

UN can probe racism, but respect sovereignty, Dominican government says
The Dominican Today
October 22, 2007

SANTO DOMINGO.- The Dominican government said it isn't concerned with the imminent visit to the country by two UN special envoys on racism and minority rights, as long as its sovereignty is respected.

Foreign relations minister Carlos Morales said "this is a democratic country and its acts are transparent and open to worldwide scrutiny, as long as its sovereignty is respected."

The Office of the High Commissioner of the UN for Human rights said Friday the special envoy for racism, xenophobia and intolerance, Doudou Diéne, and the one in charge of issues of minorities, Gay McDougall, will visit the country.

According to the UN statement, released in Geneva, the specialists "will try to obtain first hand data on problems of racial discrimination, xenophobia and intolerance."

"What these gentlemen are going to find in this country is that in fact the Dominican people are made up of 90 percent mulattos and black, and that here blacks of Haitians are neither discriminated nor persecuted," Morales said.

The official said the Haitian and Dominican people have reached an exemplary coexistence, "despite the geographic, cultural and demographic contexts which differentiate us, as well as the historical tensions that have marked us."

UN to probe allegations of Dominican racism against Haitians
The Dominican Today
October 19,2007

SANTO DOMINGO.- Two United Nations envoys will come to the country to get first hand accounts of alleged racial discrimination, xenophobia and intolerance against the almost one million largely undocumented Haitians.

Doudou Diéne, envoy for the fight against racism, xenophobia and intolerance, and the head of the issues on minorities, Gay McDougall, will visit Dominican Republic from October 23 to 29, invited by the Caribbean country authorities, said the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human rights today in Geneva. Both experts will visit the cities Dajabón (northwest), Santiago (north) and San Pedro (east).

They are also scheduled to meet with representatives of Government, international agencies in the country, as well as with delegations from non-government organizations and from different communities.

Last March Amnesty International (AI) denounced the existence of a "deeply-rooted racial discrimination" in the Dominican Republic against the immigrants of Haiti and urged the authorities to stop the massive repatriations.

Almost one million mostly undocumented Haitians live in the Dominican Republic and according to AI, from 20,000 to 30,000 are expelled annually from the country.

At the end of their visit the envoys will individually render a report to the Commission on Human Rights, which will meet in Geneva next December.

U.S., Dominican authorities continue probe of airports drug ring
The Dominican Today
October 22, 2007

SANTO DOMINGO.- The network of narcotics traffickers which used four international airports to take drugs to U.S. territory could be dismantled this week, when the Dominican antinarcotics agency (DNCD) and the U.S Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) joint investigation concludes.

For several weeks both antinarcotics agencies have worked in different fronts to uncover the ringleaders who used the country's air terminals to traffic with drugs, said DNCD president Rafael Ramirez to the newspaper Diario Libre yesterday.

He said the case which implicates the Dominican Henry Polanco, accused of heading the network which shipped drugs from Dominican airports to New York, is relevant because the ring might be also involved in other open cases which the authorities of Germany, Holland, Colombia and Haiti also probe. "Those people which we fired, arrested or investigated for cases of drug traffic in the airport at Punta Cana (east) and other airports, it's possible some are involved in the case in New York."

As to allegations that security officers of Punta Cana and Las Americas airports are being questioned, as well as airline employees, "In the course of this week we will give more specific details."

Up to 60,000 cross Dominican-Haitian border illegally each year, official says
The Dominican Today
October 23, 2007

SANTO DOMINGO.- Fifty to sixty thousand people enter the Dominican Republic illegally across the border with Haiti each year, said National Borders Council president Radhamés Batista yesterday

He said Dominican employers discriminate against the local manual labor by preferring the Haitians, because with the latter they can dodge the taxes and benefits required by law.

Batista, speaking during the conference on border development and migration between Dominican and Venezuelan officials said he's concerned with the racist campaign staged against the country by some NGOs, though didn't identify any.

The deputy Pelegrín Castillo said in his speech that the international community must adopt a stronger commitment to Haiti's situation, and that a Dominican solution mustn't be accepted to the neighboring nation's problems.

The event, slated to last until Friday, aims to exchange the border strategies to implement in both countries.

Caught by dreams: Haiti's migrant art

By Julie Chazyn

October 12, 2007

International Herald Tribune

Tucked away behind a middle class house in North Miami, Florida, is a tiny two-room guest hut where Sophia Lacroix lives, surrounded by paintings of childhood memories.

Sophia Lacroix, 38, who was born in Port-au-Prince, emigrated from Haiti when she was 15 and has never been back. Like an estimated 400,000 or more migrant Haitians in Florida and other U.S. states, she squeezes out an existence, caught between the social and economic collapse of her island homeland and a largely indifferent and unwelcoming host country.

For a living, she works at the Sant La Haitian Neighborhood Center, in Miami, a nonprofit organization that provides social, economic and legal information and referral services to the city's mostly poor Haitian community. But at night and on weekends, her small living room becomes her studio, where she paints, women selling bread at market, vendors squatting in the sun and children playing in gardens - from memory, scenes of everyday island life.

Lacroix is part of a new generation of Haitian-born artists, often self-taught, who have grown up in the United States but remain linked to a land that some have never visited, keeping their culture alive through an art that mixes an imagined Haiti with the harsh realities of migrant survival in America.

"I know that the Haiti of the '70s and early '80s no longer exists," Lacroix said in an interview. "I know I could never go home. However, when I escape into one of my paintings, it is as if I am transported back to the beautiful mountains and beaches, the noisy, colorful and fragrant market place of Pétion-Ville."

If a stare or a smile escapes her memory, Lacroix says that she doesn't have far to look for a reminder.

"I can capture the same face, the same gestures and same hardened wrinkles I remember from the Haiti of my childhood," she said. "The woman who would have been selling at the market in Haiti is now a maid in the U.S., working the same hours from dawn till dusk."

In a good year, Lacroix sells up to twenty paintings at prices ranging from \$350 to \$5,000; in a bad year, three or four. Recently there have been more bad years than good.

Despite Miami's increasing importance as a cultural center, and Florida's role as home to the largest population of expatriate Haitians, two galleries specializing in Haitian art have closed their doors in the past three months, including the Galerie d'Art Nader in Coral Gables, one of the biggest, with an international reputation for Haitian art.

"The market is slow right now," said Myriam Nader, 43, who opened the Galerie d'Art Nader in 2003 and whose family has been in the art business in Haiti and the United States for more than 50 years.

While a work by Hector Hyppolite, the father of Haitian painting who died in 1948, can sell for as much as \$65,000, Nader said, and a handful of contemporary American-Haitians, like Edouard Duval-Carrié, have established themselves in the cultural mainstream, such recognition is rare and the market remains narrow.

Still, Nader is determined to keep promoting the bright, bold folk art of young painters like Lacroix, reaching out to European buyers via the Internet, even selling phone cards as a sideline to tide over the lean spell, and planning to reopen her gallery later, in New York.

"Art is part of the Haitian life," said Nader. "When someone doesn't have money for a canvas, they will make art out of garbage cans and car doors - it's contaminating." Duval-Carrié, a classically trained artist who studied in Quebec and at the École Nationale Supérieure des Beaux Arts in Paris, moves easily around the international art world, in a way that many of his fellow Haitian emigrants in Miami cannot.

Unlike their Cuban neighbors, whose anti-Communist credentials guarantee them a right to live in the United States under the so-called dry-foot policy, Haitian refugees who arrive illegally risk deportation even after years of residency.

Bonded together by exclusion, they live in the section of North Miami dubbed "Little Haiti," a neighborhood of bright blue, pink and yellow buildings flanking wild gardens and uneven sidewalks, a world away from the renovated Art Deco houses, glass skyscrapers and celebrity mansions lining the islands off of Miami Beach.

Here, where unrefrigerated supermarkets showcase bruised mangos and papayas, sacrificial chickens run the streets and colorful murals adorn shops and church fronts, art is not a commodity but an integral part of life.

That life attracts dedicated collectors like Anthony Box, 46, a real estate lawyer whose living room is decorated with a yellow and green Lacroix still life of fruit, purchased from Nader.

"Haitian art is very addictive," said Box, a Haitian who grew up in the People's Republic of Congo and in Europe before settling in the United States. "Once you start collecting and learning the art you are captured."

"It is a difficult time for Haitian artists," Box added. But their struggle, both to survive and to perpetuate their culture, "is only adding to the artist's development which will, eventually, increase the art's value. "Right now it feels like works of love rather than works of commerce."

Police: Swiss man kidnapped in Haiti
AP, San Diego Union Tribune
October 22, 2007

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti – Three gunmen kidnapped a Swiss man from a community southeast of the Haitian capital over the weekend, U.N. police said Monday.

Thomas Noreinne, whose age and profession were not immediately known, was seized from an SUV in Petionville, a district near Port-au-Prince that is home to many foreigners and diplomats, U.N. police spokesman Fred Blaze said.

Officials with the Swiss embassy in Port-au-Prince confirmed that a kidnapping took place late Saturday but would not provide more details.

Kidnappings for ransom soared in Haiti after a 2004 uprising but have dropped sharply since late last year, when President Rene Preval and U.N. peacekeepers launched a crackdown on street gangs.

Haiti: Cultivating the green shoots of recovery
How micro-credit is helping Haiti's farmers stand on their own feet
By Gareth Chadwick
The Independent Online
17 October 2007

Haiti is the least developed country in the Western Hemisphere, and one of the poorest. More than half its population is unemployed and 70 per cent rely on the land for food and income.

But Haiti's land is becoming increasingly difficult to farm due to extensive deforestation for charcoal production. Eighty years ago, forests covered nearly 60 per cent of the country. Today that figure is just 2 per cent. Soil erosion caused by the deforestation has led to falling agricultural yields and an increasing number of deadly landslides. With unemployment and lack of income further hampering the ability of families to produce or buying their own food, up to 50 per cent of Haiti's population is malnourished.

The situation in Haiti is particularly dire for women, for whom agriculture is the principal source of income. Coupled with this is the fact that women in Haiti constitute the majority of the poor, due to the male-dominated society's inherent gender discrimination.

ActionAid has been operating in Haiti since 1996, when it established a priority project to help women gain financial independence and food security for themselves and their families. ActionAid's focus is on working with local communities to help them to help themselves out of poverty.

Its Haiti project is based in Lascahobas, which is situated in the country's lower central plateau. It is a remote, rural area, which depends on agriculture and local trade, as its isolation makes more widespread trade difficult. Because of this, the area, home to around 56,000 people, remains particularly poor.

When ActionAid first identified the need for a project, it began discussions with the people of Lascahobas to determine the most effective way it could help the community and support the local economy.

Most farmers in the Lascahobas area cannot afford to buy agricultural tools and materials, and loans commonly charge interest at 100 per cent, making repayment virtually impossible.

It quickly became clear that women in the area, vital to the economic vitality of the community and the mainstays of what agricultural production existed, were in particular need of assistance, but were hampered by their low social status and inability to afford tools or crops to grow.

ActionAid established a micro-credit scheme, targeting women, and enabling them to borrow capital on a six-month cycle at low interest. Micro-credit schemes – offering small loans with low rates of interest to those impoverished and the unemployed – successfully enable disadvantaged people to engage in self-employment, allowing them to generate an income.

During 2006, the organisation provided 100 women with loans, enabling them to purchase livestock, planting materials, seeds and tools. ActionAid works with women to arrange flexible repayment schemes and, when the loans are repaid, the money feeds into future loans for more women.

ActionAid has also incorporated a compulsory savings scheme into the micro-credit programme generating enough money to make the women self-sufficient.

Lascahobas resident Dieumen Cezaryen is a married mother of four. Her family's land has historically been very difficult to cultivate, and she has previously been unable to afford tools, fertiliser or even water to create any hope of a harvest. In 2003, her husband sold the family's livestock to pay for the cultivation of their land. Unfortunately, political instability in that year led to the area being virtually cut off and the Cezaryen family, like many others, watched helplessly as their crops rotted.

With ActionAid's help, Dieumen Cezaryen has been able to increase agricultural production on the family's land and earn surplus revenue from its sale. This not only allows her to buy more produce to grow, but also to pay for labour for the maintenance of the fields, releasing her children from the responsibility and providing them with time to study. Now Cezaryen is planning repairs on the family home which would previously have been financially impossible.

"My land is now more productive than ever. I have also purchased a goat, which I keep for reproduction. Soon, I hope to have several. I can now speak of broad improvement to the quality of my family's life, coupled with brighter prospects for the future of my children. Every day I thank God that I was fortunate enough to be able to participate in the ActionAid programme," she says.

Haiti: The Kidnapping of President Jean-Bertrand Aristide
New book chronicles events surrounding Aristide's removal from Haiti
by Randall Robinson, Darren Ell
October 23, 2007
The Dominion - <http://www.dominionpaper.ca>

In a new book, author Randall Robinson has presented new evidence in the debate about the events surrounding the February 2004 removal of elected President Jean-Bertrand Aristide. *An Unbroken Agony: Haiti, from Revolution to the Kidnapping of a President*, raises critical questions about the role of the United States in the overthrow of Haiti's elected government.

A key piece of evidence presented in the book is the statement Robinson took from Aristide's helicopter pilot, Frantz Gabriel, in 2005. Other than President Aristide, his wife, and Haitian security personnel at the President's home, Gabriel was the only eyewitness to Aristide's abduction on the morning of February 29th, 2004.

Canada's ambassador to Haiti, Claude Boucher, has stated publicly that there was no coup d'état in Haiti and that the Haitian President left of his own accord.

Colin Powell, who was US Secretary of State at the time of Aristide's removal, has made similar denials. According to the CBC, Powell called "allegations of a coup d'etat and kidnapping 'baseless and absurd,' saying Aristide asked for American assistance to leave Haiti."

"He came back to us and said it was his decision, based on what the security people were also telling him about the deteriorating situation, that he should leave," Powell told the press.

What follows is the full text of Gabriel's testimony, taken in South Africa while in exile with Mr. and Mrs. Aristide. -- Darren Ell

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I got to the house at 3:30 A.M. on Sunday morning. The gate is usually opened by a member of the CAT team (Haitian Counter Ambush Team). That morning it was opened by the Steele people [private security firm protecting Aristide]. This never happened before. (I later thought that the Steele people had gotten a call to play the game, to play along.)

The gate closed behind me. I parked in my usual space in the parking lot on the right between the two walls. I left the M3 on the seat of my car. I walked through the second gate and into the command post. No one said anything to me. I then walked through the office and then into the president's living room.

The president was standing alone in the room dressed in a suit with a white shirt and a dark tie. The First Lady was somewhere else. She was not in the living room.

I then asked, "Is there a problem, Mr. President?"

The president said, "There has been a lot of pressure coming from all different directions."

I said, "What do you mean, sir?"

He said, "The way things are looking – I am under intense pressure."

The phone rang and the president went to answer it. I heard him talk. No American forces were there at that time. While he was on the phone, I said to myself that I should go out and see what was going on in the yard where Haitian security and the Steele people were.

As I walked out [the front door], pulling up to the walk to the front door was a big white Suburban with diplomatic plates. I was standing by the steps to the door. [Luis] Moreno got out of the Suburban with two American soldiers. I turned and went back into the living room to be closer to the president. The president was putting the phone down.

Moreno said, "Mr. President, I'm from the U.S. Embassy. Ten years ago, I was there when you came in. I was there to greet you. It's too bad that ten years later, I'm the one that has to announce to you that you've got to go."

I looked at the president and then at Moreno. By then the First Lady had come downstairs. The president went into the dining room to speak with her. They came out together. The First Lady was carrying a small bag. She was wearing a suit.

Outside there were twenty to thirty American soldiers on the walls that surrounded the house. They had lasers on their guns that made red dots. The red dots filled the yard. They were crisscrossing and coming from all directions.

The two soldiers with Moreno were Special Forces. I knew this because they had beards. They carried M16's and wore full battle dress with steel helmets and bulletproof vests. They were white and said nothing.

We got into the Suburban. The president sat in the second row by the window. The First lady sat in the middle and Moreno sat by the sliding door. The two solders sat up front with one of them driving. I sat in the back row.

We went through the main gate and made the right toward the airport. Outside the gate, we were joined by a convoy of ten U.S. embassy vehicles. There were all white Suburbans. We made a right into the airport in the direction of the general aviation area. There were two hangers there. The old Huey helicopter was there. There was s white Airbus there. It had a huge American flag on the tail. There was no tail number and no other markings.

Moreno opened the door and got out of the Suburban. He said to the president and the First Lady, "Okay, let's go."

