

## HAITI NEWS ROUNDUP: JUNE 20 – 27, 2006

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### **EU raises Haiti aid, backs Preval**

**27 Jun 2006**

**Reuters**

Brussels - The European Union announced an increase in development aid for Haiti on Tuesday, in a show of support for visiting President Rene Preval and his newly elected government.

European Commission President Jose Manuel Barroso said EU aid to the troubled Caribbean nation would rise to 233 million euros (\$293 million) for the 2008-13 period from the 168 million set aside to cover 2002-7.

"We think developments are in the right direction," Barroso told a news conference after talks with Preval in Brussels.

EU Development Commissioner Louis Michel said the money would go towards education and infrastructure projects such as roads. A further tranche of aid would be made available if Haiti reached targets on good governance, he said.

A new Haitian government was sworn in earlier this month to replace the team of outgoing Prime Minister Gerard Latortue, put in place after former President Jean-Bertrand Aristide was pushed from office by a bloody rebellion in 2004.

Preval, a one-time Aristide protege, rode support from Aristide's supporters in the slums to victory in the Feb. 7 presidential election.

"The most important thing now is up to the Haitians themselves -- good governance," said Preval.

## **Lawyers, Activists Question Govt's Case Against Alleged Miami Terrorists**

**Tuesday, June 27, 2006**

**By: Jackie Jones**

**BlackAmericaWeb.com**

Last week's news that seven black men had been arrested in Miami on terrorism charges faded from the headlines as quickly as it landed. The group, it turns out, had no contacts with any terrorist groups; no explosives, few resources, and its leader sought such basic equipment as boots and uniforms from a federal informant.

On Friday, Attorney General Alberto R. Gonzales announced that federal authorities had busted a homegrown terrorist cell that had planned to blow up the Sears Tower in Chicago and other buildings. By Saturday, news reports cast doubt on the group's ability to carry out such a plot, even if it had succeeded in contacting an al-Qaeda operative. The case basically hinges on conversations between the group's alleged leader, Narseal Batiste, and an FBI informant who posed as an al-Qaeda operative.

Batiste's father was at a loss to explain his son's actions. "He's not in his right mind, I'll tell you that," Narcisse Batiste told the Associated Press. Federal officials even described the group's alleged plot to reporters as "more aspirational than operational."

In addition to Batiste, arrested were Patrick Abraham, Naudimar Herrera, Burson Augustin, Rotschild Augustine, Lyglenson Lemorin (who was arrested in Atlanta) and Stanley Grant Phanor, who was already in custody on a probation violation charge. The men were indicted Friday by a federal grand jury.

Initially, news reports raised fears of a serious domestic threat but by Sunday, interest in the story had begun to dissipate, and the national morning talk shows had moved on to stories about the possibility of troop cuts in Iraq. In Washington, one local pundit referred to the group as the "Keystone Terrorists."

At last week's news conference, the Justice Department said its aim is to foil would-be terrorists as early as possible during the planning stages. What isn't clear is whether this particular group had anything other than aspirations going for it. According to the Washington Post, the leader of the group met with a federal informant in December, but by May, the plan had fallen apart largely because of organizational problems.

The group operated out of a small building in the predominantly black Liberty City section of Miami and, according residents in the area, seemed odd, but not particularly well-organized or financed. Some of them reportedly worked as street vendors, selling hair care products. Unlike most terrorists, who work stealthily and do not call attention to themselves, group members maintained a high profile in the neighborhood. According to The Post, neighbors said the men "sport a variety of dress," from fatigues to fezzes and dashikis and flew the flags of various Caribbean nations around the converted restaurant building they used.

The bigger question raised by last week's arrests is whether the government went too far in trying to build a case against these suspects or successfully nipped in the bud a plan that could have become successful if left alone.

"I'm not privy to any private information on this case, but on the face of it, it looks pretty thin," Mark Potok, director of the Intelligence Project for the Southern Poverty Law Center, told BlackAmericaWeb.com.

Potok, who is responsible for tracking hate groups for the center, said, "this supposed group is completely unknown to us."

"These guys didn't have enough money to get to South Beach. How can you have any credible information that these guys posed any threat to any structure anywhere in Chicago, much less the Sears Tower?" asked Roger Wilkins, a history professor at George Mason University in Virginia and a former assistant attorney general during Pres. Lyndon Johnson's administration in the 1960s.

"For this to really be a crime, you need an intent plus an act, at least that's what I was always taught," Wilkins told BlackAmericaWeb.com. "You usually can't indict and try people for woofing, as you know black men are wont to do, about how mad they are with America. Even if you say you wanna blow up the Sears Tower, is there any indication, do you have any possible connection with any possible reality? Unless they have other facts, this just reeks of entrapment."

David O. Markus, a defense attorney and president of the Miami chapter of the Florida Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers, said even the government's description of the suspects' plans as "aspirational" shows the feds may have difficulty making their case.

"I think even the government is trying to lower expectations in their case, because they know nothing was actually done," Markus said Monday morning on the radio show Democracy Now. "I think the most that was done were these guys got some boots from the informants, some military boots. They have to be able to prove that they were able to carry this out, that they were going to do something. And based on mere words, that's going to be difficult to do. We have to hear what was said on the tapes, how far these meetings got. But based on words and the government's talk as aspirational plans, [the government] may have some tough hurdles to get over."

"I aspire to be the greatest quarterback in the NFL, but the only thing you can arrest me for is being crazy," Wilkins said. "I use this outrageous example because it's so ludicrous. I suspect there is pressure on the FBI to get some results here."

For some who are watching the case closely, the issues of race and immigration are closely intertwined. Five of the seven men charged are U.S. citizens. One is an illegal immigrant from Haiti, and one is a Haitian with legal residency.

"The Haitian community has been very upset by this," Max Rameau, member of Miami CopWatch, which is a project of the Center for Pan-African Development, said on Democracy Now. "We're really concerned that this is going to be used as a justification for the continued discriminatory practices against Haitians," said Rameau, who was born in Haiti.

“The point is this is just an isolated bunch of poor black guys,” Wilkins attested. “(The feds) said they took an oath to al-Qaeda. Well, who administered the damn oath?”

“Maybe there are facts that we don’t know, but you’d think before the attorney general went out and aligned himself with this information that they would check, and we would know something,” said Wilkins. “wouldn’t you? I think this (case as it has been presented) is all they have. If it is, then it’s just an outrage.”

## **Haiti's leader offers road map to future**

**By Tania Valdemoro**

**Palm Beach Post**

**Monday, June 26, 2006**

MIAMI BEACH — Roads are the road to Haiti's future, newly elected President Rene Preval said Sunday.

Visiting South Florida for the first time as Haiti's new leader, Preval said road improvements would be a linchpin to his efforts to revive the country's moribund economy through tourism.

All Haitians at home and abroad know the country's roads are crumbling and often impassible after hurricanes and other natural disasters, he told an audience of more than 400 people at the second annual Haiti Tourism and Economic Development Summit.

"We can't talk about tourism to Haiti if we don't have the roads so tourists can travel," Preval said in French during his keynote speech at the Deauville Beach Resort. "I know people are going to be criticizing us that we should do something else first. We have to start somewhere."

He told people to consider:

- Only 112,000 people visited Haiti last year.
- Haitian expatriates spent \$5 billion visiting other Caribbean nations.
- They send home \$1.3 billion annually, or about 25 percent of Haiti's gross domestic product.

According to a yearly report by the CIA: Haiti's estimated gross domestic product last year was \$4.3 billion. Of the country's 8.3 million people, four out of five live in abject poverty. More than half rely on small-scale farming to survive.

Tourism in Haiti faces other hurdles, Preval said. Haiti needs its own national airline. Haiti also needs to offer a one-stop shop to give investors the information and approvals they need so they can set up their businesses quickly, he said.

People nodded as the president spoke. Their questions kept returning to a familiar and pressing concern: political stability.

At first, Preval did not offer specifics on the issue. Later he said he chose someone to be Haiti's national police chief, but that Parliament hasn't acted on the nomination.

As for another contentious issue — allowing Haitians overseas to vote and run for political office — Preval indicated he is receptive to the idea. Yet, he warned that providing expatriates dual citizenship would require changing the Haitian Constitution, which could take up to eight years.

The president ended his remarks with an appeal for unity: "The country does not belong to me. We need all the social and economic forces to sit down and work together."

After the speech, U.S. Ambassador Janet Sanderson said she was optimistic.

"I have seen the beginnings of a new democracy in Haiti," she said. "You have a democratically elected president. You have a legislature chosen in an equally open and inclusive election. You have a president who has reached out across the political spectrum to bring everyone in. You have a real sense that people have the opportunity to change their futures."

"That's a good start."

## **Haiti President Préval calls on immigrants in S. Florida to help rebuild homeland**

**By Alva James-Johnson**

**South Florida Sun-Sentinel**

**June 26 2006**

Miami Beach -- Haitian President René Préval reached out to his country's diaspora Sunday, calling on the sons and daughters of the impoverished nation to help rebuild it.

Standing before an audience of about 400 people at the second annual Haiti Tourism Development Summit, the mild-mannered leader spoke with a soft voice, but his message of unity bellowed through the banquet hall at the Deauville Beach Resort.

"It's not up to me to know where I want to go," he said in French, while a translator echoed the words in English. "It's up to all of us to know where we want to go. And wherever we go, we want to go together."

