

## HAITI NEWS ROUNDUP: SEPTEMBER 7 – 14, 2006

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### **INTERVIEW-Larger UN force would help Haiti aid implementation**

**Reuters**

**By Gilbert Le Gras**

**14 Sep 2006**

SINGAPORE, - Haiti would benefit from faster implementation of its aid programmes if it were assigned a larger U.N. peacekeeping force to ensure the safety of development workers, a top World Bank official said on Thursday. In August the United Nations renewed the mandate of its peacekeeping force for six months at its current size of about 9,000 soldiers and police despite U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan's call for a 12-month extension.

"That is very much on the low side for U.N. peacekeeping forces when you look across the spectrum of the world and I think donors have recognised that, without that security-development nexus, you're not going to get progress," said the World Bank's Latin America and Caribbean director, Caroline Anstey.

Troop and police contributions are typically determined by donor countries' foreign and defence ministries while aid funding is approved by finance and development officials, and coordination is sometimes lacking, she said.

"We need to bring those together so security and development can go hand in hand so, for example, we can go into Cite Soleil and do development projects," Anstey said in reference to the most dangerous shanty town in the Caribbean country of 8.6 million people.

"It's very hard for development institutions and NGOs to deliver cleaner water, clean streets, sanitation in areas that are insecure," she added.

On Monday U.N. troops took over several slums in Port-au-Prince that had been held by armed gangs believed to be loyal to former president Jean-Bertrand Aristide, who was forced from power in February 2004.

A meeting of 26 donor countries and agencies in July topped up and extended the two-year-old International Cooperation Framework (ICF) with \$750 million for 13 more months after the original \$1.1-billion ICF expired, well beyond Haitian President Rene Preval's request for \$500 million.

"If you look back five years, 10 years, 15 years, there was a tendency for donors to come in with competing programmes draped in national flags, a lot of overlap, a lot of lack of coordination," Anstey said.

"Three years ago Haiti barely had a budget. Now it has a budget, it's on time, it's transparent. We, the World Bank, helped set up a civil society monitoring mechanism to make sure that transparency exists and I think the government has done a lot to put together an economic governance reform agenda," she added.

**Haiti's Dirty Little Secret: the Problem of Child Slavery**  
**Council on Hemispheric Affairs (COHA)**  
**September 14, 2006**

Child slavery is endemic in a number of developing nations and must be addressed at the upcoming Non-Aligned Movement Summit in Havana

In Haiti, the institution of slavery survives in the form of *restavec*, a system of forced child labour. *Restavec* is the Haitian Creole term meaning “stay with” and has its origins in the legacy of slavery, the sharply hierarchical class structure and the grinding poverty of Haiti’s masses. Haiti has the dubious distinction of being the poorest nation in the Western Hemisphere, with a malnutrition rate of 56 percent. Additionally, Haiti is also a country with a distinctively uneven distribution of income, where approximately 45 percent of the country’s wealth is owned by one percent of the population.

As a result of decades of economic stagnation, irresponsible rule and political corruption, over 70 percent of the population lives in wrenching poverty. The conditions are so severe that many parents send their children away to live in the homes of the wealthier families in the usually vain hope that they will receive proper clothing and formal education. Public education is free, but the costs of uniforms, textbooks as well as other school supplies are beyond the reach of most struggling parents. As a result, only 65 percent of the elementary-school-aged children are enrolled in Haiti’s primary schools, and of this number, only 35 percent will graduate. At the secondary level, this picture becomes even more dismal, as the number of students enrolled drops to 20 percent. Even though most Haitians highly esteem education, such conditions have forced parents to send their children to work for more privileged families in a situation akin to slavery. Tragically, Haiti lacks the ability to enforce current legislation prohibiting child labour. It is thus imperative for the international community to redouble its efforts to help Haiti rid itself of this heinous exploitation of children.

The practice of child slavery is not limited to Haiti. Rather, under various guises, there are millions of children working in similar conditions throughout the developing world. This issue begs to be placed on the agenda of the Non-Aligned Movement Summit in Havana, where immediate action regarding this practice should be called upon.

**The Incidence and Horrors of Child Labour in Haiti**

According to the Haitian government, there are about 90,000 to 120,000 children in bondage, but UNICEF estimates significantly larger numbers, ranging from 250,000 to 300,000. Very little child labour is used in the formal sectors of the country and is largely confined to the informal underbelly of the economy and the domestic sphere. However, desperate rural families bring their children into Port-Au-Prince and other urban areas to work as domestics in the homes of well-to-do families, who ostensibly should be providing them with schooling in return. However, these children often perform the most wretched of tasks that hired help refuse to do, such as emptying bedpans and walking for miles fetching water. They are also forced to work very long hours without compensation and are harshly brutalized for even the slightest mistake or neglect of a duty. They are frequently subject to severe physical abuse, as their owners often beat them mercilessly with cowhide switches manufactured especially for that purpose, for the most minor of infractions. These children are exposed

to insensible acts of violence, such as one girl who was set ablaze because allegedly her employers wanted to find out if hairspray was flammable.

Over 70 percent of the restavecs are girls, most of whom range from as young as 3 to 15 years of age. Many of them are virtually enslaved by individuals who are situated in only slightly better circumstances, who otherwise could not afford to hire domestics. In a class-based society such as Haiti, the ownership of a restavec elevates one a few rungs on the social ladder. Restavecs are often made to sleep on the floor, usually under a table, on a pile of rags or on a piece of dirty cardboard outside of the family's home. Moreover, they are easily identified on the streets by their tattered clothing. It is devastatingly common for young, female restavecs to be subjected to repeated rape by male members of the "host family." When their owners have no further use for them, these children are often thrust out onto the streets after being severely beaten or sexually abused. Since these children have not received the education promised by their "hosts," they have little opportunity to improve their situation at the close of their servitude.

#### The Apathy of the International Community

Without the capacity and the funding to enforce the labour laws, the deeply entrenched practice of child slavery will continue to plague Haitian society. Haiti has undergone decades of political instability and governmental corruption, in addition to stringent economic sanctions. Moreover, Haiti's dismal economic situation continues to fuel the restavec practice. Since 2000, the current Bush administration has stood in the way of over \$500 million in much-needed loans from international financial organizations to the Haitian government, in order to express its displeasure at Aristide's democratically-elected government. Included in this figure was a loan package of \$146 million from the Inter-American Development Bank aimed at improving healthcare, access to sanitary water supplies and education, all of which could have improved the desperate situation facing Haiti's children.

#### The Challenge to the International Community

Child slavery is so ingrained in the national psyche that many Haitians do not feel that the practice is particularly odious. In a society sharply divided by colour and class, many of those who occupy the lower rungs of the socioeconomic ladder are not considered fully human and are thus not accorded basic human rights, especially the restavecs. Given Haiti's current lack of state capacity, it is doubtful that the government will make any significant inroads on this social blight for years to come, especially in light of the privileged classes' opposition to any justice measures designed to uplift Haiti's poor.

Due to Haitian society's silent acceptance of this deplorable practice, there needs to be increased media attention and international condemnation of the restavec system to bring this dirty little secret to light. The U.S, which strategically fabricated and then indignantly denounced human trafficking in Venezuela, is suspiciously quiet when it comes to the woeful plight of Haiti, over which it has unique stewardship. Instead of manipulating the issue of human trafficking to suit its diplomatic goals, or ignoring it altogether, it is imperative that the international community take serious action to eliminate the existence of child slavery worldwide.

This analysis was prepared by COHA Research Associate Michale Sheckleford

**Foley's Haiti bill gets out of committee**  
**By Christine Grimaldi**  
**Palm Beach Post Washington Bureau**  
**Thursday, September 14, 2006**

WASHINGTON — Some Haitian-Americans may soon receive a paycheck from the federal government to aid in the revitalization of their homeland under a bill passed by a House committee Wednesday.

The bill by U.S. Rep. Mark Foley, R-Fort Pierce, would recruit U.S. citizens and permanent residents of Haitian descent to help revitalize Haiti's fledgling education, judiciary and health-care infrastructure. Participants could spend as long as three years there and would receive a salary and housing stipend for their services.

The program would run under the auspices of the U.S. Agency for International Development.

House International Relations Committee members unanimously approved the bill after adding a program that would provide scholarships to talented Haitian students.

The scholarships would be granted as loans, although complete loan forgiveness could be obtained if the student returned to Haiti to aid in the revitalization process.

Co-sponsors of the bill include Reps. E. Clay Shaw Jr., R-Fort Lauderdale; Robert Wexler, D-Delray Beach; and Corrine Brown, D-Jacksonville.

"The only holdup was that the politics of Haiti bled into the process," said Foley spokesman Jason Kello, noting that the bill has been in the works for about 2 1/2 years.

"With a newly democratically elected government, we've been able to see movement on the legislation."

Foley's office expects the bill to be up for a full House vote before the end of the year.

**'Fragile states risk instability'**  
**BBC News**  
**Thursday, 14 September 2006**

Violence in Haiti has made it difficult to build institutions

The number of 'fragile states' has soared over the past three years, the World Bank has said, threatening regional and global instability.

In a report, the bank warned that such countries would become even more prone to corruption, crime and arms smuggling unless key reforms were made.

Aid projects had not been accompanied by vital reforms while "nation-building on the cheap" did not work, it said.

The 26 fragile countries listed include Afghanistan, Haiti and Angola.

'Extreme poverty'

The report, which shows the number of at-risk countries has risen from 17 in 2003, was published in the run-up to the World Bank's annual conference.

Neglecting the fragile states risks worsening their misery, in turn feeding regional and global instability

Vinod Thomas, World Bank

The bank has lent \$4.1bn (£2.1bn) to so-called fragile nations over the past two years, but it said the positive benefits from its work were "in danger of being diminished".

