

Dear colleagues,

Please find below the mainstream news on Haiti for February 10-21, 2007.

The civil trial against former Haitian army colonel Carl Dorelien opened in Miami federal court. Dorelien, convicted in the Raboteau massacre, faces a civil trial for allegedly tolerating human rights abuses while serving as the army's chief of personnel during the de facto military dictatorship (1991-1994). Dorelien fled to Florida and later won \$3.2 million in the Florida lottery. The lawsuit seeks unspecified compensatory and punitive damages against Dorelien in connection with the alleged torture of Lexiuste Cajuste in Port-au-Prince in 1993 and the killing of Michel Pierre in the infamous 1994 Raboteau massacre. Under the Alien Tort Statute, foreign nationals who suffer serious abuse from violations of international law anywhere in the world can sue in U.S. courts if suspected perpetrators are in the United States. The Center for Justice & Accountability sued Dorelien on Jan. 24, 2003 -- three days before he was deported to Haiti.

The UN peacekeeping force in Haiti (MINUSTAH) stepped up their siege of Cité Soleil. Interestingly, MINUSTAH received almost simultaneous, highly positive front page coverage in the *New York Times*, the *Miami Herald* and other papers. The February 10th *Times* article ignored both the civilian death toll and the deep-seated opposition to the raids within Cité Soleil. The people of Cité Soleil, who bear the heaviest burden of crime in Haiti, understand that MINUSTAH's brutal tactics merely feed the violence, while causing dreadful and unnecessary "collateral damage": children, young adults and elderly, men and women killed or injured by UN bullets. The *Times* uncritically repeats the MINUSTAH spokesman's denial of killing civilians, ignoring ample contrary evidence provided by Cité Soleil community groups, Haitian human rights groups, the mainstream media and even the UN itself (on January 31, MINUSTAH chief Edmond Mulet, MINUSTAH's head, publicly conceded that ["there has been collateral damage, definitely"](#)). The *Times* uncritically advances MINUSTAH's goal of 'cleansing the area' and fails to inquire about procedures required by international, Haitian and almost any national law for pursuing people accused of criminal behavior: warrants, arrests, evidence and some judicial procedure before execution.

Jacqueline Charles of the *Miami Herald* follows suit with a series of articles advancing the same notion of uncritical support for the UN presence in Haiti. However, her February 10th article slightly contrasts with the *Times* as she quotes a few dissenting opinions of UN aggression by a supposed resident and other unnamed critics.

The February 13th AP/*Washington Times* article "Peace troops take offensive against Haiti gangs" presented a slightly more balanced perspective of deadly UN actions. This article mentions a key distinguishable quality between this peacekeeping mission and all others: "most U.N. peacekeeping forces deploy after the guns have fallen silent, but the Haiti mission goes on the offensive nearly every day." "It's a new experience in U.N. peacekeeping" said David Wimhurst, UN Spokesman "peacekeepers have clashed with militants in Congo and Sierra Leone, but only in Haiti do they routinely take on armed street gangs." Mulet contributed his own dehumanizing characterization of gang leaders repeatedly referring to them as 'psychopaths' thus justifying their tactics to kill, not

capture, and deny justice to those undeserving of justice. “It’s like a medieval siege, just trying to put pressure on them” said Edmond Mulet.

Jacqueline Charles’ *Miami Herald* article of February 19th “In Haitian slum, gangs retreat but misery persists” presents the UN talking points without verification: “heavily armed gang members who kept kidnap victims there, extorted local business people, and allegedly raped local women.” The article heralds the UN siege of Cite Soleil as new UN command posts emerge as a ‘symbol of progress in Haiti’s crackdown on the gangs.’ The article fails to confirm such an assessment with local residents. The *Herald* piece details the numbers of UN soldiers killed (15) and wounded (40) over the past three years but fails to mention reported numbers of civilian deaths and wounded. By contrast the December 22, 2006 UN assault on Cite Soleil alone left a reported 31 dead (including children and elderly), 33 wounded and hundreds displaced from the homes. Had such figures been reported it would have offered *Miami Herald* and AP readers ample understanding of Haitian carnival bands’ lampooning of UN peacekeepers in this year’s carnival theme songs.

Both Jacqueline Charles’ “As Haiti stabilizes, progress still slow” and the *Miami Herald*’s Opinion piece “Calm in Haiti” emphasize Haiti’s recent political stability but sounds the criticisms from Donors, former Florida Senator Bob Graham and Edmond Mulet that the Haitian government must more quickly progress on project implementation. The *Herald* clearly supports the UN mandate extension crediting the mission with this “rare period of relative calm for the last few months” and is all for “effective diplomacy and aggressive military tactics.”

