad field of candidates will encourage wider participation. Fair elections are a first step in building democracy. The government must show it is willing to take that step.

Aristide to stay in S.Africa despite Haiti poll

07 Sep 2005

Source: Reuters

CAPE TOWN, Sept 7 (Reuters) - Ousted Haitian President Jean-Bertrand Aristide will remain in his South African exile despite presidential elections at home later this year, South Africa's foreign minister said on Wednesday.

Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma said the elections, set for Nov. 20, will not solve Haiti's problems and that Aristide will not return home until peace and stability was restored to the Caribbean country.

"He does not want to give an excuse for people who want to destabilise (the polls), and use him as an excuse," she told reporters in Cape Town.

The two rival factions of Aristide's Lavalas Family party, the main opposition group since the Haitian president fled the country in 2004 amid an armed revolt, agreed this week to take part in the polls but demanded political prisoners be released.

A Lavalas party victory in the polls could open the way for his return.

The Lavalas party wants its jailed leaders, including its presidential candidate Gerard Jean-Juste, released ahead of the elections. Haiti's interim government arrested Jean-Juste in July on suspicion he had played a role in the kidnapping and killing of a journalist.

He has denied the allegation and has said the allegations, like those against fellow Lavalas leaders, are politically motivated.

Dlamini-Zuma cast doubt on the planned poll.

"Even if Haiti goes through with elections this time we don't think the conditions exist to solve the problems of Haiti through an election," she said.

"Those elections should take place in an atmosphere where every party is free not just to participate but to actually actively campaign without repression, without fear of detention."

Progress made towards upcoming polls in Haiti

by Vario Sérant

Caribbean Net News

Friday, September 9, 2005

PORT AU PRINCE, Haiti: The Haitian Provisional Electoral Council has achieved two major steps on the way to the upcoming elections.

The council published last Sunday the definitive electoral schedule and a list of political parties allowed to campaign.

According to the calendar, the presidential and legislative polling will take place in two rounds, on November 20 and January 3. The municipal and local election will be held on December 11.

Nearly half of the potential voters, 2,700,000, has been registered so far.

The electoral campaign will be officially opened on October 8. However, many political parties and candidates have been campaigning for many weeks in the countryside.

More than thirty political figures and candidates plan to run for presidency. The group of ousted President Jean Bertrand Aristide, who lives in exile in South Africa, has chosen father Gerard Jean Juste as their presidential candidate. The latter has been in custody since July 21 for his alleged responsibility in the abduction and slaughter of a prominent journalist, Jacques Roche, in mid-July.

A few months ago, many sectors were skeptical about the elections set for the end of the year, due to a rising wave of violence and kidnapping in Port-au-Prince. In many volatile areas of the Haitian capital, the security situation has improved, subsequently to raids of Haitian and UN security forces and actions of the people who were victimized by gunmen.

But things are still not totally clear. The head of the UN mission in Haiti admitted, in a statement to a Chilean daily September 3, that Cite Soleil, the biggest slum area of Port-au-Prince, remains a challenge for the blue helmets. Gangs continue to create terror there, said Juan Gabriel Valdes. At the same time, he emphasizes that the UN security forces have globally achieved their goal by preventing the country from dropping in a civil war.

Despite of this apparent lull, some remain skeptical over the fact that provisional government and the UN mission have not truly resolved the disarmament issue.

Haiti reschedules first post-Aristide vote for third time
Caribbean Net News
Wednesday, September 7, 2005

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti (AFP): Haitian authorities on Monday changed for the third time this year the dates for the country's first presidential and legislative elections since the ouster of president Jean Bertrand Aristide.

The first round of voting will take place November 20 and the second round on January 3, the interim government said.

Municipal and local elections will take place December 11, according to the interim government that took over after Aristide fled the country amid an armed uprising in February 2004.

It was the third time that the dates were changed this year in the poorest country in the Americas, which has been beset by violence despite the presence of UN troops.

U.S. diplomat awarded US\$5 million to Haiti ahead of national elections
Pravda News
2005-09-10

A top U.S. diplomat on Friday awarded US\$5 million (₹4.03 million) to Haiti ahead of national elections set for this fall.

Charg  d'Affaires Tim Carney signed the grant agreement, bringing total U.S. funding for the elections amounts to US\$31 million (₹24.9 million), the U.S. Embassy said in a statement.

"The United States government recognises the importance of credible elections for the Haitian people, and is committed to supporting the new government," the embassy statement said.

The winners of the Nov. 6 presidential and legislative elections will replace the interim government in power since a bloody rebellion ousted former president Jean-Bertrand Aristide in February 2004. Separately Friday, visiting French Cooperation Minister Brigitte Girardin announced a donation worth US\$1.24 million (₹1 million) to help Haitian schools, along with a US\$1.24 million (₹1 million) food grant, reported AP.

31 parties registered for elections in Haiti
China View
September 9, 2005

HAVANA, Sept. 7 (Xinhuanet) -- A total of 31 political parties registered for the coming elections in Haiti, said officials on Wednesday.

The country's Provisional Electoral Council accepted the participation of a party headed by ex-colonel Franck Romain, who was part of the feared dictatorships of the Duvalier family for 29 years, from 1957 to 1986.

Haiti's ousted President Jean Bertrand Aristide had been credited with helping to end the Duvalier dictatorship.

The two rival factions of Aristide's Lavalas Family party, which had been fighting over whether to take part in the elections, have also reunited and resolved to participate in the ballot on Monday.

Haiti on Monday set presidential elections for November. Max Mathurin, President of Haiti's electoral council, said the first round of the presidential and legislative elections will take place on Nov. 20, with a run-off on Jan. 3 if needed. A ballot to elect local government officials was set for Dec. 11.