That's all he said. He didn't say anything to me. He stood at the foot of the plane and sort of motioned to the president, the First Lady, and me to board the plane. The three of us went up the stairs into the

plane. The two American soldiers who were in the Suburban boarded the plane and changed into civilian clothes (polo shirts and sneakers) while the door was still open.

Moreno never boarded the plane. The [American] ambassador was not there.

All this happened very quickly. Everything was timed so well. The Suburban came into the yard at about 4:00 A.M. We got to the plane at about 4:30 A.M. The Suburban went right to the bottom of the stairs. We sat in the Suburban about five minutes before Moreno opened the door and said, "Okay, let's go."

The plane looked like it would seat about 365 people. All the window shades were pulled down. Behind the first seating section was a big operations centre with telephone, a fax machine, and a computer. The machines were on one side of the plane and there were seats on the other side.

The president and the First lady were told to sit in the front section. I sat ten rows behind a bulkhead that was behind the American soldiers who were behind the operations centre. I could not see the president and the First lady from where I was sitting, but I went to talk to them several times. He was quiet. She was crying silently. I said to myself, This is incredible. This is a kidnapping. They just came and kidnapped the president in his home and took him away. I'm in the middle of a fucking kidnapping. This is the first thing that hit my mind.

There were about thirty American soldiers on the plane. They came from the house in the ten Suburbans. They all had beards. They boarded the plane with their gear and then changed into civilian clothes. One of them, who seems to be in charge, said to me, "Are you going back with us?" like he thinks I am one of his men. Maybe it was just because of my beard.

The American soldiers sat on the plane between me and the president and the First Lady. All the way in the back behind me were the Steele men with their wives and children. They were all wearing casual clothes. The pilots wore regular pilot's uniforms. We waited on the plane about thirty minutes before we took off.

There were five black people on the plane. Besides the president, the First Lady, and me, there was a Haitian woman who was with one of the Steele men. They had a baby. After we landed the first time, I asked somebody where we were but nobody would tell me. Everybody was quiet. I heard the fuel nozzle attach. Once in a while the baby would cry. After the baby was fed, everything was quiet again. They offered the president and the First lady some sandwiches, but they did not take them.

We were on the ground for five hours. The guys who spoke to me before, who seemed to be in charge, said to everyone over the PA system, "So far we don't have an official invitation yet for President Aristide. It seems like nobody wants him." The guy was on the phone the whole time behind the president who was sitting face forward. His staff was also on the phone. Some of the phones were black and some were red. They were using the fax and the laptops also.

We flew for a long time after we took off again. We landed again and waited on the ground for fuel. We didn't know where we were. When we were approaching the Central African Republic, the guy who was in charge asked me, "What are you gonna do? Are you going back with us?" I told him that I

was staying with the president. Then he said, "You are going to a French military prison." This is what he said to me. I said, "I don't care. I'm going where the president goes." Then he said, "You will be greeted by a French colonel on your arrival."

No Americans got off the plane. Nobody. Only the three of us. Only the Central African Republic minister of foreign affairs came on the plane. We left the airport before the plane took off. Before that, we went into a small terminal. It was in the morning. We sat in the terminal for thirty minutes. The minister allowed journalists to ask him questions, but he was in no mood to talk. Then they drove us to President Bozize's palace. The president was out of town. They took us to two rooms in a side section of the palace. It was three days before President Bozize returned from out of town.

More information about Randall Robinson and his book can be found at www.randallrobinson.com.

UN calls for renewed probe into disappearance of Haiti activist

3 days ago

The Canadian Press

October 18, 2007

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti - UN peacekeepers called Thursday for a renewed police investigation into the disappearance of a Haitian human rights activist and senate candidate who was reported missing more than two months ago.

Since his abrupt disappearance, scant information has emerged about Lovinsky Pierre-Antoine, a high-profile activist and member of ousted president Jean-Bertrand Aristide's Fanmi Lavalas party.

The UN mission is "concerned to note that we have still not received news about a person of stature, a political activist, who disappeared two months ago," said spokesman Mamadou Bah. He added that Haitian police have not responded to UN offers to assist with the investigation.

Police spokesman Frantz Lerebours said there was no new information on Pierre-Antoine, and would not provide further details.

Pierre-Antoine, a leader of the pro-Aristide September 30 Foundation and critic of both UN and U.S. involvement in Haiti, was last seen leaving his Port-au-Prince home shortly before midnight Aug. 12, said Ronald Saint-Jean, leader of a coalition called the Group Initiative to Save Lovinsky Pierre-Antoine.

Saint-Jean and other supporters say Pierre-Antoine had received threats because of his ties to Aristide, and they believe he was abducted because a rented SUV he was using at the time was found abandoned outside his home.

No ransom note was ever issued, Saint-Jean said. "We are putting pressure on the authorities to give us an answer," he said.

COHA Deserves Applause for Retracting Article, but Should Know Haiti's 2006 Election Was Not Free

**By Narco News,
Sat Oct 20th, 2007**

COHA should be applauded for having the honesty and humility to concede some of the shortcomings of Michael Glenwick's article of September 14. Larry Birns' substantially revised article is much closer to being fair and accurate in its assessment of the Aristide and Latortue governments. [1] Much to his credit Birns, unlike Glenwick, highlighted the US role in ousting Aristide and appropriately referred to US policy as "malevolent".

Unfortunately, Birns also claimed that the 2006 elections "could have been Haiti's fairest election ever." Birns should know from reading COHA's reports that those elections were very far from being free or fair. One would have to go back into Haiti's dictatorial past for examples of elections that were worse. The most important tactic used to rig the elections was widespread repression against Lavalas. Other barriers to participation were discussed in my first response (and in COHA's earlier work). After 90% of the ballots were counted, massive demonstrations erupted as evidence mounted that fraud was keeping Preval's percentage below the threshold required for victory. A deal was made. Preval was declared the winner and a transparent recount avoided. [2] It may be argued that the Haitian people won the presidential election back through popular mobilization after it had been stolen.

While the Haitian elite and their foreign backers did not ultimately succeed in stealing the presidential election, their tactics did succeed in saddling Preval with a legislature that would block progressive policies. They also succeeded in stacking the judiciary, the police and even some of Preval's cabinet, with supporters of the coup.

Birns writes as if the "long road ahead" towards "better days" is one that Haitians, and Preval in particular, will travel alone – that it is basically up to them to find their way towards democracy and justice. That isn't the case. The US and its allies will continue to malevolently block their way, and get away with it to the extent that their citizens remain misinformed about Haiti's recent history. The most dangerous gangsters Haitians face are high officials who reside in Washington, Paris and Ottawa. We who live in the US, Canada or France should do much more than simply hope that things turn out well in Haiti.

[1] Birns might have gone into detail about the Aristide government's achievements such as building an unprecedented number of schools, literacy centers, a globally recognized AIDs program, backing healthcare for all, and initiating a historic lawsuit against France for reparations .

See HaitiAction All of this with half his total budget cut due to US led sanctions

[2] See Brian Concannon's "Counting Some of The Votes in Haiti"

Also see "Nage Pou Soti"

Joe Emersberger contributes to the online publication HaitiAnalysis

For Current News on Haiti read more at [HaitiAnalysis](#)

Randall Robinson on Haiti's Tortured Past, Troubling Present

By Theola Labbé,

a Washington Post Metro reporter of Haitian descent

The Washington Post

Thursday, October 18, 2007

AN UNBROKEN AGONY

Haiti, From Revolution to the Kidnapping of a President

By Randall Robinson

Basic Civitas 280 pp. \$26

Randall Robinson, the founder of the social justice organization TransAfrica, has never shied from expressing his views. In "Quitting America" (2004), he declared that the United States had nothing to offer him and other native-born blacks -- a realization that drove him to move with his family to the Caribbean nation of St. Kitts and Nevis. In "The Debt" (2000), he argued in favor of reparations to African Americans for the legacy of slavery. In his latest work, Robinson offers a passionate retelling of the history of Haiti and the circumstances surrounding the rise and fall of President Jean-Bertrand Aristide. Using history, eyewitness accounts and his own role as a monitor for parliamentary elections, Robinson has created a worthy account, in his trademark incensed style, of how American and European policies have harmed, rather than helped, Haiti.

The book opens with Haiti's beginning as an island inhabited by 8 million Taino Indians when Christopher Columbus arrived in 1492. Three decades later, only 200 Tainos remained. Three hundred years later, freed slave Toussaint L'Ouverture transformed fellow ex-slaves into soldiers and led "the only successful slave revolt ever mounted in the Americas." Robinson calls it "the most stunning victory won for the black world in a thousand years."

While much has been written about the slave revolt, Robinson's contribution is his focus on the revolt's reverberations throughout the rest of the Americas in an era when slavery permeated the political and social landscape. Thomas Jefferson and George Washington, whose ideas were precursors to future foreign policy, were dismayed by how the slave rebellion was progressing and reached out to French political leaders to express their displeasure at seeing "such a spirit of revolution among the blacks."

Following the successful slave revolt, however, Haiti saw years of instability, with rulers replaced in coups d'etat and military generals appointing themselves leaders. The United States occupied the country for nearly 20 years at the beginning of the 20th century. In 1957, the authoritarian Francois Duvalier was elected president. Known as "Papa Doc," he would be succeeded by his son, nicknamed "Baby Doc."

The election in 1990 of Aristide, a poor, populist priest, as Haiti's president was a watershed moment. Aristide energized millions of poor black Haitians, who for the first time felt that the government might represent them rather than the interests of a coterie of wealthy Haitian families. After a coup attempt and three years in exile, Aristide was elected again in 2000.

Robinson's prose is often fiery as he lays out his indictment of the colonialists who created the country's fractured economic and social landscape. Haiti's successful slave revolt will always be an affront to Western countries, he believes, but should be an inspiration to Africans and African Americans. "Haitians have a culture that slaves once bled to defend. . . . For this, Haitians are reviled by a white world that the rest of us broken souls have long since succumbed to imitate," he writes.

But Robinson is most appalled at the way Aristide and his wife (he resigned from the priesthood in 1994) were removed from the country in 2004. By far the most gripping and enlightening sections of the book are ones in which Robinson, relying on interviews with Aristide's helicopter pilot, Frantz Gabriel, describes how U.S. troops whisked Aristide out of the country. Gabriel arrived at the president's house at 3:30 a.m. on Feb. 29, after getting a call from security guard who sensed that something strange was happening and told him to come. When he got there, he found the president alone, but soon U.S. officials pulled into the driveway. One walked into the living room and told Aristide, "I'm the one that has to announce to you that you've got to go."

The Aristides were driven to the airport in a convoy of 10 white Suburbans; they boarded a plane and, after some uncertainty as to where they would be taken, were flown to the Central African Republic. Robinson spoke to Aristide nearly daily after the forced exit and traveled to Africa along with Rep. Maxine Waters (D-Calif.) to find out what had happened.

In recounting these events, Robinson often takes on a crusading tone, using words such as "abduction" and "kidnapping" to describe Aristide's departure. These are more than opinions to Robinson; they are his truth, but with his urgent tone, he risks alienating the kind of reader he may want to edify, someone ignorant of Haiti's unusual history as a rebel slave colony.

Nevertheless, with his strong eye for detail, Robinson manages to illuminate a tragedy that the rest of the world experienced only through news reports and photographs -- if it paid attention at all. Describing his visit with Waters to the Aristides in exile, he writes, "At the bottom of the stairway, we saw the president and Mrs. Aristide standing side by side in shadow waiting for us. Their faces wore small, guarded smiles. Tired and emotionally drained, they appeared, nonetheless, composed and dignified."

Three years later, unanswered questions still haunt Robinson. Why has no one in the U.S. media investigated Aristide's claims that he was wrongfully removed and forced to resign? Why was he spirited out of his country and never told where he would be taken? Robinson has written this book because he wants to invite more people to search for the answers.

Haiti's Preval Seeks to Amend Term Limit

By JONATHAN M. KATZ

The Associated Press

October 17, 2007

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti (AP) — Haitian President Rene Preval on Wednesday called for a constitutional amendment to allow presidents to serve consecutive terms — a change he said would bring more stability to a country frequently mired in political chaos.

Preval, in a speech at the National Palace, proposed overhauling the country's entire constitution to give the government more flexibility to promote development and fight corruption.

He suggested holding all national and local elections on the same day every five years, and recommended creating a constitutional court to interpret the nation's laws. He also said the president should have the power to dismiss the prime minister — who is now appointed by the executive, but can only be ousted by parliament.

Current rules limit Haitian presidents to two terms, with at least a five-year break in between. Preval's initial proposal, which spokesmen said he would refine before submitting to parliament, would allow future presidents to serve those terms back-to-back.

Preval, who won his second nonconsecutive term last year, assured legislators he could not, and would not, seek office again.

"I know that as soon as the president asks to reflect on the constitution, it gives rise to suspicion," Preval said. "I repeat once again for everyone: My tenure comes to end on Feb. 7, 2011, period."

Haiti's current constitution was signed in 1987 after 29 years of dictatorship and was intended to impede any return to authoritarian rule.

Preval urged lawmakers to work with him to overhaul the document, which he called the single greatest threat to Haiti's long-term stability.

Preval said the amendment process is slow, needing the approval of two-thirds of the Senate and Chamber of Deputies and requiring they then wait until the next session of parliament to implement the changes.

Caricom office to re-open in Haiti
Caribbean Broadcasting Corporation
Friday, 19 October 2007

President René Prével is expected to deliver the feature address at the re-opening of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) Representational Office in Haiti on Friday, according to a CARICOM statement issued here.

It said that the ceremony will take place at the new office in the heart of the capital, Port au Prince and that the Parliamentary Secretary in the Ministry of Finance of Barbados Senator Tyrone Barker will represent Prime Minister Owen Arthur, the present CARICOM Chairman.

CARICOM Secretary General Edwin Carrington and Dennis Robert, who is representing the Ambassador of Canada to Haiti, will also address the function.

"The CARICOM Representational Office (CRO) is being re-opened with the support of the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), three years after it was closed following the interruption of democratic governance in 2004," the CARICOM statement said.

"The office was then located in the Embassy of The Bahamas and had been established at that time with the support of the government of the Kingdom of Norway.

The statement said that Ambassador Earl Huntley, a St. Lucian diplomat and administrator with wide experience, will be in charge of the CRO.

CARICOM said that the CRO is being established to facilitate more speedily the integration of Haiti into the regional integration grouping "with particular emphasis on the Single Market and Economy; identify and mobilise domestic, financial and other resources; promote relations with the media; and undertake public education programmes".

"The ratification by the Haitian Parliament of the Revised Treaty of Chaguaramas including the Single Market and the Economy and the re-opening of the Representational Office within two weeks of each other augur well for the quickening of the pace of the fuller integration of Haiti into CARICOM," Carrington said.

Deputy Secretary-General of CARICOM, Ambassador Lolita Applewhaite, said that CIDA's assistance regarding the CRO is part of the wider CARICOM Trade and Competitiveness Project.

"Among the goals of the project is to assist Haiti to prepare itself for full participation in the CSME. This is being done within the context of the wider goal to provide more and better opportunities for the people of CARICOM to participate in and benefit from the CARICOM Single Market and Economy (CSME).

"It also should enable all CARICOM citizens to understand, participate and actively engage in economic activities," she added.

CMC

World Bank more than doubles aid contribution
Caribbean 360.com
October 22, 2007

Robert Zoellick

WASHINGTON DC, USA, - The World Bank is promising a new tactic to tackle poverty in Haiti.

Though the bank works through governments only, it has said it needs to work with civil society organisations (CSO) and communities and help to coordinate support from other donors.

President Robert Zoellick told a conference of CSOs in Washington DC that he discussed this with President of Haiti Rene Preval.

"I have had some experience with this, the travails and tribulations of Haiti over the past years have not only left the problem with economic development, but they have left the problem of how you draw society into the challenges of Haiti's development.

"This is in terms of community building and other types of support. Obviously, the security situation has been a trial for everyone, and the UN force has helped on that.

"So we have played a role trying to coordinate some of the donors in support on this, but I would very much welcome some partnership with CSOs to see what can be done on the ground in terms of building local capacity, because we know the democracy is still fragile-I saw President Preval commenting on that this week-so if we are going to be successful, we have to try to build the local support for it.

He also announced that the World Bank was increasing its contribution to development aid.

"IDA is our primary tool for dealing with the 81 poorest countries in the world.

"We are in the process of IDA15, so we raise money for grants and concessionary loans every three years.

"I was very pleased that I was able to work with the board early in my tenure to get a contribution from World Bank Group resources of US\$3.5b for IDA15.