"Neglecting the fragile states - home to 500 million people, half of whom are living in extreme poverty - risks worsening their misery, in turn feeding regional and global instability," said Vinod Thomas, head of the bank's independent evaluation group.

In the case of the Central African Republic, "inadequate attention" had been given to its budget crisis and in Haiti the aggravated security situation had not been addressed.

Donor countries often failed to consider levels of political instability and the strength of key institutions before committing money, said Soniya Carvalho, the report's author.

"Too often early engagement was not followed-up with a clear and relevant reform agenda," the report said.

To remedy this, the bank recommended that donors cooperate with government ministries and agencies with strong financial controls and transparent practices, or reliable non governmental organisations.

## Aid conditions

World Bank head Paul Wolfowitz has been a strong proponent of improving governance and tackling corruption as a condition for aid.

In April, Mr Wolfowitz said the bank would reinforce its governance and anti-corruption measures on all bank projects including loans, grants, research and technical assistance.

Proposals by Mr Wolfowitz to tackle corruption have been controversial

But he has come under fire - from places such as Britain - which argue that such an approach is unbalanced.

While supporting its anti-corruption efforts, International Development Secretary Hilary Benn has said the World Bank should not make aid conditional on countries adopting certain economic policies.

Some countries have expressed worries that tackling corruption could slow down the pace at which aid is delivered.

In a bid to encourage better governance, the bank recently said it would give an amnesty to countries that had defrauded the bank in the past, if they admitted their wrongdoing and pledged to follow tough new rules.

**World's poorest countries increasingly wired, UN agency reports**  
**UN News Centre**  
**14 September 2006**

According to the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), “teledensity” has more than doubled in the majority of least developed countries (LDCs) since 2000 with some of them boosting connectivity by as much as 20 times, thanks to rapid growth in the deployment of mobile technologies.

According to ITU statistics, LDCs with the highest annual growth rate in terms of cellular subscribers over the period 2000-2005 were Djibouti, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Niger, Liberia, Mali, Sudan, Yemen and Laos. Prepaid services, accounting for almost 90 per cent of the entire market, have contributed to the explosive expansion of the mobile sector in LDCs. In Afghanistan, Chad, Djibouti, Eritrea, Haiti, Somalia and Niger all mobile subscriptions were prepaid.

Overall, access to the internet has increased and more interest is on deployment of broadband services in rural areas. By 2005, internet user penetration caught up with fixed line penetration in LDCs, providing access to a host of applications, such as e-education, e-health, e-business, e-agriculture, and e-government.

Despite recent progress, LDCs continue to face major challenges. Many established policies and regulations have become obsolete, leading to inefficient and increasingly untenable restrictions and barriers to the development, the ITU said in a news release, calling on policy makers and regulators to address these gap

**Haiti haunted by thuggish 'Ghosts'**  
**By Patrick Goldstein, Times Staff Writer**  
**Los Angeles Times**  
**September 12, 2006**

TORONTO — Asger Leth doesn't especially look crazy or suicidal. But after I saw his new documentary, "Ghosts of Cité Soleil," which debuted at the Toronto Film Festival before a packed house Saturday night, I had my doubts. The 36-year-old Danish filmmaker, whose father, Jorgen Leth, is a prominent Danish director, spent most of 2004 in the squalid slums of Haiti, chronicling the story of Haitians 2pac and Bily, two gang leaders of the Chimeres, the secret henchmen of then-Haitian President Jean-Bertrand Aristide.

After years of corruption and dictatorship, Haiti is the eyesore of the Caribbean, racked with poverty and violence, with a malnutrition rate higher than Angola and a life expectancy lower than Sudan. Leth's documentary shows us the thug life of the street gangs of Cité Soleil up close and personal — so up close that the film's cameramen occasionally dive for cover when gunfire erupts in the streets.

The movie made me feel as if I'd been tossed into the middle of an out-of-control reality TV show, with 2pac and his gunsels shooting rivals, smoking reefers, talking to the camera and composing rap-like anthems about killing. Many of the thugs have adopted monikers culled from American pop culture, from 2pac to Rocky Balboa and Jean-Claude Van Damme, but they're not posers — they make a hip-hop icon like 50 Cent look about as scary as Shrek.

Leth was introduced to Haiti by his father, who'd taken him as a boy in the 1980s while making films there. When his father fell into a depression, he found only one cure — moving to Haiti. "Ever since I was a kid, my father told me the stories are stronger in Haiti than anywhere else on the planet," says Leth, who when we spoke Sunday morning was still groggy from a wee-hours party the night before at which Wyclef Jean, who provides the music for the film, played a spirited set.

"My father figured that if he went to Haiti, where there's so much chaos, the chaos inside his head would disappear. And it worked. In 2004, I'd just been divorced and I was suicidal myself. So going to Haiti was the best cure for divorce depression I could think of. At least until I got cured, and then I really realized how scary it was. Making this film was how I learned to handle fear, though I wouldn't recommend it for everybody."

The film is fascinating because you suspect that if 2pac and Bily, who are brothers, had grown up in a less hopeless environment, they might have turned their street smarts into something less sociopathic. As Leth puts it: "In a country full of illiteracy, they could read and write and speak several languages. It being Haiti, they ended up as gang leaders. But in another country, they might've been musicians or started a business."

But in this movie, they are little more than thugs. Many who saw the film, which is still seeking a distributor, had concerns about Leth's portrayal of the brothers, wondering if the filmmaker had gotten too close to his subjects. I was especially troubled by another key character in the film — Lele, a French relief worker. She is intensely devoted to helping the poor of Cité Soleil, at no small personal risk — Leth calls her "the queen of the slums." She offers aid and counsel for the gangsters — perhaps

a trade-off for safe passage in a dangerous spot — but she goes even further, becoming a lover of first Bily and then 2pac during the course of the film.

When I spoke with Leth, he revealed that her role was even murkier than the film suggests. Milos Loncarevic, Leth's fearless cinematographer and co-director, was the person who helped introduce Leth to the gangsters and gain their trust. But Leth told me that Loncarevic, a Serbian expatriate, first came to Haiti to be with Lele, who was his girlfriend when filming began.

In an era where much of so-called reality TV is fake, it's hard to blame a documentarian for making questionable judgment calls, especially in such circumstances. Leth told me that when he went to interview the Haitian chief of police, who was trying to wipe out the gangs, "I had to pretend I was a stupid outsider because if he knew I was with the gangs, they would've followed us and we would've all been in some horrible gun battle."

But he pleads innocent to a loss of objectivity. "Actually, I'm totally objective because I'm too cynical about Haiti to take sides. Everyone there is trying to kill each other. And in another five years, it'll be a new bunch of guys doing all the shooting. When it comes to Haiti, it is a place I love, but it is also a place where I lost all my illusions."

## **A U.S. citizen no more -- Haitian to be deported, judge rules**

**BY ALFONSO CHARDY**

**Miami Herald**

**Tue, Sep. 12, 2006**

An immigration judge today ordered Lionel Jean-Baptiste, the first naturalized American in recent times stripped of his citizenship after being convicted of a drug crime, to be deported to Haiti.

The judge advised Jean-Baptiste that it's possible he may yet get to stay in the United States if the government of Haiti refuses to take him back. The Haitian consul in Miami told The Miami Herald that Haitians who have taken other country's citizenship are no longer considered citizens of Haiti, therefore, Haiti would be under no obligation to accept him.

Jean-Baptiste gave up his legal battle today. He remains at the Krome detention center for now.

It was Jean-Baptiste's first major immigration court hearing since U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement officers detained him June 14 and put him in deportation proceedings. The detention came about eight months after the U.S. Supreme Court declined to hear his case.

Jean-Baptiste, 58, had his citizenship revoked after a Miami federal jury in 1997 convicted him on drug-trafficking charges. ICE moved to revoke Jean-Baptiste's citizenship in 2000, not because of the conviction -- but because the commission of the crime occurred while he awaited citizenship and was required to be of "good moral character."

## **Three gang members surrender weapons**

**By Stevenson Jacobs**

**The Associated Press**

**South Florida Sun Sentinel**

**September 12, 2006**

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti · Three gang members surrendered their guns Monday in the first handover of weapons in a U.N.-led effort to disarm hundreds of Haitian criminals.

The men held the guns above their heads as they approached Brazilian peacekeepers to the cheers of supporters during the handover ceremony in the gritty Port-au-Prince slum of Solino. They agreed to disarm after peacekeepers promised they would not be arrested.

Haiti's government and U.N. peacekeepers are trying to persuade up to 1,000 gang members to lay down their arms with offers of money, food and job training.

The impromptu ceremony marked the start of what officials acknowledge will likely be a lengthy campaign to disarm the gangs, which are blamed for a recent wave of shootings.

## **UN troops take Haiti gang area**

**By Joseph Guyler Delva**

**Reuters**

**September 12, 2006**

UN troops have taken over several areas that had been held by illegally armed gangs in the volatile slums of the Haitian capital, according to a UN official who pledged to bring gang leaders to justice.

UN Special Envoy Edmond Mulet said some of the 9000 UN peacekeepers sent to stabilise the troubled Caribbean country had been moved from calm provincial cities and redeployed to surround gangs and block their getaways in hot spots around the capital of Port-au-Prince.

"We began to surround the bandits who control Cite Soleil and other neighboring slums," Mr Mulet told Reuters in an interview.

"These criminals are wanted by the police and they will have one day or another to face justice," warned Mr Mulet. "They should know that we are progressing and we are going to nab them."

UN troops had conducted operations in Cite Militaire and other neighbourhoods near the country's most dangerous shantytown of Cite Soleil, in the metropolitan area. They set up 32 new checkpoints in parts of the capital where armed gangs were forced to flee for their lives, Mr Mulet said.

"We have taken over some of the territories occupied by the bandits," including a Cite Militaire building that had been used as a gang base and a hiding place for kidnap victims, he said.