Haiti, one of the poorest countries in the Americas, has been geared up for polls following the departure of Aristide in late February last year.

The country has been plunged into political turmoil since Aristide's departure, and the United Nations has sent forces to assist the provisional government to keep order after continuous clashes between rebels and Aristide sympathizers.

9-11 Fund Created for a United World
emediawire
September 9, 2005

Orphans International (OI) Worldwide announced today that OI has established its "9-11 Fund for a United World" to fund its mission of Raising Global Citizens. "We need to raise children in Indonesia and Haiti -- and now New Orleans -- who are taught that we are all brothers and sisters, and we need to work together as a human family," states OI Worldwide founder. OI has approved projects in China, Ghana, Haiti, Guyana, India, Peru, the Philippines, Togo, Sulawesi (Indonesia), Sumatera (Indonesia) - and now New Orleans.

New York (PRWEB) September 10, 2005 -- Orphans International (OI) Worldwide announced today that Orphans International America has established its "9-11 Fund for a United World" to fund its mission of Raising Global Citizens. "We need to raise children in Indonesia and Haiti -- and now New Orleans -- who are taught that we are all brothers and sisters, and we need to work together as a human family," states Jim Luce, OI Worldwide founder. OI Worldwide has approved projects in China, Ghana, Haiti, Guyana, India, Peru, the Philippines, Togo, Sulawesi (Indonesia), Sumatera (Indonesia) - and now New Orleans.

Orphans International, first incorporated a few weeks before the World Trade Center disaster in 2001, stands to better the world through a multi-faceted approach. OI's mission is to help orphaned children grow into solid global citizens through a sound structure that is simultaneously "Interfaith, because there are many paths up the mountain; Interracial, because there is but one race, the human race; International, because our neighbors are our family; Intergenerational, because there is much to learn from our elders; and Internet-connected, because the world today is at our fingertips," according to its website.

"On 9-11 it is not enough to remember the consequences of intolerance, but to act to overcome intolerance. What better way to do that than to contribute to raising children globally to actively embrace tolerance?" Luce asks. OI works with Moslem, Protestant, Catholic, Buddhist and Hindu children in Haiti and Indonesia, and are now beginning work in New Orleans, Guyana, Togo, and Peru. "As a New Yorker who lived through 9-11, who watched the towers fall with my own eyes, I am dedicated to building a world without hatred, without the mindset of extremism that sees all in black-and-white, right-and-wrong. Diversity and tolerance are key to building a better world," Luce adds.

OI's menu of funding opportunities includes \$100 to fund overseas educational costs, \$200 for bunk beds, \$300 for a refrigerator, \$500 for a digital camera for documenting OI's progress, \$600 for annual child sponsorship, \$1,000 for an Endowment Gift, \$1,250 for a laptop computer, \$1,500 to fund a houseparents' annual salary overseas, \$2,400 for an English teacher's salary overseas, \$3,000 to allow one to name a room, \$4,800 to fund a project director's salary overseas, \$5,000 for a used all-terrain vehicle, \$7,500 to fund satellite high-speed Internet access, \$6,000 to fund an overseas doctor's salary, \$7,500 to fund OI's annual Website cost, \$8,000 for computer center hardware, \$12,000 to cover OI's office in New York, \$15,000 to cover sponsorship of OI's Annual Benefit at the Harvard Club in Manhattan, \$16,000 to construct a small home overseas, \$24,000 to fund an office assistant in the U.S., \$25,000 to construct a computer center overseas, \$30,000 to construct a school overseas, and \$50,000 to construct an overseas health clinic.

Orphans International has announced two other Katrina-related initiatives: a scholarship fund to send displaced professionals to volunteer in Haiti or Indonesia for one year, and flying in the OI Sumatera Tsunami Relief Medical Team from Aceh to assist in recovery efforts. Last week, OI announced the establishment of a fund to cover transport, room, board and stipend to flood victim professionals who wish to volunteer for the next year assisting flood orphans in both Banda Aceh, Indonesia, and Gonaives, Haiti.

Orphans International America has received bi-partisan support from leaders such as former president Bill Clinton, Mayor Mike Bloomberg, Sen. Chuck Schumer, and Sen. Hillary Clinton, as well as many New York City-based public officials. Orphans International is a non-partisan, interfaith organization incorporated in New York in 2002. Last month in Indonesia, the Acehenese Ministry of Social Affairs recognized Orphans International's work with tsunami orphans along with UNICEF and Save the Children. We are designated as a 501(c)3 organization by the IRS.

OI's mission is "Raising Global Citizens" and OI's children remain in their native countries to become educated to their fullest potential and then help move their countries forward; they do not place children for adoption in America. Projects are running in both Sumatera and Sulawesi in Indonesia, and opening this month in Haiti. Projects in formation include Romania, Togo, the Philippines, Peru, Ghana, and Guyana. Future plans include working with AIDS orphans in both China and India. Each OI campus is working towards full programming for the orphaned children and the village community with classes for English, computer science, and a strong emphasis on the arts.

Donors who wish to support this effort may write e-mail protected from spam bots for additional information. More detailed information is available on OI's website, [www.oிww.org](http://www.oిww.org); the organization's monthly e-newsletter is available on-line. Tax-deductible contributions to the "9-11 United Fund" may be sent to "Orphans International," earmarked "9-11," at 540 Main Street, Ste. 418, N.Y., N.Y. 10044. Last year less than 3% of OI America's income was spent on management.