The scant mainstream media coverage of the Lancet’s clarification and reaffirmation of a study of violence in Port-au-Prince from 2004 to 2006 concluding the study had “no evidence of systematic bias” was given additional coverage by the AP and picked up by the International Herald Tribune.

The BBC’s Nick Caistor traveled to Haiti via the Dominican Republic for one day. The very brief excursion resulted in “Trying to stay safe in Haiti” with quotes from one traveling companion and Caistor’s Haitian driver offered readers little other than proof that he could survive a day in Haiti without harm or kidnapping. The BBC, like other mainstream media outlets, uncritically lends its support to the UN Mission in Haiti.

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1. Haitian describes torture by police to jurors

The horrors of torture in Haiti under a former military regime were outlined in a civil trial against a former Haitian army colonel that began Tuesday in Miami.

BY ALFONSO CHARDY

Miami Herald

February 21, 2007

<http://www.miami.com/mld/miamiherald/news/world/haiti/16744655.htm>

Lexiuste Cajuste, once a top labor union leader in Haiti, described in detail to a Miami jury Tuesday how military-overseen police officers in Port-au-Prince tortured him in 1993.

Officers, he said, forced him under the open frame of an iron bed, his back and buttocks exposed. Then, he added, officers took turns stomping on his back with their boots and beating his buttocks with wooden clubs -- until he lost consciousness.

"I felt a lot of pain, and I felt I was going to die," Cajuste said in Creole, as an interpreter translated his words into English for the jury of four women and two men.

Cajuste's testimony came on the first day of a civil trial for unspecified compensatory and punitive damages against former Haitian army Col. Carl Dorelien, a former high-ranking officer who won \$3.2 million in the Florida Lottery in 1997 after he settled in Florida.

Attorneys for Cajuste, one of two plaintiffs in the case, claim Dorelien is responsible for the torture suffered at the hands of police and military officers -- not because Dorelien was personally involved, but because he was a member of the high command and his assignment was to ensure military discipline.

LINE OF SUITS

The case, filed in Miami federal court by the San Francisco-based human rights organization Center for Justice & Accountability, is the latest in a string of similar civil actions against foreign-born torture suspects who later moved to the United States.

Under the 218-year-old Alien Tort Statute, foreign nationals who suffer serious abuse anywhere in the world can sue in U.S. courts if suspected perpetrators are in the United States. The center sued Dorelien on Jan. 24, 2003 -- three days before he was deported to Haiti.

Matt Eisenbrandt, a Center for Justice & Accountability attorney, acknowledged in his opening statement that Dorelien was not personally involved in torturing Cajuste or in the other alleged abuses.

But Dorelien bore responsibility because he had been a member of the Haitian military high command and his specific assignment as chief of personnel was to ensure discipline of officers and to investigate human rights violations committed by men under his command, Eisenbrandt said.

"He was a member of the high command, and the high command ran Haiti," Eisenbrandt told the jurors.

Dorelien was not in the courtroom. Immigration authorities deported him because of his record as a human rights violator. He remains in Haiti.

Dorelien's Miami attorney, Kurt Klaus, did not make an opening statement. He told The Miami Herald later that he will make his comments to the jurors at the end of the trial, which is expected to continue through Friday and perhaps into next week.

CLAIMS INNOCENCE

Klaus has said Dorelien is not responsible for the abuses alleged in the lawsuit. He has accused attorneys for the Center for Justice & Accountability of going after his client because of his Lotto win.

There's only about \$808,000 left from the original jackpot, but the money is frozen pending a separate legal dispute over whether it should go to victims of human rights abuses in Haiti.

The second plaintiff in the case is Marie Jeanne Jean, widow of Michel Pierre -- one of 26 men, women and children killed in 1994 by soldiers and paramilitary supporters in Raboteau, a poor neighborhood in Gonaives, Haiti. She is expected to testify this week.

2. Ex-Haitian officer faces civil trial on rights allegations

A former Haitian army colonel will be judged in Miami in a civil trial to determine his liability in the death of one person and the torture of another.

BY ALFONSO CHARDY

Miami Herald

February 19, 2007

<http://www.miami.com/mld/miamiherald/16730644.htm>

Carl Dorelien was among high-ranking military officers who overthrew Haitian president Jean-Bertrand Aristide in 1991 and then served as army colonel in the central command until U.S. troops landed in 1994 to restore Aristide to office.