Several armed groups are believed to be loyal to former President Jean-Bertrand Aristide, who was forced from power in February 2004 by an armed rebellion and by pressure from the United States and France. UN peacekeepers were deployed four months later to stabilize the impoverished country.

Some gang members said their movement was politically motivated and rejected accusations they were bandits.

"We are not criminals, we are political militants who had to take up weapons to defend ourselves," said gang leader William Baptiste, known as Ti Blan.

UN officials said gang leaders who committed atrocities against innocent citizens will be considered criminals.

"If someone kidnaps for economic ransom, kill, shoot at innocent victims, I don't see any political motivation behind that," said Mr Mulet.

He said UN forces continue to come under attack from recalcitrant gangs, and called on gang members to immediately surrender their weapons.

## **NAM nations plan world in which 'peace can triumph'**

**Michael Langan | Havana, Cuba**

**Mail and Guardian Online, South Africa**

**12 September 2006**

Most Non-Aligned nations firmly oppose terrorism and understand the United States' grief over the September 11 terror strikes, a top South African diplomat said on Monday.

"Many countries have expressed their own feelings about the tragic events of five years ago. No grievance justifies the type of action that we saw five years ago," Ayanda Ntsaluba, leading his country's delegation meeting at the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) summit here, told reporters.

"I think most of the members of the NAM share that view," Ntsaluba said as delegates began work at the summit of 118 countries committed to countering what they see as the overwhelming political and military weight of the US.

The summit brings together leaders from about 50 developing nations and high-level representatives from another 50, including some of the most outspoken foes of the US, such as Iran and North Korea for their nuclear ambitions plus Venezuela and Cuba, which the US accuses of seeking to destabilise democracies in the Americas.

The NAM did not issue a statement on September 11, but in a draft of its final statement firmly condemns terrorist acts as "the most flagrant violations of international law".

"The fight against terrorism isn't connected to any particular date. We have a very clear position, independent of the date," Cuban Vice Foreign Minister Abelardo Moreno told reporters here.

For Ntsaluba, "What we saw in New York was just a manifestation of a bigger problem."

To target conditions that could favour terrorism, "Our goal should be to create a world where everybody has a stake," the South African added.

"The global community of nations have to work together to establish an environment where peace can triumph, with respect for diversity," Ntsaluba said.

Cuba and several other members of the NAM have stressed the need to retool the movement created during the Cold War to counter the hegemonic influence of the superpowers. Now, they say, they must work against overwhelming US might.

Among the prominent leaders slated to attend is Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, who has defied UN demands that he halt uranium enrichment, the process used to make nuclear reactor fuel but also atomic bomb material.

The summit will also give nuclear-armed rivals India and Pakistan a chance to jumpstart peace talks aimed at resolving their decades-old dispute over Kashmir, a Himalayan region divided between the two countries but claimed by both.

The bilateral talks would be the first high-level contact between the two countries since multiple blasts on commuter trains in India's financial capital Mumbai in July stalled the peace process. New Delhi had pointed the finger at Islamabad and a Pakistan-backed Islamic rebel group for the blasts which killed 183 people and wounded more than 800. - Sapa-AP

## **Non-aligned movement called 'more necessary than ever'**

**Mon, 11 Sep 2006**

**CBC News, Canada**

The world's developing nations need to band together to promote balance in an unjust world, Cuba's foreign minister said Monday in opening a week-long summit of non-aligned nations in Havana.

Felipe Perez Roque said current global and political problems highlight the need for unity in the movement, originally developed during the Cold War.

"Today we can affirm ... that the movement is more necessary than ever," Perez Roque said in Havana, which is hosting the summit of the Non-aligned Movement (NAM), a 116-member organization made up of mostly developing countries from Africa, Asia and Latin America.

The leaders of two countries that U.S. President George W. Bush has called rogue states — President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad of Iran and President Bashar Assad of Syria — were among 50 heads of state expected to attend the summit, less than 150 kilometres from U.S. shores. Another of Bush's rogue states, North Korea, planned to send a high-ranking delegation.

United Nations Secretary General Kofi Annan is also scheduled to attend a Friday night dinner for delegates, along with the leaders of Pakistan, South Africa, India and Thailand and dozens of other delegates.

The countries in the NAM, which has almost as many members as the United Nations, account for more than half of the world's population.

The organization formed during the Cold War as an outlet for countries that didn't have strong ties to the U.S. or the former Soviet Union. Critics have argued that it is no longer anything more than a relic of the Cold War that is long past its prime.

Push to revive NAM to counter U.S.

But Cuba's government has been hoping to revive the movement to counter U.S. influence in the world.

Before the summit began, Perez Rocque urged its members to denounce U.S. actions in Iraq, Afghanistan and Cuba.

He said it was unjust and dangerous for one sole superpower to attack, intimidate and invade other nations.

"This summit will denounce the threats of preventive wars, the proclaimed rights of the world's only superpower to occupy countries illegally and change regimes and the existence of secret prisons for torture," Perez Rocque said at a news conference in Havana on Sunday.

The organization could have tremendous international impact if its members unite, organize and work together for rights, he said.

'Castro watch' on

It's not known whether Cuban President Fidel Castro, who is recovering from recent gastrointestinal surgery, will attend the summit.

He had been mistakenly listed as host of the Friday night dinner, Cuban officials said, but they didn't make it clear whether he would be at the gala.

The 80-year-old dictator, who temporarily handed over power to his brother Raul Castro, had surgery for an undisclosed ailment more than a month ago.

He hasn't been seen in public since, but Cuba's state-run newspaper has published several photos of Castro reportedly taken after his surgery.

With files from the Associated Press

**U.S. global cop role to be denounced**  
**Sun Sep 10, 2006**  
**By Anthony Boadle**  
**Reuters**

HAVANA (Reuters) - Developing nations will denounce the United States' role as global policeman at a summit in Havana this week, Cuban Foreign Minister Felipe Perez Roque said on Sunday.

Perez Roque said the summit was not organized to attack the United States but developing countries could not remain silent over "unilateral" actions taken by Washington in policing the world since the Afghanistan and Iraq wars.

"This summit will denounce the threats of preventive wars, the proclaimed rights of the world's only superpower to occupy countries illegally and change regimes, and the existence of secret prisons for torture," he said at a news conference.

Diplomats said moderates like India and other nations friendly with Washington wanted no such finger-pointing at the United States during the summit.

Some 50 heads of state and government will attend the meeting of the 116-nation Non-Aligned Movement.

Cuban leader Fidel Castro, Washington's longest-lasting ideological foe, may not be well enough to attend the meetings.

Perez Roque said he did not know if Castro, who is recovering from stomach surgery in July, would be able to do more than receive in private some of the leaders expected in Havana.

"We cannot say yet whether he will be physically present in the work of the summit," he said.

Emergency intestinal surgery for an undisclosed illness forced Castro, 80, to turn over power temporarily to his younger brother, Raul, and left him 41 pounds (18 kg) thinner. Raul Castro will stand in for his brother at the summit.

Cuba's main leftist ally, Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez, is seen as the political heir who will take up Castro's role of assailing Western capitalism in the name of the world's poor.

## **SUPPORT FOR IRAN**

The presidents of Iran and Syria -- which the Bush administration sees as supporters of terrorism -- are expected in Havana as well as a high-ranking delegation from North Korea, which Bush has included in an "axis of evil."

The Non-Aligned Movement, which groups almost two-thirds of the member states of the United Nations, will back Iran's disputed nuclear program and endorse its right to use nuclear energy for peaceful ends, including the right to enrich uranium to produce electricity, Perez Roque said.

The Cuban minister criticized the "hypocritical double standard" of the United States and other Western nations that have tried to stop Iran's nuclear program while they "perfect" their own nuclear arsenals.

Cuba, the West's only surviving communist nation, takes over the chairmanship of the NAM from Malaysia for the next three years.

The movement was founded in Belgrade in 1961 by Third World nations to try to avoid alignment with either the United States or the Soviet Union. Its founders included Yugoslavia's Josip Broz Tito, India's Jawaharlal Nehru, Egypt's Gamal Abdel Nasser and Indonesia's Sukarno.

Since the Cold War ended, the movement has struggled to find a purpose. Experts say it is handicapped by historical, cultural and religious divisions.

"It's a relic of the Cold War," said Riordan Roett, director of Western Hemisphere Studies at the School of Advanced International Studies in Washington. "Allowing Cuba to head the movement indicates that it is pretty irrelevant, particularly under an ailing Fidel or an aging Raul."

"They clearly are not going to have the energy to do very much other than make statements."