On Sunday, during his first visit to South Florida since his February election, Préval shared the podium with the newly appointed U.S. Ambassador to Haiti, Janet Ann Sanderson, former United Nations Ambassador Andrew Young, Illinois State Sen. Kwame Raoul and other guests.

A former protégé of ousted president Jean-Bertrand Aristide, Préval served as the country's president from 1996 to 2001. The declaration that he had won the presidential election earlier this year ended a nine-day electoral crisis. His government replaces a U.S.-backed interim regime led by Boca Raton retiree Gerard Latortue, installed after Aristide's ouster in 2004.

Gov. Jeb Bush, who was slated to attend the summit, was not present but provided a letter of support for the program. Marie Bell, chairwoman of the governor's Haiti Advisory Committee, said the governor had a scheduling conflict.

Préval, a 63-year-old agronomist, offered peace and security as the only hope for his country and promised to create a safe environment, not only for citizens and visitors but also for investors. He said his government would make tourism a top priority by addressing the need for adequate roads.

Préval said the 4 million Haitians living abroad contribute about \$1.3 billion to the nation's annual economy, representing about 25 percent of its gross national product. They account for 80 percent of the tourism in Haiti and spend \$5 billion as tourists in other Caribbean countries. He said his government hopes to bring that money back to Haiti.

He said the country could blame international financial institutions for Haiti's collapse, "but it's not their fault. It's our fault because we don't have a plan for our own government."

He said Sunday he was developing a 25-year plan to rebuild the country.

Since his election, Préval has appointed a coalition government that includes members of six political parties. Under his leadership, the country has made progress in international relations. CARICOM, the

15-member Caribbean regional group, lifted its suspension of Haiti last month in response to Haiti's return to democratic rule.

Préval is scheduled to give the opening address at the organization's meeting next month in St. Kitts.

He said Sunday he wants to restore faith in Haiti, "faith in justice, faith that when an investor invests in Haiti the rules don't change."

But even as Préval spread hope and optimism, political controversies simmered.

Aristide supporters who backed his election called for the release of many of their comrades who were arrested during the Latortue regime, including former Prime Minister Yvonne Neptune.

"Most of us think there could have been an executive order to let these people out of prison," said Lavarice Guadin, of Veye Yo, the pro-Aristide Lavalas group in Miami. He and other supporters also called for the return of Aristide, who remains exiled in South Africa.

But Guadin said they were willing to be patient and welcomed Préval at a cultural event in Little Haiti later Sunday evening.

"We understand that his government is young at this time and he's still under a lot of pressure," Gaudin said in an interview. "We ask the people to be patient with the new president."

But most who attended the Miami Beach luncheon said they were encouraged by Préval's message.

"I especially like the security part," said Yves Laurent, a West Palm Beach mortgage broker who has a clothing factory in Haiti. "I think he's a trustworthy guy, and I think he will keep his word."



## **Préval seeks help from all Haitians**

**New Haitian leader René Préval visited South Florida in search of Haitian expatriate support and investment.**

**BY JACQUELINE CHARLES**

**Miami Herald**

**June 26, 2006**

"We need to recognize them as Haitians," Préval said in an interview with The Miami Herald. "We need to have dual nationality."

Préval's statement is perhaps his strongest to date on dual nationality, and an effort by the new leader in Port-au-Prince to draw support from Haitians abroad.

Haiti's 19-year-old constitution does not allow dual citizenship, but Préval suggested change may be in order to include many Haitian Americans who otherwise feel shut out in their attempts to help their troubled homeland.

The issue of dual nationality has become a political football, used by some on the island to keep Haitians who have become naturalized citizens elsewhere out of political decision-making. Expatriate Haitians in the United States and other countries argue that their experience, influence and resources should be tapped to help their homeland, long plagued by political and economic instability. Last year, Haitian Americans sent \$1 billion in remittances to their native homeland.

Préval said he had met on Friday with some opposition leaders in Haiti to discuss the matter, and had asked a leading Haitian constitutionalist to study the possibility of amending the constitution.

## **TOURISM SUMMIT**

Préval was the featured speaker at the three-day Haitian Tourism and Economic Development Summit in Miami Beach that promoted tourism in Haiti. Sunday night, he received an emotional welcome when he hosted a town hall meeting at the Joseph Caleb Auditorium in Liberty City.

But as the estimated 900 Haitians and Haitian Americans clapped and chanted his name, they also called out the name of former Haitian President Jean-Bertrand Aristide, a sign that despite Préval's desire to distance himself from the ousted leader, some Haitians still want to bring back Aristide.

Though Préval delivered the same message as he did at the tourism summit, he made a special appeal to the Caleb crowd, saying Haiti needs foreign investments but can't attract them because of kidnapping and crime.

Also, in a show of unity, he pointed out that he was traveling with business executives as well as members of grass-roots organizations that have the stronghold of Aristide's support.

## **REACHING OUT**

Préval, who is popular with Haiti's poor, made a special effort during his speech to point out the importance of Haiti's economic elite.

"We need investments in the country," he said.

Of Haiti's 112,000 visitors last year, 80 percent of them were Haitian expatriates. Préval said the country must work to increase tourism and return Haiti to its days as a Caribbean vacation destination.

The audience responded to his message with applause.

"It's clear he recognizes the importance of the diaspora," said Haitian-American businessman Pepe Bayard. "And I believe he has the will to do it and to give the diaspora what it needs."

Still, Préval conceded that his plans will take work. The country also needs political stability, security - and roads.

"Everything cannot happen in one day," he said.

As a result of aid from the international community during the past two years, Haiti will be receiving millions of dollars to help build roads throughout the country.

"I don't see how we can talk about tourism if we don't have comfortable roads," Préval said. "We have to start somewhere. Let's start with the roads."

Plans are also under way for the renovation of the Port-au-Prince and Cap-Haitien airports.

In the interview with The Miami Herald, Préval reiterated his goals of bringing economic development to Haiti. However, he is currently facing challenges.

Reports of kidnappings and police shootings have recently increased, which some observers say is an indication that gangs have become restless with Préval's government.

## SECURITY CONCERNS

Préval dismissed the claims of increased violence, saying kidnappings were being staged by a group of "bandits that are taking advantage of the social misery."

He said he is trying to address security issues and noted that he is waiting for parliament to approve his choice for a new police chief.

"We need security, period," Préval said.

While Préval has received high praise for building a coalition government since his February election, Haiti still must hold local elections for mayors and senators.

Préval said he did not know when those elections will take place.

## **Aristide supporters expected to be released, Haiti's Preval says**

**BY JACQUELINE CHARLES**

**Miami Herald**

**June 26, 2006**

MIAMI - Two senior supporters of former Haitian President Jean-Bertrand Aristide, whose imprisonments have been attacked by human rights groups, could soon be freed, Haitian President Rene Preval said Monday.

"The government prosecutor has asked that former Prime Minister Yvon Neptune be released, and the dossier of So Ann should be resolved soon," Preval said in a meeting with a small group of journalists at a downtown Miami hotel.

Neptune, who served under Aristide, was jailed a year ago in connection with a 2004 massacre of Aristide opponents near the western port city of St. Marc.

He has been on and off a hunger strike to protest his detention, saying it is politically motivated.

So Ann, whose real name is Annette Auguste, has been jailed since Mother's Day 2004. A grandmother and singer, she and several other jailed Aristide supporters are accused of participating in a violent 2003 attack on Aristide opponents. Their cases are currently before a Haitian appeals court.

Preval did not provide specifics about how the two cases would be resolved. He pointed out that in recent weeks his government has freed several Aristide supporters who had been jailed by the U.S.-backed interim government that replaced Aristide after his ouster in 2004.

Among those released was former Aristide interior minister Jocelerme Privert. Privert was jailed in April 2004, accused of being the mastermind of the St. Marc massacre. He has filed an appeal and was provisionally released 11 days ago.

One person whose fate remains undecided is the Rev. Gerard Jean-Juste, a pro-Aristide and former Miami Haitian rights activist who is facing illegal weapons and conspiracy charges.

He was freed earlier this year to seek cancer treatment in Miami.

International human rights organizations have complained that the interim government jailed scores of Aristide government officials and supporters with little cause, and considered some of them as political prisoners.

Preval arrived in South Florida Sunday and left Monday for Brussels and Paris, where he will be seeking European support for programs to professionalize Haiti's police force and other government-run departments. He is traveling with members of his government, and several Haitian businessmen who are supporting his efforts to stabilize the country.

Preval's presidency has brought a ray of hope for many Haitians who want to see progress in their impoverished homeland.

Still, he faces a litany of challenges including fixing Haiti's corrupt and antiquated justice system.

"The justice system needs to be reformed," he told the journalists Monday. "Not just to encourage investments in the country or go behind criminals and drug dealers but to ensure the security of the population."

"What is important for us today in Haiti is for us to have peace, and it comes through dialogue," he said Monday. "Peace brings stability."

## **Ailing Haitian priest urges release of all political prisoners in homeland**

**By Alva James-Johnson**

**South Florida Sun-Sentinel**

**June 27 2006**

The Rev. Gerard Jean-Juste, the Catholic priest who five months ago left a Haitian prison for cancer treatment in South Florida, called Monday for his nation's government to release all political prisoners.