"That is in comparison with the \$1.5b that we pledged for IDA14; so as you can see, it's a pretty big jump.

And I was very pleased with the support on that, because it will strengthen our hand when I am going to donor countries and others to try to add to the sum of money we have to devote to the poorest countries."

He was speaking at a breakfast meeting of CSOs in Washington DC.

UN Mission in Haiti to Expand Policing Efforts

By Brian Wagner

Miami

VOA News

16 October 2007

United Nations officials have agreed to extend the peacekeeping mission in Haiti as part of a plan to add more international police. VOA's Brian Wagner recently visited the Caribbean nation, where officials say the renewed efforts will help improve policing on Haiti's borders and in their national waters.

More than three years into their mission, United Nations officials in Haiti are seeking to reform their 9,100-member peacekeeping team to better address ongoing criminal and security problems.

The Security Council agreed unanimously Monday to extend the U.N. mission another year, as it works to strengthen Haiti's government. The resolution calls on the mission to reduce the number of military troops and deploy an additional 140 international police officers, increasing the size of the police contingent to nearly 2,100.

U.N. military forces have been credited with restoring peace to even some of the most violent parts of Haiti, by carrying out raids and other military operations.

In a recent interview, J. Carter, head of civil affairs for the U.N. mission, says the focus now is on conducting more police operations.

"Particularly with regard to border control, customs, immigration, things of that nature," he said.

"That's one of the insecurities that remains, is Haiti's lack of control of its own borders and territories."

Illegal drug networks have been able to take advantage of weaknesses in Haiti's security forces in recent years to ship contraband from South America to traffickers in the United States and elsewhere. Also, insecurity along Haiti's border with the Dominican Republic has been a source of tension between the neighbors on the island of Hispaniola.

Carter says cooperation between international police and Haitian officers already has produced results, such as the arrest of several alleged drug kingpins this year. He says such efforts are helping to restore confidence in the nation's government.

"The people are beginning to see results too, and that counts," he said. "Because that provides a certain conviction and imbues credibility to the [Haitian] government's efforts."

Some Haitian lawmakers, however, have criticized the joint police efforts, especially agreements that have allowed U.S. anti-drug agents to make arrests on Haitian soil. They say such operations violate Haiti's sovereignty.

But deputy Jean Dorsonnee Verrettes from the northern Artibonite region, says international support is needed until Haiti's police force can function on its own. He says Haiti's police force still has some

weaknesses and lacks key resources. Verrettes says the support of international partners may help overcome some of those problems.

For months, the U.N. mission has been working with Haiti's police force to rebuild its infrastructure and reform its training program for new officers. The top U.N. police official, Richard Warren, says one major goal is to combat the perception of corruption that has plagued Haiti's police for decades.

"The change in reality is to move the orientation of the police service from one that serves the state to one that serves the people," he said. "If we can do that and it can be sustainable in Haiti, I think we have a bright future for the police."

Warren says 1,400 Haitian police officers have completed the new training program, and officials hope to graduate classes of similar size each year through 2011.

The current mandate of the U.N. mission in Haiti allows it to operate until next October, and it is unclear if officials will extend it further.

Haiti's President Rene Preval has praised the assistance from the U.N. and other international partners. In a speech last month at the United Nations, he noted that the presence of foreign troops remains difficult for many Haitians to accept, and he suggested the U.N. mission cannot remain forever.

U.N. Force to Remain in Haiti
By EDITH M. LEDERER
The Associated Press
October 15, 2007

UNITED NATIONS (AP) — The U.N. Security Council voted unanimously Monday to extend the U.N. peacekeeping mission in Haiti for a year, noting significant improvements in security in recent months but saying the situation remains fragile.

The U.N. force of more than 7,000 troops and 2,000 international police replaced a U.S.-led force deployed after an uprising toppled President Jean-Bertrand Aristide in February 2004.

More than 400 people died in clashes involving pro- and anti-Aristide street gangs, police, peacekeepers and ex-soldiers who helped oust Aristide.

Haiti experienced relative calm after President Rene Preval's election in February 2006, but violence flared several months later. A U.N. crackdown on gangs launched late last year has led to a sharp reduction in shootings, but many people still live in squalor and are in desperate need of jobs, hospitals and schools.

In Port-Au-Prince, Haiti, some political leaders and residents of the country's largest slum seemed to welcome the extension, saying a crackdown earlier this year has made life easier in a neighborhood previously run by gangs.

"Last year we couldn't have sat here playing dominoes" because it was so dangerous, 27-year-old construction worker Jean-Baptiste Venel said in the seaside slum of Cite Soleil. "If the U.N. is here for another year it's a good thing for the country and Cite Soleil."

Residents say that Cite Soleil — where people live in rows of bullet-scarred hovels with no electricity or running water — is currently safer than it has been since Aristide's departure.

Senate President Joseph Lambert praised the U.N. resolution but said Haiti must restore its national sovereignty after years of security provided by U.N. troops.

In its resolution, the Security Council acknowledged significant improvements in the country's security situation in recent months, but noted it remains "fragile," in part because of continuing drugs and arms trafficking.

Ban said in a report to the council following his visit to Haiti in August that despite "marginal improvements," the Haitian police force "remains unable to undertake crucial security tasks" without help.

The force's mandate covers mainly Haiti's security needs, but Preval's government has been pressuring the U.N. to funnel more resources into development projects.

The resolution urged the U.N. country team and all humanitarian and development organizations in Haiti to complement security operations by undertaking activities to improve living conditions in the country.

UN force in Haiti to target arms, drugs smuggling
Mon Oct 15, 2007
Reuters AlertNet

UNITED NATIONS, Oct 15 (Reuters) - The Security Council renewed the mandate of the U.N. peacekeeping force in Haiti for another year on Monday but reconfigured it to try to strengthen the country's borders against arms and drugs smuggling.

A unanimously passed resolution noted "significant improvements" in the security of the turbulent Caribbean state but said "international illicit trafficking of drugs and arms continues to affect the stability of Haiti."

U.N. troops and police were dispatched to Haiti in 2004 after a revolt that toppled former president Jean-Bertrand Aristide. They have only recently brought relative calm to the poorest country in the Americas, rife with violent gangs, killings sparked by turf wars in teeming slums and a rash of kidnappings.

The resolution took up a recommendation by Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, who visited Haiti in August, to reduce the number of troops by 140 to a maximum of 7,060, decreasing infantry and reorganizing the remainder.

Ban's Aug. 22 report said soldiers should be taken from calmer areas and redeployed to establish patrols along the coast and Haiti's land border with the Dominican Republic.

The report said that, with its 1,600 miles (2,560 km) of unprotected coastline, unguarded seaports and numerous clandestine airstrips, Haiti was wide open for arms and drugs smugglers.

The police component of the U.N. force will be increased by 140, to a maximum of 2,091, to help Haitian police in urban areas, compensate for the shift of troops and help with border monitoring.

Ban's report said the Haitian National Police, "despite marginal improvements ... remains unable to undertake crucial security tasks unaided."

Monday's resolution welcomed "continuing achievements in Haiti's political process," including peaceful local elections in April, but said the situation "continues to constitute a threat to international peace and security."

The U.N. force, drawn from countries including Brazil, Argentina, Chile, Canada, France and the United States, has suffered 31 deaths among troops, police and civilian staff.

After the deluge in Haiti, residents turn to each other
Friday, October 19, 2007
By Wadner Pierre
Caribbean Net News

GONAIVES, Haiti: Cars crossing Gonaives Avenue shoot plumes of murky water from their rears. Men on motorcycles stick to the shoulder of the road, dodging large puddles. As the flooding in this coastal city begins to slowly recede, residents are starting to assess the measure of destruction.

Scattered thunderstorms are still drenching Haiti, which remains on "yellow alert", with persistent threats of overflowing rivers, floods and landslides -- always a danger in a country that has lost 90 percent of its forest cover.

Haitians of all classes dread hurricane season. A week of hard rain in areas like Les Cayes, a seaport in the southwest, means residents must trudge through feet of water. And many feel abandoned to the mercy of the elements. One couple carrying plastic cans down a street in Gonaives asked, "Where is the state? Why do they wait for the catastrophe before intervening?"

Residents of this city, the capital of the department of Artibonite, which was especially hard-hit, say that local forecasting committees should be formed to help communities avoid the worst.

For more than a week, people in Les Cayes, Hinche, Port-De-Paix, Gonaives, Nippes and Grand'Anse have reported that the roads are impassible, or nearly so, due to the floods.

The rains began in earnest late last month. And since the first week of October, Gonaives, a city of about 100,000 people, has been literally underwater.

The horror of Hurricane Jeanne is still alive in the memories of its residents, and many complain that they see no sign of the hundreds of thousands of dollars that international donors gave after that monster storm in 2004 left some 3,000 people dead -- 2,000 in Gonaives alone -- with bodies floating for days. One Gonaivian remarked, "Only the good Lord can save us."

The Haitian government has released funds to send food and beds to the stricken areas, and the United Nations has also offered to help. However, residents here appear to be highly sceptical of the international community's involvement in Haiti, choosing instead to work together to do the best they can. "Since the passage of Jeanne, we do not have the means," a man named Croyance explained.

"We are forced to live under tensions. You see the jeeps of MINUSTAH [the U.N. mission in Haiti] and the National Police force, but we believe that only God will not abandon us. We are in his hands."

When asked for an assessment of the work done by international relief agencies and NGOs in the region, a 28-year-old man who gave his name as Eddy responded, "I, and most people here, believe these groups are only here to line their pockets. Their work is far from being completed or from being of any use to us."

He added: "All they do is drive around in their jeeps and make their bosses believe that they are doing something useful."

An elderly man named Rogest lashed out at Haiti's political class, and recalled that after Jeanne inundated Gonaives, many of the dead remained unburied for days and relief was slow to be distributed to the survivors. "The inhabitants do not forgive former de facto Prime Minister Gerard Latortue for not even helping his birthplace.

The officials elected in 2006 sit in Port-au-Prince speaking French and awaiting the patronage festivals to give some gourds to the priests of the parishes to show how close they are to the people," he said bitterly.

According to the International Organisation for Migration, 700 homes have been completely destroyed and more than 4,000 seriously damaged, "leaving around 4,000 families in distress and 3,000 persons living in temporary shelters." Areas in southern Haiti were also devastated, according to radio reports.

There have been 37 confirmed deaths, but some press reports indicate that up to 50 people may have perished in the flooding. A mounting number of climatologists believe that global warming, caused in large part by the industrialised north, has increased the intensity and frequency of bad weather during the Caribbean's storm season from June 1 to November 30.

This is a particular problem for Haiti because much of the country's topsoil is precarious and exposed due to the clear-cutting of forests to make charcoal for cooking and heating water. More than 70 percent of the energy usage in Haiti, the poorest country in the Americas, is derived from wood and other biomass.

Secretary-General Paul Loulou Chéry of the Confédération des Travailleurs Haitiens (CTH), a national trade union confederation, says the situation is desperate. He has heard from numerous people living in the flooded areas who have faced severe weather for weeks.

Chery said the CTH is trying to provide support to the many trade unionists living in the affected departments, but has few resources to do so. He explained that rising costs of living for the poor exacerbate the crisis.

"The people of all these departments need solidarity at once," Chery said.

Security Council renews mandate of UN force in Haiti

Agence France-Presse

Inquirer.net, Philippine

10/15/2007

UNITED NATIONS -- The Security Council on Monday voted unanimously to renew the mandate of the UN mission in Haiti for one year and urged the force to help the country boost its police capacity in addressing drug and arms trafficking.

The 15-member body passed a resolution renewing the mandate of the force known as MINUSTAH, which expired Monday, until next October 15 and endorsed recommendations that the force be reconfigured to comprise 7,060 troops and a total of 2,091 police.

The resolution called on MINUSTAH to continue helping Haitian authorities to undertake "coordinated deterrent actions to decrease the level of violence."

UN peacekeepers spearheaded a series of raids in the Haitian capital's crime-riven Cite Soleil last December to crack down on armed gangs, subsequently arresting hundreds of gang members and confiscating dozens of their weapons.

Last month, UN chief Ban Ki-moon, in a briefing to the council on his recent trip to Haiti, identified the fight against corruption and narcotics trafficking as key priorities.

The resolution adopted Monday also urged member states, including neighboring and regional states, in coordination with MINUSTAH, to help authorities "address cross-border illicit trafficking of drugs, arms and other illegal activities, and to contribute to strengthening the HNP (Haitian National Police) capacity in these areas."

The council also highlighted the need for the Brazilian-led MINUSTAH to establish patrols along maritime and land border areas in support of border security activities by the Haitian police.

The resolution was sponsored by Argentina, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, Chile, France, Guatemala, Italy, Panama, Peru and the United States.

MINUSTAH was deployed in the impoverished Caribbean country after then-President Jean Bertrand Aristide fled an uprising in February 2004.

Its main troops contributors are: Brazil, Uruguay, Sri Lanka, Jordan, Nepal, Argentina and Chile.

More than half of the Caribbean island's 8.4 million people live on one dollar a day, according to UN officials.

Border Officers Find \$852K Hidden In Car Bound For Haiti
West Palm Beach News
October 18, 2007

RIVIERA BEACH, Fla. -- U.S. Customs officials found \$852,000 hidden in the bumper of a sport utility vehicle leaving from Palm Beach and bound for Haiti, police said.

According to a press release, U.S. Customs and Border Protection officers were performing random inspections of vehicles destined for Haiti Wednesday, utilizing a newly acquired X-ray vehicle, the Z Backscatter Van, nicknamed "the ice cream truck" by CBP officers.

Officials said the officers noticed an unusual density in the rear quarter panel and bumper of a red 1997 Toyota RAV-4 that was awaiting export. Upon physical inspection, investigators found bundles of cash wrapped in plastic bags and black tape that were tightly packed into the small spaces.

CBP Director of Field Operations Harold Woodward said the money was being smuggled out of the U.S. illegally and was likely linked to "serious criminal activity."

U.S. Customs and Border Protection is an agency within the Department of Homeland Security which is charged with the management, control and protection of U.S. borders at and between official ports of entry. The CBP is charged with keeping terrorists and terrorist weapons out of the country while enforcing hundreds of U.S. laws.

Dozens killed in Haiti floods
Sydney Morning Herald, Australia
October 14, 2007

FLOOD victims washed their furniture in a river after flooding triggered by torrential rain killed at least 23 people in their village in central Haiti.

The loss of life in Cabaret, nestled in mountains about 30 kilometres north of the capital Port-au-Prince, brought the death toll from the floods and mudslides that have swept across much of Haiti over the past two weeks to at least 31.

Forecasters said there was no end in sight to the downpours lashing the Caribbean country. Heavy rains have also caused havoc in Cuba and Jamaica. But Haiti, the poorest country in the Americas, is far more vulnerable to deadly floods because about 90 per cent of its forests have been cleared, mostly to make fuel for cooking.

In September 2004, flooding triggered by the passage of the tropical storm Jeanne killed more than 3000 people in Haiti, 2000 in the port city of Gonaives alone, while spring flooding a few months before had killed 2000 in the south of the country.

China to send more riot police in Haiti
China Internet Information Center, China
Xinhua News Agency
October 18, 2007

China is to send its sixth riot squad to Haiti in December on a peacekeeping mission for the United Nations, the Chinese Ministry of Public Security (MPS) said in Beijing on Thursday.

The riot police, all from southwest China's Yunnan Province and mostly anti-drug trafficking police officers, are now receiving training in peacekeeping knowledge, language, driving, shooting and tactics, according to the MPS. So far, China has sent a total of five riot squads of 625 police over the last three years to Haiti since the first riot squad of 125 members was sent there in October 2004, said Meng Hongwei, vice minister of public security.

In addition to regular patrols, Chinese riot police also rescued hostages, searched for suspects and offered security safeguards during elections, Meng said.

"All the Chinese riot police in Haiti have won UN peace medals for their outstanding performance on the peacekeeping mission," he said.

Besides riot police serving in Haiti, since January 2000 China has sent 430 police on UN peacekeeping missions to countries and regions including East Timor, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Liberia, Afghanistan, Haiti and Sudan.

Haiti Literacy Campaign Grows
Prensa Latina
October 18, 2007

Port-au-Prince, A southeastern region of Haiti is about to be declared free of illiteracy, informed the nation's secretary of State.

Jacmel Valley, with an illiteracy rate of 15 percent could soon be free from that blight, said Carol Joseph, Secretary of State for Literacy.