Dorelien then fled to the United States and settled in Florida where he bought a Lotto ticket in 1997 and won \$3.2 million. Accused of human rights violations back home, Dorelien was deported in 2003 -- and then lost control of his jackpot.

Now, Dorelien faces a civil trial in Miami federal court for allegedly tolerating human rights abuses while serving in Haiti. U.S. District Judge James Lawrence King is to begin selecting jurors Tuesday. The lawsuit seeks unspecified compensatory and punitive damages against Dorelien in connection with the alleged torture of Lexiuste Cajuste in Port-au-Prince in 1993 and the killing of Michel Pierre in the infamous 1994 massacre in Raboteau.

NOT IN COURT

Dorelien will not be at the trial but his Miami attorney, Kurt Klaus, will present a defense. He told The Miami Herald Friday that his client is not responsible for Cajuste's alleged torture or the Raboteau deaths.

"He had no direct command of troops," Klaus said. "He was an attache in the central command office, but he was just an administrator. The only reason they are bringing the lawsuit here is because Mr. Dorelien won the Florida Lottery and they see dollar signs."

The lawsuit is separate from an order last year by a judge in Tallahassee who ruled that about \$808,000 left from the jackpot should be paid to relatives of Raboteau victims including Pierre's widow -- one of the lawsuit plaintiffs. Dorelien has appealed the jackpot order and the case is pending.

Cajuste, who now lives in Jacksonville, told The Miami Herald last year that he was tortured in 1993 at a police station in Port-au-Prince. Cajuste said he was arrested after he went to a radio station to deliver a news release calling for a general strike.

Pierre died in Raboteau, a neighborhood of the Haitian city of Gonaives, when Haitian soldiers and civilian paramilitary supporters rampaged through the area in 1994.

DEADLY RAMPAGE

At least 26 unarmed men, women and children were killed during the two-day rampage, including Pierre.

The lawsuit was filed by the Center for Justice & Accountability, a San Francisco human rights organization.

"After waiting more than 12 years, our clients will finally have their day in court, and, for the first time, one of the many high-ranking members of the Haitian Armed Forces who found refuge in the U.S. after the restoration of democracy to Haiti, will have to answer to a U.S. jury for the allegations of widespread and severe human rights abuses," said Pamela Merchant, the group's executive director.

3. U.N. Troops Fight Haiti's Gangs One Battered Street at a Time

By MARC LACEY

The New York Times

February 10, 2007

<http://select.nytimes.com/search/restricted/article?res=F30F11F8355B0C738DDDAB0894DF404482>

For years, street gangs have run Haiti right alongside the politicians. With a disbanded army and a corrupted wreck of a police force, successive presidents have either used the gangs against political rivals or just bought them off.

Recently, something extraordinary has occurred. President René Préval decided to take on the gangs and set the 8,000 United Nations peacekeepers loose on them, a risky move that will determine the security of the country and the success of his young government.

"We're taking back Port-au-Prince centimeter by centimeter," said Lt. Col. Abdesslam Elamarti, a peacekeeper from Morocco. "We're pressing these gangs so the population can live in peace."

The offensive by the United Nations forces, who arrived here in 2004 after the ouster of President Jean-Bertrand Aristide, began in earnest in late December. One of the fiercest battles took place on the morning of Jan. 25 with a raid by hundreds of United Nations forces on a gang hide-out on the periphery of Cité Soleil, this sprawling seaside capital's largest and most notorious slum.

After a fierce firefight in which gang members fired thousands of shots, United Nations officials succeeded in taking over the hide-out, a former schoolhouse that gang members had once used to fire upon peacekeepers and to demand money from passing motorists. The United Nations said four gang members had been killed in the battle.

Other raids have followed, and though it is still too early to judge the operation, gang leaders seem to be on the run, and armored United Nations vehicles now rumble through the crowded streets of Cité Soleil.

[Some 700 United Nations peacekeepers raided strongholds in Cité Soleil before dawn on Friday trying to take control of abandoned buildings used by gang members. One person was killed and several others wounded, including two peacekeepers, United Nations officials said.

["There will be no tolerance for the kidnappings, harassment and terror carried out by criminal gangs," Maj. Gen. Carlos Alberto dos Santos Cruz, the commander of the United Nations forces, said in a statement on Friday. "I will continue to cleanse these areas of the gangs who are robbing the Haitian people of their security."]