In an interview with the South Florida Sun-Sentinel just hours after Haitian President Rene Preval left Miami for Brussels, Jean-Juste said hundreds of supporters of former President Jean-Bertrand Aristide still remain in prison.

They include the country's former Prime Minister Yvon Neptune and other leaders of Aristide's Lavalas Party. Most were arrested two years ago when Aristide's government was toppled in a bloody revolt and replaced by an interim government led by Boca Raton retiree Gerard Latortue, who served as prime minister.

"Many of us Haitians here and in Haiti think the government should go faster because these people were illegally arrested, arbitrarily charged, with no case at all," said Jean-Juste, 60, who lives in Fort Lauderdale with his sister.

Jean-Juste, whom the interim government released for medical treatment, said he was weak from chemotherapy and could not meet with Preval during his visit to South Florida. Jean-Juste said he asked for Neptune's release in a brief telephone conversation with Preval. "He said he's doing his best as the case is in court pending," Jean-Juste said of Preval.

The interim Haitian government arrested Neptune and Jocelerme Privert, Aristide's former interior minister, in 2004 for their alleged involvement in a massacre that year that left more than 50 people dead in the city of St. Marc. Earlier this month, Haitian authorities cleared Privert and released him from jail, according to a British Broadcasting Corp. report.

Jean-Juste said Neptune remains on a hunger strike and in poor health.

Latortue declined to comment. However, in a recent interview with the New York Daily News, Latortue said he was embarrassed that Neptune remains in jail.

Jean-Robert Lafortune, of the Haitian American Grassroots Coalition of Miami, said the issue of political prisoners is problematic for Preval, a former Aristide protégé who received strong support from the former president's supporters. "His leadership is going to be based on his ability to deal with political prisoners in Haiti because this is going to decide whether or not he's going to maintain the support of the Aristide supporters," Lafortune said.

Preval, elected in February, also is going to be tested on the issue of Aristide's return, Lafortune said.

A year ago, Haitian authorities arrested Jean-Juste, suspecting his involvement in the murder of prominent journalist and poet Jacques Roche.

Jean-Juste's imprisonment, his second under the interim government, was condemned by humanitarian organizations, members of the U.S. Congressional Black Caucus and activists around the world.

A judge cleared Jean-Juste of homicide, but he was indicted on weapons possession and criminal conspiracy charges, which he denies.

These days, Jean-Juste spends his days worrying about the imprisoned comrades he left behind. "That is killing me," he said. "I talk to them. I send help to them, and I'm trying to do my best for them."

## **Haiti Makes Best of a Tenuous Peace**

**Amid a months-long lull in gang warfare, faint signs of economic life emerge. But in the luckless island nation, expectations are low.**

**By Carol J. Williams**

**Los Angeles Times**

**June 26, 2006**

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti — Just a short walk from the gang-ruled slum he calls home, on a street he was afraid to tread less than six months ago, Eligene Mondesir has found the first paying job of his 55-year lifetime.

It's smelly, exhausting work, shoveling garbage from the gutters in the withering tropical heat. But Mondesir, like the 1,750 others hired by a foreign relief group, is grateful for the \$2 daily wage that allows him to feed more than a dozen family members.

In the tenuous peace that has prevailed since Haiti's Feb. 7 presidential election, faint signs of economic life have emerged, offering the first breath of hope in years that Haitians might finally escape decades of desperation.

But this luckless country has been at this crossroads before, and those who have seen their modest dreams of a normal life dashed by violence, misrule and corruption have learned to damp their expectations.

"I'll take it while it lasts," Mondesir says of the street-cleaning job on the volatile airport road — work that will disappear at the first sign of any resumption of gang warfare.

With the election of agronomist Rene Preval, a former ally and protege of exiled President Jean-Bertrand Aristide, the kidnapping and killing that had made this capital a war zone ceased as if someone turned off a switch. Why, who and for how long remain questions no one can answer.

Preval has reached out to defeated rivals in putting together a new government and recovery plans. Some see the current calm as a breathing space accorded by skeptical rivals. Others say it is just a pause for assessment of how to manage the new leader.

Gang violence ceased with Preval's election because the gunmen decided to give the new president "the gift of a truce" while they decide whether Preval will interfere with their criminal interests, speculates Mario Andresol, head of the Haitian National Police.

"I'm not too confident about security in this country," he said, pointing to an incident last month in which a Haitian judge freed an accused killer from prison in exchange for \$60,000.

The Brazilian-led U.N. peacekeeping force that has more than 9,000 troops and police in Haiti has responsibility for helping reform the judicial system, mission spokesman David Wimhurst said. But the more the world body's civilian advisory team learns about crime and justice here, the more it despairs of the near future.

"Those who don't want a return of law and order can stir things up so easily," Wimhurst said.

He pointed to recent judicial manipulations that lifted a freeze on Aristide Foundation bank accounts long enough for millions to be withdrawn by the former leader's exiled allies. The accounts had been frozen to allow investigation into allegations that the money was illegally transferred from state coffers. The head of the corruption investigation who sought to thwart the withdrawal was jailed for a week on another judge's order.

"The judicial system is not just corrupt, it's fallen to pieces," Wimhurst said.

How much control over the police and courts Haiti's new leaders are willing to cede to U.N. officials is unclear. A proposal by the mission to pair every Haitian judge with an overseeing foreign counterpart has been met with a hail of protests as a denigration of Haitian sovereignty.

John Currelly, who heads the Pan American Development Foundation's Clean Streets project that Mondesir works for, says of the postelection peace, "It is absolutely only a lull."

The only way to entrench stability, says the Haiti veteran who was kidnapped for ransom a year ago, is to improve the standard of living and demonstrate to Haitians that there is a dignified means of surviving without resorting to the gun.

The suspension of violent clashes in the slums of Port-au-Prince has allowed some progress in efforts to alleviate suffering among Haiti's poorest.

"It certainly helps us a lot. There are a lot less restrictions on our movements" now that it's safe for medical relief workers to get into areas previously off limits because of security hazards, said Karoline Fonck, the Pan American Health Organization country officer for HIV/AIDS programs.

But others warn that the postelection peace is as orchestrated as the violence was.

"The roots of the problems haven't been tackled yet — that being the extreme misery of poverty in this country and the armed groups who still have their weapons," said Paul Denis, a leader of the Struggling People's Organization, a rival political movement to Preval's, but one that has joined the president's governing coalition. "These gangs are armed and waiting. Just as the violence was turned off by someone's order, so can it be turned on again at a moment's notice."

Analysts note that the key to economic improvement must come from the private sector. But most concede a longer period of calm will be needed to lure back investors chased away over the last 15 years of populism and political violence.

One exception that has brought swift change on the business landscape was the May launch of a new cellular phone network that broke a cozy duopoly enjoyed by companies now forced to compete.

Not only has the new company's \$130-million investment nearly doubled the number of Haitians with access to communications, it has created 350 jobs, expects 700 employees by mid-summer and has franchised 220 outlets across the country.



Preval's recently installed prime minister, Jacques-Edouard Alexis, says he knows he's running against a clock.

Noting that organizations such as the U.S. Agency for International Development are already fashioning projects to spend pledged foreign aid, Alexis said he wanted the donors to respond to what the government considers priority projects. The urban needs may be more apparent to foreign visitors, but Alexis wants the roads, schools and conditions for agriculture and small business first addressed in the countryside. That would stem the flow of people into the capital, where the vast majority live in miserable shantytowns without jobs or access to food, power or running water, he said.

"We have to develop the countryside so people will stay there," Alexis said. "We can encourage the assembly sector to create factories in the provinces and jump-start agriculture so we can produce more of our own food and at lower prices."

The Bush administration has assured Preval that aid and assistance will flow to this country to ensure that recovery can get underway and the tentative peace can be firmed up with a tangible improvement in living standards.

"We in the United States understand that our commitment here, our engagement, has to be long term," said a senior U.S. diplomat who declined to be identified. "We have at times had a short attention span on Haiti."

The mood on the streets is one of deep skepticism.

"It's good for now. No one can say about tomorrow," said Jean Leger Jean-Baptiste, a 42-year-old who lives in the squalid Cite Soleil neighborhood.

Claudette Pierre, a 32-year-old with four children and an ailing mother to support on the few pennies she makes a day selling candy, looked confused when asked what she expects can be accomplished if peace endures through the summer.

"The future is something we've never had time to think about," she said.

**UN troops face surge of gang violence in Haiti slums**  
**The Jamaica Observer**  
**AP**  
**Monday, June 26, 2006**

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti (AP) - An upsurge in gang violence has led UN troops to increase patrols and checkpoints in the volatile Haitian capital, a commander with the Brazilian-led peacekeeping mission said yesterday.

Brazilian Commander Alberto Barbosa Nascimento told The Associated Press that gangs loyal to former President Jean-Bertrand Aristide were responsible for the recent surge in shootings and kidnappings in the impoverished Caribbean nation.

Haiti had been relatively calm since the February 7 election of President Rene Preval, but a rise in kidnappings and attacks on police and UN peacekeepers in recent weeks has raised fears of a flare-up of violence similar to the mayhem following a 2004 revolt that toppled Aristide.