The literacy campaign in Haiti based on the Cuban method, Yes I Can began last September 8 shortly after the arrival of specialists of the Cuban Education Ministry.

The Haitian government continues the census of illiterates and sets up centers for classrooms. There are already 53 of such centers in all regions of the nation.

Another backup, the preparation of literacy teachers, is already in its conclusive phase in several areas, Joseph said, specifying that the Spanish government is supplying financial resources for this purpose, while it is directed by UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization).

The Haitian government intends to complete the campaign by 2010 with a 90 percent reduction of illiteracy in the country, one of the highest in the world.

**Floods kill at least 31 in Haiti: official
Reuters
Sat Oct 13, 2007**

PORT-AU-PRINCE (Reuters) - Flooding triggered by torrential rains killed at least 23 people in a village in central Haiti on Thursday, a government official said on Friday.

The loss of life in Cabaret, nestled in mountains about 19 miles north of capital Port-au-Prince, brought the toll from floods and mudslides across much of Haiti over the last two weeks to at least 31, civil protection officials said.

Forecasters said on Friday there was no end in sight to the downpours lashing the Caribbean country and some of its neighbors.

"In the Cabaret area alone, 23 people are confirmed dead but there could be more and we are still in the process of assessing the situation," Interior Minister Paul Antoine Bien-Aime told local radio.

He said efforts were underway to distribute food, water and other supplies to the village, where at least 1,000 people have been made homeless.

Heavy rains have also caused havoc in Cuba and Jamaica.

But Haiti, the poorest country in the Americas, is far more vulnerable to deadly floods because about 90 percent of its forests have been cleared, mostly to make charcoal for cooking.

In 2004, flooding triggered by the passage of Tropical Storm Jeanne in September killed around 3,000 people in the port city of Gonaives, while spring flooding just a few months before had killed another 2,000 in the south of the country.

In eastern Cuba, more than 20,000 people were evacuated because of heavy rains, state media outlets and a government civil defense official said.

In Jamaica, meanwhile, more than 200 people were rescued by army and police from a low-lying area known as Big Walk Gorge that links the capital Kingston with the tourist resorts of Ocho Rios to the north and Montego Bay in the west.

The rains, which have been lashing Jamaica for the past week, forced the closure of schools across the country on Friday, authorities said.

(Additional reporting by Horace Helps in Jamaica)

Haiti floods leave 45 dead

AFP

Oct 12, 2007

PORT-AU-PRINCE (AFP) — At least 45 people have died in the poverty-stricken island of Haiti as homes were swept away in floods triggered by heavy rain, the interior ministry said Friday.

Interior Minister Paul Antoine Bien-Aime told AFP 23 bodies had been found Thursday in Cabaret, just north of the capital, and 12 were missing after floodwaters hit their hillside homes, sweeping them away in the current.

"The water carried off people living in houses built on the hillside, sweeping them into the town," the minister said.

More than 6,000 people have had to leave their flooded homes in Cabaret, where neighborhoods have been completely submerged, witnesses told radio stations in Port-au-Prince.

The mountainous and impoverished Caribbean island nation faces regular flash-flooding during the rainy season. Deforestation, which heightens the risk of flooding, is rife as the poor collect every scrap of wood for cooking.

Civil protection authorities said thousands of families were displaced and hundreds of homes destroyed or damaged across the country. Roads were swamped and plantations wiped out.

"Farming has been particularly affected and numerous crops have been destroyed," Bien-Aime said.

Apart from Cabinet, further casualties were reported in other villages after more than a week of rain. The ministry said the provisional death toll for the whole of the country was at least 45.

The government released funds to send food and beds to the stricken areas and the United Nations has offered to help. It already has thousands of peacekeepers in the country, whose problems were compounded by violent political strife in recent years.

In eastern Cuba, just west of Haiti, civil defense officials evacuated more than 18,000 people amid flooding concerns from the same weather system, which damaged at least 1,000 homes there.

And in Nicaragua at least 1,000 were evacuated in the Chinandega region of the northeast, where a flood alert was issued, emergency services told AFP. Heavy rain there has caused major rivers to flood their banks.

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Haiti flooding death toll rises
BBC News
13 October 2007

Floods caused devastation in Cabaret, north of the capital
Flooding in Haiti caused by several days of torrential rain has left at least 20 people dead, officials say. Twenty-three bodies were recovered from the town of Cabaret, which was inundated by flooding, Interior Minister Paul Antoine Bien-Aime said.

Floods and mudslides across the country have damaged farmland and left hundreds of people homeless.

Efforts are being made to evacuate people from villages in dangerous areas, civil defence agencies say.

Efforts were underway to provide food and water and shelter to people in Cabaret, Mr Bien-Aime said.

Aid operations have been hampered by poor communication links and infrastructure.

Heavy rains have also affected other countries in the Caribbean, including Cuba and Jamaica

Floods kill at least 20, damage dozens of homes in Haiti town
The Associated Press
International Herald Tribune
October 12, 2007

CABARET, Haiti: Waters from a rain-swollen river that flooded a Haitian town killed at least 20 people and damaged dozens of homes, government officials said Friday, as residents tried to dry out from the deluge and account for the missing.

Witnesses said the Bretelle River burst its banks Wednesday evening, sending water 1.5 meters (5 feet) deep surging through the dirt streets of this town.

"All hell broke loose," said 42-year-old Terry Bien-Aime, one of many residents who piled their belongings outside to dry. "I was scared for my life."

Interior Minister Paul Antoine Bien-Aime told The Associated Press while touring the damage that at least 20 people were dead and officials were searching for more.

Word of the flooding did not reach the capital, just 30 kilometers (20 miles) away, until Friday. Haiti, the Western Hemisphere's poorest country, suffers from poor roads and communications.

The floodwaters overturned trucks, flattened banana trees and knocked down shacks of corrugated metal. On Friday, families stood outside their homes along the debris-filled streets, cleaning mud, banana leaves and trash off their remaining possessions.

"I wasn't able to save anything. I just closed the house and the water came through," said Jude Beauvais, a 32-year-old school teacher.

Locals said many in the town of 70,000 were caught off guard because it was only raining lightly when the river jumped its banks, swollen by storms higher up in the mountains.

It was the second time this year that the town had been damaged by serious flooding.

Bien-Aime told a crowd on one of the hardest-hit streets that the government was planning to build dams relocate people who live too close to the river. He also said officials would distribute food and help residents who lost their homes find shelter.

At least eight people had previously been reported killed by flooding caused by heavy rains in Haiti over the past two weeks.

Haiti's widespread deforestation, mountainous terrain and large number of people living in shacks or poorly constructed houses make the Caribbean nation particularly vulnerable to flooding.

Flooding destroys homes, crops in Haiti

Source: Catholic Relief Services (CRS)

Relief Web

17 Oct 2007

Persistent and heavy rains over the first half of October have caused widespread flooding in communities throughout Haiti.

Overall, more than 14,000 people were affected in some capacity, as the floodwaters destroyed over 4,000 homes and damaged crops. The death toll so far is reported at 23, however, some reports cite as many as 37 deaths.

In response, CRS is focusing immediate relief near Les Cayes in the South department, and in an area of small, isolated communities north of Port-au-Prince that were severely affected. CRS Haiti staff and our local Caritas partners are on the ground distributing emergency food, clean water, and kits of basic household and hygiene items to replace what families lost from flooding.

Although the rains have subsided, the floods have caused pockets of severe damage to this severely deforested Caribbean island nation.

Approximately 225 families in and near the town of Cabaret, an area known as Les Orangers, lost homes and crops. Working with Caritas and the Civil Protection Committee, CRS has already sent food and water and provided transportation to the local Church.

In addition to the family kits, flood victims will also need long-term shelter and agricultural recovery.

Our Work in Haiti

CRS has worked in Haiti for more than five decades, providing relief during some of the most devastating disasters, including Hurricane Ivan and Tropical Storm Jeanne in 2004. Our programming reaches thousands of families, and has expanded to include food aid, disaster preparedness, HIV and AIDS treatment and awareness, and agriculture enterprise.

Rebuilding Efforts in Haiti Shift to Education

By Brian Wagner

VOA News

Port-au-Prince

09 October 2007

Thousands of Haitian schools reopened their doors for a new school year last month, thanks in part to the support of the United States and other international donors. As Haiti's government works to recover from years of instability, foreign aid remains a key source of backing for its struggling education system. VOA's Brian Wagner has this report.

Haitian slums, such as this one, offer little opportunity for jobs or an education

One year ago, violence involving criminal gangs, police and U.N. peacekeepers tore apart Cite Soleil in the Haitian capital, Port-au-Prince. Since then, joint police efforts have brought peace to the nation's largest slum, and allowed residents to return and businesses to reopen. The streets are much safer without drug gangs around, but there are still few opportunities for Haiti's youth to receive an education and rise out of poverty.

On one Cite Soleil corner, resident Job Civil says he and many others long for opportunities to help them escape long days of boredom. "Young people like us are on our own. We need an environment that will give us an education and create jobs that we can do in the community."

One nearby school for about 300 primary students is struggling to reopen after violence forced it to close in 2005. The director says he missed the start of the new school year in September, but he hopes to open in a few weeks with the help of the United Nations mission.

Haiti education's educational system is dependent on non-governmental financing

Across Haiti, international and private funding are crucial to the education system. Some 90 percent of primary schools are supported by religious or community groups. Conditions in Haiti and years of instability mean Haiti's government can support only a fraction of the nation's 15,000 primary schools.

Ernst Alexis is the assistant principal at a religious school in Port-au-Prince. He says parents also bear the financial burden to send their children to school. "Students, parents and schools must make constant sacrifices. Parents will do anything to find ways to send their children to school."

Alexis says many families struggle to pay school fees and purchase supplies for their children, and while some students can afford text books, others make do with photocopies.

To help overcome some of those challenges, the United States has given \$24 million to education efforts in Haiti over the past three years. The U.S. Agency for International Development recently presented a check for \$8 million for textbooks and other materials.

At a ceremony, Haiti's Education Minister Gabriel Bien-Aime welcomed the U.S. support to help expand the government's role in education. "The money will help schools overcome some of the difficulties we face, as the government tries to provide books, uniforms and other materials to students."

Overall, U.S. aid to Haiti since 2004 has totaled more than \$600 million. The Inter-American Development Bank says additional funds come from Haitians living abroad. Last year they sent back more than \$1.6 billion.

Fania Joseph

Remittances help many students pay for their education. Fania Joseph's father lives and works in Florida. The tenth grade student says she is sad that her father lives far away, but the money he makes helps to send her to a better school. "My father was unable to find work here, so he left. That is not the fault of the government, but conditions are very difficult here."

Like many of her classmates, Fania says she would like to finish school and leave the country to find work. But she adds she would like to be able to return some day to help her people seek a better life and improve the country.

Haiti delays Senate elections amid infighting on electoral council

The Associated Press

IHT

October 10, 2007

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti: Haiti is delaying legislative elections as it sorts out allegations of financial fraud and criminal activity within the nation's electoral council, a government spokesman said Wednesday.

The current Parliament was elected in 2006 after two dormant years in the wake of a 2004 uprising that toppled former President Jean-Bertrand Aristide, and 10 out of 30 Senate seats were supposed to be up for election in November.

Government spokesman Joseph Jasmin said the election "is certainly not going to happen in November."

"I can't give you any estimate when it is going to happen but we will work so it can happen quickly," he said.

Jasmin said Rene Preval and leaders of Haitian political parties have reached a consensus to revamp the feuding election panel and replace some or all of its members.

Today on IHT.com

California fires force more orders to evacuate
In China, the political message is continuity
Microsoft throws in the towel in fight with EU
The Provisional Electoral Council has long been criticized for votes plagued by ballot irregularities and fraud allegations.

Internal conflict reached a head when two members — Patrick Fequiere and Louis Jerson Richeme — accused commission President Max Mathurin, Secretary-General Rosemond Pradel and Treasurer Francois Benoit of embezzling an undisclosed amount of money for personal use and of trying to have Richeme killed.

"The (council) is broken in two. The members are fighting all the time," Jasmin said.

Mathurin declined to comment Wednesday, saying he would issue a statement later. Pradel and Benoit could not be contacted.

It was unclear how the announcement would affect current business in the Senate, which has the power to dismiss the country's prime minister and members of the Cabinet.

Haiti to study creation of force to replace UN peacekeepers

By ASSOCIATED PRESS

The Jerusalem Post

October 10, 2007

Haiti's president appointed a commission of academics and ex-military officers Tuesday to study the creation of a security force to one day replace UN troops in the restive Caribbean country.

An 8,800-member UN peacekeeping force, deployed in 2004 after an uprising toppled former President Jean-Bertrand Aristide, has provided the only real security Haiti has seen since Aristide disbanded the army in 1995.

The new seven-member panel named by President Rene Preval will decide whether to create a unit to supplement the impoverished nation's overwhelmed and outgunned police forces, or to restore the army, which orchestrated several coups throughout Haiti's history.

Aristide must be part of solution to Haiti crisis

The UN's peacekeeping mission has been extended for one year

October 16, 2007

By Thami Dickson

SABC News, South Africa

The resolution of the political problems facing the Caribbean nation of Haiti would not be complete without the involvement of the former Haitian President, Jean Bertrand Aristide. This emerged as the UN Security Council extended the mandate of its peacekeeping mission in Haiti for one year.

The council says Haiti has a golden chance to begin to rebuild itself with the help of the international community. Aristide is in temporary asylum in South Africa after he was removed from power in a political revolt in 2004.

The UN peace keeping mission in Haiti, known as Minustah, was established in 2004 to stabilise the country following a violent political uprising that resulted in the overthrow of Aristide. Since then, Haiti has struggled against lawlessness perpetuated by armed gangs operating from slum neighborhoods.

Political challenges

The Security Council has heard that order is now returning to Haiti and there is a chance for the Haitians to resolve their political challenges.

Aristide is seen as the important element in the ultimate stabilisation of this Caribbean nation. Although he was not discussed in the Security Council, his influence and support in the country is acknowledged as critical in the efforts to build lasting peace.

With the Haitian National Police struggling to build their ranks, the UN is providing the majority of the country's security forces. UN Secretary General Ban Ki Moon, who visited Haiti recently, writes in his report that the country needs help to expedite social and economic development and in building functioning civil institutions.

**Haiti hosts 15th CARIFORUM ministerial meeting
The St. Kitts and Nevis Sun,
Tuesday October 16 2007**

Haiti will be at the centre of Caribbean activity from 15-19 Oct.

The 15th Meeting of Ministers of CARIFORUM the Caribbean Forum of African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) States takes place during that week in Port-au-Prince and the Caribbean Community will re-open its representation office in Haiti on 19 Oct.

It will be the first time that Haiti will be the venue for a CARIFORUM ministerial meeting since the return to democratic rule in 2006. CARIFORUM consists of the 14 independent member states of Caricom and the Dominican Republic who are signatories to the ACP-European Union (Cotonou) Partnership Agreement which governs trade and aid relations between the two groupings.

Cuba is also a member of CARIFORUM but is not a signatory to the Cotonou Agreement.

The meeting is particularly critical coming as it does one week after the special meeting of the heads of state and government of CARIFORUM in Montego Bay, Jamaica during which the leaders met with European commissioners for trade and for development and humanitarian aid, to discuss the on-going negotiations for an Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) between CARIFORUM and the EU.

The status of the EPA negotiations is one of the items on the agenda of the ministerial meeting as is a report of the Regional Preparatory Task Force on the negotiations.

The task force is recommending specific capacity-building measures designed to ensure that CARIFORUM member states can take advantage of an EPA.

Ministers will also review the status of the ninth European Development Fund (EDF) programmes while looking forward to the 10th EDF programme through their consideration of a regional strategy paper and the Regional Indicative Programme (RIP) for the 10th EDF.

That latter programme is valued at about euro 165 million or US\$225 million and will finance regional co-operation programmes and projects in CARIFORUM during the period 2008-2013.

In addition, ministers will consider the future of the CARIFORUM Cultural Support Programme which was established in 2001 to promote the development of cultural exchanges and industries among the member states.

The meeting will also have before it applications from Martinique and Guadeloupe for associate membership in CARIFORUM.

The meeting ends on 19 Oct., and on that same evening the Caribbean Community (Caricom) will hold a function to mark the re-opening of its representation office in Port-au-Prince which was closed in 2004 following the forced departure from office of former president Jean-Bertrand Aristide.

The office will be headed by Ambassador Earl Huntley of St. Lucia as the community seeks to facilitate Haiti's integration into its operations, in particular the Caricom Single Market and Economy (CSME).

The Caricom secretary-general is expected to officiate at the opening.