Aristide to Return 'When Haiti Safe'

AllAfrica.com

Business Day (Johannesburg)

September 8, 2005

Wyndham Hartley

Cape Town

Former Haitian president Jean-Bertrand Aristide should return to his native country as soon as there was peace and stability, Foreign Minister Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma said yesterday, but also expressed doubt that the coming elections in Haiti would achieve this.

Aristide has been resident in SA since last year, after he was forced to resign as leader of Haiti.

Government has supported the former president in his claim that he was forced from office and that he is still the legitimate leader of the island state.

Responding to a question at a media conference, Dlamini-Zuma said she did not think Haiti's elections would solve all the Caribbean country's problems. She confirmed Aristide had said he would not contest the elections, but was still calling for them to be free and fair.

"He will be here until conditions allow him to return to Haiti," Dlamini-Zuma said.

Separately, SA will retain its presence in Burundi for the time being to help with reconstruction in that country, the foreign minister said.

"We are all happy that Burundi finally has a democratically elected government. But, SA has to remain in Burundi, both to make sure that Burundi never goes back to the conflict situation, but also to make sure that we can take advantage of this phase to really try and leapfrog it into sustainable development," DlaminiZuma said.

Research and practical experience revealed that probably 50% of countries that emerged from civil war or strife, slid back into conflict where there was no proper postconflict reconstruction and development, the foreign minister said.

"So we have to get all that in place. The reconstruction of the infrastructure is going to be very important."

Family Welcomes Eight Adopted Children from Haiti
September 8th, 2005
Alex Cabrero Reporting
ksl.com, Utah

In today's fast paced society, three years seem like a lifetime to wait for anything. A Cache County family has been waiting that long to get bigger.

Rebecca Maesato promised her two daughters she would never adopt any children. But after seeing the poor children of Haiti, she felt she had no choice. Now her family has the story of a lifetime.

American Airlines flight 1925 was supposed to arrive in Salt Lake at 7:52. It's an hour and a half late.

Leah Maesato, Waiting for her Family: "Because an engine went out so they had to make an emergency landing in Denver."

Normally a big deal, but after everything this family has been through, it's nothing.

Leah Maesato: "We are used to bumps in the road for sure."

Only minutes separated Leah Maesato and her sister from their mother and eight new brothers, but before we show you this happy reunion, it's best if we explain how it all came about.

Port-au-Prince, Haiti, where some seven-thousand children roam the streets.

Rebecca Maesato: "We usually bring them bread."

This is where Rebecca Maesato and her daughters decided to go three years ago, leaving behind their comfortable Cache County life to make a difference. The conditions for children are terrible, but it's also where they knew they could save some.

Which brings us back to Wednesday night where eight adopted children finally came to their new home.

"You're here! Oh my gosh, I can't believe you're here!"

It's the first time the entire family has been together.

"Sammy, this is your cousin Charlie and your cousin Kat."

A whole new chance at life...

Leah Maesato: "We thought this would never happen, and here they are standing on American soil."

The American dream, all because one woman knew she could make a difference.

Rebecca Maesato, Cache County Resident: “It’s been quite a journey, but we’re happy to be here.’

The family hopes to open a business soon so they can rely on their own money, instead of the donations so many have given them.

Miami Baggage Handlers Arrested In Drug Sting
Fri Sep 9, 2005
WPLG Click10.com News

Three baggage handlers at Miami International Airport may have been involved in an alleged drug trafficking ring, which stretched from Miami to Haiti, Local 10 reported.

Eleven people, including some who Local 10 reported may be former members of a Haitian police department, were named in an FBI indictment Thursday.

The three baggage handlers worked American Airlines flights from Haiti that landed at Miami International Airport, according to Local 10.

The three unidentified men had been tipped off as to what luggage they should remove from flights, according to Local 10. It was luggage that allegedly contained sizable quantities of cocaine.

Just last month, three other baggage workers at American Airlines were arrested at the airport in an unrelated case. They were charged with rifling through a shipment of mail that was to be loaded onto a flight to Haiti.

Local 10 learned of the story as it was breaking Thursday morning. The FBI has arrested 10 of the 11 people named in the indictment.

The suspects will not be in court Thursday, because it has taken so long to find them, according to Local 10 reports.

They are expected to be in court Friday, at which point the indictment that names them will be unsealed.

Teenage arsonist behind Paris fire risks life in jail
Expatica, French news in English
Sept. 6, 2005

PARIS, Sept 6 (AFP) - Four teenage girls were remanded in custody Tuesday on suspicion of starting the fire that killed 18 people in a suburban Paris highrise at the weekend.

The number of people killed in Sunday's apartment block fire in a southern Paris suburb rose to 18 Tuesday.

The death of the 18th victim, a Frenchwoman of Somali origin, was announced late Tuesday. Two of her four children had already died of smoke inhalation. A 35 year-old Haitian man also died of smoke inhalation Tuesday.

Eight Haitians are now known to have been among the dead.

The girls are believed to have set light to letter-boxes in the hall of the 18-storey apartment block in a dispute with a fifth girl who lived in the building.

The girls -- aged between 15 and 18 -- are accused of "wilful destruction by arson leading to death."

If the 18-year-old goes to trial and is convicted, she could face life in prison, while the minors could be jailed for 20 years.

Four teenage girls admitted to police Monday that they set light to letter-boxes in the hall of the 18 storey high-rise as part of a dispute with another girl.

Locals said the gang of girls was often seen hanging around the estate -- a low-cost housing development in the working-class suburb south of Paris called L'Hay-les-Roses near Orly airport.

The fire killed 16 other people over the weekend, including three children, in an apartment block fire early Sunday -- the third fatal fire to hit the French capital in nine days.

The blaze broke out at around 1:00am in the hall of an 18-storey highrise containing 110 local authority flats at L'Hay-les-Roses near Orly airport. The casualties -- including 11 who were seriously injured -- were all caused by smoke inhalation.