**The search for justice for Haiti's Yvon Neptune and his fellow inmates - All political prisoners**  
**Tuesday, June 27, 2006**  
**by Ashley Dalman**  
**COHA Research Associate**

René Préval has an enormous task ahead of him, as he picks up the reins of a battered and demoralized nation – one that is in the ER, almost terminal. Reforming the Haitian judicial system, however, is perhaps the most critical of his multiple burdens due to its near ruinous condition. To this day, disgracefully enough, many political prisoners, including former Prime Minister Yvon Neptune, under President Jean Bertrand Aristide, remain in jail, along with a number of his senior colleagues, while they wait for the democratic transition to eventually provide a fair judicial outcome. Numerous publicly-spirited lawyers and human rights workers, outraged by the arbitrary and vindictive behavior of Bernard Gousse, the former justice minister under the now replaced hapless interim Haitian government, have attempted to prevent scores of innocent individuals associated with former President Aristide and his Lavalas party from being persecuted in the aftermath of the U.S., French, UN, and Canadian-sanctioned February 2004 de facto coup.

Before Haiti can truly move forward and President Préval can begin to consolidate the fleeting prospect for democracy offered by his victory at the polls, the question of injustice under the ill-reputed, U.S.-backed Latortue interim government must be addressed. For Préval, it is of utmost importance, for both his own legitimacy and his country's dignity, that worthy public figures, such as Prime Minister Neptune and some of his immediate associates, have all charges against them immediately dropped. Washington and Ottawa were integral participants in the process that divested Haiti of its democratic rule, for they legitimized Aristide's illegal ouster. Disgracefully enough, the Aristide-era prisoners have been and mostly remain today imprisoned under harsh conditions.

**No Picture in the Dungeon**

Neptune began his incarceration in June 2004, after being accused, but not formally charged, with participating in a massacre in the neighborhood of La Scierie, shortly after Aristide's fall in February 2004. In fact, UN human rights expert Louis Joinet has declared that the deaths at La Scierie were a result of a clash between pro and anti-Aristide factions. One year later, Neptune was placed under the charge of UN peacekeeping forces, but was later, upon his insistence, transferred back to the custody of Haitian officials. His position at the time was that he didn't want to receive any special treatment from what he considered an illegal government. In April 2005, still under Latortue rule, Neptune began a hunger strike, demanding the full lifting of all charges against him.

Neptune had little hope of release or a fair trial under Latortue and Gousse. Attorney Brian Concannon, a highly regarded human rights proponent during Aristide's rule and director of the Institute for Justice and Democracy in Haiti, has reported that Neptune is refusing to be represented by counsel, or otherwise to cooperate with the Latortue-Gousse justice system, which had persecuted him in violation of its own rules. Neptune has also refused any presidential pardon, instead insisting that all spurious claims against him being dropped. Given the demonstrable failings of Haiti's judicial system, as well as the baleful legacy of the Gousse-era, Neptune has refused to cooperate with the former regime, and has limited himself to working with co-defendants to apply political pressure, including writing a letter to President Préval.

On May 9, 2006, an appeal process initiated in September by Neptune and his co-defendants was heard by the Haitian courts, and finally on May 23, the appeals process was concluded. Mario Joseph, representing the political prisoners, asked that the charges be dropped, while calling for their immediate provisional release on their personal recognizance. Even though the government prosecutor acquiesced to the release request, the justices hearing the case did not reach a decision until one month after the appeal, despite the obvious straightforward nature of the petition. Such rank judicial incompetence is more than appalling, particularly because of all the suffering that the defendants had to go through over their protracted ordeal.

On June 13, the justices granted a provisional release to another inmate, former Minister of Interior Jocelerme Privert; however, Neptune was denied release based on the notion that his request was not made on time. Any conceivable justification for the denial is beyond being contrived; it was simply a matter of insolence, as there was no reason to believe Neptune was a flight risk, since his concern for justice above all else is indisputable. For example, Neptune turned himself in during the month of June in 2004 and then again in February 2005, after he was forced out of prison at gunpoint during a jailbreak attempt instigated by others. Furthermore, Neptune once refused the government's offer to fly him out of the country for medical treatment (with the obvious implication that he could fade into the countryside whenever he wanted) because the offer did not include dropping charges against him. Sadly, the kind of personal integrity that Neptune has demonstrated is in such scarce supply when it comes to Haiti's courts, with it all too often being found concentrated in the defendants, rather than in the judges.

#### RNDDH: In-Humane, not Human Rights

Many of the deep flaws surrounding Neptune's case, including the protracted delay in the opening and resolution of the appellate trial, can be traced to the Réseau National de Défense des Droits Humains (RNDDH), a sinister organization that continually has pressured the government to retain its political prisoners in jail, perhaps because it facilitated some of their arrests four years ago. The RNDDH used to be known as the National Coalition for Human Rights in Haiti (whose parent organization NCHR is based in New York) and ostensibly was originally committed to the promotion of human rights. By 2004, however, the Haitian branch of the organization had become increasingly politicized and fell under the influence of anti-Aristide Haiti-hardliners in the Canadian and U.S. governments.

During and after the 2004 coup, in which Canada and the U.S. played a defining part, the NCHR-Haiti denounced many individuals, and even had an arrangement with the head prosecutor in Port-au-Prince, by which any individual accused by the NCHR-Haiti would be subject to prosecution. Yvon Neptune was one of those who was unfortunate enough to be on that list. Countless individuals, many whose only crime was a loose affiliation with Aristide's Fanmi Lavalas party, were arrested by the interim government based on false accusations entered by the NCHR-Haiti. When the NCHR-Haiti's parent organization responded to the mounting number of accusations by forcing the abusive faction within its organization to be separated from the parent body, the former NCHR-Haiti became the RNDDH, a body which is now mainly funded by the Canadian government, specifically for the La Scierie case.

#### Foreign Disservice

Canada's backing of the RNDDH could not be more bizarre. Recently, Canada gave over \$15 million to Haitian NGOs to improve the government and justice system, most likely involving the RNDDH. According to Concannon, the highly compromised "human rights" organization receives Ottawa

funding, and additional revenue from the U.S. It was these three countries, together with Kofi Anan and the UN mechanism, which legitimized the notorious rump interim regime of Gerard Latortue, and which also arranged for the de facto ouster of constitutionalist Haitian president—President Jean-Bertrand Aristide in February of 2004. Shortly after the accusations against Neptune were released by the NCHR-Haiti, the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) announced an additional \$100,000 in funding to the organization to specifically pursue the La Scierie case. Such international support was particularly distressing, when considering how Aristide, in the months before his end, was cut off from most foreign assistance, which led to the economic asphyxiation of his government and the truncation of its political options.

#### Collective Outrage

The Haitian government's squalid handling of Neptune's case has attracted outrage from a number of quarters. One year ago, UN Special Envoy Juan Gabriel Valdes took up Neptune's cause, saying to Reuters, "Our appreciation of the legal system and the procedures followed indicate to us that it would be perfectly possible to release Mr. Neptune from prison even if his case continued to be processed... We believe that serious attention should be given to Neptune's release." Even Roger Noriega, former U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for Western Hemispheric Affairs wrote a letter to the St. Petersburg Times in May 2005 stating, "The United States has repeatedly expressed its concerns about the health and well-being of former Haitian Prime Minister Yvon Neptune. We have also repeatedly expressed our concerns to Haiti's Interim Government that Mr. Neptune's case has not been processed expeditiously in accord with the Haitian constitution." Fifteen congressmen and the Caribbean Community regional bloc (CARICOM) have all called for Neptune's immediate release.

#### Haiti's Judicial Ineptness Branches Out

The former Haitian regime's judicial misdemeanors extend far beyond the inexcusable treatment of prominent former Aristide officials. Other dignitaries jailed include Annette August; a grandmotherly activist nicknamed "Sister Anne" by her neighbors. The Village Voice reported shortly after Aristide's ouster, that a detachment of U.S. Marines showed up at August's Port-au-Prince home and arrested her along with her four children. In addition, Lavalas leader Father Gerard Jean-Juste remained in prison indefinitely, charged with the July 2005 murder of journalist Jacques Roche, even though Amnesty International has pointed out that Jean-Juste was in Miami at the time. Charges are still being ledged against Jean-Juste, however, he was released in January under a humanitarian exception for leukemia treatment.

#### Last-call for Justice

René Préal, in his short time in office, has already made important strides towards reforming the judicial system. Préal purged the corrupt, former interim cabinet, and replaced it with a new one made up of ministers experienced in democratic processes. On June 8, 2006, the Haitian parliament approved the new cabinet, including a new minister of justice, with the deplorable Justice Minister Gousse now a distant, if execrable memory. Préal, however, has so far failed to take a stand against the ongoing judicial ineptness in Haiti. As Attorney Concannon notes, all the cases of the political prisoners are before the judges, who were put in place by the former interim government, leaving Préal little room to maneuver. The new Haitian president must work with the judicial system in order to achieve fair results, instead of pulling everyone out of prison, an illegal interference on the judicial system, which would greatly tarnish Préal's image. Any reforms, however, must be coupled with the instant release of all political prisoners, with Washington and Ottawa partially redressing their past sins by

immediately throwing their support behind such a move. Préval's efforts at introducing civic rectitude to the country will be neutralized as long as Canada and the U.S. continue to fund the RNDDH and tacitly consent to the continued support of the imprisonment of Neptune and his co-defendants. Under any circumstances, Neptune and all the other political prisoners must not spend an additional moment in jail, if justice is to be served.