## **MEDIA ALERT: HAITI - THE TRADITIONAL PREDATORS**

### **Human Rights, Media Silence And The Lancet**

#### **Media Lens**

**September 11, 2006**

Medialens - In a series of alerts in 2004 we examined media coverage of events surrounding the military coup that forced Haitian president Jean-Bertrand Aristide into exile on February 29, 2004. Aristide was flown out of the country in a US plane and taken to the Central African Republic – an event that he described as a “kidnapping” in the service of a coup d’etat. (Democracy Now, “President Aristide Says I Was Kidnapped - Tell The World It Is A Coup”, March 1, 2004, <http://www.democracynow.org/article.pl?sid=04/03/01/1521216>)

[www.medialens.org](http://www.medialens.org)

Peace, Earth and Justice News

#### **Kidnapping Aristide**

The following day, Andrea Mitchell, NBC’s Chief Foreign Affairs Correspondent, reported on Nightly News:

“With Aristide gone, Haiti can now qualify for millions of dollars in aid, frozen since 1997 because of Haiti’s political chaos.” (NBC Nightly News, ‘Haitian rebels celebrate departure of President Jean-Bertrand Aristide who claims he was forced out by US,’ March 1, 2004)

Commenting on this observation, Dan Beeton of the Center for Economic and Policy Research wrote last month:

“Mitchell may have stated something bluntly that U.S. Government, World Bank, and IDB [Inter-American Development Bank] officials preferred to imply in more subtle terms: the problem always was Aristide and Lavalas – their policies, and the lenders’ refusal to work with them anymore.” (Beeton, ‘What the World Bank and IDB Owe Haiti,’ Global Policy Forum, August 2, 2006; [http://www.zmag.org/content/print\\_article.cfm?itemID=10698&sectionID=55](http://www.zmag.org/content/print_article.cfm?itemID=10698&sectionID=55))

The economist Jeffrey Sachs, director of the Earth Institute at Columbia University, explained the nature of “the problem” with Aristide in the Financial Times in March 2004:

“The crisis in Haiti is another case of brazen US manipulation of a small, impoverished country with the truth unexplored by journalists... President George Bush’s foreign policy team came into office intent on toppling Mr Aristide, long reviled by powerful US conservatives such as former senator Jesse Helms who obsessively saw him as another Fidel Castro in the Caribbean.” (Sachs, ‘Don’t fall for Washington’s spin on Haiti,’ Financial Times, March 1, 2004)

#### **The Double Game**

Aristide had previously been forced into exile by a military coup in September 1991, before being returned in 1994 with the assistance of 20,000 US troops. We noted in our alerts in 2004 that the US had been playing a “double game”. Despite returning Aristide under armed guard, the 1991 coup was in fact armed and financed by the United States, and led by US-trained personnel who slaughtered much of the grassroots Lavalas movement supporting Aristide. We cited Noam Chomsky’s summary of events:

“The Haitian generals in effect were being told [by Washington]: ‘Look, murder the leaders of the popular organisations, intimidate the whole population, destroy anyone who looks like they might get in the way after you’re gone.’ ... And that’s exactly what [coup leader] Cedras and those guys did, that’s precisely what happened - and of course they were given total amnesty when they finally did agree to step down.” (Chomsky, *Understanding Power*, The New Press, 2002, p.157)

Aristide was allowed to return in 1994 only after he had agreed to accept the US military occupation and Washington’s harsh “structural adjustment” package. But Aristide failed to jump all of the hurdles set up by US power. Peter Hallward, professor of philosophy at Middlesex University, explained in a rare, honest article on the subject in the *Guardian*:

“One of the reasons why Aristide has been consistently vilified in the press... is that Aristide never learned to pander unreservedly to foreign commercial interests. He reluctantly accepted a series of severe IMF structural adjustment plans, to the dismay of the working poor, but he refused to acquiesce in the indiscriminate privatisation of state resources, and stuck to his guns over wages, education and health.

“What happened in Haiti is not that a leader who was once reasonable went mad with power; the truth is that a broadly consistent Aristide was never quite prepared to abandon all his principles.” (Hallward, ‘Why they had to crush Aristide: Haiti’s elected leader was regarded as a threat by France and the US,’ *The Guardian*, March 2, 2004)

This honest framing of the issue, was almost never seen in media reporting. Instead, the US was consistently portrayed as a disinterested bystander intervening reluctantly in Haiti’s affairs, partly out of moral concern but also to prevent a flood of refugees arriving on its shores. The reality of American self-interest was rarely discussed.

An astonishingly naïve leader in the *Independent* even railed at American ‘indifference’:

“The poorest country in the western hemisphere is collapsing, its people living in fear once again... Colin Powell’s only comment? There is ‘frankly no enthusiasm’ for sending in troops.” (Leader, ‘America’s position on Haiti is, frankly, indefensible,’ *The Independent*, February 19, 2004)

The *Independent* was outraged by this refusal to intervene and harked back to what it perceived to be more enlightened times:

“To rule out intervention so swiftly is ill judged, to say nothing of being morally indefensible. Ten years ago Bill Clinton sent US troops to restore President Aristide, ousted in a coup three years previously. With a mandate from the UN, the US reinstated the exiled former Marxist priest. The

world expected Haiti to become a de facto US protectorate... The callous reality is that economically and strategically, Haiti does not matter to the US.”

It was beyond the Independent to understand that the United States already +was+ intervening, through terror proxies. It was also unthinkable that Haiti mattered very much to US business interests that profit from a country in which 65% of the population lives in abject poverty. The US Network For Economic Justice reported:

“Whereas corporations receive vast incentives to set up plants in Haiti... returns to the Haitian economy are minimal, and working and living standards of Haitian people, whose wages are generally below the minimum of thirty cents an hour, steadily decline... Decades of public investments and policy manipulation by the World Bank, the IMF, and the US government have deliberately created an environment where the exploitation of workers is hailed as an incentive to invest in Haiti.” (‘50 years is enough: Corporate Welfare in Haiti,’ <http://www.50years.org>)

The Guardian also sought to sell the lie of US indifference to Haiti:

“The unpalatable truth is that Haiti just does not matter very much, strategically, economically or politically, in the world as presently organised.” (Leader, ‘Haiti: From bad to worse,’ The Guardian, February 14, 2004)

### Human Rights Abuses

In 2004, the media focused intensely on Aristide’s alleged human rights abuses. The Independent’s David Osborne published an article titled, ‘Haiti’s despot Aristide stirs up people’s revolution.’ (The Independent, January 13, 2004). Osborne wrote:

“Last week, the United States, which helped reinstall President Aristide in 1994 after he was ousted from power in a military coup, censured his administration for allowing ‘government-sponsored gangs’ to rampage through the country intimidating his opponents.”

Osborne added:

“In its scolding of President Aristide, the US alleged that his police force is to blame for some of the recent violence.”

As the title of Osborne’s piece made clear, we were to understand that the United States government was an honest and objective source of opinion on Haiti.

In similar vein, the Independent’s Andrew Gumbel wrote an article titled, ‘Aristide’s thugs crush hopes of people’s revolution with beatings and intimidation.’ (The Independent, February 13, 2004) A week later, Gumbel’s February 21 contribution was titled, ‘The little priest who became a bloody dictator like the one he once despised.’

A Daily Telegraph leader noted that the Americans were “critical of M Aristide's rule, in particular his use of thugs to intimidate political opponents”. (Leader, ‘The Caribbean nightmare,’ Daily Telegraph, February 14, 2004)

Again, the US view was to be taken at face value as a credible source - there was no mention of the US use of thugs to kill Aristide’s supporters.

The Times was also deeply concerned at Aristide’s alleged abuses:

“The resentment left by his flawed victory, his increasingly despotic and erratic rule and the wholesale collapse of the local economy inspired the rebellion against him.” (Leader, ‘Au revoir Aristide,’ The Times, March 1, 2004)

Peter Hallward put Aristide’s responsibility for violence in perspective:

“... people with - generally tenuous - connections to Aristide's Lavalas party were probably responsible for around thirty killings in all the years he was in office. Five thousand Lavalas supporters were killed while Aristide was in exile between 1991 and 1994, and fifty thousand deaths have been attributed to the Duvalier dictatorships.” (Hallward, letter, London Review of Books, May 6, 2004)

#### Post-Aristide - The Press And The Traditional Predators

With Aristide forced out of the country in February 2004, Haiti fell back into the hands of “the traditional predators”, as Chomsky has described them. Nine months later, a December 2004 report by the University of Miami found that “many Haitians, especially those living in poor neighbourhoods, now struggle against inhuman horror. Nightmarish fear now accompanies Haiti’s poorest in their struggle to survive in destitution [in] a cycle of violence [fuelled by] Haiti’s security and justice institutions“. (Quoted, Chomsky, op. cit, p.154)

So how did the British media, outraged by Aristide’s “despotic“ rule, respond to this evidence of a “struggle to survive“?

A LexisNexis media database search shows that the University of Miami report received literally no coverage in the mainstream press. Not one of the journalists in the Independent, the Guardian, the Times and the Telegraph who had focused on Aristide’s record drew attention to the findings of the report.

More recently, an August 2006 study published by the Lancet found that during the 22-month post-Aristide period of the US-backed Interim Government, 8,000 people were murdered in the greater Port-au Prince area of Haiti alone, giving Haiti’s government one of the worst human rights records in the hemisphere. 22 per cent of the killings were committed by the Haitian National Police (HNP), 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 Aristide and his Lavalas party.

In addition, 35,000 women and girls were raped or sexually assaulted, more than half of the victims were children. Kidnappings, extra judicial detentions, physical assaults, death threats, and threats of

sexual violence were also common. Professor Royce Hutson, assistant professor of social work at Wayne State University, who co-authored the study, said that while around half of rape perpetrators were identified as "general criminals", about 14 per cent were members of the Haitian National Police, 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. (Andrew Buncombe, 'Police and political groups linked to Haiti sex attacks,' The Independent, September 4, 2006)

Anne Sosin, of the group Vizyon Dwa Ayisyen (Haiti Rights Vision), said: "Cases of rape have increased dramatically during the past two years... 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." (Ibid)

But the political links are deeply embarrassing to the West and its media - the study found no evidence of murders or sexual assaults committed by members of Aristide's Lavalas movement. Professor Hutson told Democracy Now's Amy Goodman:

"We didn't find any - we didn't detect any Lavalas atrocities with regards to murder or sexual assault. We did detect some physical assaults by Lavalas members and some threatening behavior by Lavalas members. So they're not completely exonerated from any human rights abuses. However... a vast majority of the atrocities that weren't committed by criminals, but by others, were from groups affiliated in some fashion with anti-Lavalas movements." ('Shocking Lancet Study: 8,000 Murders, 35,000 Rapes and Sexual Assaults in Haiti During U.S.-Backed Coup Regime After Aristide Ouster,' August 31, 2006; <http://www.democracynow.org/article.pl?sid=06/08/31/144231>)

The media reaction to the Lancet report could hardly be more revealing. The report was initially covered in a single article by Andrew Buncombe in the Independent on September 4 - there were no other mentions in either the American or the UK national press. The story was completely ignored by the Guardian, the Observer, the Independent on Sunday, the BBC and other media.