Trafficking Case Exposes Child Servitude
The Associated Press
By JENNIFER KAY

MIAMI (AP) — The teen slept on a rolled-up mattress on the dining room floor and bathed in the backyard with a garden hose. For six years, she washed dishes, made beds and cooked for a family that beat her and hid her in a closet when visitors arrived. She never went to school.

Simone Celestin's story sounds like a slave narrative from another century, but federal prosecutors say it happened in South Florida. They say Celestin is one of an unknown number of children and teens called "restaveks," who are hidden as slaves within the Haitian immigrant community.

"Restavek" is a Haitian Creole word meaning "one who stays with." The term applies to an estimated 300,000 poor children in Haiti, mostly girls, who are given or sold by their parents to wealthier families, or taken from orphanages.

The children work in exchange for food, shelter and the promise of school, but often end up victims of physical and sexual abuse, according to the U.S. State Department's annual report on human trafficking.

Some sneak into the United States when their host family emigrates, then hide in a Haitian-American community, which is often loath to discuss the practice with outsiders.

Haitian-American advocates recall about 30 instances that have come to light since 1999, when a 12-year-old came forward with an appalling story about being a Broward County couple's household servant and a sex slave for their son.

But authorities believe those examples are probably just a small fraction of the actual number, because so few cases are reported.

"Haitians don't see those kids as slaves," said Jean-Robert Cadet, a former restavek who published a memoir tracing his journey from Haiti's poverty to the American middle class.

Marleine Bastien, executive director of Haitian Women of Miami, said some Haitians view the practice as an informal foster care system.

"They may feel they were helping the little child by bringing the child here and express bewilderment that they are being prosecuted for 'doing the right thing,'" Bastien said.

Maude Paulin, a teacher, and her mother, Evelyn Theodore, are scheduled to stand trial in January on federal charges that they illegally brought Celestin into the country in 1999 and kept her in involuntary servitude. Prosecutors say Celestin, then 14, was taken from an orphanage Theodore owned in Haiti, the least developed country in the western hemisphere.

Paulin's ex-husband is also charged with human trafficking, and her sister faces forced labor charges. All four could spend decades in prison if convicted.

Richard Dansoh, Paulin's attorney, said this is a case of cultural misunderstanding. He said Celestin had been the favorite of Paulin's late father at the orphanage, and the family took her in at his wishes.

"They took her to improve her chances of having a good life. This is not a slavery case," Dansoh said.

Dansoh said Celestin could not be enrolled in school because she lacked the proper documents, but Paulin home-schooled the girl. Celestin protested when the family tried to curtail her involvement with older men who had promised to help her gain permanent residency in the U.S., he said.

Paulin and her family were trying to "shield her from a life of inappropriate relationships," Dansoh said.

Prosecutors and Celestin's immigration attorney declined to comment because her case is pending. They declined to make her available for this story. It's not clear how Celestin's situation came to the attention of authorities.

U.S. immigration authorities and advocates call human trafficking a hidden crime because victims do not contact police. They say law enforcement and school officials often miss the warning signs in young people, such as missing identification, isolation or behavioral problems.

Advocates say it's difficult to coax suspected restaveks to open up, even when they are identified, because they are told their work supports family members back in Haiti, and they fear relatives will suffer retribution.

Cadet remembers the shame he felt as a teenager when a high school teacher discovered he was homeless and asked why. Cadet spent his childhood in Haiti as a restavek for a prostitute and her son, then continued working for them after the family emigrated to New York. They kicked him out when school interfered with his chores.

"For me to tell that teacher I was a restavek was like telling him I was a dog. In Haiti, a restavek and a dog share the same social status. For me to tell this man that, I am not really a human being," Cadet said.

The teacher is now a college professor and an advocate for restaveks.

Danielle Romer, president of Haitian Support Inc. in Homestead, recalled one 15-year-old girl whose experience showed why restaveks don't reach for help: "She was working a.m. to p.m., not going to school, but where she sleeps is better than what she had in Haiti."

Dwa Fanm, a Brooklyn-based women's rights organization, decided in 2004 not to renew a federal grant for services directed at Haitian restaveks because the 20 women who came forward did not want to register as human trafficking victims. Registration would have allowed them to apply for asylum or specific visas to stay in the U.S.

"As soon as we said, 'You have to report it, we have to report it so you can be certified,' they said, 'Never mind, I've changed my mind,'" said Farah Tanis, the group's executive director. "They didn't want to prosecute. It makes sense — people are afraid for their lives."

Haiti has long journey to stability – Brazil

Reuters

Wed Oct 3, 2007

SAO PAULO, Oct 3 (Reuters) - Countries in the U.N. peacekeeping force in Haiti are eager to stay until the job of bringing security to the impoverished country is done, Brazil's ambassador to Haiti said.

The mandate of the U.N. mission dispatched to Haiti in 2004 and led by Brazil is up for renewal on Oct. 15.

Haiti's path to stability will take more time, Ambassador Paulo Cordeiro de Andrade Pinto said in telephone interview from Haiti's capital Port-au-Prince on Tuesday night.

Andrade Pinto, who met with officials from countries in the U.N. force last week, said they showed enthusiasm for continuing the mission.

However, the renewal resolution should also change the mission's priorities to focus less on security and more on helping development, he said.

"This peacekeeping effort must be well-formed and stay in Haiti as long as it is necessary," he said, adding that he believed most Haitians want the nearly 9,000-strong force to stay.

Haiti has been relatively stable in recent months following more than two years of political and gang violence before and after the fall of Jean-Bertrand Aristide, the former president ousted in a bloody rebellion in February 2004.

The U.N. force and Haitian police have managed this year to rein in rampant kidnapping that threatened to undermine the government of one-time Aristide protege, President Rene Preval, who was elected last year.

"If compared to when I arrived here, security has improved significantly," said the ambassador, who has been in Haiti since 2005.

He acknowledged that the crime rate is still high.

"It is a country that used to solve its differences with bullets and knives. How can we change a century of culture in one day?"

The U.N. force, drawn from countries including Brazil, Argentina, Chile, Canada, France and the United States, has suffered 31 deaths among troops, police and civilian staff.

Haiti's President Says Nation No Longer Deserves Failed State Stigma

By David Gollust

VOA

26 September 2007

Haitian President Rene Preval told the U.N. General Assembly Wednesday the Caribbean country is on its way to escaping the stigma of being labeled a failed state because of its recent economic and security gains. Mr. Preval got a show of political support from senior U.S., European and Latin American diplomats on the sidelines of the U.N. debate. VOA's David Gollust reports from our U.N. bureau.

René Garcia Préval addresses 62nd session of the UN General Assembly in New York, 26 Sept 2007
Haiti has been the beneficiary of massive international aid, and the support of a U.N. peacekeeping mission, since the explosion of political unrest in the country in 2004.

And President Preval told the General Assembly the outside assistance, and the improved security provided by the U.N. mission, MINUSTAH, are helping the country turn the corner toward political peace and economic recovery.

Delivering his country's policy speech at the U.N. General Assembly, Mr. Preval said Haiti has all too often been on the U.N.'s agenda because of chronic problems. But, he said the unwelcome characterization of the country as a failed state no longer applies.

"Haiti is on the way to bidding farewell to that state slowly, patiently, but with determination," he said. "Organized armed gangs who are responsible for violence directed against innocent populations have been dismantled. And there is no longer any no-go zone for peaceful citizens in any area of our territory. The governance of our economy has greatly improved. The money printer was put away, and this has reduced inflation below the 10 percent line, which had been rampant for a number of years, and just a few months ago had reached the dizzying heights of 40 percent."

Mr. Preval said that real growth has returned to the Haitian economy after more than 10 years of decline in the gross national product, and that his government has patiently worked to restore a climate of peace in the country's turbulent political life.

He said Haitians consider foreign troops on their country's soil as a wound to their national sovereignty. But he said, in practical terms, the presence of MINUSTAH - as the country's new security forces take shape - is the only realistic formula available enabling Haitians to restore freedom and peace.

The mandate of the Brazilian-led 7,100-member U.N. force is due to expire in mid-October, but U.N. officials say another one-year extension by the Security Council appears certain.

Before his U.N. address, Mr. Preval attended a meeting of an informal support group for Haiti that included diplomats from the United States, the European Union, the Organization of American States and the U.N.

Appearing with the Haitian president after the meeting, U.S. Undersecretary of State for Political Affairs Nicholas Burns said the Preval government is responsible for the strides of recent months and deserves continued American and other international support:

"The point of this meeting, the third we have had in the last three years, is to show support for President Preval, to show support for the government of Haiti, to show support for extraordinary progress that Haiti is making under his leadership in terms of renewed stability," he said. "And if you've been to Cite Soleil and Port-au-Prince, you see that - the fight against corruption, the fight against narcotics and the drug problem. And the importance of MINUSTAH, the United Nations military force remaining in Haiti for another year, the United States supports that for a one-year renewal."

Burns said the United States is providing Haiti with more than \$200 million in economic and security aid this year, on top of the \$600 million given since the 2004 upheaval that drove controversial former President Jean-Bertrand Aristide from power.

Haiti: Duvalier Could Face Justice

By ALEXANDRA OLSON

The Associated Press

Sep 28, 2007

NEW YORK (AP) — Haiti's president said Friday that former dictator Jean-Claude "Baby Doc" Duvalier would have to face justice for his regime's corruption and abuses if he returns to the Caribbean country from exile.

Duvalier, whose rule came to an abrupt end in February 1986 when he fled during a popular uprising, ended years of silence over the weekend with a Haitian radio address in which he apologized for "wrongs" committed under his rule. He did not say whether he would return to Haiti, but his unexpected address came amid a quiet campaign by some of his hardcore supporters to bring him back from in France.

President Rene Preval, who earlier this week rejected Duvalier's apology, said he could not prevent the former dictator from returning because Haiti's constitution prohibits the forced exile of any citizen.

Asked if Duvalier would be brought to trial, Preval said his "dictatorship killed thousands of people" and stole millions of dollars.

"There is also the clamor of the people ... I think justice has to have its say," Preval told a news conference in New York, where he was attending the U.N. General Assembly.

Earlier this week, Preval said his government was preparing a case to recover \$6.3 million in Duvalier-linked Swiss bank accounts. Many Haitians believe the money was stolen from public funds. Duvalier has denied illegally taking money.

Named president for life at 19 following the death of his father in 1971, "Baby Doc" now reportedly supports himself with handouts from friends. An estimated 60,000 people were killed during the 29-year father-and-son dictatorship, while many others were maimed by the dictatorship or forced into exile.

Preval also said he saw no reason to restore the Haitian army that was disbanded in 1995 by Jean-Bertrand Aristide, the president toppled in a 2004 uprising. An 8,800-member U.N. force has provided the only real security in the impoverished Caribbean nation since Aristide's ouster.

In July, the government said it would study the creation of a security force to one day replace the U.N. peacekeepers, and that a special commission named by Preval would decide whether it should take the form of a reconstituted army or a supporting unit of Haiti's outgunned police.

Danticat family story also Haiti's tragic tale

By Chauncey Mabe

SOUTH FLORIDA SUN-SENTINEL

The Contra Costa Times

10/14/2007

In her family memoir, "Brother, I'm Dying," nominated just last week for a National Book Award, Edwidge Danticat has produced a nearly perfect little book. Not only is this a consistently engaging account of fraternal devotion between her father and uncle, but it also serves as a miniature dramatization of the tragedy besetting her beloved, benighted native land, Haiti.

What's more, Danticat, for the most part, tells the story rather than showing it -- thereby demonstrating one way in which autobiographical writing may be rescued from the excessive novelization that has plagued the memoir throughout its rise to literary and commercial prominence.

Danticat, of course, is a novelist of proven ability. Indeed, she is among the first important Haitian-born literary figures to write in English rather than the island nation's colonial tongue, French, or the vernacular language of its people, Creole. She emerged as a prodigy when her creative writing thesis at Brown University was published as the novel "Breath, Eyes, Memory" in 1994. Oprah Winfrey catapulted Danticat to superstardom by selecting the novel for her TV book club two years later.

"Brother, I'm Dying" engages the reader's attention from its opening sentence: "I found out I was pregnant the same day that my father's rapid weight loss and chronic shortness of breath were positively diagnosed as end-stage pulmonary fibrosis."

Quickly sketching in the details of a 2004 visit to New York, Danticat introduces us to the extended family centered on her father, a retired gypsy-cabdriver. At first it seems she is laying the groundwork for a lovely, mournful meditation on the symmetry of life's cycles, as a revered father prepares to die and the family readies itself for the birth of a child.

Yet when Danticat pulls back in subsequent chapters to show her early life in Haiti, it is not her father but her uncle Joseph who becomes the protagonist of the story. Joseph is the brother who stayed behind in Port-au-Prince, where he served as pastor of a small neighborhood Protestant church, a local eminence who ran a school, raised his own and other children, and survived cancer of the throat to return to his pulpit.

Little Edwidge, though aware of her real father and mother far away in New York, regarded Joseph and his wife as her parents until she was 11 years old. When her parents call to say they can finally afford to bring her and her brother Bob to the United States, she is reluctant to go:

"I reached over and pinched him on the back of the hand that was holding the phone. My uncle slapped my hand away, all the while shooting me a reprimanding glare. Even though we had been expecting it, how could I tell him that I didn't want to leave him? What difference could it make? For better or for worse, I had to go. These were my parents, my real parents, and they wanted me to come live with them."

Danticat refrains from the false drama she might have obtained by shaping her nonfiction story into the tropes of a novel. On the contrary, as she relates anecdotes of family triumphs and misadventures -- births and deaths, secret pregnancies, origin stories of long marriages, terrifying encounters with the Tontons Macoutes -- her prose sometimes takes on the tone of poetic fable, but never seems anything less than an honest attempt at factual accuracy.

In some ways "Brother, I'm Dying" is an archetypal American immigrant story -- parents move here and through hard work and sacrifice lay the foundation for their children's prosperity -- but in its details, it remains distinctly Haitian, encompassing, by means of the sad end of her uncle's story, the particular tragedy of that downtrodden island.

Joseph refuses to leave Haiti and the Bel Air neighborhood, even as conditions worsen over the years. On the eve of a long-planned trip to visit churches in Miami, his neighborhood is riven by a battle between U.N. troops and local gangs.

His house and church looted and in ruins, Joseph flees to the United States, where he is caught up in a Kafkaesque bureaucratic nightmare, mistakenly interned at the Krome Detention Center by indifferent functionaries. Despite frantic efforts by Danticat, her husband and an immigration lawyer, this dignified and blameless man, age 81, is jailed like a criminal.

It is here that Danticat's stylistic restraint serves her best. Instead of ranting about the injustices inflicted upon Uncle Joseph, her narrative voice, if anything, grows quieter -- steely, even -- as she relates the series of indignities he suffers before the conclusion of his awful little drama, which would have been forgotten, had not his niece been a famous American writer with the skill and platform to report it, in this very fine book, to the world.

"Baby Doc" is wrong Rx for Haiti

Jean-Claude "Baby Doc" Duvalier wants another shot in Haiti.

Editorial

The Seattle Times

Editorial

September 28, 2007

A Tree Grows in Issaquah

International efforts to stabilize and rebuild Haiti are greatly compromised by Jean-Claude "Baby Doc" Duvalier's quiet grab for power in the Caribbean island.

Haiti has long been one of the most corrupt and unstable nation in the Western Hemisphere. But since the election last year of President René Préval, the island has enjoyed a measure of peace and stability. Gone are the daily clashes between armed thugs, protesters and United Nations peacekeepers

Inflation is falling. Haitian currency is rising.

This is no time for Duvalier to emerge from the rock under which he has long resided. The former Haitian leader is widely remembered for presiding over a brutal kleptocracy for 15 years before being ousted in a popular uprising in 1986.

Until then, many Haitians had known no life other than one under the brutal hand of a Duvalier. Before the younger man, his father, known as Papa Doc, had ruled in an equally harsh fashion.

After years of silence in exile in France, Duvalier and a few supporters have launched a quiet campaign to return him to power. A public-radio address by Duvalier acknowledged his regime's many "mistakes" and asked Haitians for forgiveness. Reported to be penniless and unhappy in exile, Duvalier is pushing for his small National Unity Party to have a hand in Haitian politics.

Thanks, but no thanks. Haiti is on an admittedly long road to recovery. It must still tackle a 70-percent unemployment rate and a ruined environment. It doesn't need Duvalier to add to its tall list of challenges.