The biggest of the United Nations operations have been aimed at one of the most wanted and feared of all the gang leaders, an unlikely and unpredictable power broker in his 20s who goes simply by the name Evans. Evans and his groups have been linked to a rash of kidnappings in the capital, and lately his men have been locked in fierce battles with United Nations peacekeepers.

Within the confines of Cité Soleil, Evans's every whim is enforced with absolute authority. Deeply superstitious, he recently said he suspected cats of bringing him bad luck after one appeared during a raid by United Nations troops on one of his hide-outs, local residents and United Nations officials said.

So he issued an order that all cats were to be killed in his patch of the slum. His gunmen would be rounding them up and roasting them, he told the people. When one woman resisted, he or one of his men shot her, United Nations officials say.

Evans and the other leaders now hide in the maze of tin-roofed shanties that are home to some 300,000 of Haiti's urban poor. Meanwhile, the local population debates which is a more effective strategy for dealing with these young toughs, confronting or conversing with them.

Haiti, the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere, has a long tradition of politics mixed with thuggery. In the 1970s and '80s, François Duvalier and his son Jean-Claude employed the Tontons Macoute, dreaded paramilitary hoodlums.

Mr. Aristide was elected president in 1990 and again in 2000 with the support of the poor. Gang leaders, who act as de facto spokesmen for long-neglected slums, gained entry to the presidential palace and helped dole out jobs and other spoils to their men.

In his initial months in office, Mr. Préval, who had been Mr. Aristide's prime minister as well as president from 1996 to 2001, followed a similarly conciliatory tack. He negotiated with gang leaders, including Evans, inviting them at times to face-to-face meetings in the presidential palace, officials say.

But he has grown increasingly impatient with the gangs as they resisted surrendering their guns and continued wreaking havoc on Port-au-Prince.

The kidnapping spree at the end of last year was the last straw. As the country prepared for Christmas, street thugs began grabbing people off the street, taking them into the slums and demanding ransoms.

Then the kidnapers began singling out children. In one horrible episode, a teenage girl was killed and her eyes were gouged out. Then, a school bus of children was seized by gunmen, prompting many terrified parents to keep their children hidden at home.

Mr. Préval, who has support among Haiti's poor as well as its elite, found his coalition government under attack as well, with opposition politicians in the Senate and Chamber

of Deputies denouncing him for allowing the violence. The president changed course, calling off negotiations with the gangsters and giving the United Nations the go ahead to go after them.

Some local residents say that the raids are stirring up the gangs and that innocent people are getting caught up in the cross-fire.

David Wimhurst, the spokesman for the United Nations mission, said that the peacekeepers were careful to single out only combatants and that gang members had themselves killed civilians and then blamed the United Nations.

Not everybody agrees that confrontation is the best way of calming the slums. "The gang men can change," insisted Meleus Jean, 45, a pastor who runs a tiny church in Cité Soleil and who was once almost hit by a stray bullet while delivering a Sunday morning sermon. "I talk to them and I think they are gang men because they have nothing else. Fighting them will not change them."

One of those who has been criticized in the past for dealings with gang members has been Wyclef Jean, the Haitian-American rapper formerly of the Fugees. "The problem is much bigger than the gang leaders," he said in a telephone interview from New York. "I'm not saying they are not part of the problem. When people are killing people, that's a problem. But we don't have enough conversation."

But United Nations officials say the time for talk is over.

"If one of them goes to Préval and says, 'I want to give up,' and waves a white handkerchief, that is fine," said Edmond Mulet, a Guatemalan diplomat in charge of the United Nations mission here. "That's the kind of conversation we want."

At the same time, nobody believes that arresting or killing the gang leaders will be enough to calm Port-au-Prince. The violence is linked, most say, to the dire poverty.

"The people didn't ask to be born here," said Christy Jackson, 42, headmaster of a school in Cité Soleil. "We didn't ask to live like this."

The United States government recently set aside \$20 million to create jobs for young people in Cité Soleil once the violence is quelled. In Solino, a neighborhood where the gangsters were chased away, people are being paid to clean garbage from a clogged drainage ditch.

Mr. Jean, the singer, has numerous social projects under way, including a program to bring giant mobile movie screens to poor neighborhoods, which have no cinemas.

Mr. Mulet, of the United Nations, said he believed that the gang leaders were beyond rehabilitation. "They've been killing people, kidnapping people, torturing people, raping girls," he told reporters recently in Washington. "It is very difficult to reinsert into society

someone like that. A psychiatric institution would be the best place to place them in the future -- after we arrest them."