According to a final official report on casualties, 11 people were seriously injured. Of those killed, three were children about 10 years old, officials said. A young man died in hospital of severe smoke inhalation late Sunday. Five people remain in critical condition, doctors said.

The girls -- one aged 16 and the others 18 -- were held for questioning on Sunday and admitted setting light to letter-boxes in the hall of the 18-storey high-rise in the working-class suburb of L'Hay-les-Roses near Orly airport, police said.

"They said they did it for fun. They didn't mean to kill but things got out of control," a police officer said on condition of anonymity.

Two of the girls live in the high-rise, which contains some 110 apartments, police said.

Interior Minister Nicolas Sarkozy told French television that the fire was the result of a "criminal act" which needed to be "punished as such".

He rejected suggestions by the local mayor that the blaze was the consequence of an "anti-social act".

Residents told investigators that vandals had been spotted setting light to letter-boxes on the ground floor of the highrise. Low-level arson attacks on cars and property are a regular problem in run-down housing estates that surround many French cities.

Altogether 39 people have been killed in three fires in Paris in little over a week, but authorities were at pains to play down any similarity between the latest disaster and the fires on August 26 and 29 that killed 24 African immigrants in two dilapidated Paris buildings.

"This is a block of flats. It's got nothing to do with the fires in the Paris squats," said fire service spokesman Captain Michel Cros.

Several African families were among the 300 to 400 people living in the high-rise, which is in a working-class neighbourhood with no particular reputation for trouble. At least five or six of the victims were Haitians, according to one survivor.

The blaze sent long flames licking up the outside of the building, while smoke billowed up the stairwell -- fanned by the airflow as residents opened their doors in panic. On a hot night most windows were open.

Rescue workers found victims in the stairwell at the very top of the building, while lower down residents who stayed in their apartments and sealed their doors with material were safe.

"The smoke woke me. My bedroom was full of it. It stuck to the skin, it was suffocating," said Jean, a first-floor resident who called the fire brigade. "There were people who wanted to hurl themselves from their windows, but I told them not to -- that the emergency services were coming."

"There was total panic, because we saw the bodies of people we knew. Our neighbours -- a couple and their child, an entire family -- are dead," said Florence Leclerc.

Some 160 firefighters were dispatched to the scene, and the fire was brought under control after two hours. Residents said there were scuffles between local youths and the firefighters. One young woman resident gave birth in an ambulance brought to the scene.

Prime Minister Dominique de Villepin issued a statement expressing his "condolences ... and the firm support of the state", while Social Cohesion Minister Jean-Louis Borloo left a UMP conference at La Baule on the Atlantic coast to be at the scene.

The question of safe and affordable housing for immigrants moved to the top of the political agenda after the recent fires, which followed an earlier conflagration in a city centre hotel in April that killed 24 Africans.

Police were working on the theory that one fire, which killed 17 West Africans near Austerlitz station on August 26, may have been set deliberately, but last Monday's at a squat in the fashionable Marais district was almost certainly an accident.

Both of those buildings were run-down condition and overcrowded, and lacked safety equipment. By contrast the apartment bloc at L'Hay-les-Roses appeared to have been properly maintained.

Thousands of protesters marched through Paris on Saturday demanding urgent investment in low-cost housing for immigrants, and condemning the forced evacuation of two Paris squats late last week.

Interior Minister Nicolas Sarkozy ordered the evictions as a safety measure, but the Socialist-controlled city council said no long term alternative accommodation had been found for the 150 residents, many of whom are in France illegally.

He told French television he took full responsibility for the evictions and did not regret them.

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Local Haitians look to improve homeland

By Doug McNamara

Staff Writer

Gazette Leader

Wednesday, September 7, 2005

Haiti is a nation on the brink of complete failure. Despite the presence of a United Nations stabilization force, armed gangs, encouraged by Haitian elite, have taken de facto control of Port-au-Prince, the country's capital. Looting, kidnapping, car-jackings and rape have become daily events.

As a result, many local businesses have collapsed, crippling the economy of what is already the poorest nation in the Western Hemisphere. Just recently, in light of the continuing violence, the United States evacuated all "non-essential" embassy personnel.

Politically, Haiti is still under the nominal control of an interim government and hasn't recovered from a 2004 coup which deposed then-President Jean-Bertrand Aristide, who was accused of tampering with election returns in 2000.

According to a recent Village Voice article, in one of Port-au-Prince's most impoverished neighborhoods, the national police have freely distributed machetes to residents, encouraging them to attack fellow unarmed residents. The move is seen by some as an attempt to weaken the exiled Aristide's political base, which is primarily drawn from the poor.

The recent turmoil has only exacerbated the poverty gap, with more than 80 percent of the country's population below the poverty line, according to a 2003 estimate by the CIA.

Haiti's troubles, however, transcend domestic woes. As the country continues to spiral downward, Union County's large Haitian expatriate community, particularly those living in Elizabeth, are powerless to do anything.

Fred Lorquet, a Roselle resident and Elizabeth merchant who emigrated to the U.S. 30 years ago, explained, there's "always bad news" coming from Haiti. He recounted that his sister, who lived in Haiti, died in July. However, family members, citing the all-too-frequent kidnappings, cautioned Lorquet against attending the funeral.

Yves Aubourg, the Urban Enterprise Zone director in Hillside, recalled a similar experience. After his mother died in June, he too was warned not to set foot inside the country. Instead, he ended up having her body shipped to the U.S.

Both Aubourg and Lorquet added that in light of the recent violence, many native Haitians have abandoned their summer vacation plans to return to the island.