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Penniless in exile, Baby Doc asks Haiti to forgive him

The Guardian UK

Rory Carroll, Latin America correspondent

Wednesday September 26, 2007

The Guardian

Jean-Claude "Baby Doc" Duvalier, Haiti's former dictator, has broken years of silence to apologise for his regime's mistakes and to request his people's forgiveness.

The 56-year-old recorded a message from his exile in France accepting responsibility for "wrongs" committed during his 15-year rule over the Caribbean island. It has been broadcast around Haiti in the recent days.

The broadcast appeared aimed at softening up public opinion for an unlikely political comeback. That Duvalier is said to be near penniless may be relevant.

"If, during my presidential mandate, the government caused any physical, moral or economic wrongs to others, I solemnly take the historical responsibility ... to request forgiveness from the people and ask for the impartial judgment of history," Duvalier said.

For most Haitians there is no if. Duvalier is remembered for presiding over a murderous kleptocracy for 15 years until being ousted in a popular uprising in 1986.

A chaotic legacy endures in the form of extreme poverty, lawlessness and political turmoil which makes Haiti one of the worst places to live in the western hemisphere.

That desperation, however, has allowed Duvalier to claim things have deteriorated since he left and that the country would benefit from his political resurrection.

The phrasing of the statement from Paris was more aspirational than penitential and cast the former playboy in the role of democratic saviour-in-waiting.

"The watchword is already launched, the instruction is given. Militants and militant sympathizers of the National Unity party be ready. We live in waiting of the revival," Duvalier said.

The NUP claims to have recruited thousands of new members in Haiti on the back of nostalgia for the deposed dictator. They launched the François Duvalier Foundation, named after Jean-Claude's father, in 2006 to remind people that he was once considered a champion of the island's black underclass.

In the broadcast Duvalier said he was "broken by 20 years of exile" but "reinvigorated" by what he claimed was growing support among younger Haitians.

A 9,000-strong UN peacekeeping force has restored some order on the island, giving President René Préval's government a breathing space to fight poverty and crime. Analysts warn that the current calm is fragile.

The chances of a Baby Doc comeback are remote. The "Duvalierists" seldom gather in public because of enduring hostility. They did not contest the most recent election, and so have no seats in parliament.

Bobby Duval, a former football star and human rights advocate who was starved and tortured under the Duvalier regime, said the former dictator's apology did not go far enough. "He killed thousands of people, stole money and destroyed the psyche and heart of a people. This guy should be in jail and I'm just waiting for him to come back so that can happen," he told the Associated Press.

Baby Doc, so-called because he inherited power from his father François "Papa Doc" Duvalier, a doctor-turned-tyrant, lacks the common touch. His address was in French, not Creole, the language spoken in the slums where most Haitians live.

The father and son reign of 29 years left at least 40,000 political opponents dead, many of them at the hands of the Tontons Macoutes militia. Baby Doc is also remembered for presiding over embezzlement which is reputed to have drained £250m from the impoverished treasury.

When he fled to France he lived a luxurious life on the Riviera, driving a Ferrari, shopping in designer boutiques and shuttling between his chateau and several apartments. The money appears to have run out several years ago after a costly divorce from Michelle Bennett Pasquet.

Duvalier's inability or unwillingness to get a job has forced him to rely on handouts from friends. He reportedly lives in a one-bedroom flat in Paris. Last month Switzerland extended a freeze on a Duvalier-linked bank account containing £3.1m.

Backstory

Jean-Claude "Baby Doc" Duvalier's spectacular rise and fall was a Haitian tragedy. Anointed president for life aged 19 in 1971, the playboy continued the tyranny of his late father, François "Papa Doc".

The long-suffering population plunged deeper into poverty while Baby Doc's family and cronies looted the treasury. Dissenters were jailed, shot and hacked to death. His glitzy multimillion dollar wedding underlined the dictator's aloofness. Trafficking in drugs and cadavers (for foreign medical schools) further tainted the regime.

An uprising in 1986 prompted exile to France. Baby Doc's expensive lifestyle and costly divorce drained his fortune. He now lives modestly in Paris and claims to be broke. The island he left behind is the poorest, and according to social indicators the most wretched, in the hemisphere.

Haiti's 'Baby Doc' seeks forgiveness

By Tom Leonard in New York

The Telegraph, UK

27/09/2007

Jean-Claude "Baby Doc" Duvalier, the exiled former dictator of Haiti, has belatedly asked his countrymen to forgive "wrongs" committed by his regime in an apparent bid to soften opposition to him returning there.

In a speech recorded in Paris, where he has reportedly been living in growing poverty, Duvalier urged supporters to rally around his small political party.

It was Duvalier's first public address in years and the speech was broadcast across the impoverished Caribbean country that he and his father, Francois "Papa Doc" Duvalier, did so much to ruin.

Duvalier, 56, took over as ruler of Haiti from his father in 1971 when he was just 19.

As "president for life", he continued in the family tradition of torturing and murdering political opponents, and pilfering the state coffers.

When he fled to France in 1986 following a popular uprising, he left a country racked by violence, and economically and politically on its knees.

In the radio address, Duvalier described himself as "broken by 20 years of exile" but "reinvigorated" by what he claimed was growing support among younger Haitians for his small National Unity Party.

"The watchword is already launched, the instruction is given. Militants and militant sympathisers of the National Unity Party be ready. We live in waiting of the revival," he said. Duvalier made no direct mention of planning to return. Last year, supporters set up the Francois Duvalier Foundation to promote supposedly positive aspects of his rule.

In his speech, Duvalier said history would be the judge of his regime. "If, during my presidential mandate, the government caused any physical, moral or economic wrongs to others, I solemnly take the historical responsibility ... to request forgiveness from the people and ask for the impartial judgment of history," he said.

Bobby Duval, a former football star who was starved and tortured under the Duvalier regime for speaking out against human rights abuses, said it was the first time he could recall the former dictator apologising for his regime's atrocities.

"He killed thousands of people, stole money and destroyed the psyche and heart of a people. This guy should be in jail and I'm just waiting for him to come back so that can happen," said Mr Duval.

Duvalier's party has no seats in parliament, although the party did not contest seats in the most recent elections.

His address was timed to coincide with the 50th anniversary of his father's election.

Haiti's constitution outlaws the forced exile of any Haitian citizen.

Haiti to go after former dictator's funds
USA Today
September 25, 2007

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti (AP) — Haitian President Rene Preval on Tuesday rejected an apology from former dictator Jean-Claude "Baby Doc" Duvalier and said the government would ask a court to recover millions in state funds allegedly stolen during the 15-year regime.

Preval, speaking before leaving for the U.N. General Assembly in New York, said Duvalier's surprise apology for past abuses was welcome but inadequate.

"An apology is one thing, justice is another thing," Preval, a former anti-Duvalier activist who was elected president last year, told reporters. "It will be up for the Haitian people to decide if there will be forgiveness."

Preval said his government had asked Swiss authorities to freeze Duvalier-linked bank accounts containing \$6.3 million — money many Haitians believe was stolen from public funds. Duvalier has denied illegally taking money and the Swiss government has said the funds would remain frozen for at least another year.

The president said his administration is preparing a case to "recuperate the funds," without providing details.

Duvalier, whose regime came to an abrupt end in February 1986 when he fled the country during a popular uprising, ended years of silence over the weekend with a Haitian radio address in which he apologized for "wrongs" committed under his rule.

The address coincided with the 50th anniversary of the election of his father and predecessor, Francois "Papa Doc" Duvalier. It also came amid a quiet campaign by die-hard allies to see him return from exile in France.

Duvalier did not say whether he would seek to return to his homeland, but claimed younger Haitians are beginning to mobilize in support of his small National Unity Party, which plans to run candidates in a parliamentary election this year.

Named president for life at 19 following the death of his father in 1971, "Baby Doc" now lives in France and reportedly supports himself with handouts from friends.

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Senior UN official in Haiti urges action to prevent sexual abuse

Source: United Nations News Service

Relief Web, Switzerland

10 Oct 2007

A senior official serving with the United Nations peacekeeping operation in Haiti (MINUSTAH) has called for action to prevent sexual exploitation and abuse by UN personnel.

Speaking to participants at a UN-run workshop on the issue yesterday, the Secretary-General's Deputy Special Representative, Luiz Carlos da Costa, stressed that sexual exploitation and abuse constitutes a serious breach that can result in instant dismissal.

Addressing the problem is an essential issue for the UN, he said, emphasizing the need for all UN personnel to display exemplary conduct.

"All those who, under the banner of the United Nations, work in Haiti have a mission to help the country to advance on the road to peace and progress," he said. "We therefore have an essential role based on trust, and are expected to live up to a high standard of behaviour."

Mr. da Costa said it is "completely unacceptable that certain individuals betray this trust" by committing acts of sexual exploitation or abuse, or by overlooking them.

Mary Anne Martin, who specializes in discipline issues, led Tuesday's workshop, which included the participation of senior UN officials, other staff, and representatives of non-governmental organizations (NGO) and UN agencies.

The aim was to lay the groundwork for preventing sexual exploitation and abuse, including the use of prostitutes, and came as part of the UN's overall "zero-tolerance" policy on the issue.

Ms. Martin emphasized the need to look at the problem comprehensively and define strategies which are best suited to address it. She called for participants to focus their attention on understanding the circumstances which give rise to misconduct to formulate appropriate responses.

MINUSTAH, in line with the overall UN policy, has taken steps to combat the problem, including by having a conduct and discipline unit related to the Office of the Secretary-General's Special Representative.

Corruption claims halt Haiti election for senators

Wednesday, October 10, 2007

By Joseph Guylor Delva

Caribbean Net News, Reuters

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti (Reuters): An investigation into allegations that members of Haiti's electoral council have misappropriated public funds forced authorities to abandon plans to hold elections next month for a third of the country's Senate seats, an electoral official said on Tuesday.

The president of the electoral council, Max Mathurin, said the first round of the ballot, due to take place on Nov. 25, and the second round on Dec. 2 would be postponed because the council had stopped working while the members accused of corruption by their colleagues wait to know their fate.

"The decision to set a new date for the election is no longer in our hands ... President (Rene) Preval has to make a decision as to what will become of this electoral council," Mathurin told Reuters.

Haiti, long racked by political instability and bloodshed, was plunged into chaos after former President Jean-Bertrand Aristide was ousted in an armed revolt in 2004.

A UN peacekeeping force struggled at first to rein in rampant kidnappings and violence. But the Caribbean country of 8.5 million has begun to edge slowly toward stability and social peace since Preval was elected last year.

Progress, however, is precarious and grinding poverty means many Haitians are growing impatient for more concrete results.

Jostling for political power is getting fiercer as political parties vie for control of the 30-member Senate, which has the constitutional power to fire the prime minister and government ministers.

Next month's election was to replace a third of the Senate and also find a replacement for an additional senator killed in an accident this year. The delay means it will not be possible for new senators to take office by the Jan. 14, 2008, deadline set in the constitution.

The corruption allegations against three electoral council members were filed by two other members of the nine-seat panel -- Patrick Fequiere and Louis Jerson Richeme.

Mathurin, Rosemond Pradel, the council's secretary-general, and Francois Benoit, its treasurer, who have been banned from leaving the country, are accused of misappropriating public funds. The amount allegedly embezzled was not disclosed.

Fequiere told Reuters he and Richeme had filed documents proving the allegations but declined further comment because the accusations were being investigated by a prosecutor.

Mathurin denied the allegations and said Fequiere and Richeme were trying to destroy the electoral council's reputation because of personal conflicts with other members.

"All they want is to destroy this council and to get rid of the other members, hoping they'll keep a seat on the next panel," Mathurin said.

Benoit is also the subject of a separate criminal investigation over allegations he tried to kill Richeme.

In a complaint filed with prosecutors, Richeme said Benoit pulled a gun on him during a recent discussion at the council's headquarters.

Haiti: A Modern Tragedy
by Roger Annis
ZNet
October 06, 2007

An Unbroken Agony
Haiti, From Revolution to the Kidnapping of a President
By Randall Robinson
Basic Civitas Books 280 pages, \$26.00 US

Randall Robinson has written the story of a great tragedy of recent times--the violent overthrow of Haiti's elected president and government on February 29, 2004. *An Unbroken Agony: Haiti, From Revolution to the Kidnapping of a President* gives a blow by blow account of the events surrounding that tragedy.

The author brings impressive credentials to the task. He helped to found the Trans Africa Forum, one of the most established human rights and social justice advocacy organizations in the U.S., dedicated to improving the lot of people of African descent. The Forum has long fought for a fair and respectful U.S. economic and political relationship with Haiti. His work gave him an enduring respect for the ousted president, Jean-Bertrand Aristide, and his wife Mildred.

Robinson writes with an unapologetic passion for the Haitian people's historic fight against slavery and colonialism. He situates the tragic events of 2004 on the broader canvas of the racism and imperial arrogance that has dominated the policies of the world's big powers towards Haiti, particularly those of the U.S. and France.

Why is Haiti so poor, the uninformed observer will ask. Surely, after 200 years of nominal independence the country could do better?

"As punishment for creating the first free republic in the Americas (when thirteen percent of the people living in the United States were slaves)," Robinson replies, "The new Republic of Haiti was met with a global economic embargo imposed by the United States and Europe."

"The Haitian economy has never recovered from the havoc France (and America) wreaked upon it, during and after slavery."

Robinson is not trying to write a comprehensive history of Haiti. (Paul Farmer's *The Uses of Haiti* fits that bill admirably.) He does, however, provide enough historical background to explain the present-day.

The author rushes the reader back and forth in time and place in an effort to recreate the drama and tragedy of February 2004. "It was Friday, February 27, 2004," he opens one chapter, "the evening before the last day of Haitian democracy."

The stage for the overthrow of February 29, 2004 was set in the national election in the year 2000. Jean-Bertrand Aristide was elected president for a second time. The U.S., France and Canada, the three contemporary overseers of Haiti, threw up their hands in exasperation over the electorate's choice of a man and a political movement dedicated to lifting the burden of their crushing poverty.

Aristide promised improvements to the lot of the desperately poor Haitian majority, and he was a man of his word. The big powers would have none of it. They began an embargo of aid funds to the government, directing funds instead to parallel services operated by "non-governmental" or charitable organizations. Soon they would also block the government's requests to international financial institutions for loans to finance ambitious education and health care projects

More ominously, money and arms flowed to paramilitary forces sponsored by the venal Haitian elite and drawn from the disbanded Haitian army or purged Haitian National Police. The paramilitaries were safely lodged in the neighbouring Dominican Republic. Robinson captures the gravity and drama of the periodic assaults they launched against the institutions of the Haitian government following the 2000 election.

When the paramilitaries launched what became a final incursion in early 2004, they were a small force, no more than 200. They were feared and hated by the majority of the Haitian people. By virtue of an overwhelming superiority of arms, they were able to wreck government rule in cities in the north of the country. But they didn't have a chance of taking the capital city. That task fell to their international sponsors, and this was done on February 28-29. The U.S., France, Canada and Chile landed troops at strategic locations in the country.

The Aristides were taken by U.S military forces to one of the most isolated countries in the world, the Central African Republic. An Unbroken Agony kicks into high gear as the author tells the story of the delegation he led on a harrowing flight to the Central African Republic on March 14 to rescue them from a quasi-imprisonment. The delegation included U.S. congresswoman Maxine Walters. It had no idea of the reception it would receive from the country's ruler, François Bozize, a client of French imperialism. After many tense hours, Bozize gave permission to the delegation to leave, its mission accomplished. The Aristides were granted political exile in South Africa, where they remain to this day.

One of the myths perpetrated by supporters of the foreign intervention in Haiti is that Jean-Bertrand Aristide was prepared to leave the presidency and the country in the face of the mounting political pressure against him. The Aristides accepted a U.S. offer to whisk them out of the country, so the story goes. Robinson presents extensive documentation to dispel the myth.

An Unbroken Agony prompted many questions in the mind of this reader. How did the paramilitaries achieve such a devastating impact? The Haitians who overthrew Haitian democracy in February 2004 were a tiny force—their principal leader, Guy Philippe, received less than two percent of the vote in the 2006 presidential election. Were there more decisive steps that the Aristide government could have taken to defend the country and minimize the havoc they caused following the 2000 election?

And what has become of Latin American solidarity? Robinson describes the selfless measures of the early 19th century Haitian revolutionaries to aid the independence struggle of the South American

peoples led by Simón Bolívar. Today, the majority of the 7,100 foot soldiers of the post-2004 UN-sponsored occupation force in Haiti are drawn from the countries of Latin America, with Brazil — whose president is the leader of the governing “Workers Party” — in the lead. The UN force is responsible for innumerable killings and jailings of pro-democracy fighters following February 2004. Thankfully, substantial aid and solidarity to Haiti from Venezuela and Cuba keeps the banner of Simón Bolívar flying high in Haiti.