Even if the gangsters are all rounded up, the country's justice system is ill-equipped to handle them.

Justice is bought and sold in Haiti, with both police officers and judges routinely allowing bribes to determine guilt or innocence. Jails are packed with people awaiting trial, most languishing for years.

On top of that, more and more narcotics have begun flowing through Haiti to the United States, law enforcement officials say. It is Haiti's weakened state that is the big attraction to narcotics traffickers, officials say.

In a recent report on Haiti's woeful law enforcement apparatus, the International Crisis Group, a nonprofit group committed to preventing and resolving deadly conflicts, said that without urgent reform "the current escalation of organized violence and criminality may come to threaten the state itself."

As bullets fly, everyone is under threat. One stray shot pierced the outer wall of a hospital in Cité Soleil recently. "We don't know who shot it," said Marie Yves Noël, the chief nurse. The bullet continued on through the maternity unit and then broke the glass of a pediatrics ward. Nobody was hit.

4. Peace troops take offensive against Haiti gangs

By Stevenson Jacobs

ASSOCIATED PRESS

The Washington Times

February 13, 2007

<http://washingtontimes.com/world/20070212-103030-9485r.htm>

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti -- On the dusty streets of Haiti's largest slum, young men in baggy clothes lounge outside bullet-pocked shacks, listening for the rumble of armored vehicles carrying U.N. peacekeepers.

In the seaside slum of Cite Soleil, those are the sounds that precede gunbattles and bloodshed, sending the youths and everyone else rushing for cover.

Frustrated by unrelenting kidnappings for ransom, killings and other crimes, the United Nations is taking on the powerful gangs that have flourished in the chaos after the ouster of President Jean-Bertrand Aristide in 2004.

The raids have the blessing of current President Rene Preval, who angrily warned gangs last year to "disarm or die."

Most U.N. peacekeeping forces deploy after the guns have fallen silent, but the Haiti mission goes on the offensive nearly every day. Sent in more than two years ago, the 9,000-strong force is pushing deeper into Cite Soleil and holding its ground with bases and checkpoints.

Haiti's ruling class welcomes them, and the veto-wielding governments on the U.N. Security Council are united in wanting an end to the Caribbean country's nearly two decades of political upheaval.

"It's a new experience in U.N. peacekeeping," said David Wimhurst, a spokesman for the U.N. mission. "It hasn't been easy, but we're making headway."

The crackdown has led to the killing or capture of several reputed gangsters. Critics say it also has taken innocent lives in Cite Soleil, where 300,000 people scrape out a meager existence on streets lined with ditches of raw sewage.

In a major operation Friday, more than 700 U.N. troops stormed Cite Soleil to seize a large swath of the slum from gang control. A firefight lasting several hours left two soldiers injured and at least one gang suspect dead.

"We're encircling them. It's like a medieval siege, just trying to put pressure on them," Edmond Mulet, the U.N. special envoy to Haiti, told reporters at U.N. headquarters on Jan. 29.

Mr. Mulet said the force takes fire "every day" and called gang leaders "psychopaths" who wantonly kidnap and kill law-abiding Haitians.

Alix Fils-Aime, a top security adviser to Mr. Preval, said the gangs win favor in Cite Soleil partly by sharing their loot with the poor. Robert Argant, president of the Haitian Chamber of Commerce, said, "These guys are using the money they steal from people to get others around them to support them."

The gang members insist they are soldiers fighting for equality in a country where about 80 percent of people live on less than \$2 a day and a tiny elite controls the economy.

"They call us gangsters, but everyone in this world is a gangster. When you're hungry, you're angry. When you're thirsty, you're angry. When somebody is against you, you have to be angry," said a gang member who identified himself only as Yamoska.

Mr. Preval, overwhelmingly elected a year ago, has sent emissaries to the gangs to negotiate a peaceful disarmament, while at the same time deploying the national police to Cite Soleil for the first time since Mr. Aristide's ouster.

The government also encourages the gangs to trade their weapons for job training and economic aid, but that effort has disarmed only about 100 men and recovered a small pile of rusty, antiquated guns.

The gang members are no strangers to struggle. After Haiti's now-disbanded army toppled Mr. Aristide in a 1991 coup, paramilitary death squads sprayed Mr. Aristide's slum strongholds with gunfire, killing an untold number of people. Some of today's gang members were orphaned by the killings, which eased in 1994 when U.S. troops restored Mr. Aristide.