In addition to informal relief efforts such as Lorquet's, the Haitian community in the area has banded together to form the Haiti Solidarity Network of the Northeast, said Jack Martin, one of the founding members and a priest at St. Mary's of the Assumption Church in Elizabeth.

The network meets monthly at the St. Joseph's Social Service Center to "keep informed from trustworthy sources" and not the mainstream media, said Martin.

It also frequently sends delegations to Haiti. While there, they "build connections with villages" by providing medical relief, assisting in building infrastructure and helping to rebuild areas destroyed by hurricanes and other natural disasters all too common to the region.

Both Lorquet and Aubourg agree that the United States hasn't done enough to help Haiti. Saying he is "condemning the Bush administration," Aubourg faults the U.S. for turning a blind eye and, in some cases exacerbating, Haiti's problems.

In particular, he feels that though "people are dying everyday" in Haiti, "nobody's talking about it." Lorquet agreed, adding that the "government here doesn't really care."

Martin added that he was "quite unhappy" with America's role in the transition from Aristide government to the current one.

Staff Writer Doug McNamara can be reached at 908-686-7700, ext. 118, or gazetteleader@yahoo.com.

Lieutenant briefs group on human trafficking trip

Members of the Collier County Sheriff's Office went to the Dominican Republic this summer to study human trafficking at its source

By JANINE A. ZEITLIN, jzeitlin@naplesnews.com

September 9, 2005

Naples Daily News

Children hawking trinkets during rush-hour traffic.

Girls in massage parlors near the beach.

Haitians toiling in sugar cane fields.

These are the people Collier County Sheriff's Office's trafficking unit eyed for signs of human trafficking from the Dominican Republic this summer.

Trafficking is forced labor or sexual slavery and often involves a human smuggling debt victims pay that traffickers make impossible to pay off to leave countries.

On Thursday, Lt. Bill Rule, head of the sheriff's trafficking unit, briefed the Collier County Coalition Against Human Trafficking about the July trip the unit took to learn about trafficking.

Awareness about slavery is penetrating society there, Rule said, praising the Caribbean country's efforts to raise consciousness.

"Even the young children in the Dominican Republic are learning about human trafficking," he said, referring to a boy he met offering to shine his tennis shoes for a few cents.

His mother told him to avoid people who approach him for a shine, Rule said.

Dominican Republic is on the U.S. State Department's watch list, according to its 2005 human trafficking report.

An estimated 2,000 children from Haiti, which borders the country, are trafficked there each year and an estimated 48,000 children are locked in child labor in the country, the report states.

"They have a much broader problem than what we have," Rule said, adding law enforcers there charged with conducting investigations often lack vehicles and radios.

European and U.S. tourists visit the country seeking child prostitutes and create demand for sex trafficking, officials said. A tourist at a resort town told Collier law enforcers pimps infest the beaches and offer girls as young as 15.

The State Department report criticized the country for not doing more to root out trafficking-related corruption and for only reporting two new trafficking arrests last year.

General Juan De la Cruz Martinez, who oversees the country's prison system, and the chief assistant to the country's attorney general were at the Thursday meeting.

Trafficking began inciting public outcry with trafficking in organs, he said, which made the authorities take it more seriously. A law passed two years ago put penalties for traffickers up to 15 years in prison, he said.

The general said he hopes to ignite a public awareness campaign to bring authorities and advocacy organizations together to fight trafficking after seeing the collaboration between the Collier Sheriff's Office and Coalition of Immokalee Workers, a farmworkers rights group that's fighting slavery in the agricultural industry.

"We're going to take that idea with us to try to make our fight stronger," he said

Miramar is home to wealthiest Haitian community in S. Florida

By Alva James-Johnson

South Florida Sun-Sentinel

September 9 2005

Pradel Vilme wanted to raise his children in a quiet suburban neighborhood with all the trimmings of middle-class American life.

So in 2001, the real estate agent moved his family from Miami to western Miramar and from a three-bedroom to a five-bedroom house.

"You have to upgrade yourself," said the 54-year-old Haitian-American, who has lived in South Florida since 1985. "In America, people transplant from place to place until they're retired. They're always looking for something better."

Now, thanks to Vilme and others like him, Miramar is home to the wealthiest Haitian community in Broward and Miami-Dade counties, according to a study released last week by the Brookings Institution, a public policy think tank in Washington, D.C.

The study, based on the 2000 Census, was initiated by Sant La Haitian Neighborhood Center in Miami as a supplement to another Brookings report called "Growing the Middle Class: Connecting All of Miami-Dade Residents to Economic Opportunity."

Among cities with large Haitian populations in the two-county area, the study found that Haitians in Miramar had the highest median household income, with \$43,138. North Miami Beach had the second-highest, with \$30,068. Lauderdale Lakes was third, with \$30,059, and Haitians in Miami had the lowest median household income, with \$20,000.

Gepsie Metellus, executive director of Sant La, said many are attracted to Miramar's newer homes, schools and suburban environment.

"People want to have an excellent quality of life, and wherever they can afford it, they will go," she said.

The report highlighted the Haitian community's struggle to rise. It found that Haitians in Miami-Dade had the lowest median household incomes, the lowest-paying jobs and the highest rate of adults without a high school education among all ethnic groups.

Yet it documented the progress many Haitians have made since the 1970s, as many of them acquired wealth and moved from Little Haiti and other Miami neighborhoods to Broward. The study found that Haitians in Broward, numbering 62,342, had a median household income of \$31,041. In Miami-Dade, with a Haitian population of 95,669, the figure was \$27,284.

In the report, researchers said getting an accurate count of the Haitian population was impossible because the census undercounted minority and immigrant groups. Still, they said, the statistics reveal important trends.