On September 8, the Guardian finally focused on the report, or rather on claims that cast doubt on its credibility. The Guardian's Duncan Campbell wrote:

"The Lancet medical journal is investigating complaints that it published a misleading account of violence in Haiti that appears to exonerate the supporters of the exiled leader Jean-Bertrand Aristide of murder, sexual assaults and kidnapping." (Campbell, 'Lancet caught up in row over Haiti murders,' The Guardian, September 8, 2006)

Campbell reported allegations that "one of the authors of the report, Athena Kolbe, had previously written favourably about Mr Aristide when working as a journalist in Haiti under the name of Lyn Duff. The Lancet report quotes articles by Ms Duff without saying that she is the same person as Ms Kolbe".

Campbell, however, added:

“It is accepted by all parties that the study's core findings - that there have been disturbingly high levels of violence and sexual abuse in Haiti in that period - are true...”

The editor of the Lancet, Richard Horton, has defended the study's excellent credentials and peer reviews: "It was very thoroughly reviewed by four external advisers." (Ibid)

## Conclusion

Alongside the two mentions in the UK press, the Lancet report has been mentioned once in the entire US press in an article that appeared last week in the Miami Herald. Ira Kurzban, the general counsel for Haiti for 13 years during the governments of René Préval and Aristide, noted that several days after Aristide's expulsion in 2004 Gerard Latortue was airlifted by the US into Haiti and named the prime minister “with barely a fig-leaf as a process“. Kurzban continued:

“His major qualification, as with many Iraqi advisors to the Bush administration, was his strong ties to the US intelligence community and neoconservatives in the White House. Having fed the administration what it wanted to hear about how unpopular and dictatorial Aristide was in Haiti - similar to the disinformation campaign waged by Ahmed Chalabi regarding Iraq - the unqualified Latortue was rewarded by being anointed prime minister.” (Ira Kurzban, ‘Latortue's disturbing legacy,’ The Miami Herald, September 7, 2006)

Kurzban added:

“The Bush administration legacy of terminating democracy under Aristide and allowing gross human-rights abuses and corruption to fester during Latortue's regime will take many decades to reverse. Nor was the administration successful in terminating the Haitian people's desire for the return of Aristide, who is as popular as ever in Haiti.”

Almost nothing of this has appeared in the mainstream media. We could be forgiven for assuming that Aristide had been long forgotten by the Haitian people, that Haiti had achieved some kind of normality.

In 2004, with the US, UK and French governments eager to see Aristide demonised and removed from power, the British and US media published hundreds of articles about the human rights situation in Haiti. Dozens of journalists lined up to vilify a democratically elected Haitian government that, in reality, had temporarily thrown off the “traditional predators” promoting Western interests.

Just two years on, a peer-reviewed report published in a prestigious scientific journal showing that Western policy has again unleashed mass killing on Haiti has simply been ignored. The US and UK governments have of course responded with silence. As though functioning as a fully-fledged state-run propaganda system, the watchdogs of our ‘free press’ have followed suit.

## SUGGESTED ACTION

The goal of Media Lens is to promote rationality, compassion and respect for others. In writing letters to journalists, we strongly urge readers to maintain a polite, non-aggressive and non-abusive tone.

Ask the journalists below why they had so much to say about human rights abuses under Haiti's President Aristide but nothing to say, now, about the Lancet report on human rights abuses in Haiti post-Aristide.

Write to Andrew Gumbel  
Email: a.gumbel@independent.co.uk

Write to David Usborne  
Email: d.usborne@independent.co.uk

Ask the four senior editors below why they have had little or nothing to say about the Lancet report on Haiti.

Write to Alan Rusbridger editor of the Guardian (one mention of the Lancet report)  
Email: alan.rusbridger@guardian.co.uk

Write to Roger Alton editor of the Observer (zero mentions)  
Mail: roger.alton@observer.co.uk

Write to Simon Kelner editor of the Independent (one mention)  
Email: s.kelner@independent.co.uk

Write to BBC online editor Steve Herrmann (zero mentions)  
Email: steve.herrmann@bbc.co.uk

Write to director of BBC News, Helen Boaden (zero mentions)  
Email: HelenBoaden.Complaints@bbc.co.uk

Please copy all emails to us:  
editor@medialens.org

Please do NOT reply to the email address from which this media alert originated.

The new Media Lens book 'Guardians of Power: The Myth Of The Liberal Media' by David Edwards and David Cromwell (Pluto Books, London) has been reprinted and is again available. For further details, including reviews, interviews and extracts, please click here:  
[http://www.medialens.org/bookshop/guardians\\_of\\_power.php](http://www.medialens.org/bookshop/guardians_of_power.php)

This is a free service. However, financial support is vital. Please consider donating to Media Lens:  
[www.medialens.org/donate](http://www.medialens.org/donate)

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## **Journal reconsiders article about Haiti rights abuse**

**A British medical journal is investigating whether an author of its current report about abuses in Haiti was too close to her subject.**

**AP**

**Miami Herald**

**September 9, 2006**

(AP) -- The British medical journal The Lancet is investigating an alleged conflict of interest by an author of a report that claims 8,000 people were slain under Haiti's interim government.

A critic of the study accused one of the report's authors of being a supporter of former President Jean-Bertrand Aristide, whose ouster following a violent uprising led to the installation of the U.S.-backed interim government that ran the country from 2004 to 2006.

Astrid James, a deputy editor of The Lancet, said Thursday that the journal is investigating the allegations "as quickly as we can" but still stands by the report, carried in the current issue, which also said up to 35,000 women were sexually abused while the interim government ruled.

"We're obviously concerned by what we've heard and we're conducting our investigation, and we have asked for more information from the authors," James said from the journal's London headquarters.

### **AUTHOR'S DEFENSE**

The journal began its inquiry after learning that Athena Kolbe, one of two U.S. authors of the report, had volunteered in 1995 at an orphanage founded by Aristide and has written in various publications in support of Aristide.

Kolbe, whose full name is Athena Lyn Duff-Kolbe, is a researcher at Wayne State University in Detroit. She denied any conflict.

"There is no bias whatsoever," she said. "We did absolutely nothing wrong."

The report blamed half the killings and rapes on criminals, but said Haitian police and anti-Aristide gangs were also involved and that U.N. troops had threatened civilians. The study indicated that no killings and few rights abuses were committed by supporters of Aristide's Fanmi Lavalas party -- despite claims to the contrary by international and local human rights groups.

Kolbe said the report is not suggesting that Lavalas supporters didn't commit killings.

"We know Lavalas supporters and U.N. troops committed killings, but their numbers were not broad enough to be detected in the study," she said.

### **SURVEY METHOD**

The report used a random sample method to question 5,720 Haitians in Port-au-Prince about their experience after Aristide's ouster.

Kolbe said she got to know Aristide when she volunteered 12 years ago at an orphanage and has "very warm feelings" for the former president.

"That does not by any means mean that I'm a Lavalas supporter," she said.

The researcher said she didn't disclose her ties to Aristide with The Lancet, saying ``I didn't see it as relevant."

**Kurzban column gets it wrong**  
**Miami Herald**  
**Letters to the Editor**  
**By Gerard Latortue**  
**September 9, 2006**

I was dismayed and surprised by Ira Kurzban's Sept. 7 Other Views piece, Latortue's disturbing legacy, and comments on my tenure as Haiti's interim prime minister during the last two years.

The basis for Kurzban's allegations is a now-discredited study published in The Lancet and purporting to reflect on the brutality of my government.

A quick search would have revealed that The Lancet, a prestigious British medical journal, already is investigating complaints about potential conflicts of interest involving the article's author, Athena Kolbe. She is a student at Wayne State University's School of Social Work.

Kolbe also has been an employee of former President Jean-Bertrand Aristide at one of his centers where street children were alleged to have been trained to terrorize Haitians during his regime, often in view of Aristide's police.

Their despicable practices continued under the leadership of Aristide, Kurzban's employer.

For obvious reasons, Kolbe used the pseudonym Lyn Duff to sign her article.

Kurzban's piece is simply part of a well-funded pro-Aristide campaign to distort news and repair Aristide's reputation. Aristide has the funds to do it. Over the years, he has collected more than \$10 million from the Haitian treasury, which he left empty.

This is why the lawsuit to look into Aristide's tenure was withdrawn. It has never been dismissed by the trial court, as Kurzban alleges.

The \$250,000 a month referred to never was paid to the law firm. However, Kurzban has already collected.

Finally, even though I have had the honor and the privilege to hold various posts during my long career, I have yet to be a "radio announcer in Boca Raton," as Kurzban claimed.

GERARD LATORTUE, Boca Raton

**On the Globe and Mail's High Standards**  
**The Lancet, Haiti and the manufacture of controversy**  
**by Dru Oja Jay**  
**The Dominion, Canada**  
**September 08, 2006**

On occasion, a study or report will appear that significantly embarrasses--or even shames--people in positions of power. In such cases, one can expect those who see themselves as being slighted to mobilize their resources to attack those whose findings caused them to suffer. The result is an open battle over who has the ability to state facts without becoming the centre of "controversy".

This is the case with UK-based medical journal The Lancet's recent study that suggests that after the US- and Canadian-backed overthrow of Haiti's government, an estimated 8 000 people were killed, and 35 000 women were sexually assaulted in Port-au-Prince. The study, which was peer-reviewed by four advisors, interviewed a random sample of residents of Haiti's capitol.

[A similar case involving Human Rights Watch and Lebanon was recently explored in an article by Nazareth-based journalist Jonathan Cook.]