Committed to maintaining support in the slums, Mr. Aristide sent the gangs money, food and -- by some accounts -- weapons. Many gang members remain loyal to him today and say the United Nations is allied with their enemies. Several told the Associated Press that they want to lay down their arms but fear being vulnerable to U.N. raids.

The latest U.N. offensive began late last year, prompted by a string of bold, daylight kidnappings. Many victims were schoolchildren snatched off the street. One teenager was slain by her captors after her family failed to come up with a ransom. She was shot in both eyes.

On Dec. 22, peacekeepers stormed Cite Soleil to break up a kidnap gang. When fighting ended five hours later, at least six persons were dead and an unknown number wounded, the United Nations said.

The U.N. force said that only gang members died, citing information from informants. But people in Cite Soleil said at least 10 persons were killed and none was a gang member. They gathered the bodies in an empty schoolhouse and demanded justice as female relatives sobbed.

"People have been killed, houses have been burned and lives have been destroyed. We want an investigation," said Webster Maurice, a Cite Soleil activist.

U.N. officials say peacekeepers try to avoid harming bystanders.

In most of the 15 U.N. peacekeeping missions around the world, international troops are used mainly as police to maintain order in post-conflict countries. Peacekeepers have clashed with militants in Congo and Sierra Leone, but only in Haiti do they routinely take on armed street gangs, said Mr. Wimhurst, the U.N. mission spokesman.

"We normally deal with rebel groups or armed factions who have leaders and have agreed to disarm or enter into a political agreement. Here, none of that is true. They're just a bunch of gangs who fight us," he said.

Fifteen foreign soldiers and policemen, including several killed in clashes with gangs, have died.

In most raids, blue-helmeted peacekeepers enter the slums in armored cars and on foot to secure gang-controlled neighborhoods, arrest criminals and recover weapons. They may fire only if attacked.

Few in Haiti think Cite Soleil will calm down unless its staggering poverty is addressed.

The United States has announced a \$20 million grant to create jobs and provide other aid, and foreign donors are helping improve the ill-equipped police force. But the country still has only about 6,000 police -- an eighth of what it is thought to need.

5. U.N. chases gang chief; 1 killed in slum firefight

Hundreds of U.N. peacekeepers raided Haiti's largest and most violent slum Friday, seizing a portion of it in a six-hour gun battle that left one dead.

BY JACQUELINE CHARLES

Miami Herald

February 10, 2007

<http://www.miami.com/mld/miamiherald/news/world/haiti/16667196.htm>

PORT-AU-PRINCE - U.N. peacekeepers seized a chunk of Haiti's worst slum controlled by a notorious gang leader after a lengthy firefight Friday that left at least one dead and four wounded, including two Blue Helmets.

Barbed wire and heavily armed U.N. police officers guarded several entrances into the Cité Soleil slum late Friday after the predawn raid by several hundred of the U.N. forces.

The peacekeepers seized control of four strategic locations, including a house suspected of housing kidnap victims, a water tower, and the center of the area known as Jamaica

Base, that one of Haiti's most notorious gang leaders, known as "Evans," used as his center of operation.

Evans, one of a handful of key gang leaders that the U.N. peacekeeping forces are focused on putting out of business, was not captured, but at least one Haitian was killed and four other persons were injured, including two peacekeepers.

"We have not captured him. We don't believe we have killed him," Laurie Arellano, spokeswoman for the U.N. peacekeeping mission, said just 2 ½ hours after the Blue Helmets finally took control of Evans' Jamaica Base.

"The objective was to secure the area. If we had killed or captured him, that would have been a big impact. It doesn't change what we set out to do," Arellano added.

Arellano said Evans and his gang of supporters were terrorizing the population, using them as human shields in firefights with authorities and extorting money from local businesses.

"By us having soldiers in Jamaica Base, they have no place to operate. There is no place for them to go and hide," she added. "You can't have security if you have gangs running sections of the town."

By about 5 p.m. residents slowly began returning to their homes but were patted down by U.N. police before they were allowed to walk through a tiny entrance on the road, blocked by barbed wire and trucks. Amid the gunfire, many had ran out to a main highway nearby for safety.

"I don't know why they won't leave the population alone," Changlet LaFleur, 24, said about the U.N. forces, angry at what he described as their entry into the neighborhood while firing their guns.

Both U.N. and Haitian authorities have come under criticism for their recent aggressive attacks on the gangs, which have many of them running scared and changing locations.

But Prime Minister Jacques-Edouard Alexis told The Miami Herald Friday that the government is serious about cracking down on the wave of kidnappings and other crime.