**Kidnapping drives Canadian missionary from Haiti**  
**CNN.com**  
**June 27, 2006**

A Canadian missionary who was kidnapped for a week and released when a ransom was paid has left Haiti, saying he was unsure if he would return but vowing to keep his orphanage running.

Ed Hughes told The Associated Press that he would like to stay but believes he must leave so he doesn't again become targeted by kidnapping gangs that are behind a surge of abductions in the impoverished Caribbean nation.

"I don't know what to do and I don't have an answer as to when I am coming back to Haiti," Hughes said before boarding a flight to Canada.

His voice trembling and his eyes tearing up, the 72-year-old Hughes said he was leaving to protect his orphanage, which has barely enough money to feed nearly 150 children and send another 80 to school - not to pay ransom demands.

"They have to understand this or else they will always try to kidnap me again or harm my children," he said. "These are the poorest children in the world and they don't need any more trouble."

The missionary said he paid a ransom of \$2,000, but one of his employees stole the money and his supporters had to come up with another \$2,000 for his release.

The employee who took money is in jail, he said.

## **Kidnapped Canadian Released in Haiti**

**By MYRNA DOMIT**

**The Associated Press**

**Monday, June 26, 2006**

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti -- A Canadian missionary kidnapped in a surge of politically motivated gang violence has been released after a week in captivity.

Ed Hughes, 72, was abducted from his home north of Port-au-Prince on June 18. His captors

Nelson Ryman, who runs an orphanage in Haiti with Hughes, said the missionary was released Saturday night on a rural road after the kidnappers received a ransom raised by his friends and colleagues.

Ryman said the ransom was less than \$10,000 but would not give the exact amount. Police and U.N. officials worked through a Haitian mediator to secure Hughes' release.

Hughes was put on a "tap-tap," a pickup truck used as a collective taxi, but for some reason tried to jump out and hurt his head, Ryman said.

He made it back to the capital early Sunday and was resting at a safe location in Port-au-Prince.

"He called me in the morning and was extremely disoriented," Ryman said from his home in Tampa, Fla. "A bit later I talked to him again and he said he plans to return to his children in the orphanage."

Hughes was shot and badly wounded in the arm in December 2005 trying to stop the abduction of Haitian-American missionary Daniel Phelusmar, who was held for four days.

A surge in gang violence has led U.N. troops to increase patrols and checkpoints in the volatile Haitian capital, a commander with the Brazilian-led peacekeeping mission said Sunday.

Brazilian Commander Alberto Barbosa Nascimento blamed gangs loyal to former President Jean-Bertrand Aristide for the increase in crime.

At least 29 people were kidnapped in Haiti's capital last month, up from 15 in April, the mission says.

The well-armed gangs also have killed 10 Haitian police officers since May in an effort to intimidate the nation's ill-equipped security forces, police say.

The violence has raised fears of a repeat of the mayhem that followed a 2004 revolt that toppled Aristide, now in exile in South Africa. Haiti had been relatively calm since the Feb. 7 election of President Rene Preval.

"Attacks by gang members had decreased in recent months because they expected President Preval's government to bring back Aristide. This has not been the case, so the recent attacks serve as a strategy to pressure the current government," Barbosa said.



Barbosa said violence also has escalated because gangs in the sprawling slums of Port-au-Prince need money after several months of relative quiet.

## **Haitian President Speaks In Miami**

**By KELLI KENNEDY**

**The Associated Press**

**The Tampa Tribune**

**Jun 26, 2006**

MIAMI BEACH - Haiti cannot expect to be seen as a desirable tourist destination until the necessary roads are built and political stability is achieved, Haitian President Rene Preval said Sunday at a tourism conference in South Florida.

The president's speech at a Miami Beach hotel capped a three-day conference where local and Haitian business investors discussed how tourism could boost the Caribbean country's crippled economy. Haitian leaders want potential tourists to envision the country's beautiful landscape, rich culture and exotic cuisine - not the Western Hemisphere's poorest nation riddled with violence.

Neighboring Caribbean island Cuba had 2.5 million visitors and the Dominican Republic had 4 million visitors in 2005, Preval said in a 90-minute speech that was delayed nearly three hours.

Haiti had 112,000 tourists that same year, he said.

### **Travel Comforts**

"The first thing everybody is asking for is roads. How can you talk about tourism without having the highways that take the tourists to places in a comfortable way?" Preval said through an interpreter.

Preval said he would rely on international financial help to defray the cost of road building, though he did not specify the estimated cost or a timeline for construction.

Gov. Jeb Bush also had been scheduled to speak Sunday but did not attend the event. A spokeswoman said Bush, who governs a state with a large Haitian community, sent a representative to the conference and is committed to working with Haiti to improve its situation.

"We want to help with a strong Haiti, a healthy Haiti," spokeswoman Alia Faraj said.

Serge Philippe Pierre, marketing director for the Haitian airline Tortug' Air, said he was encouraged by Preval's vision to boost tourism. "It is a good way for Haiti to rebuild the country," he said.

Preval, a 63-year-old champion of the poor, took power last month from a two-year interim government installed after former President Jean-Bertrand Aristide was deposed amid a February 2004 revolt.

### **Peace Needed For Prosperity**

Throughout his speech, Preval repeated the need for stability in his country and begged his countrymen to stop the violence. Political unrest was the main reason why Haiti was not viewed as a safe, desirable tourist destination, he said.

"We have other islands in the Caribbean that have far more crime than we do, but nobody talks about them because they have political stability," Preval told a packed hotel ballroom of about 400 diners, mostly from South Florida's Haitian community.

Haiti had been relatively calm since Preval was elected Feb. 7, but recent kidnappings and attacks on police and U.N. peacekeepers have raised fears of a flare-up of violence similar to the mayhem after the 2004 revolt that toppled Aristide.

A Canadian missionary kidnapped from his home north of Port-au-Prince a week ago was released Sunday. Twenty-nine people were kidnapped in Haiti's capital last month, up from 15 in April, according to the U.N. peacekeeping mission.

Haiti also needs to streamline the process for investors, he said. In the Dominican Republic, investors can open a business in two days, but Haiti's political red tape often forces investors to donate to political causes before they can open a business, he said.

Preval also called on U.S. lawmakers to help boost Haiti's economy by passing the Haitian Hemispheric Opportunity Through Partnership Encouragement Act, which supporters say could create as many as 20,000 jobs in the Caribbean country.

**Haiti: Brazilian troops face increased gang violence**  
**Agência Brasil**  
**June 26, 2006**

Rio - Brazilian troops in Haiti as part of the UN Stabilization Mission (Missão de Paz das Nações Unidas no Haiti) (Minustah) have been forced to deal with higher levels of gang violence recently, reports Alberto Barbosa Nascimento, an officer who is in charge of press relations for the Brazilian forces, which number 1,200. According to Nascimento, the gangs have broken a truce and are now resorting to violence as the government attempts to exercise its authority.

Minustah bulletins, which are issued daily, show that over the last ten days Brazilian soldiers have been involved in at least four armed conflicts. In one incident, a gang of seven armed men fired on Brazilian soldiers in the Bel-Air neighborhood of the capital, Port-au-Prince. The soldiers responded and one of the attackers was killed.

Nascimento says one of the reasons for the upsurge in violence is the crackdown by the new government (which took office in February) on gang activities, such as drug trafficking and kidnappings. Brazilian troops have also moved into the Cité Soleil area of Port-au-Prince, a sort of violent no-man's land that was long abandoned by the government. "It is a place that was no-go for police and authorities," explains Nascimento.

Translation: Allen Bennett

**US will continue to support Haiti, says ambassador**  
**Monday, June 26, 2006**  
**by Vario Sérant**  
**Caribbean Net News**

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti: The United States plans to assist the Haitian government, the United Nations Stabilisation Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) and the Organisation of American States (OAS) in "the completion of local elections".

US ambassador Janet A. Sanderson made the announcement during a short speech to the members of the Haitian American Trade Association (HAMCHAM), in Port-au-Prince, on June 22.

The Provisional Electoral Council (PEC) is still not able to set a new date for the organization of the local elections initially due to take place on June 18, 2006. The financing of these polls - which will reportedly cost 13 million dollars - is the main concern of the PEC.

The American diplomat affirmed that her country will support the new Haitian administration in order to improve "the capability of the local authorities to provide services to their populations".

Sanderson also promised US technical aid for the Haitian Parliament "so as to help it to fulfill its constitutional obligations".

Sanderson renewed her country's commitment "to work with President René Préval and his Prime Minister Jacques Edouard Alexis" so that they can achieve the crucial goals they aim at.

The ambassador referred to recent undertakings by Préval relating to the creation and the consolidation of the institutions envisaged by the Constitution, "the decentralization of the government", the implementation of a national dialogue and the improvement of the "investment climate".

"It is in regard to those promises (that) the history and the Haitian people will judge President Préval during his mandate," stressed Sanderson.

The dinner, organized by HAMCHAM in Sanderson's honour, was the occasion for the ambassador to recall that her country kept to its (financial) commitments towards Haiti.

"Of the amount of one billion one hundred thousand dollars promised for the Interim Cooperation Program, more than 960 million dollars have already been spent in Haiti. More than 500 million dollars of this amount come from my country," said Sanderson.

Recalling that "the United States represents the largest backer in Haiti", Janet Sanderson let it be known that "this will continue".