"Miami-Dade struggles with the fact that it's a huge entry point for immigrants, but when these new immigrants and their families move up and become middle class, they leave," said Rebecca Sohmer, a research analyst with the metropolitan policy program at Brookings. "Miami-Dade's loss is Broward County's gain."

Alex Stepick, director of the Immigration and Ethnicity Institute at Florida International University, said the migration of Haitians and people from the English-speaking Caribbean to western Broward began 15 years ago. In addition to those moving from Miami, many Caribbean-Americans are migrating from New York and elsewhere in the Northeast.

"In the year 2000, the state of Florida had more Haitians and English-speaking West Indians than the state of New York," he said, "and much of that was because of the rapid growth in western Broward, which tends to be middle class."

It's what sociologists call chain migration, he said. "Somebody gets there, then people they know follow them, and the chain exponentially grows."

Miramar Mayor Lori C. Moseley said she has noticed the growth of the Haitian middle class in her city.

"Miramar is an incredible, culturally diverse community where everyone is welcome and everyone feels welcomed here," she said. "We have a population that's a little bit of this and little bit of that, and we try to celebrate it."

Now Vilme, his wife, and three children, ages 10, 16, and 17, call it home.

Vilme said he fled Haiti in 1985 to escape the Jean-Claude "Baby Doc" Duvalier regime. Vilme settled in Miami and earned a bachelor's degree in business administration from Florida International University. After starting his own real estate and mortgage company, he decided it was time to move.

Now he has a program on Haitian radio station WJCC, AM-1700, in which he educates other Haitians about how to adjust to their new environment.

He encourages them to participate in their neighborhood associations so they can help make the rules.

"We're at the early stages of Haitians moving into these communities," he said. "It's an adjustment because every culture is different."

Alva James-Johnson can be reached at ajjohnson@sun-sentinel.com or 954-356-4523.

Sex, tourism and politics mingle in Haiti movie
Wed Sep 7, 2005
AFP News

VENICE, Italy (AFP) - A film about North American women looking for sex and sun in troubled 1970s Haiti opened at the Venice film festival, but the runaway success of the event so far is an animated movie, Tim Burton's "Corpse Bride."

French director Laurent Cantet's "Heading South," starring Charlotte Rampling and based on a novel by Radio Haiti journalist Dany Lafferriere, is a political metaphor that explores sexuality as an instrument of political and economic power.

It portrays three North American women who come alone to a Haiti beach hotel for relaxation and pampering as the country begins to convulse at the end of the notorious "Baby Doc" Duvalier regime.

The rich women shower local men with gifts and money, the men sell the only thing they possess, their bodies and their youth. The most sought-after of the young men is Legba, played by Menotho Cesar.

"The hotel is a small bubble where Americans come to forget the reality of their lives, which are filled with frustration, and rediscover their power of seduction," said Cantet.

"As for Legba, the hotel is the only place he can go to escape the harsh reality of this country and find a bit of affection."

Cantet's film, applauded by critics at Venice where it screens in competition for the Golden Lion, was partly shot in Haiti though the film had to be postponed for a year when the island was torn by the violence that ousted President Jean-Bertrand Aristide in late 2004.

"The desire of women is not often talked about in cinema, especially if it concerns women over 40. Here, not only do we talk about it, we listen to the women themselves talk about it," said Cantet.

By the end of the movie, Rampling's character Helen, who has built up a close relationship with the locals over years of similar vacations, finds herself the outsider when a police inspector investigating Legba's murder dismisses her evidence.

On a lighter note, Burton's inventive, funny and touching movie featuring the voices of Johnny Depp, Helena Bonham-Carter, Albert Finney and Christopher Lee earned loud and lengthy applause at the festival, where it is being shown out of competition.

Using painstaking stop-motion animation on plastecine figures 12 inches (30 centimetres) tall, "Corpse Bride" recounts a 19th-century Russian folk tale in which Victor, voiced by Depp, is whisked away to the underworld to marry the mysterious Corpse Bride (Bonham Carter), while his real bride Victoria (Emily Watson) waits in the Land of the Living.

Finney and Joanna Lumley play Victoria's pompous parents Finis and Maudeline Everglot, while Victor's nouveau riche parents are voiced by Tracey Ullman and Paul Whitehouse.

"Corpse Bride" marks the fifth time the director has collaborated with Depp, who also starred in Burton's "Edward Scissorhands," "Ed Wood" and "Sleepy Hollow."

The veteran Lee, known for his previous roles as Dracula, plays an authoritarian pastor.

Rambling ages disgracefully in "Heading South"

Thu Sep 8, 2005

Reuters.co.uk

By Clara Ferreira-Marques

VENICE (Reuters) - Charlotte Rambling ages disgracefully in "Heading South", Laurent Cantet's gritty tale of women paying for love in 1970s Haiti, one of 20 films competing for Venice's top Golden Lion prize.

The film, adapted from short stories from Haiti's Dany Laferriere, portrays three white women looking for affection until they stumble upon the hardships and violence of real life under the dictatorship of "Papa Doc" and "Baby Doc" Duvalier.

Famous for her well-preserved aristocratic good looks, 60-year-old Rambling plays Ellen, a jaded university teacher who pragmatically accepts she has to pay for the attentions of the athletic young Legba.

"It was a disturbing role to play. Why does this woman feel the need to do what she does?," she said in an interview just off the sun-soaked Lido that hosts the Venice Film Festival.

"It isn't sexual tourism as we know it now -- they want to imagine they are having love affairs. (Ellen) is looking for a dream of being loved, caressed and looked after by someone who gives her no opposition," said Rambling, who first stepped into the spotlight with Luchino Visconti's 1969 drama "The Damned".