"Our job is to protect the population," he said. "We asked them [gang members] to turn over their guns. They started to, then afterward we saw a change in their direction. More kidnappings and killings."

6. In Haitian slum, gangs retreat but misery persists

BY JACQUELINE CHARLES

Miami Herald

February 19, 2007

PORT-AU-PRINCE - Schoolboys kicked a tiny red ball around in the shadow of a bullet-riddled building in the Cité Soleil slum. Women walked to and from market with baskets on their heads, and families packed a tiny church nearby.

But the children never strayed too far from their play area, afraid of a return of the firefights between local gangs and United Nations peacekeepers that once regularly ripped through the squalid area, leaving gang members and civilians dead or wounded.

"You can't let your children out of your sight," said Marguerite Joseph, 32, tightly clutching her 2-year-old daughter in fear as four black and white U.N. armored vehicles ferrying blue-helmeted troops rumbled by her cement-block shack.

Over the past weeks, hundreds of U.N. peacekeepers have slowly seized sections of Cité Soleil, a densely populated slum of about 200,000 people, once dominated by heavily armed gang members who kept kidnap victims there, extorted local business people, and allegedly raped local women.

The flags of the United Nations and Haiti now flutter from atop the crumbling blue bullet-pocked building, once used by the gangs to snipe at U.N. peacekeepers, and now a U.N. command post and symbol of progress in Haiti's crackdown on the gangs that mushroomed in the wake of former President Jean-Bertrand Aristide's 2004 ouster.

"We want the capital to regain its peace," Prime Minister Jacques-Edouard Alexis told The Miami Herald during the U.N. forces' predawn raid on Feb. 9 to take control of the area known as Boston, about a quarter-mile from the building.

It is quiet in Boston now, at least for the moment.

U.N. forces now control about 20 percent of Cité Soleil, and the gangs appear to be on the run. Scores of gang members have been arrested, and three gang leaders -- including Boston's feared former ruler, a young man known as Evans or "Ti-Kouto" (Creole for Little Knife) -- have contacted Haitian authorities, offering to turn in their guns.

Still, many problems remain in the seaside shantytown, a historic stronghold of support for Aristide where graffiti still hail him as "King." Residents live in row after row of corroding tin-roof shacks next to mounds of garbage and open sewers. Money and work are scarce. Misery is plentiful.

"People are hungry," said one of a group of young gang members in Cité Soleil who blocked a reporter from walking deeper into the slum.

Where there were once chimeres, slang for gunmen loyal to Aristide, who doled out government food and jobs to dirt-poor residents, there are now bandi -- bandits who kidnap and rob but provide food and water in exchange for residents' silence.

The U.N. peacekeepers first went on the offensive against Cité Soleil's gangs in December, after an unprecedented rash of child kidnappings and increasing pressure by Haitian lawmakers on Alexis and President René Préval to improve the security situation.

Several hundred U.N. peacekeepers and Haitian national police began to launch raids into gang-controlled areas and eventually seized control of the Bwa Neuf section of the slum after several firefights. Then, on Feb. 9, they seized the Boston section in their largest raid to date.

"There are between three and five big bandits [in Port-au-Prince]. . . . Those are the ones we really want," said Edmond Mulet, the head of the U.N. mission in Haiti, known as MINUSTAH.

Some of the gang leaders are now fighting for control of the Martissant slum on the southern outskirts of Port-au-Prince in battles that have forced many residents to flee their homes.

Since the Feb. 9 raid, 45 gang members from both Martissant and Cité Soleil have been arrested by the Haitian National Police and the peacekeepers, U.N. military spokeswoman Laurie Arellano said. But how long they will remain behind bars is unclear because Haiti's jails already are severely overcrowded.

Also seized during the Cité Soleil raid were a Galil assault rifle, about 6,000 rounds of ammunition, two telescopes, one binoculars, two laptop computers and 27 cellphones. The raiders also found the national identity cards of several kidnap victims, Arellano said.

"Now it's possible to walk in Boston without fear, without problems, without criminals circulating freely in that area," said Brazilian Maj. Gen. Carlos Alberto dos Santos Cruz, the U.N. military commander, as he showed off the seized loot.

Although Evans was not captured, Dos Santos Cruz said his forces were still looking for him.

A Haitian official familiar with a months-old effort to disarm the gangs told The Miami Herald that Evans and two other Cité Soleil gang leaders had offered to disarm after the U.N. raid Feb. 9 -- in exchange for a one-way ticket out of Haiti.