Haiti is living an unprecedented economic and social calamity as a consequence of the coup d’etat of 2004. The violent overthrow of its government received little attention or concern from democratic opinion in the world. A shameful silence still reigns.

Roger Annis travelled to Haiti from August 5 to 20 as a participant in a human rights investigative delegation. He can be reached at rogerannis@hotmail.com. You can read his reports from Haiti at www.thac.ca/blog/9.

Official: Haitians benefit from Cuban literacy method
China View
www.chinaview.cn 2007-10-18

HAVANA, Oct. 17 (Xinhua)-- Cuba's literacy method "I can do it" has benefited Haiti's southeastern Valle de Jacmel inhabitants, local media reported on Wednesday.

Haiti's Secretary of State for Literacy Carol Joseph said specialists from Cuban Education Ministry has advised the anti-illiteracy campaign in Valle de Jacmel.

Valle de Jacmel used to suffer a 15-percent illiteracy rate. Thanks to the Haitian government's continuous efforts to create more and more educational centers, the region is about to be declared free of illiteracy, Joseph said.

As part of the national anti-illiteracy program, the government has already established 53 educational centers throughout this Caribbean country, and teachers' training is in its final stage in several areas, the official said.

The Spanish government has offered financial aid for this program headed by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, Joseph said.

The Haitian government is expected to conclude its anti-illiteracy program by 2010 with a 90-percent reduction of illiteracy rate. This Caribbean country's illiteracy rate is 60.3 percent, one of the highest worldwide.

Bahamas urges continued UN support for Haiti
Friday, October 5, 2007
by Lindsay Thompson
Caribbean Net News

NASSAU, Bahamas (BIS): The Bahamas has called on the United Nations (UN) to continue its mission in Haiti for sustainable development, peace, security and democracy.

Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Brent Symonette made the plea in an address at the 62nd Session of the UN General Assembly in New York on October 2.

“We urge the international community to support the people of Haiti in this quest,” he said.

At a time when the international community is engaged in serious reflections regarding the history and consequences of slavery and the slave trade he said The Bahamas wishes to recognise Haiti as the only country to liberate itself from slavery and for the inspiration this provided to the international campaign against slavery.

“Since modern forms of slavery still exist and many people continue to be held in servitude we must not relent in our resolve until everyone is able to enjoy and exercise the freedoms which this organisation has worked so diligently to recognise, uphold and defend,” Symonette said.

He noted that despite Haiti’s proud history of becoming the first black republic in 1804 challenges have beset The Bahamas’ neighbour for generations.

“Haiti’s return to democratic order last year was especially welcomed and we celebrate the strides Haiti is making along the difficult and arduous road to peace, security and development,” Mr. Symonette said. “We heartily commended President (Rene) Preval and his administration for their stewardship of this demanding process.”

He also commended the Organisation of American States (OAS) for its unstinting support of the people of Haiti.

“The United Nations Mission in Haiti continues to play a vital role in this process and The Bahamas supports the call for that mission to be maintained so as to consolidate the gains made to date and thus place our CARICOM sister country on a firm and lasting path to sustainable development, peace, security and democracy,” Symonette said.

Haiti: repression drops, but not poverty

Author: Tim Pelzer

People's Weekly World Newspaper, 10/04/07

VANCOUVER, British Columbia — While the people of Haiti have experienced an improvement in the country's political atmosphere, their economic situation continues to deteriorate, said Roger Annis, a representative of the Canada-Haiti Action Network.

Annis visited Haiti from Aug. 5-20 as part of a seven-person human rights delegation sent there by Haitian-American organizations. Among other things, he wanted to observe the changes that have occurred since the re-establishment of democracy last year.

“Life has improved for the average Haitian in the political realm,” he told the World in an interview here. “The worst of the repression that occurred in the two years following the coup against the elected government [of Jean-Bertrand Aristide] has eased.”

He said the current government, headed by President Rene Preval, has put an end to the Haitian National Police (HNP) force's murderous attacks against poor neighborhoods, where it killed and wounded many people. In the Port-au-Prince area alone, the HNP and the UN Stabilization Force (Minustah) killed 4,000 men and women during the two-year period in which the interim government of Gerard Latortue ruled the country, he said.

On Feb. 29, 2004, U.S. Special Forces backed a coup against President Aristide, seized him and flew him to the Central African Republic. The United States, with the assistance of the UN, Canada and France, then set up a new interim government headed by Latortue.

Despite improvements in its conduct, the HNP is still operating outside the law, Annis said. Two commissioners appointed by Preval to oversee the HNP and the justice system in two of Haiti's 10 districts told his delegation that Haitian police are still making illegal arrests and are still not following the constitution.

Noting that the Royal Canadian Mounted Police began training the HNP three years ago, Annis said, “One has to ask the question: what has three years of training led to if Haitian government officials are saying that the HNP refuses to recognize constitutional authority?”

While there has been progress in releasing political prisoners, several hundred still remain in jail, according to Annis. His delegation met with Justice Ministry officials who complained that a lack of court facilities and judges who could review the cases has prevented the release of the country's remaining political prisoners.

While Minustah acts in a less brutal manner against the population, UN troop violence is still a problem, too, Annis said.

The overall political climate still remains fragile, he said. For instance, his delegation suffered a disaster when their guide, well-known human rights activist Lovinsky Pierre Antoine, disappeared during the second week of their tour, leading to the cancellation of scheduled meetings with Preval and

others. Lovinsky is still missing, and Annis fears that right-wing forces are responsible for his disappearance.

“What hasn’t improved is the overall economic and social situation of the country, which continues to deteriorate,” he remarked. Between 70-80 percent of the labor force is unemployed, and the money that Haitians living abroad send back to their families is a key factor in keeping the economy afloat. “Basic services like education, health care, electricity and clean water do not exist,” he said.

“The Preval government doesn’t have the resources to tackle the acute economic and social needs, nor the ability through taxation to raise those resources,” commented Annis. “There has been no willingness and no programs from the [UN] occupation authority to address the social and economic calamity.”

He said that only Cuba and Venezuela are helping Haiti by building schools and hospitals there, among other projects.

Annis said Haitians also recognize that the Preval government is not a sovereign government and that it is constrained by the UN occupation authorities and foreign powers. Furthermore, Preval has to contend with a National Assembly and Senate dominated by right-wing parties.

“What is disturbing is that the Preval government has embarked on a program to privatize the country’s remaining public enterprises,” he said, citing the government’s sale of the national telephone company and the planned privatization of the electric company, customs service and national airport. “This is of great concern to the trade unions and popular movements in Haiti.”

Haitians need worldwide solidarity more than ever, Annis said.

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Residents of once-violent Haitian slum welcome extension for UN peacekeepers
The Associated Press
International Herald Tribune
October 15, 2007

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti: Political leaders and residents of Haiti's biggest slum largely welcomed news that the U.N. has extended its peacekeeping mission for another year, saying a crackdown earlier this year has made life easier in a neighborhood previously run by gangs.

"Last year we couldn't have sat here playing dominoes" because it was so dangerous, 27-year-old construction worker Jean-Baptiste Venel said in the Port-au-Prince's seaside slum of Cite Soleil. "If the U.N. is here for another year it's a good thing for the country and Cite Soleil."

Earlier Monday in New York, the U.N. Security Council voted unanimously to extend through at least October 2008 the mission by the multinational force, known as Minustah from its initials in French.

Cite Soleil — where people live in rows of bullet-scarred hovels with no electricity or running water — is currently safer than it has been in the years since a 2004 revolt toppled former President Jean-Bertrand Aristide and prompted the deployment of the 9,000 U.N. peacekeepers.

But its inhabitants remain desperately poor and some residents criticized the peacekeepers, saying Haiti needs development and jobs, not more security forces.

"The U.N. didn't come to do anything," said Aristide Idore, an unemployed 29-year-old. "I hope when I wake up tomorrow they've packed their things and gone."

Senate President Joseph Lambert praised the U.N. resolution but said Haiti must restore its national sovereignty after years of security provided by U.N. troops.

"We need to create a culture of peace," Lambert said, "and from there we can decide how long Minustah is going to be around."

Dominican Republic-Haiti borders now more secure

Saturday, October 6, 2007

By Beata Lockwood

Caribbean Net News

Dominican Republic Correspondent

SANTO DOMINGO, Dominican Republic: The newly-formed Specialised Frontier Security Corps in their first few days of operations at the Dominican Republic - Haiti border points, have returned over 3,500 undocumented Haitians who were seeking to enter the Dominican Republic illegally.

In declaring "zero tolerance", the Dominican Republic is attempting to stop the ever-increasing flow of Haitian immigrants who cross over the long, rambling mountain borders almost at will.

The main checkpoints in operation at this time are situated in the southwest of the country in the Jimani and Dajabon areas and will soon be expanded to cover all border crossing points.

The border patrols are equipped with the latest night vision, computerised technology and all terrain vehicles in an effort to bring the borders under control. Eventually, it is estimated that 2,000 agents will be on full time duty by 2008.

Official says US to start pilot project to reintegrate deportees
Caribbean Broadcasting Corporation, Barbados
Friday, 19 October 2007

A top United States (US) official in Barbados says Washington will soon start a pilot programme to help reintegrate some deported Caribbean nationals into their homelands.

A statement from the Barbados government says US Ambassador to Barbados and the Eastern Caribbean, Mary Ourisman, gave this assurance recently when she met with Minister of Social Transformation, Trevor Prescod, who raised concerns over the deportation of nationals from the US.

"Mr Prescod expressed concern about the USA unilaterally deporting Barbadians who were involved in criminal activity," the statement said.

Ourisman did not give an indication of the implementation schedule but earlier this year US officials announced that they were planning to expand to other Caribbean countries a model programme used in Haiti to help deported Haitians criminals reintegrate into society.

Charles Shapiro, the US State Department's principal deputy assistant secretary of state for Western Hemisphere affairs, said the project in Haiti is the "sort of thing" the US is looking at doing in other Caribbean Community (CARICOM) nations.

"Not every comma and period [of the programme] will be the same as in Haiti, but it will be similar," he said in a statement.

Shapiro said the programme provides deportees with HIV/AIDS testing, counselling and micro-loans to help them set up businesses.

He said a similar programme, formerly run by the United States in Central America, ensured that deportees were "not just dumped into airports," but it gave them "a place to spend the night, food and bus fare" to get back to their town or village if they did not live in the capital city.

CARICOM leaders have long complained about the deportation of convicted criminals at the end of their jail sentences in the US.

The topic was one of the major discussion points at the year's US-CARICOM Summit between US points between US President George Bush and regional leaders.

Dominican First Lady to head fight against rubella, help for Haiti
The Dominican Today
October 4, 2007

WASHINGTON. - Dominican Republic will head the hemisphere's fight against rubella and the congenital rubella syndrome, with the designation of the First Lady Margarita Cedeño as the continent's ambassador for the elimination of the disease.

Cedeño's designation took place during the Pan-American Health Organization's (OPS) 27th Pan-American Sanitary Conference, held from October 1 to 5.

In her speech before the OPS the Dominican First Lady said last year more than five million Dominicans between seven and 39 years of age were vaccinated against rubella and the congenital rubella syndrome nationwide, which prompted the international organism to grant the certificate on the disease's elimination.

Cedeño said Dominican Republic is also committed to collaborate with Haiti to eradicate the disease and will accompany the Haitian authorities in the vaccination effort slated for November.

Activist returns from Haiti, alone

Raksha Vasudevan

Gauntlet News, Canada

September 27, 2007

Haitian people should be left alone to decide their own fate, said Annis.

Canada's role in the political and economic dealings of Haiti--the poorest country in the western hemisphere--is often not called into question, despite knowledge that Canada helped fund a coup against its democratically elected government in 2004.

Canada Haiti Action Network activist Roger Annis is hoping to change this by touring around Canada to present reports of his two-week "fact-finding" mission this August.

The investigative human rights delegation was sponsored by Fondasyon Mapou, a not-for-profit group in Washington lobbying for Haiti's solidarity. With Annis was prominent Haitian human rights advocate Lovinsky Pierre Antoine. During their stay Antoine was kidnapped. More shocking than his actual disappearance, though, is the Canadian government's failure to acknowledge the incident, explained Annis.

"It's an absolute disgrace that Canada has failed to speak out about the situation," said Annis. "Haitian elite and foreign backers don't want voices like Lovinsky's to be present on the political scene."

The foreign backers in this case are the United States, France, and Canada--the three nations that helped overthrow Haiti's democratically elected government of Jean-Bertrand Aristide in 2004. All three countries have claimed that president Aristide's removal from power was necessary because he was ordering the deaths of his political opponents and destroying Haiti's already fragile economy.

However, many critics believe there was another, unspoken reason for the coup: the foreign powers were feeling threatened the long-impooverished country was on the path to political and economic empowerment explained Annis.

"The Aristide government had a pre-disposition of favouring the poor population," he said. "This angered countries like Canada and the U.S. who wanted cheap, uneducated labour."

During his time in power Aristide created new health care programs, doubled the minimum wage, and built more schools than were built in the entire preceding century.

For the first time since the 2004 coup against Aristide, a democratically elected government was elected Feb. 2006, with Rene Preval as president. Despite this, the foreign powers that supported the coup, have continued to maintain a strong presence there in the form of the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti. The 8,000-strong peacekeeping force is mandated to rid the country of the armed gangs that dominate its streets.

Dr. Tim Donais, an Assistant Professor of Political Science at the University of Windsor stated he thought this was being accomplished. Donais specializes in international security and post-conflict

peace-building and has made two trips to Haiti, the first in 2004 and the most recent in June of this year.

"MINUSTAH has essentially decapitated the gangs," he said. "The biggest difference between 2007 and 2004 is that the security situation has improved noticeably. Haiti is a country that needs massive help and Canada is making a real contribution to that effort."

Prime minister Stephen Harper echoed this sentiment during a visit to Haiti in July.

"It is apparent that the people who live there feel increasingly secure, and it is gratifying to see Canadian aid achieving real results," he said during his Jul. 20 visit to Haiti.

Canada has committed to contributing \$540 million to the re-construction of Haiti over the 2006-2011 period.

Roger Annis disagreed and has labeled the past three and a half years of foreign attempts to restore security and stability in Haiti a "complete failure." He pointed out the current broken judicial system, virtually non-existent health care, and tragically lacking infrastructure--all problems that the foreign governments are trying to solve but also ones which, he claims, they created themselves by helping to overthrow Aristide.

"It's a bit like someone burning down your house, and then showing up in a fire truck," said Annis. "The only solution is a gradual, orderly withdrawal of foreign powers and an infusion of unconditional aid money to a sovereign Haitian government."

Annis added that the silence surrounding Lovinsky's disappearance must end and more critical examination of Canada's presence in Haiti must take place.

"People here have to be engaged in what their government is doing to their country's name abroad," he said.

Annis will be presenting the findings of his trip to Haiti at Carpenter's Hall on October 2.

Bahamas Chamber of Commerce Seeks Trade Ties with Haiti

By Lindsay Thompson Bahamas Information Services

The Bahama Journal

September 26, 2007

The Republic of Haiti, the first Caribbean nation to achieve independence in 1804, is ready for a rebirth, a chance to rebuild its economy with the help of The Bahamas.

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti - The Republic of Haiti, the first Caribbean nation to achieve independence in 1804, is ready for a rebirth, a chance to rebuild its economy with the help of The Bahamas.

This can be accomplished through a sustained trade arrangement between both countries, an idea 10 years in the making.

The purpose of a four-day fact finding mission organized by the Bahamas Chamber of Commerce, the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Haiti, and the Centre for Investment Facilitations (CFI) is to form such ties.

Since Sunday, September 23, the Bahamas Chamber of Commerce and some of its members have been with perspective business partners and toured various establishment to examine possible trade arrangements aimed at boosting both economies, particularly Haiti's.

The mission ends on Thursday, September 27.

The Bahamas is represented in tourism, fisheries, construction, financial services, agriculture, technology, souvenir manufacturing, textiles, clothing, and other general services.

The Bahamas Chamber of Commerce is represented by Dionisio D'Aguillar, president; Philip Simon, executive director; and Winston Rolle, a past president. The Bahamian delegation is being facilitated by The Bahamas' Ambassador to the Republic of Haiti, His Excellency Dr Eugene Newry.