Alongside Rambling's 55-year-old Ellen, "Sopranos" actress Karen Young plays Brenda, the love-struck woman who finally oversteps the mark. Louise Portal, best known for her role in Canadian film "The Barbarian Invasions", plays the likeable Sue.

For Rambling, who most recently won critical acclaim for her performance in Francois Ozon's "Swimming Pool", the parts are an example of the diverse roles now on offer for older women.

"Different subjects are coming up that didn't come up before. We're pioneers," she said with a smile.

Cantet has the three women in unforgiving 70s bathing suits through most of the film and cast them alongside dashing local boys. But the award-winning French director said he was careful to steer clear of any pathetic overtones.

"My characters are complex enough not to be pathetic. It is about accepting yourself as you are and there should be no desire to take pity on them," he told Reuters.

"I do not want this to be a film about sex tourism. There are much deeper feelings at stake here."

The director, who won a Venice award in 2001 for his film "Time Out", wanted his portrayal of Haiti to be true to life, including real people and authentic street scenes, filmed in trigger-happy Port-au-Prince.

"The first day we went into Port-au-Prince to film one of the street scenes, there was a gunfight. I thought it was going to end there," he said.

For security reasons, the beach sequences were filmed in the Dominican Republic and part of the Haitian scenes were postponed in the chaos that followed the fall of President Jean-Bertrand Aristide in 2004.

"Heading South", or "Vers le Sud", is the most accessible of three French films in competition at the Venice Film Festival.

Earlier this week, director Philippe Garrel presented his black-and-white look at the aftermath of May 1968 with "Les Amants Reguliers", while Patrice Chereau brought Venice an austere tale of marital turmoil with "Gabrielle".

Plainfield church group takes mission trip to Haiti

LifeSpring Community Church in Plainfield recently sent eight members of its congregation to Bonne Fin in Haiti.

The Plainfield Sun, Suburban Chicago

Sept. 9, 2005

The group stayed at the guest house for Hospital Lumiere. The main objective of the group was to paint two of the hospital operating rooms, four local school rooms, the wall and sign outside the school and a beach house, as well as do various maintenance jobs, according to a press release from the church.

The team visited patients in the hospital, and some were even allowed to observe surgery while there. They also interacted with many local children, and even gave a lesson on how to play Frisbee.

According to the release, the group encountered extreme poverty in Haiti. There is little plumbing or electricity, drinking water comes from community wells and laundry and bathing is done in small streams or drainage canals.

One member of the group, Cindy Lopezalles, said she was proud to go on the trip.

"There is much to be done in the world outside our front door," she said. "We need to be Christ's hands and feet and show his love to those in the world. I have been deeply touched by the people and the country of Haiti. I can't wait to go back. And that is the best way that I can show others how much it is worth it to go on a trip like this."

LifeSpring is planning on sending more people on mission trips in the future.

LifeSpring Community Church holds services at 9 and 10:45 a.m. Sundays at Drauden Point Middle School. Call (815) 436-7633 or go to www.yourlifespring.org.

Season heats up with benefit concerts

By TOM DI NARDO

Philadelphia Daily News

Sept. 9, 2005

Here we go again, poised for another roller-coaster ride through an explosive concert season. It'll take a few weeks for the schedule to heat up, but already there are attractions for music lovers to savor.

Members of four ensembles, plus many other prominent musicians, are donating their talents to benefit the "bateyes" (bah-TAYZ), remote villages in Haiti and the Dominican Republic populated mostly by migrant laborers, with a horrifyingly high percentage of HIV/AIDS infection. (Also, 10 percent of the gate will go toward Katrina relief efforts.)

Andrew Grams, assistant conductor of the Cleveland Orchestra, will conduct a generous program of repertory works, pieces by Haitian composers Werber Jaegerhuber and Ferere Laguerre, and "Three Dances," an oft-performed, 1995 work by busy Philadelphia composer Kile Smith, curator of the famed Fleisher Collection of Orchestral Music.

There are family connections among the performers, including 14-year-old Haitian-American violinist Michael Casimir, who will perform Lalo's *Symphonie espagnole* along with his violist father Magliore and violinist uncle Richard.

And the supremely gifted cousins Ellen and Francesca de Pasquale, daughters of two members of the esteemed de Pasquale String Quartet (all onetime members of the Philadelphia Orchestra), will solo in the Mozart *Sinfonia Concertante* for violin and viola.

Ellen, currently associate concertmaster of the Cleveland Orchestra, is the daughter of recently retired (Philadelphia Orchestra) co-concertmaster William dePasquale and orchestra cellist Gloria dePasquale. Francesca is the daughter of retired orchestra violinist Robert dePasquale, who will also play the concert.

Last year's bateye relief concert, held in Willow Grove, raised \$15,000 to counter damage from floods on the island of Hispaniola. (7 p.m. Saturday, Sep. 10, Church of the Savior, 651 N. Wayne Ave., Wayne, \$30-\$100, 215-646-9904. Also, see Damon C. Williams' article on page 51 for information about this weekend's forum on human rights in Haiti.)

Christopher O'Riley's fascinating "From the Top," which airs locally at 12:30 p.m. Saturdays on WRTI (90.1-FM), brings young players with astonishing talent to national prominence. Saturday, Sep. 10th's program was taped at the Kimmel Center last May and features a wealth of our own performers.

Two ensembles from Settlement Music School, the Weinstein Woodwind Quartet and the Settlement Chamber Orchestra, will perform works by Ligeti and Samuel Barber, respectively. Cellist Nicholas Bodnar, 15, will play a piece by Cassado, and the Temple Music Prep Violin Nonet will perform a Fugue by Arcady Dubensky.