The diplomat talked in addition about "efforts which are being made in the US Congress in order to pass preferential laws in favor of Haiti in the field of textile exports".

Without anticipating the results of these discussions, Sanderson specified however that the completion of those discussions "would create thousands of new jobs in Haiti".

Sanderson entitled her speech "Haiti and the United States, a new departure".

American ambassadors recently arrived in Haiti are often invited by the Haitian American Chamber Association to this kind of event, sometimes looking for confrontation.

Contrary to her predecessors, Sanderson chose - for the moment - measured words. "I also learned that there is a tradition of launching verbal grenades during such events. I am not here to do that - or at least, not yet," emphasized Sanderson at the beginning of her speech.

**Rio Group wants UN Mission to remain in Haiti**  
**Monday, June 26, 2006**  
**by Gordon French**  
**Caribbean Net News**

GEORGETOWN, Guyana: Rio Group members are advocating an extended life and mandate of the United Nations (UN) Stabilisation Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH).

Speaking at the just concluded 27th Rio Group Foreign Ministers meeting in Georgetown, Guyana, Minister of Foreign Affairs Rudy Insanally said the possibility of an extension will be explored to maintain the successes achieved.

"The Rio Group and CARICOM (Caribbean Community) should continue to cooperate, to consolidate and continue the progress made so far. In response to the request made by recently elected President Rene Preval, we should seek not only to increase the size of MINUSTAH but also to extend its mandate to include a strong development component to consolidate the gains made in the area of political stabilization," Insanally said.

MINUSTAH is largely manned by Latin American countries including Brazil, Argentina and Chile. As a direct result, Haiti was able to hold free and fair national elections. The mission was set-up to help restore peace and security in poverty stricken Haiti after the ouster of its former President, Jean Bertrand Aristede.

With the holding of elections in that country, the international community has welcomed Haiti's return to democracy.

"We must be vigilant to ensure that the financial assistance promised by the international community to support Haiti's reconstruction is readily forthcoming. Delay and disappointment will only cause a reversal of the democratic process and threaten once more the stability of Haiti as well as the Caribbean," Insanally said.

Insanally hailed the cooperation between Caricom and the Rio Group which was displayed during the Haiti crisis.

"The effectiveness of CARICOM/Rio Group coordination is our combined effort to restore democracy to Haiti - a country which has for far too long been subjected to autocratic and repressive governments and condemned to live in inhuman and degrading poverty," he said.

## **Kidnapped Canadian missionary freed in Haiti**

**Sun Jun 25, 2006**

**By Joseph Guyler Delva**

**Reuters**

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti - A Canadian missionary held by kidnappers in Haiti for almost a week was freed after a \$2,000 ransom was paid, a Haitian police official said on Sunday.

The missionary, Ed Hughes, was released unharmed on Saturday night and two people were taken into custody, judicial police commissioner Michael Lucius said.

"He was released by his captors after we conducted an operation in the area where he was held," Lucius told Reuters.

Hughes was kidnapped on June 19 in an orphanage he runs in Cabaret, 12 miles north of the capital Port-au-Prince.

The poorest country in the Americas had enjoyed a brief period of calm following the February election of President Rene Preval, regarded as a champion of Haiti's masses of poor.

Hughes had been a victim of crime before. Last year, most of his right arm had to be amputated after he was shot by gunmen apparently intent on kidnapping someone else at the mission.

Lucius said police were still looking for two suspects thought to be the main figures behind a kidnapping spree in Cabaret.

Both suspects -- Desir Jean Tardieu, known as the "Joker," and Peterson Cheristin, known as "Sonson" -- escaped from prison on April 8, where they were being held on accusations they beheaded a witch doctor.

Hughes' abductors initially demanded \$100,000 to free him.

More than 2,000 people have been kidnapped for ransom in the Caribbean country over the past 2 years.

But armed gangs in some of the most violent shanty towns declared a ceasefire during the February election.

The election was the first since former president Jean-Bertrand Aristide was driven into exile by an armed revolt and mounting pressure to quit in February 2004.

Police and officials in a Brazilian-led U.N. peacekeeping force that has tried to keep factions supporting and opposing Aristide apart since his ouster say they have noticed an increase in crime and violence in recent weeks.



## **'The Return': Aristide, Law and Democracy in Haiti**

**By Brian Concannon**

**The Jurist**

**June 26, 2006**

JURIST Special Guest Columnist Brian Concannon Jr., Director of the Institute for Justice and Democracy in Haiti, says that although the return to Haiti of ousted former president Jean-Bertrand Aristide is legally and constitutionally permissible, a double standard in the international community still blocks his way home...

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Say “the return” when discussing Haiti, and people who follow events in the country know you are talking about former president Jean-Bertrand Aristide returning from his exile in South Africa. Aristide was ousted in a coup d’état in February 2004, and flown, against his will, in a U.S. government plane to the Central African Republic. He settled in South Africa, at the government’s invitation, but has always said he will return to Haiti when the conditions are right.

The conditions are getting closer to right, although Aristide would now return as a private citizen. President René Preval was elected on February 7 and inaugurated on May 14, 2006. His Ministers were ratified by Parliament on June 7, replacing the brutal and unconstitutional Interim Government that had ruled since the coup. Haiti’s Constitution limits presidents to two non-consecutive terms, and President Aristide’s second term ended in February.

The prospect of President Aristide’s return generates passionate reactions, both for and against, in Haiti, but also in Washington and other world capitals. The return is usually debated in terms of President Aristide’s likely role in Haitian politics, but the controversy raises two important questions beyond politics - what right does everyone have to weigh in on a private Haitian citizen’s decision to live inside the country or out? And what does the controversy say about the much broader issue of return - of the return of full democracy and sovereignty to Haiti.

Haiti’s new President, René Preval, is asked about the return incessantly by the foreign press, and he gives a simple answer: no one besides President Aristide has the right to determine when and if he returns to Haiti. Article 41 of Haiti’s Constitution declares that “no individual of Haitian nationality can be deported or forced to leave the country for any reason whatsoever.” Article 41-1 adds that “no Haitian needs a visa to leave the country or to return to it.” As a legal matter, therefore, the government has nothing to say about any citizen’s return. President Preval has responded that Articles 41 and 41-1 govern his actions, and that he intends to comply with them and with all the articles of Haiti’s Constitution.

Several commentators have mentioned that President Aristide would have to face any legal action against him if he returns to Haiti, or if he goes to the U.S. That is true of any citizen, but is independent of the right to come home. Moreover, although the foreign press has reported extensively on criminal investigations against President Aristide in both Haiti and the U.S., there are no criminal charges against him in either country. The Interim Government and its allies made many serious accusations of criminal activity against President Aristide to the press, but not a single one to the Haitian justice

system. Haitian authorities did file a civil complaint against Mr. Aristide and several others in a federal court in Miami. They launched an impressive public relations campaign, including press conferences, Washington briefings and seminars. But they did not actually pursue the case in court - seven months after filing the complaint (the first step) not a single defendant has been served (the second step, usually done immediately). A U.S. Grand Jury has spent two years investigating drug trafficking and money laundering between Port-au-Prince and Miami, and although the "smoking gun" against President Aristide has been announced several times in the press, not a single charge has issued from the courthouse.

Articles 41 and 41-1 should dispose of the discussion of the return, but once again Haiti's Constitution is not allowed the last word. The countries that used their financial and military clout to remove President Aristide back in 2004 - the U.S., Canada and France - are now using their diplomatic clout to keep him out. The U.S., once again, is taking the lead, with its trademark faithfulness to a consistent sound bite. Before the votes from the February 7 Presidential elections had even arrived at election headquarters, Acting U.S. Ambassador Tim Carney predicted that the election "is going to demonstrate....how Jean Bertrand Aristide is a man of the past." Later that week, State Department spokesman Sean McCormack told reporters that Aristide "is in South Africa, and I would expect that he would stay there," and that "we think the Haitian government should be looking forward to their future, not to its past." Deputy State Department Spokesman Adam Ereli added: "our understanding is that the government of Haiti is looking forward, not looking back. They've got a democracy to build, and the future is not in the past. Aristide is from the past" (all italics supplied).

This message was echoed far beyond the Bush Administration. Former Assistant Secretary of State Roger Noriega declared that for Preval, Aristide's return "would be the end of his ability to run the country." Lawrence Pezzullo, President Clinton's special envoy to Haiti warned "if [Preval] brings Aristide back, that thing will blow up." The International Crisis Group added that Aristide's return "would be a very polarizing and divisive event that could fatally damage the effort to move Haiti forward." None of these experts even mentioned that it was Aristide's removal in 2004 that led to unprecedented violence - thousands of deaths - not to mention the reversal of ten years' hard won democratic progress.

France's Minister for Cooperation and Development, Brigitte Girardin, visited South Africa in April, and opposing Aristide's return was high on her agenda for discussions with Foreign Minister Foreign Minister Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma. Canada, France, and even some South American countries buttonholed South African President Thabo Mbeki when he went to Chile for President Michelle Bachelet's March inauguration, to tell him not to allow Aristide's return.

The fact that such a broad spectrum of non-Haitian officials and commentators feel they can pressure Haiti's government to deprive a citizen of his Constitutional right to live in his homeland raises the second question: how much has democracy actually returned to Haiti, and how much democracy will the international community allow?