Haiti is located about 750 miles from Nassau and has been trading with The Bahamas since the 1800s. With an estimated eight million people, it is considered the poorest country in the Caribbean. However, the country's Chamber of Commerce is optimistic that the negative perception of the island nation can change through sustained trading, hence keeping Haitians at home instead of risking their lives on the high seas in search of a better way of life.

The feeling is that Haiti can learn from The Bahamas' expertise in tourism and services; and also build partnerships in agribusiness, heritage tourism, small hotels development and other areas.

At a press conference held in the VIP Lounge of the Toussaint Louverture International Airport, Mr. D'Aguillar said The Bahamas' decision to invest in Haiti stems from the fact that a reported 50,000 Haitians live in The Bahamas, resulting in very close ties being formed.

Also, The Bahamas incurs millions of dollars on exports from Haiti. However, once a shipment of mangoes and avocados leaves Haiti, it goes to Miami, shipped to The Bahamas and sold for \$4 each.

Ways were discussed to package the abundance in mangoes as 56 per cent of fruit rot on the streets.

"Haiti is very much an emerging market in the sense that your Government is perceived to be stable and things are falling into place to make Haiti a very attractive place to invest in," Mr. D'Aguillar said.

The Bahamas Chamber of Commerce plans to form similar arrangements with Panama, the Dominican Republic and Brazil.

"The time has come to do business in a structured and organized manner," said Frantz Marceau Louis, international consultant in project development and management.

He suggested that this can be done by developing an efficient transport service to facilitate the transshipment of goods to The Bahamas.

"In Tourism, Haiti has not had the vibrant industry as it would like to have. But Haiti has the historical wealth which can turn over the minds of investors," Mr. Louis said.

Mr. Louis also said that not long ago, the name Haiti meant "instability". But The Bahamas would not seek interest if there was not a change in the political and economic climate created since the Rene Preval presidency began in May, 2006.

A cooperation agreement was to be signed between the Bahamas Chamber of Commerce and the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Haiti on Monday, September 24.

Critic slams role of Canada in Haiti
Straight Talk
September 27, 2007

When it comes to assisting Haiti, the Canadian government is part of the problem rather than the solution, according to Vancouver resident Roger Annis, who was part of a human-rights delegation in Haiti in August.

"What we learned is that what the Canadian government is doing is not helping in Haiti," Annis, a member of the Canada-Haiti Action Network, said on September 25 during a slide show at the Maritime Labour Centre for members of the Vancouver and District Labour Council. (Today [September 27], Annis will speak at SFU Harbour Centre at 7 p.m.)

Haiti, an island republic that borders the Dominican Republic, is a former French colony and the poorest country in the western hemisphere. On February 29, 2004, Canada, the U.S., and France were all involved in the overthrow of democratically elected president Jean-Bertrand Aristide, who now lives in exile.

At the VDLC meeting, Annis said the federal government is "pulling the wool over Canadians' eyes" by legitimizing the brutal overthrow of Aristide, which was undertaken on former Liberal prime minister Jean Chrétien's watch. He added that Prime Minister Stephen Harper's Conservative minority continues the same "scandalous" foreign policy.

Annis said Canada's emphasis should be on aid and core funding that addresses improvements to road networks, sanitation, and better job creation rather than beefing up security that threatens to undermine civil liberties. "And the justice system they [the Canadian government] claim to have financed is starved of resources, as the Haitian national police operates outside of the justice system," Annis claimed.

Annis also called on the Canadian government to condemn the kidnapping of Haitian human-rights activist Lovinsky Pierre-Antoine, who works with victims of the 2004 coup d'état. Calls to Conservative foreign-affairs minister Maxime Bernier were not returned by the Straight's deadline.

NDP MP Peter Julian (Burnaby–New Westminster) defended his party's record on Haiti, adding that NDP foreign-affairs critic Alexa McDonough has spoken for Haitians.

"We continue to be concerned about issues surrounding Haiti and the taking of political prisoners and increased privatization," Julian told the Straight. "Alexa is speaking up on the issues and these are issues that we are bringing up....So I hear his [Annis's] point, but I disagree."

Haitian rebel claims political persecution from hiding, dares US to kill him
The Associated Press
International Herald Tribune
October 10, 2007

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti: A fugitive Haitian rebel leader and former presidential candidate told a local radio show Wednesday that he was the victim of a political plot and dared U.S. agents to kill him.

Guy Philippe, who went into hiding after U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration agents and Haitian police raided his home in July, told the hosts of Signal FM's "Haiti Today" that the raid in the coastal city of Les Cayes was political payback.

"This is a political plot. I have no problem with them accusing me of something, but they should tell me what it is and base it on the law," said Philippe, 39, who helped toppled former President Jean-Bertrand Aristide in 2004.

Philippe is being sought in connection with a pending drug trafficking indictment in U.S. federal court, said Alicia Valle, special counsel to the U.S. Attorney's Office in Miami. She declined to provide specifics.

In his message from hiding, Philippe told the radio program that U.S. agents had opportunities to catch him before. He said he spent two hours in a meeting at the U.S. Embassy in Port-au-Prince in 2005, and that in 2006 he was issued a U.S. visa.

"What I have been saying about my political views I will continue saying: Foreign aid is not going to help Haiti. If they want to kill me for this statement, they just have to do it," he said.

The army veteran and former Cap-Haitien police chief led a 2004 uprising that claimed credit for ousting Aristide. He later gave up his arms to a U.N. peacekeeping force and ran for president in 2006, but finished a distant ninth.

Earlier this year, Philippe denounced several powerful Haitians on local radio, an act some Haitians speculate convinced well-connected people to seek his arrest.

Haiti's President Says Nation No Longer Deserves Failed State Stigma

By David Gollust

New York

VOA

26 September 2007

Haitian President Rene Preval told the U.N. General Assembly Wednesday the Caribbean country is on its way to escaping the stigma of being labeled a failed state because of its recent economic and security gains. Mr. Preval got a show of political support from senior U.S., European and Latin American diplomats on the sidelines of the U.N. debate. VOA's David Gollust reports from our U.N. bureau.

René Garcia Préval addresses 62nd session of the UN General Assembly in New York, 26 Sept 2007
Haiti has been the beneficiary of massive international aid, and the support of a U.N. peacekeeping mission, since the explosion of political unrest in the country in 2004.

And President Preval told the General Assembly the outside assistance, and the improved security provided by the U.N. mission, MINUSTAH, are helping the country turn the corner toward political peace and economic recovery.

Delivering his country's policy speech at the U.N. General Assembly, Mr. Preval said Haiti has all too often been on the U.N.'s agenda because of chronic problems. But, he said the unwelcome characterization of the country as a failed state no longer applies.

"Haiti is on the way to bidding farewell to that state slowly, patiently, but with determination," he said. "Organized armed gangs who are responsible for violence directed against innocent populations have been dismantled. And there is no longer any no-go zone for peaceful citizens in any area of our territory. The governance of our economy has greatly improved. The money printer was put away, and this has reduced inflation below the 10 percent line, which had been rampant for a number of years, and just a few months ago had reached the dizzying heights of 40 percent."

Mr. Preval said that real growth has returned to the Haitian economy after more than 10 years of decline in the gross national product, and that his government has patiently worked to restore a climate of peace in the country's turbulent political life.

He said Haitians consider foreign troops on their country's soil as a wound to their national sovereignty. But he said, in practical terms, the presence of MINUSTAH - as the country's new security forces take shape - is the only realistic formula available enabling Haitians to restore freedom and peace.

The mandate of the Brazilian-led 7,100-member U.N. force is due to expire in mid-October, but U.N. officials say another one-year extension by the Security Council appears certain.

Before his U.N. address, Mr. Preval attended a meeting of an informal support group for Haiti that included diplomats from the United States, the European Union, the Organization of American States and the U.N.

Appearing with the Haitian president after the meeting, U.S. Undersecretary of State for Political Affairs Nicholas Burns said the Preval government is responsible for the strides of recent months and deserves continued American and other international support:

"The point of this meeting, the third we have had in the last three years, is to show support for President Preval, to show support for the government of Haiti, to show support for extraordinary progress that Haiti is making under his leadership in terms of renewed stability," he said. "And if you've been to Cite Soleil and Port-au-Prince, you see that - the fight against corruption, the fight against narcotics and the drug problem. And the importance of MINUSTAH, the United Nations military force remaining in Haiti for another year, the United States supports that for a one-year renewal."

Burns said the United States is providing Haiti with more than \$200 million in economic and security aid this year, on top of the \$600 million given since the 2004 upheaval that drove controversial former President Jean-Bertrand Aristide from power.

Dominican Border Patrol Repatriates Undocumented Haitians
By VOA News
08 October 2007

Haiti

The head of the Dominican Republic's new border patrol says his force has repatriated several thousand undocumented Haitians since operations began last week.

General Adriano Silverio Rodriguez told local media that 3,600 undocumented migrants were repatriated in the past few days. He said immigrants were put on buses headed back to Haiti.

Last Tuesday, Silverio told the *Diario Libre* newspaper that his force is taking a "zero tolerance" approach. He claimed four-thousand undocumented migrants were repatriated during the previous 72 hours of operations in Dajabon and Jimani.

The Dominican Border Corp (Cesfront) took over border patrol duties from the army in late September.

Amnesty International has accused Dominican authorities of arbitrarily deporting up to 30,000 Haitian migrants from the country every year. The London-based human rights group has reported that migrants fleeing poverty in Haiti occupy the lowest rung of the Dominican social ladder.

Haiti is the Western Hemisphere's poorest country and has been plagued with violence.

Ex Haitian official praises decision to issue Dominican work IDs
The Dominican Today
October 16, 2007

SANTO DOMINGO.- The Immigration Agency's initiative to issue an ID card to Haitians who cross to work in the Dominican side of the border is a timely decision as residents in the border town Dajabón complain of the new border guard's strict control, said an ex Haitian consul today.

Edwin Paraison said since its creation in 1996, the Mixed Bilateral Commission has discussed the need for the "natural interchanges and outside legal norms which the inhabitants in both countries' border region maintain."

He said the high legal expenses to travel between Dominican Republic and Haiti is beyond the reach of Dominicans and Haitians in the impoverished border communities. He said for a Haitian native has to spend at least US\$200 to legally cross the Dominican border, including an ID card, photos, travel to the Haitian capital, passport and the Dominican visa.

Paraison, who also heads the Zile Foundation, said other expenses are the taxes, a tourism exit card on both sides of the border, and the seals on the passport, which don't cover not even one month of use.

He said faced with those expenses, when Haiti's minimum wage of US\$2.02 (70 gourdes) per day, it's "irrational to demand those travel documents to our compatriots."

Préval pledges justice in murders of Haitian journalists
Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) News Alert
September 27, 2007

New York, —Haitian President René Préval has pledged support for an independent committee evaluating stalled investigations into a series of unsolved journalist murders this decade and said that all political obstacles to justice have now been removed.

Meeting with a delegation from the Committee to Protect Journalists on Wednesday, Préval expressed his “full support” for the committee and said that the Haitian government “wants justice to prevail.” Préval is in New York to participate in the 62nd session of the United Nations General Assembly.

“We welcome President Préval’s will and commitment in pursuing justice in crimes against the press,” said CPJ Executive Director Joel Simon. “Without political impediments, the Haitian government must now push strongly for exhaustive investigations in the cases of murdered journalists. Haiti must break the cycle of impunity so that faith can be restored to the country’s judicial system.”

CPJ officials and Préval examined press freedom conditions in Haiti during the meeting, and they talked about the future of the recently created independent committee of journalists that is reviewing the progress of official investigations into the unsolved murders of journalists in Haiti from 2000 to 2007. Préval is in his second year in office following the ouster of Jean-Bertrand Aristide and a tumultuous interim administration.

“Haitian politicians and investigators had not been interested in pursuing justice in cases of murdered journalists because some of them were implicated in these crimes,” Préval told CPJ through an interpreter. “But now the situation has changed; there is political will and this will allow us to make progress.”

The CPJ delegation included Simon, CPJ board member Franz Allina, and CPJ Senior Americas Program Coordinator Carlos Lauría.

Préval acknowledged that there will be difficulties in bringing justice, especially in the oldest cases. But the president said that the independent committee is a “signal that will permit us to resolve some crimes.” Préval said that “freedom of the press is essential for the development of a democracy.”

The Haitian president noted that the climate of violence that had plagued Haiti since 2000 has eased. “There is a different atmosphere now, and the press can work in a relatively free environment,” Préval said. According to CPJ research, attacks on Haiti’s press dropped significantly in the last two years.

The CPJ delegation called on Préval to support efforts to strengthen the work of the independent committee, and it urged the government to provide police, judges, and prosecutors with the resources to do their jobs. CPJ also requested Préval renew the mandate of Judge Bernard Saint-Vil, who is responsible for the investigation into the murder of Spanish correspondent Ricardo Ortega, who was shot twice when gunmen opened fire on demonstrators in Haiti’s capital, Port-au-Prince, in April 2004.

The independent committee was a joint initiative between Préval and the local press freedom group S.O.S. Journalistes. The committee has access to official police and court documents on the murders of at least 10 journalists. It is studying the case files one by one in order to determine where and why they have stalled.

The committee is led by journalist and free press activist Joseph Guyler Delva, president of S.O.S. Journalistes. It includes reporters Euvrard Saint-Armand from Radio Caraïbes; Anne Marguerite Auguste from Radio Solidarité; Dieudonne Saincy from Radio Métropole; Jean Wilmer Morin from local radio station Tropic FM and the television station Télémac; Louis Gary Cyprien from the daily Le Nouvelliste; Marie Nick Marcelin from Radio Ibo; and Idson Saint-Fleur from radio station Signal FM.

“Progress has already been made,” Préval said. The president cited recent convictions in the case of Jacques Roche, cultural editor with the Port-au-Prince-based daily Le Matin, who was killed in Haiti’s capital in July 2005. On August 30, a judge in Port-au-Prince sentenced Alby Joseph and Chéry Beaubrun, members of the local Solino gang, to life in prison for the kidnapping and murder of Roche. “This is a step forward,” noted the president.

The committee has sought to identify concrete problems in the investigations and expedite solutions. In one case, for example, the committee discovered a vital “missing” courthouse file in the 2001 slaying of Brignol Lindor and forwarded it to the investigators actually handling the case.

Delva said the committee will next examine the case of Haitian journalist Jean-Léopold Dominique, owner and director of Radio Haïti-Inter and one of the country’s most renowned journalists. Dominique was gunned down on April 3, 2000, outside the entrance to his Port-au-Prince station. A long-stalled case that has been characterized by incompetence and a lack of political will, Dominique’s slaying remains unpunished, CPJ research shows.

Three journalists have been murdered in direct reprisal for their work in Haiti since 2000, CPJ research shows. CPJ is investigating the circumstances surrounding the slayings of the other journalists.

Authorities net endangered fish smugglers in Canada, US

AFP

Sep 26, 2007

OTTAWA — Authorities said Wednesday they dismantled a fishy smuggling ring that allegedly illegally imported 119,978 kilograms (263,953 lbs) of endangered queen conch meat into Canada and the United States.

The smuggling operation is said to have shipped the mollusk meat from the Dominican Republic, Haiti, Jamaica, Honduras and Colombia to Canada between 2004 and 2006, using false descriptions to avoid detection by officials.

Once in Canada, it was either sold on the local market or re-packaged -- sometimes as whelk meat, a non-endangered cold water species -- and shipped to the United States.

DNA testing was used to positively identify the detained shipments from 2006 as being queen conch (*Strombus gigas*), also known as pink conch.

Several charges have been laid in Canada and the US against persons and companies located in Florida, British Columbia and Nova Scotia.

The shellfish, one of the largest mollusks native to North America, is protected under the Convention on International Trade of Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora.

The smuggling and sale of endangered species is punishable upon conviction in Canada to a maximum fine of 300,000 dollars or five years in jail, or both.

In the United States, the law provides for a maximum five years imprisonment and fines up to twice the profit made, in this case over one million dollars.

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Michigan's Conyers says immigration policy hurts Haitian migrants
WLNS TV 6 Lansing, Michigan
Associated Press
October 8, 2007

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti (AP) - Michigan Congressman John Conyers says the U.S. government should allow more Haitian migrants to remain in the United States after dangerous ocean voyages.

The Detroit Democrat and House Judiciary Committee chairman spoke today while visiting the troubled and impoverished Caribbean country.

Conyers had praise for the island's improving security after meeting with President Rene Preval and parliament members.

His visit was led by the New York-based Haiti Support Project and aimed at promoting trade, tourism and U.S.-Haitian relations.