There are Philadelphia Orchestra connections as well. The orchestra's recording engineer, George Blood, proudly claims two show participants as his daughters. Harpist Madeline Blood, 13, will play Khatchaturian's "Oriental Dance," and 17-year old oboist Clara Blood is part of the Weinstein Quartet.

And violinist Robyn Bollinger, daughter of orchestra bass trombonist Blair Bollinger, will perform the gorgeous opening movement of Prokofiev's Second Violin Concerto. The gifted Robyn, just 13, has already won the Greenfield Competition and soloed with the orchestra.

Man's meddling hurting our disaster defense

September 8, 2005

BY SANDRA POSTEL

Chicago Sun Times

AMHERST, Mass. -- Although it would appear that the unfathomable damage wrought by Hurricane Katrina is due to an extraordinary act of nature, this limited perspective misses important lessons we had better learn this time: Distinguishing a natural disaster from a human-induced one is getting more difficult. And we need to enlist nature's help, not assign it blame.

Storms, floods, earthquakes and tidal waves are natural events, to be sure, but the degree to which they produce disaster is now often strongly influenced by human actions. By necessity or choice, more people are living along coastlines, in flood plains and on fragile hillsides -- zones that place them in harm's way. At the same time, the clearing of trees, filling of wetlands, engineering of rivers and destruction of coral reefs and mangroves has frayed the natural safety nets that healthy ecosystems provide. Consequently, when a natural disaster strikes, the risks of catastrophic losses are higher.

Data collected by Munich Re, one of the world's largest reinsurance companies, show the loss of life and property from natural disasters has been climbing for two decades. Worldwide economic losses from natural catastrophes over the last 10 years have totaled \$566.8 billion, exceeding the combined losses from 1950 through 1989. More than four times as many "great" natural catastrophes occurred during the 1990s as during the 1950s.

In the case of Katrina, the failure to adequately maintain and upgrade artificial levees to keep floodwaters out of New Orleans has emerged as an obvious human cause of the suffering. But so were decisions to allow coastal wetlands to be drained and filled for commercial development and to allow more than two dozen dams and thousands of miles of levees on the Mississippi River to sequester sediment that would otherwise replenish delta lands.

Coastal wetlands and barrier islands reduce the power of hurricanes and storm surges, a vital natural service largely missing when Katrina struck. Louisiana alone has lost more than 1.2 million acres of coastal lands since the 1930s.

Along with Katrina, other recent disasters suggest the value of nature's protective ecological infrastructure. Nearly 5,000 Haitians died, and tens of thousands lost homes during tropical storms in May and September of 2004. Although tagged as natural disasters, these tragedies were exacerbated by a distinctly human activity: the clearing of trees in the highlands. Destitute and lacking alternatives, Haiti's poor have cut down most of their trees for firewood and charcoal, thereby losing a valuable service provided by forested watersheds: the moderation of runoff and the prevention of massive mudslides. The very storms that devastated Haiti had far less impact on nearby Puerto Rico, where highland watersheds are forested.

Likewise, the Indian Ocean tsunami that struck coastal Asian nations last December unveiled yet another important piece of ecological architecture -- the storm and wave protection afforded by mangroves and coral reefs. The tangled roots and dense vegetation of mangroves that thrive where salt water meets fresh water act like a shock absorber against storm and wave energy. Vast areas of these

natural protective barriers -- including half the coastal mangroves in Thailand -- had been cleared for hotels, shrimp farms, and other commercial developments.

For the same reason people buy home insurance and life insurance -- to avoid catastrophic loss -- societies need to "buy" disaster insurance by investing in the protection of watersheds, flood plains and wetlands. Often these investments pay for themselves, even in strict economic terms. For example, after the Great Midwest Flood of 1993, when the upper Mississippi and Missouri Rivers rose to record heights, researchers estimated that restoration of 13 million acres of wetlands in the upper Mississippi River basin, at a cost of \$2 billion to \$3 billion, would have absorbed enough floodwater to substantially reduce the \$16 billion to \$19 billion in flood damage.

We have little time to waste in acting on these lessons. Global warming and its anticipated effects on the hydrological cycle will make the robustness and resilience of nature's way of mitigating disasters all the more important, as tropical storms, seasonal flooding, and droughts increase in frequency and intensity.

Sandra Postel, director of the Global Water Policy Project in Amherst, Mass., is author of *Liquid Assets: The Critical Need to Safeguard Freshwater Ecosystems*.

Dinner gala to aid effort to bring water to Haiti
September 8, 2005
Orlando Sentinel

The Harris Rosen Foundation and the Haitian Self Sufficiency Task Force will have a dinner and gala to benefit the Water for Haiti Project on Saturday.

In Haiti, much of the water is so contaminated that one glass may cause serious illness or even death. During the past decade, thousands have died in Haiti from a lack of potable water.

The Water for Haiti Gala will feature keynote speaker Carole Berotte Joseph, president of MassBay Community College in Wellesley Hills, Mass. Joseph, whose career in higher education spans more than 20 years, has lectured extensively and has authored and translated numerous articles on educational policy issues facing Haitian communities in the United States and in Haiti. Friends, a six-member Haitian band, will perform.

The gala will begin with a silent auction and reception at 6 p.m. followed by dinner at 7 p.m. in the Rosen Centre Hotel Grand Ballroom, 9840 International Drive, Orlando.

Tickets are \$200 each, and a table of 10 guests is \$1,500. All proceeds benefit the Water for Haiti Project, which will purchase water-filtration systems and deliver them to hospitals and schools in rural areas of Haiti.

To purchase tickets or become a table sponsor call 407-996-5823 or visit RosenHotels.com/Water.