There are few, if any, precedents of the world's powerful countries keeping a former elected President out of his own country, but that level of interference is routine for Haiti. On February 17, 2004, as insurgents took over cities in the north of Haiti, U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell reaffirmed that President Aristide was Haiti's constitutional President, and announced that the U.S. "cannot buy into a

proposition that says the elected President must be forced out of office by thugs and those who do not respect law and are bringing terrible violence to the Haitian people.” But twelve days later, Mr. Powell’s State Department forced President Aristide onto a plane, delivering Haiti to thugs who brought terrible violence to the Haitian people. The United Nations, with a Charter proclaiming “respect for the principle of equal rights and self-determination of peoples,” declined the elected government’s request for help before the coup. But within a few hours of President Aristide’s departure (on a Sunday morning), the UN Security Council had authorized a military mission to Haiti, not to restore the Constitutional authorities, but to consolidate their overthrow. The Organization of American States, which had a newly-minted Inter-American Democratic Charter designed to respond to threats against the democratic order of member states, never once criticized the coup.

If Haiti’s former President has trouble travelling into Haiti, its current Prime Minister, Jacques-Edouard Alexis has trouble travelling out. Canada announced in early May that he was barred from the country because his name is on a list of people accused of “crimes against humanity.” The Canadian government admits it has no specific evidence against Mr. Alexis. It makes vague reference to the Carrefour Feuilles massacre, a police killing of suspected gang members during Mr. Alexis’ previous tenure. Ironically, Mr. Alexis’ government aggressively prosecuted that massacre - several top police officials were convicted of murder and imprisoned - and the UN and human rights groups hailed the prosecution as a major step in fighting large-scale human rights violations. Canada claims to be sorry and to be looking into the matter, but a month after the issue was first raised, Mr. Alexis’ name is still on the list.

Imagining analogous treatment among the world’s powerful countries is difficult: England’s Prime Minister Tony Blair pressuring President Bush to restrict former Vice-President Gore’s anti-war speeches, because he “is a man of the past.” Or the U.S. Ambassador to France warning against the “divisive” socialist Parliamentarians who called for a vote of no-confidence against the French government last month. In Canada, lawyers and human rights groups did present extensive evidence of George Bush’s responsibility for war crimes and crimes against humanity ahead of his December 2004 visit. Of course the Canadian government declined to invoke the same immigration bars it invoked against Mr. Alexis, despite the ample evidence for Mr. Bush, and the lack of any for Mr. Alexis.

Haitians have a marketplace expression for double standard - *de pwa, de mezi* (literally “two weights, two measures”), that gets frequent use in discussions about the international community’s treatment of their country. Haitians with varying levels of approval for President Aristide’s tenure in office agree that his forced exile is yet another example of *de pwa de mezi* - powerful countries that preach respect for human rights and national sovereignty declining to apply those principles to their weak country. So for them, President Aristide’s physical return is one part of a broader return of Haiti to a complete democracy, and to a sovereignty respected by the rest of the world. In this broader return, there would be no more need to argue about a former President coming home, and more than there is in the rest of the world.

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## **2 Caribbean leaders seek favor in S. Fla.**

**BY JACQUELINE CHARLES**

**Miami Herald**

**June 22, 2006**

Town hall meetings

They were elected within weeks of each other, rallying support from the poorest of the poor in their poverty-stricken countries.

Now after making history, both of these Caribbean leaders are headed to South Florida to curry favor with some of their most influential citizens abroad.

In separate inaugural state visits this week, both Jamaican Prime Minister Portia Simpson Miller and Haitian President René Préval will make tracks to Miami-Dade and Broward counties, the bedrock of South Florida's sprouting Caribbean community.

"To have two new heads of state visiting South Florida is a testament to the maturity of these immigrant communities," said Marlon Hill, a Miami attorney who recently was elected to represent the southern United States on the Jamaican government's diaspora advisory board.

In South Florida, home to nearly 400,000 Caribbean nationals, Jamaicans and Haitians are quickly emerging into a power bloc, transforming the political, cultural and economic landscapes of once predominantly white cities.

In Miami-Dade, where Haitians are the second-largest nationality after Cubans, Haitian Americans have been elected to the Legislature, the judiciary and three city councils. Last year, Gov. Jeb Bush appointed the first Haitian American, Dr. M. Rony Francois, to head a state agency, the Health Department.

In Broward, where Jamaicans are leading the black and Caribbean growth, five cities boast Jamaican-American elected officials. A Jamaican American also sits on the South Miami City Council.

That growing clout and influence is not lost on either Simpson Miller or Préval, both of whom received considerable moral and financial support from local émigrés during their recent political bids -- and are beefing up efforts to reach out to their diaspora communities in hopes that their expatriates' talent, money and influence will make a difference in their troubled Caribbean homelands. "The government wants full integration of the diaspora in the life of the country," said Jean Geneus, Haiti's minister for Haitians living abroad. "They are going to find in the government a partner to carry out such projects."

In South Florida, both Préval and Simpson Miller will find a community eager to play a role in nation-building beyond the \$1 billion Haitians and Jamaicans living in the United States each sent back last year.

"Even though we are in the diaspora, we want to establish that although we are not there in the island, we have not forgotten where we came from," said George Pedlar, president of Broward's Caribbean

American Democratic Club, said about the visits. ``This is a good sign they are recognizing this rather than just giving lip service as before."

The first of the two to visit, Simpson Miller arrives this evening when she will be shuttled off to a private reception, followed by an invitation-only breakfast with international bankers before hosting a Friday evening town hall meeting at Nova Southeastern University in Davie.

Préval comes on Sunday. He will give the keynote luncheon speech at the second annual Haiti Tourism and Economic Development Summit in Miami Beach, followed by a community meeting later at the Joseph Caleb Auditorium in Liberty City.

Both leaders arrive here armed with similar agendas -- and problems.

Simpson Miller's approval rating has dropped since she was elected by delegates of the People's National Party in Jamaica to replace outgoing party president and Prime Minister P.J. Patterson. The party has not recovered from the divisive race, and the friction is overshadowing Simpson Miller's desire to call general elections to extend her term. Meanwhile, despite a recent 20 percent drop in the murder rate, crime remains a problem. Amnesty International recently criticized the government for not doing enough to prevent an increase in violence against women and children.

As for Préval, many Haitians remain hopeful about his presidency and willingness to include opposition groups in his Cabinet. However, the continued jailing of supporters of ousted President Jean-Bertrand Aristide and a recent spate of police killings and kidnappings could threaten his plans to attract foreign investment and tourism.

**Haiti Kidnappers Lower Ransom Demand**  
**By MYRNA DOMIT, Associated Press Writer**  
**Los Angeles Times**  
**June 22, 2006**

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti -- Kidnappers who seized a Canadian missionary from his residence five days ago have lowered their ransom demands, a colleague said Thursday.

Ed Hughes' captors initially threatened to kill him unless a \$45,000 ransom was paid but now say they will release him for \$10,000, said Nelson Ryman, co-director of the Tytoo Gardens orphanage north of Port-au-Prince.

"We have hopes that he will be released before the weekend," Ryman said from his home in Tampa, Fla. Ryman left Haiti last week.

Ryman said, however, it wasn't clear if Hughes could raise the money his captors have demanded.

"It is highly unlikely that friends of Mr. Hughes would be able to come up with that amount," Ryman said.

U.N. authorities and Haitian police have been negotiating with Hughes' kidnappers through a mediator, Ryman said.

Hughes figured in another kidnapping, losing an arm in December 2005 trying to stop the abduction of Haitian-American missionary Daniel Phelusmar. Hughes was shot and badly wounded in the arm. Phelusmar was held hostage for four days.

A total of 29 people were kidnapped in Haiti's capital last month, up from 15 in April, according to the U.N. peacekeeping mission in Haiti. The actual number was probably higher because victims' families often prefer to negotiate with kidnappers rather than notify police.

The abductions have highlighted Haiti's shaky security following last month's inauguration of Rene Preval as president of the Western Hemisphere's poorest country.

Hughes' orphanage houses about 20 children and feeds 130 others.

Police on Tuesday conducted a raid in the town where Hughes was seized, freeing a kidnapped Haitian and arresting four people. It's unknown whether the suspects had any connection to the abduction of Hughes.

**Canadian missionary kidnapped in Haiti**  
**Associated Press**  
**The Globe and Mail**  
**June 20, 2006**

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti — A Canadian missionary who runs an orphanage in Haiti was kidnapped outside the Caribbean country's capital, officials said Tuesday.

Ed Hughes, 62, was kidnapped from his home late Monday in Cabaret, a rural town just north of the capital Port-au-Prince where he runs an orphanage, said Michael Lucius, chief of the Haitian Judiciary Police.

But the wife of a Florida missionary who co-founded the orphanage with Hughes said he had been kidnapped on Sunday.

"We got a phone call from a worker at the orphanage on Sunday, saying Ed had been kidnapped," said Dottie Ryman of Zephyrhills, Fla., whose husband Nelson had just returned from Haiti on Friday.

A local broadcast report quoted witnesses as saying bandits attacked the orphanage and stole electronic equipment before taking Hughes with them.

The report from Radio Métropole said the kidnappers issued a ransom demand of about \$530,000.

Mrs. Ryman said negotiations with the kidnappers were ongoing, adding her husband was constantly "in touch" with those involved in the process.

A Foreign Affairs spokeswoman said the department was aware of "the kidnapping of a Canadian citizen in Haiti."