Because Canadian officials have repeatedly claimed that Canada's intervention was conducted in order to improve the human rights situation, and because Canada is responsible for training and vetting the police officers who are named as a significant source of political violence (along with UN soldiers), the report qualifies as embarrassing.

At least two similarly high-profile human rights reports--from teams from the University of Miami and Harvard University--long ago reached very similar conclusions about the coup and the attendant increase in political violence. Despite their thorough documentation, the Canadian media almost entirely ignored both reports.

The Lancet report, perhaps in part due to the publication's high profile, proved harder to ignore. In its last weekend edition, the Montreal Gazette published a front-page story on the findings. The next day, a followup story reported that Canadian soldiers had made death threats during house raids and sexually threatened women while off-duty. The report attracted interest from CBC's The Current and As It Happens.

The response to the report, which emerged a few days later, has been characterized by its attempts to discredit the author by raising the standards by which such reports are judged to comical levels of purity.

The Globe and Mail broke from its long-standing de facto policy of not reporting on human rights reports that implicate Canadian operation in Haiti with a report by Marina Jimenez with the headline "Author of Lancet article on Haiti investigated: Writer critical of Canadian peacekeepers worked at orphanage founded by Aristide."

The report raises two concerns. First that nine years ago Athena Kolbe, one of the report's authors, worked for an orphanage started by Jean Bertrand Aristide. Second, that she once wrote articles under the name Lyn Duff. There, the substance ends.

Jimenez quotes a letter by Charles Arthur as claiming that the study could have been "skewed or biased in order to exonerate Fanmi Lavalas/Aristide supporters from accusation of involvement in human-rights violations." Jimenez and others do not mention that Arthur and his Haiti Support Group are affiliated with numerous organizations that receive funding directly from the Canadian government and Rights and Democracy.

The Guardian, a newspaper with a more progressive reputation than the Globe, also opted to avoid covering the story until the "investigation" became news. The sub-headline reads "Report appeared to clear Aristide camp of blame," and the story opens with "The Lancet medical journal is investigating complaints that it published a misleading account of violence in Haiti that appears to exonerate the supporters of [Aristide]."

Attentive readers, however, may be confused when they read the actual Lancet report and find the statements like the following: "Political groups on both sides of the spectrum were named as responsible for violent and criminal acts... Lavalas members and partisans of the Lavalas movement were also named as having committed such acts."

But the reason for a story's importance, such as it is, is always in the headlines: the author is being "investigated". It is only through close reading that one determines that the only source cited for the fact of the "investigation" is Kolbe herself and her editors at The Lancet. The patient reader of the Guardian will reach the fourteenth paragraph and discover Lancet publisher Richard Horton stating that "The Lancet is checking that all the correct procedures for the research were followed."

He adds: "It is not suggested that the Lancet report had misreported its findings or that Ms Kolbe had any other agenda than the welfare of ordinary Haitians at heart."

Investigation, indeed. "Checking" doesn't have quite the same ring to it. (Jimenez, in the end, only cites Kolbe herself to establish the fact of an "investigation"; Kolbe has said she is in fact not being "investigated" and said that Jimenez falsely attributed her statement to that effect.)

In their enthusiasm for objectivity, however, the Globe, the Guardian and the Associated Press, which ran a similar story, may have lost some perspective. The Globe's Jimenez cites Rights and Democracy's Nicholas Galletti, who complains of the "author's background" calling into question a "study 'based on flawed methodology' whereby responsibility for crimes is attributed to groups without a proper criminal investigation or trial."

The question is, to whom does the standard that "responsibility" should not be delegated "without a proper investigation or trial" apply? Rights and Democracy receives millions in annual funding from the Federal Government (the "majority" of its funding, by its own account) and its President is appointed by the Prime Minister's Office. One has only to visit the falsely-named "Non-Governmental Organization's" web site to find numerous reports on human rights which do not adhere to this

standard. If it did operate by the same standard, it's not clear how it is possible to keep track of human rights abuses in countries (Haiti, for example) where such crimes go unprosecuted.

Rights and Democracy's reports do differ in one significant respect: they almost uniformly do not inspire front-page articles that embarrass those in positions of power in Canada.

\* \* \*

Postscript: This is not the first time that the Lancet has been attacked for a study examining the impact of a military invasion on human rights. An analyst at the UK's MediaLens pointed out some of the inconsistencies in the media's coverage of various Lancet reports.

## **Haiti survey accused of being soft on Aristide**

**08 Sep 2006**

**Source: AlertNet**

**REUTERS**

British medical journal The Lancet is getting a bit of a rapping for publishing a study on violence in Haiti without pointing out that a journalist cited in it is also one of its authors, writing under a different name.

The report into human rights abuses in the year or so after President Jean-Bertrand Aristide's removal found that 8,000 people had been murdered and 35,000 women sexually assaulted in 22 months. Most of the people surveyed said criminals were responsible for the attacks, but Haitian police and opponents of Aristide were also cited, and U.N. peacekeepers involved in lesser crimes.

But Haiti solidarity activist Charles Author has written to the Lancet questioning whether the report's co-author Athena Kolbe was trusted to write an unbiased report when articles she wrote under the name Lyn Duff were favourable to Aristide.

Kolbe insists there was nothing sinister about this - she changed her name when her parents divorced.

The report found that while opponents of Aristide's Lavalas Family party were responsible for 13 percent of murders, 11 percent of sex attacks and 17 percent of kidnappings, Lavalas supporters weren't singled out for any serious crimes.

According to British paper The Guardian, a women's rights organisation in Haiti says their experience is that all groups are implicated in violence against women, not just Aristide's opponents.

Furthermore, a spokeswoman for the U.N. mission in Haiti told the Guardian she thought the findings of the survey by Wayne State University in Michigan sounded a bit exaggerated.

According to Kolbe, the survey's findings are being misrepresented. She says that its purpose was to look at the broad picture, not to document every single rights abuse.

"We're not exonerating any group," she told AlertNet. She said the survey didn't let anyone - including U.N. peacekeepers or Lavalas supporters - off the hook. "In fact, we discovered a disturbing number of sexual threats and threats of physical violence by Lavalas members."

However, she said that the methodology of the quantitative survey meant they didn't get highlighted. "They weren't killing across the area in such large numbers that we picked them up," she explained.

"Our type of study can not be used to prove that no violations happened by a particular group; it can only be used to show broader patterns of abuse against the populace," Kolbe said.

Kolbe has said she hopes the debate about her identity won't eclipse the violence people have suffered - and are still suffering - in Haiti.

Lancet editor Richard Horton has defended the study, saying it went through a thorough peer review. But they're investigating the complaints.

Ruth Gidley  
AlertNet journalist

**Lancet caught up in row over Haiti murders**  
**Duncan Campbell**  
**Friday September 8, 2006**  
**The Guardian**

- Report appeared to clear Aristide camp of blame
- Magazine investigates 'misleading' study

The Lancet medical journal is investigating complaints that it published a misleading account of violence in Haiti that appears to exonerate the supporters of the exiled leader Jean-Bertrand Aristide of murder, sexual assaults and kidnapping.

The report into human rights abuses, carried out by Wayne State University in Michigan, found that 8,000 people had been murdered and 35,000 women sexually assaulted in Port-au-Prince in the 22 months after Mr Aristide was ousted in 2004. But it found that while opponents of Mr Aristide's Lavalas Family party were responsible for 13% of the murders, 11% of the sexual assaults and 17% of kidnappings, supporters of Lavalas were not implicated in any of them.

Charles Arthur, an author and Haitian solidarity activist in Europe, has written to the editor of the Lancet challenging the the notion that no Lavalas groups were involved in the violence. He said there had been many allegations that all groups, including Lavalas, had been involved.

Mr Arthur also said that one of the authors of the report, Athena Kolbe, had previously written favourably about Mr Aristide when working as a journalist in Haiti under the name of Lyn Duff. The Lancet report quotes articles by Ms Duff without saying that she is the same person as Ms Kolbe.

The report identified criminals as the main perpetrators of the violence, but the Haitian police and opponents of Mr Aristide were also cited as being responsible for much of it. UN soldiers were implicated in lesser crimes.

A women's rights group in Haiti has also protested to the Lancet that the findings run counter to all the evidence they have received from rape victims. "We have seen around 1,000 cases of rape," said Anne Sosin, of Haiti Rights Vision. "What our evidence overwhelmingly suggests is that all groups are implicated in abuse against women. It's important that scientific journals such as the Lancet are used to hold all perpetrators to account for human rights violations and abuses."

Ms Kolbe said this week that she stood by the findings. "I am not a supporter of Lavalas," she said. She added that the report indicated that Lavalas Family party supporters had been involved in assaults, death threats and other offences, although not in murder and rape.

The report does indeed state that "political groups on both sides of the spectrum were named as responsible for violent and criminal acts ... Lavalas members and partisans of the Lavalas movement were also named as having committed such acts."

Ms Kolbe said she felt that the most important aspect of the research - that there had been widespread murder and rape in Port-au-Prince - should not be lost in issues over people's past work.

Her colleague, Professor Royce Hutson, also stood behind the report's findings. He said that, with hindsight, clarifying that Ms Kolbe and one of her sources were the same person might have been advisable. He said they were fully cooperating with the Lancet inquiry but were confident there were no issues of conflict of interest.

The UN stabilisation mission in Haiti (Minustah) has also queried the report's findings and suggests that the estimate of 8,000 murders is four times higher than its own data from human rights organisations on the island.

Speaking for Minustah, Sophie Boutaud de la Combe said the report's conclusions "seem exaggerated" and she felt a truer figure would be 2,000.

The publisher of the Lancet, Richard Horton, said the study had come with excellent credentials and peer reviews. "It was very thoroughly reviewed by four external advisers," he said.

He added that if a journalist quoted in the report was the same person as the academic conducting the research he would have expected it to be disclosed and was "dismayed" that it had not been. The Lancet is checking that all the correct procedures for the research were followed.