"Foreign Affairs officials are in touch with his emergency contacts," said Amber Dickie, without providing further details.

Haitian police conducted a raid in the town Tuesday and freed a kidnapped Haitian and arrested four people, but Lucius said it was unknown they had any connection to the abduction of Hughes.

"We still have not located the Canadian missionary and do not have additional information concerning a ransom. But we are currently working on this case," he said.

The kidnapping was the latest in a string of abductions that have plagued the country since President René Préval took power last month.

Mr. Hughes was wounded in December 2005 during the kidnapping of a man who was working for the orphanage, Mrs. Ryman told the Canadian Press. His arm had to be amputated after being shot by the kidnappers, she said.

UN spokeswoman Marie-Evelyn Petrus-Barry said UN authorities were working with Haitian police to find Hughes and “liberate him as soon as possible.”

A rise in kidnappings and killings in recent weeks has raised fears of a flare up of violence seen in the aftermath of a February 2004 revolt that toppled Preval's predecessor, Jean-Bertrand Aristide.

Police said Tuesday that well-armed gangs have killed 10 Haitian police officers since May in a surge of violence aimed at intimidating the impoverished country's ill-equipped security forces.

The victims include two policemen whose bullet-riddled bodies were decapitated and burned last month in the Port-au-Prince slum of Cité Soleil, police spokesman Frantz Lerebours said.

"My impression is that gangs are starting a campaign to intimidate both Haitians and the police force," Mr. Lerebours said. "This is a new phenomenon in Haiti and we are currently discussing strategies to combat the bandits."

Haiti has only 6,000 poorly equipped police to patrol the country of eight million people. UN officials say a country of that size needs at least 20,000 police.



**Haiti discussed at the 11th ACP-EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly**  
**Tuesday 20 June 2006**  
**By Charles Arthur for AlterPresse (Vienna)**

Vienna, 20 June 06 [AlterPresse] --- A delegation from the new Haitian parliament participated on June 19, 2006 in a discussion of European Commission development aid to Haiti at the 11th ACP-EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly in Vienna, Austria.

The Haitian delegation, composed of three Senators and two Deputies, joined representatives of 77 other African, Caribbean and Pacific states (ACP) states and members of the European Parliament in the week-long assembly. The series of meetings included a session with European Development Commissioner, Louis Michel.

The Belgian member of the European Parliament (MEP), Johan Van Hecke, who was head of the European Union election observation mission to Haiti earlier in 2006, opened the discussion on Haiti by asking Commissioner Michel what measures the European Commission (EC) planned to take with a view to offering the newly-elected Haitian President and his government the greatest possible degree of development assistance.

Commissioner Michel replied by stating that in order to give the new government the time and the means to pursue reforms, and so as not to interrupt the development programme, the donors' conference in Brussels last October had decided to extend the CCI (Interim Cooperation Framework) for another year, until the end of 2007.

He remarked that EC is the most important donor, having committed nearly 300m euros. This development cooperation is, he said, concentrated on four themes: infrastructure, education, rural development, and support for democratisation and governance.

Van Hecke replied that as a result of his experience as head of the EC election observation team in Haiti in early 2006, he could confidently state that the EC's political commitment is very much appreciated in Haiti, but he wondered, "When we will begin rebuilding this country? What are our priorities? Infrastructure, infrastructure, infrastructure...Yes, but what about supporting democratisation? Is the new Parliament going to be supported? What about the local government elections? Will the EC support the local elections?"

Commissioner Michel replied, "I can reassure you, we will support good governance - it is one of the most important new approaches of our philosophy. Yes, we want to support the new Parliament. As for the local elections, yes, we support them. We will find the finances to help the process."

At this point, the chair of the Assembly, Glenys Kinnock MEP, asked for contributions from the delegates, and in particular the Haitian delegation.

Head of the delegation is Evelyne Chéron, the Fanmi Lavalas Senator for the West department, who is also first secretary of the Senate. Ms Chéron said, "Thank you for your kind words. We need election assistance as soon as possible because without these elections, constitutionality will suffer. We need a Permanent Electoral Council, and only then can we start developing infrastructure, education and rural

development. These are three important axis, but as soon as possible we need social peace because, if not, violence will start again.”

The British MEP, Fiona Hall, followed up with another question about the local government elections, pointing out their importance, not only for local democracy, but also because “this further round of elections must take place so that a number of Parliamentary seats, left unfilled because of problems in the first round, are filled.”

The delegate for the Dominican Republic stated that “Democracy in Haiti will lead to economic development. The Dominican Republic wants Haiti to develop so that we can have more trade. The EU and ACP must provide rapid support to Haiti.”

Commissioner Michel replied, “We are in favour of the local government elections. The Haitian authorities do know our position and we will finance the elections. We are open to another observer mission...”

Addressing the request from the Haitian delegation, he said, “We have spent considerable sums of money to help the Haitian people. I cannot just get on the telephone and tell my people to release money for Haiti. We need projects and requests coming from the Haitian authorities. President Préval knows that he can count on us, but he must play by the rules, and the authorities must get together with the delegation in Port-au-Prince.”

This latter point was underlined by Glenys Kinnock who said she supported the idea that the (Haitian) Parliament makes contact with the EC delegation in Haiti.

In addition to Evelyne Chéron, the Haitian delegation at the 11th ACP-EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly includes Senator Evallière Beauplan, representing the PONT party in the North-West department (Beauplan served as a Fanmi Lavalas Senator 2000-2004), Senator Ricard Pierre of the OPL elected in the South-East department, and two Deputies - Sorel Jacinthe representing the Fusion party in the Chambellan district of the Grande-Anse, and Jean Marcel Lumerant representing the Alyans party in the district of Grand-Goave. [ca apr 20/06/2006 23:00]

**Maxine Waters moves to cancel  
\$1 billion in debt immediately  
Haiti Action Committee  
June 22, 2006**

U.S. Representative Maxine Waters Introduces Resolution to Cancel More Than \$1 Billion in Debt for Haiti Legislation Would Give Newly Elected Government A Fresh Start

Washington, DC- United States Representative Maxine Waters (CA-35) today introduced a resolution urging the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank, the Inter-American Development Bank, and other multilateral financial institutions to provide Haiti complete debt cancellation immediately. The resolution also urges the U.S. Secretary of the Treasury to use the voice, vote, and influence of the United States within these institutions to accomplish this goal. Waters was able to garner bipartisan support for her resolution that includes senior members of the House Financial Services Committee and the House International Relations Committee as original co-sponsors.

"The impoverished people of Haiti cannot wait, as suggested by the World Bank, until 2009 for debt cancellation," said Congresswoman Waters. "The IMF, the World Bank and the Inter-American Development Bank should cancel Haiti's debts now and allow President Preval and the newly elected government of Haiti to invest in social and economic development for the Haitian people."

President Rene Garcia Preval was installed as President of Haiti last month, following democratic elections in which more than 60 percent of registered voters participated.

"The cancellation of Haiti's debts will enable the newly-elected government of Haiti to improve healthcare, education and other essential government services; invest in critical infrastructure; and improve the lives of the Haitian people," said Congresswoman Waters.

According to the IMF, Haiti owes over \$1 billion dollars to multilateral financial institutions, including \$9.1 million to the IMF, \$566.7 million to the World Bank, and \$470.9 million to the Inter-American Development Bank. Rep. Waters' resolution would expedite the process that would relieve Haiti of its debt burden and provide its newly elected government with a solid economic foundation as it moves into the future.

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## **Gangs kill three Haitian police, nine others**

**Thu Jun 15, 2006**

**By Joseph Guyler Delva**

**Reuters**

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti - Armed gangs have targeted police officers in a new outbreak of violence that has killed 12 people in Haiti, including three policemen, in the last five days, a police spokesman said on Thursday.

"These attacks were not carried out at random," said police spokesman Frantz Leurebours. "The police have particularly been targeted in this increase of criminal activities."

Several other police officers have escaped assassination attempts, he said. Nearly 100 police officers have been gunned down in Port-au-Prince during the past 2-1/2 years, police and human rights groups said.

In addition to the three policemen killed, nine residents of Port-au-Prince were also fatally shot in recent days, police said.

Armed gangs in several violent slums in Port-au-Prince had voluntarily put down their weapons a few weeks before Haiti's February 7 presidential election to facilitate the balloting. But gunfire has become more frequent since the winner, President Rene Preval, was inaugurated on May 14.

Gunmen near the Cite Soleil slum exchanged fire on Wednesday in a fight over sports equipment and giant television screens offered by a nongovernmental group to give underprivileged youngsters a chance to watch World Cup soccer being broadcast from Germany.

It was unclear whether anyone was injured in that incident. Similar gunfights occurred in Cite Soleil last week.

Police have also reported several kidnappings over the past few days, though the numbers are well below those seen last year when as many as 10 people a day were abducted at gunpoint and held for ransom, they said.

A member of the lower house of parliament, Aodont Bien-Aime, escaped a kidnapping attempt earlier this week but was injured in a car accident as he tried to outrun armed bandits who were pursuing him.

Police are determined to crack down on criminal gangs, Leurebours said, but it is a tough job since illegal armed groups have refused to give up their weapons.

"The Haitian police, backed by U.N. troops, remain very vigilant, because armed groups can decide any time to take up weapons again," Leurebours said.