It is not suggested that the Lancet report had misreported its findings or that Ms Kolbe had any other agenda than the welfare of ordinary Haitians at heart. It is accepted by all parties that the study's core findings - that there have been disturbingly high levels of violence and sexual abuse in Haiti in that period - are true and need to be urgently addressed by the Haitian government and other bodies.

The president of Haiti, René Préval, a former close ally of Mr Aristide, was elected earlier this year. Mr Aristide, from whose party Mr Préval distanced himself in the election campaign, is in exile in South Africa.

**New report suggests violence has become much worse in Haiti since Canadian intervention**  
**Dru Oja Jay**  
**The Dominion**  
**September 7, 2006**

An estimated 8 000 individuals were murdered in the 22 months following the US- and Canada-backed overthrow of the government led by Jean-Bertrand Aristide, a new report suggests. The study, based on randomized interviews with Port-au-Prince residents conducted by The Lancet, a prestigious UK-based medical journal, also estimated that 35,000 women were victims of sexual assault during the same period.

The report has revived criticisms of Canadian policy in the poorest country in the western hemisphere. At the time of the coup, documents acquired by the Dominion expressed the view that “President Aristide is clearly a serious aggravating factor in the current crisis,” though officials at the time publicly denied backing the coup.

The findings, however, suggest that the situation for Haitian residents of Port-au-Prince became perilously worse after Canada intervened and Aristide was removed from the country. Specific reports of Canadian troops sexually harassing local women have been cited by the Ottawa Citizen, but some critics have called attention to Canada’s broader responsibilities for the humanitarian crisis.

RCMP officers have been responsible for vetting and training the Haitian National Police, the force that The Lancet study cites as being responsible for significant and systematic human rights abuses.

“This study confirms what Canadian politicians such as Denis Coderre, Paul Martin and Peter Mackay have persistently denied: the interim government and their paramilitary allies waged a massive campaign of repression against Haiti’s poor,” Bianca Mugenyi of Haiti Action Montreal said in a communiqué.

“Canada helped overthrow the elected government,...led the UN police contingent, yet refuses to take any responsibility for the vast human rights abuses,” said Nik Barry-Shaw, of the same group.

Official response has been minimal; the Montreal Gazette quoted one government representative as asking for a delay in publication to provide time to address the findings.

## **UK medical journal Lancet investigating author of Haiti study**

**By STEVENSON JACOBS**

**AP**

**Canada News**

**September 7, 2006**

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti (AP) - The British medical journal The Lancet said Thursday it is investigating an alleged conflict of interest by an author of a report in the current issue that claims 8,000 people were slain under Haiti's interim government.

A critic of the study accused one of the report's authors of being a supporter of former president Jean-Bertrand Aristide, whose ouster following a violent uprising led to the installation of the U.S.-backed interim government that ran the country from 2004 to 2006.

Astrid James, a deputy editor of The Lancet, said the journal is investigating the allegations "as quickly as we can," but still stands by the report, which also said up to 35,000 women were sexually abused while the interim government ruled the troubled Caribbean nation.

"We're obviously concerned by what we've heard and we're conducting our investigation and we have asked for more information from the authors," James said from the journal's London headquarters.

The journal took the action after learning that Athena Kolbe, one of two U.S. authors of the report, had volunteered in 1995 at an orphanage founded by Aristide and has written articles in various newspapers in support of Aristide while he was president and after.

Kolbe, a researcher at Wayne State University in Detroit, denied any conflict.

"There is no bias whatsoever," she said. "We did absolutely nothing wrong."

The report blamed half the killings and rapes on criminals, but said Haitian police and anti-Aristide gangs were also involved and that UN troops had threatened civilians. Canada sent about 500 soldiers to Haiti in March 2004 as part of a UN peacekeeping mission, and they left in August of that year. Canadians have also been involved in leading a UN police force in Haiti.

The study found that no killings and few rights abuses were committed by supporters of Aristide's Fanmi Lavalas party - despite claims to the contrary by international and local human rights groups.

The report used a random sample method to question 5,720 Haitians in Port-au-Prince about their experience after Aristide's ouster.

Kolbe said she got to know Aristide when she volunteered 12 years ago at an orphanage and has "very warm feelings" for the former president.

"That does not by any means mean that I'm a Lavalas supporter," she said.

The researcher said she didn't disclose her ties to Aristide with The Lancet, saying "I didn't see it as relevant."

Kolbe said she had written articles about Haiti for several San Francisco publications under the name "Lyn Duff." She said her full name is Athena Lyn Duff-Kolbe, but that she only uses Athena Kolbe in her academic work.

The Lancet report cites two articles by Lyn Duff as references, but doesn't disclose that Duff and Kolbe are the same person.

Doubts about Kolbe's work were raised by Britain-based human rights activist Charles Arthur, who sent a letter to The Lancet expressing concern that the study tried to exonerate Aristide supporters even though independent human rights workers say they committed killings and rapes after the revolt.

"How can the survey be regarded as objective if the main person co-ordinating the survey hides her very pronounced political sympathies by using a different name?" Arthur wrote.

**Military investigates alleged threats by Canadian troops in Haiti Jeff Heinrich**  
**CanWest News Service;**  
**Montreal Gazette**  
**Thursday, September 7, 2006**

MONTREAL - The Department of National Defence is looking into allegations of death threats and sexual threats by Canadian troops in Haiti in 2004.

"The military police are conducting a review of the information relating to these allegations," said Capt. Mark Giles, spokesman for the Canadian Forces Provost Marshal.

"They're aware of it, obviously, and they're going to make an assessment as to whether further investigation is warranted."

Giles was commenting on a front-page article last Saturday in the Montreal Gazette.

In the article, the co-author of a new U.S. study on human-rights abuses in Port-au-Prince said Canadian soldiers were blamed for threatening people after the ouster of president Jean-Bertrand Aristide in early 2004.

The allegations were made in a December 2005 survey done by the author, Athena Kolbe, and a fellow researcher at Wayne University's school of social work, in Detroit. Their report was published last week in *The Lancet*, the British medical journal.

In one alleged incident, a resident of Delmas on the outskirts of the Port-au-Prince said Canadian troops raided his house and threatened to kill him if he didn't give them names of Aristide supporters.

In another alleged incident, a woman said she was grabbed by a drunk, off-duty Canadian soldier while out with friends near a base in the capital. She said he threatened to have sex with her.

But Giles suggested that may not have been possible.

"There's some information from our end suggesting our troops were pretty much confined to the camp, to the base, for the majority" of the Canadian troops' time in Haiti, from March to August 2004.

"So whether or not it's feasible that there's reality or not to these allegations, I don't know. But certainly we take any allegation like this seriously."

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Montreal Gazette

## **UK medical journal investigating author of Haiti study**

**The Associated Press**

**International Herald Tribune**

**Published: September 7, 2006**

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti British medical journal The Lancet said Thursday it is investigating an alleged conflict of interest by an author of a report in the current issue that claims 8,000 people were slain under Haiti's interim government.

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### **Latortue's disturbing legacy**

**BY IRA KURZBAN**

**Central Valey Times,**

**Miami Herald**

**Posted on Thu, Sep. 07, 2006**

<http://www.centredaily.com/mld/centredaily/news/opinion/15458244.htm>

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On Feb. 29, 2004, former President Jean-Bertrand Aristide was forcibly removed from Haiti by the Bush administration. Several days later, Gerard Latortue was airlifted into Haiti and named the prime minister with barely a fig-leaf as a process. Latortue was a radio announcer in Boca Raton.

His major qualification, as with many Iraqi advisors to the Bush administration, was his strong ties to the U.S. intelligence community and neoconservatives in the White House. Having fed the administration what it wanted to hear about how unpopular and dictatorial Aristide was in Haiti -- similar to the disinformation campaign waged by Ahmed Chalabi regarding Iraq -- the unqualified Latortue was rewarded by being anointed prime minister.

### **Brutal regime**

The results of his tenure are now in. A study published this week in The Lancet, the respected medical journal of the United Kingdom, scientifically analyzed the brutality of the regime. In the last two years, reports have documented the gross human-rights violations in Haiti, but these abuses were sadly ignored by most mainstream media. The University of Miami School of Law's Center for Human Rights, led by the prominent human-rights author and professor Irwin Stotzky, Harvard University's Human Rights Clinic and the Institute for Justice and Democracy in Haiti all detailed executions and systematic human-rights violations after Aristide's removal.

The Lancet report, however, confirms everyone's worst suspicions. It concludes that in the 22 months after Aristide's removal there were 8,000 murders and 35,000 sexual assaults in the greater Port-au-

Prince area alone. More than 50 percent of these murders were attributed to anti-Aristide and anti-Lavalas factions including armed anti-Lavalas groups, demobilized army members and government security forces.

#### Gangs not guilty

Similarly, almost 30 percent of the sexual assaults were attributed to anti-Lavalas and anti-Aristide forces. The remaining murders and sexual assaults were due to common criminals or of unknown origin. Although a sustained disinformation campaign by Latortue and the Bush Administration claimed that violence was due to Lavalas "gangs" -- the study finds just the opposite. No murders or sexual assaults were attributed to Lavalas members or partisans during the 22-month period of Latortue's regime.

As in Iraq, the other lasting legacy of the Bush administration's policies in Haiti has been rampant corruption. More than \$900 million in aid was provided to the Latortue regime at the request of the United States, France and Canada. But no visible major projects warranting such huge expenditures have been recorded. In a country where the average annual income is less than \$350 per year, the newly elected legislature is investigating this rampant corruption, including \$6 million that disappeared from Latortue's Foreign Ministry.

#### Luxury cars

Latortue also paid a U.S. law firm \$250,000 a month retainer solely to bring against Aristide a civil suit that was ultimately dismissed. In a parting shot to the Haitian people, Latortue awarded himself two new luxury automobiles, which he took to Florida until the misappropriation was discovered.

The Bush administration legacy of terminating democracy under Aristide and allowing gross human-rights abuses and corruption to fester during Latortue's regime will take many decades to reverse. Nor was the administration successful in terminating the Haitian people's desire for the return of Aristide, who is as popular as ever in Haiti.

Ira Kurzban was the general counsel for Haiti for 13 years during the governments of René Préval and Jean-Bertrand Aristide.

## **In Haiti, Stability Remains Elusive**

**UN peacekeepers patrol as people flee gang violence in Port-au-Prince. (AP/Ariana Cubillos)**  
**September 6, 2006**

**Prepared by: Stephanie Hanson**  
**Council on Foreign Relations**

Just a few months ago, Haiti appeared to be on a tentative path toward social and economic stability. Gang violence—an ongoing problem in Port-au-Prince—had been relatively quiet since Haitian President René Préval's election in February. At a recent conference, international donors exceeded Préval's request of \$520 million and pledged \$750 million to fund roads, education, health, and sanitation (Reuters).

And the country, which has long had the highest rate of AIDS outside Africa, is making such dramatic progress on controlling the epidemic that care for AIDS patients (McClatchy) has far outstripped the care of other patients in the national healthcare system. But a recent surge in gang violence (MSF) and kidnappings (Miami Herald) in Port-au-Prince underscores the difficult road ahead for the impoverished country.

There is widespread agreement that until the security situation in Haiti stabilizes, there is little hope of changing the country's status as the poorest in the Western Hemisphere. Alain Deletroz, the International Crisis Group's Latin America Program Director, says Haitians "must see from Préval that a new chapter has indeed opened in their history. Otherwise, Haiti could become the hemisphere's first permanent failed state." In August Préval ordered gang leaders to disarm or face death. But Amaral Duclona, a major gang leader based in the Port-au-Prince slum of Cite Soleil, refuses to disarm until UN peacekeepers stop raiding the slums (AP).

Duclona's response highlights the complications facing a UN force (MINUSTAH) charged with peacemaking rather than peacekeeping. MINUSTAH, authorized for up to 7,200 troops and 1,951 police officers, has a limited mandate to address domestic law enforcement. A recent report (PDF) by the international development agency ActionAid says the UN force in Haiti doesn't have enough police officers; there only about 700 in Haiti at present. It also suggests that its post-conflict strategy for disarmament should be replaced with a community-based one. The UN and the Haitian government might be heeding that recommendation: UN special envoy Edmond Mulet announced a new disarmament plan on Monday, applicable only to rank-and-file gang members, not top gang leaders. "This is not a traditional disarmament," he said, "This is more like a one-on-one approach" (AP).

Yet concerns about the longevity of the peacekeeping force remain. In August Secretary-General Kofi Annan called for a one-year renewal, but MINUSTAH's mandate was only renewed for an additional six months. In an earlier interview with CFR.org, UN Undersecretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations Jean-Marie Guehenno says "we have to be very clear that we will really stay the course" in order for Haiti to stabilize. Even if the UN force's mandate is renewed in February 2007, a UN report covering the period from February to July 2006 says it will take at least five years to achieve 12,000 well-trained and well-equipped police officers, the minimum number necessary to maintain security in Haiti.

## **Human rights, not politics, should be priority for Haiti**

**Tuesday 12 September 2006**

### **Debate**

**By Michael Deibert [1]**

**Submitted to AlterPresse on September 11, 2006**

A recent article in the British medical journal *The Lancet* 'Human rights abuse and other criminal violations in Port-au-Prince, Haiti: a random survey of households,' [2] rather than serving as a sober analysis of the myriad of human rights abuses that occurred under Haiti's 2004-2006 interim government, appears to be little more than part of an ongoing attempt to rehabilitate the public image of former Haitian President Jean-Bertrand Aristide and elements of his political party, Fanmi Lavalas [3].

The article in question, quoted extensively by Mr. Aristide's U.S. attorney, Ira Kurzban, in a recent editorial in *The Miami Herald* [4], was co-authored by Athena R. Kolbe, who has previously written extensively about Haiti under the nom de plume Lyn Duff. Described as "a friend of Aristide" in a 2004 article [5] in the magazine "Dissident Voice," Ms. Kolbe worked at Mr. Aristide's Lafanmi Selavi center for street children, which served as one of the nexuses for the gangs who terrorized Haiti during the latter's 2001-2004 tenure as Haiti's president. All of this naturally begs the question of how Kolbe/Duff's "research" into the issue of human rights violations and the perpetrators can be regarded as objective when she states that for three and half years she was an Aristide employee, and states that her sympathies are solidly with Haiti's disgraced former president.

The atmosphere of violence in Haiti today did not spring out of a vacuum. With some of the ghastly rapes and murders carried out in the town of Saint Marc as the Aristide regime sputtered to its bloody dénouement in February 2004 [6] [7]- including one in the ruins of the city's burned-out commissariat by the pro-Aristide Bale Wouze (Clean Sweep) gang - carried out in the presence of Corps d'Intervention et de Maintien d'Ordre (CIMO) and Unite de Securite de la Garde du Palais National d'Haiti government forces (at the time reporting directly to Mr. Aristide's National Palace), one must ponder whether these sexual assaults were happening with government sanction.

In his *Miami Herald* editorial, Mr. Kurzban writes that "The University of Miami School of Law's Center for Human Rights, led by the prominent human-rights author and professor Irwin Stotzky, Harvard University's Human Rights Clinic and the Institute for Justice and Democracy in Haiti all detailed executions and systematic human-rights violations after Aristide's removal."

While no one disputes the fact that human rights abuses took place during the 2004-2006 interim government in Haiti (in a personal aside, I lost several friends to Haiti's violence during this period), the devil, as they say, is in the details.

The University of Miami School of Law's Irwin P. Stotzky was a long-time board member of Mr. Aristide's aptly misnamed "Foundation for Democracy" and his own biography on the school's website [8] announces that "he has served as an attorney and adviser to Haitian President Jean-Bertrand Aristide." The only attorney in Haiti thanked by name in the pages of the university's voluminous Haiti report was for a considerable time an employee of an Aristide government-funded legal organization, the Bureau des Avocats Internationaux. One of the report's key claims - that pro-Aristide armed gangs congealed after the president's departure - has been revealed to be false by the reporting of many journalists, foreign and Haitian, working on the ground in Haiti since 2001 [9] [10].

The Institute for Justice and Democracy in Haiti (IJDH), for its part, listed Mr. Kurzban as one of its founders and "a member of the Board of Directors" in a 24th March 2005 letter sent to Santiago A. Canton, Executive Secretary of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights of the OAS [11]. Though the organization is ostensibly headquartered in Oregon, where its lead attorney resides, donations are directed to be sent to a Florida address, where Mr. Kurzban resides. The group's 2005 annual report lists \$53,836 of contributions from several "individual supporters" with long-standing links to Mr. Aristide, including Mr. Kurzban himself [12]. Recently, the organization has busied itself with an attack on a Haitian public servant of unimpeachable integrity, Port-au-Prince chief prosecutor Claudy Gassant, who had to flee Haiti for his life during Mr. Aristide's tenure while attempting to investigate the murder of Haiti's most prominent journalist, Jean Dominique, and who the IJDH maligns as a "a prominent Lavalas critic" in a recent press release [13].

In a similar vein, when Mr. Kurzban writes that Haiti's 2004-2006 interim government "paid a U.S. law firm \$250,000 a month retainer solely to bring against Aristide a civil suit that was ultimately dismissed," he errs in that the case was in fact withdrawn with an option to refile, not dismissed. When it comes to the subject of expenditures, Mr. Kurzban declines to reveal that, according to US Department of Justice Foreign Agents Registration Act (FARA) filings, his own law firm received an astonishing \$4,648,964 from the Aristide government of behalf of its lobbying efforts alone between 2001 and 2004 [14], and that Mr. Kurzban still serves as Mr. Aristide's attorney in the United States. By way of putting things in perspective, Mr. Kurzban was thus earning from the Haitian state more than 2,000 times the average yearly income of any one of the more than 7 million people in Haiti who survive on less than \$2 per day. For his part in Mr. Aristide's propaganda campaign, the public relations firms of former U.S. congressmen and head of the Congressional Black Caucus Ron Dellums received the relatively modest sum of \$989,323 over the same period.

Though the Lancet report chronicles no rapes or murders committed by Fanmi Lavalas partisans, something that flies in the face of the on-the-ground reporting of journalists who have worked in Haiti for the last two years, it may be instructive to recall that, over the last two years, defectors from Mr. Aristide's party have charged publicly that former president was orchestrating a large part of Haiti's violence from exile with the connivance of former officials of his government [15]. Citing the July 2005 murder of Haitian journalist Jacques Roche, a May 2005 attack on a Port-au-Prince marketplace that killed seven people and saw a large part of the market, which served the capital's poor, burned to ashes and what they charged was a campaign of rape by gangs supportive of the exiled president in the capital's slums, last year four of Haiti's most politically progressive organizations - the Groupe d'Appui aux Rapatriés et Réfugiés (GARR), the Plateforme haïtienne de Plaidoyer pour un Développement Alternatif (PAPDA), Solidarité des Femmes Haïtiennes (SOFA) and Centre National

et International de Documentation et d'Information de la Femme en Haïti (EnfoFanm) - all signed a petition calling for Aristide to be judged for his crimes against the Haitian people [16].

Rape and other transgressions, unfortunately, appear to be looked upon as just another weapon in the arsenal of some of Haiti's politicians by which they can crush opposition to them and whatever designs they may have on power. It is high time that it be denounced without regards to who is committing it, and that foreign lawyers, journalists, researchers and others stop attempting to shield the guilty from having to answer for their crimes.