No deal, said the official, who asked for anonymity because of the sensitivity of the disarmament program.

But while a degree of normalcy has returned to Cité Soleil, some Aristide supporters have complained that the U.N. forces used "brutal tactics" in their raids.

The U.S.-based Institute for Justice & Democracy in Haiti, headed by Brian Concannon Jr., issued a statement Wednesday alleging that the raids caused unnecessary ``collateral

damage among children, young adults and elderly, men and women killed or injured by U.N. bullets."

Haitian news media reported four civilians dead in the Boston raid, but U.N. officials said they could not confirm that number. Fifteen U.N. peacekeepers have died and 40 wounded since the U.N. force was deployed to Haiti in 2004.

U.N. officials say they use caution in their offensive and try to limit civilian casualties. Many gang members use the same caliber of bullets as the U.N. peacekeepers, so it's almost impossible to prove which side shot a person, they add.

During a recent walk through Cité Soleil, few residents were willing to discuss the gangs or the kidnappings with a correspondent, choosing instead to talk about how tough life had become since Aristide's departure.

"Given where we are currently, the fact we have not died yet, it is only because of God," said Perle Estelan, 47, a husband and a father of three who gets by doing odd jobs. "He's the one who is protecting us, keeping us alive."

Some international and local organizations have tried to help in Cité Soleil. A group of Haitian businesses, for instance, provide water through a recently started foundation, donating about \$1,000 a month. Peacekeepers also contribute food and water in areas they have taken control of. And recently, the United States announced that it would give Haiti \$20 million to help create jobs for youths in Cité Soleil.

Mulet, the U.N. chief, and others welcome the aid, saying that more than military muscle is needed to root out Haiti's burgeoning gang problem.

"People in Cité Soleil need to see some kind of dividends," Mulet said. "They need to see the state, the government, is moving in rebuilding schools, hospitals, providing development projects."

7. Haitian carnival anthems take aim at U.N

STEVENSON JACOBS

Associated Press

Miami Herald

February 19, 2007

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti - Songs lampooning politicians have always been a fixture of Haiti's carnival, but this year, musicians have a new favorite target: U.N. peacekeepers.

The airwaves have been filled with satirical songs about the U.N. force, known by its French acronym MINUSTAH, which has been trying to restore order to Haiti since the 2004 rebellion that toppled President Jean-Bertrand Aristide.

"MINUSTAH, you're really just a tourista. You're holding back my country," the group Vwadezil sings in one popular song. "You're just lounging around so why don't you get ... out."

The songs, known as "meringues," add a political dimension to the three-day carnival celebrations. The rum-fueled festivities bring even more chaos to the bustling streets of downtown Port-au-Prince, with tens of thousands of people dancing to live bands on floats.

Haiti's government spent \$2 million on this year's carnival, hoping to lure tourists, especially Haitians living in the United States.

The former French colony, plagued since independence with political upheaval and dire poverty, has a long history of skewering public institutions during carnival.

U.N. troops are only the latest addition to a rhetorical menu that typically includes crooked government officials, outgunned police and kidnappers who prey on the population of 8 million.

The peacekeepers have recently become more aggressive in battling the gangs blamed for rampant kidnappings. On Sunday, they captured a gang leader known as Ti Bazil in the Cite Soleil slum.

But many Haitians feel that the force, which combines soldiers and police from more than a dozen countries, has been too slow in stemming violence.

"MINUSTAH, you've invaded our country, you must make things better," the popular group T-Vice warns in one of its meringues.

Other meringues accuse U.N. bureaucrats of spending more time dining in posh restaurants and sunning themselves on the beach than working to solve the poor country's troubles.

"Since the U.N. is now a part of our society, I touch upon it in my music," the band Vwadezil's lead singer, Fresh La, said in an interview. "They're taking a long time to bring peace to the country, and that's keeping us from moving forward."

The U.N. mission takes the jabs in stride.

"I think it's part of the Haitian tradition of carnival to make fun of things, even serious things," said Edmond Mulet, the special U.N. representative to Haiti. "It's a way of conveying some sentiments which are genuine and I don't blame for them that. On the contrary, I think they should be welcomed."

Some singers have caused problems for the U.N., however.

At last year's carnival, the group Demele performed a profanity-laced song that accused peacekeepers of stealing goats belonging to peasants. Despite denials by the U.N. mission, the accusation spread through the streets and became a common chant during anti-U.N. street protests.

"That song caused a lot of issues between MINUSTAH and the population," said that group's frontman, also known as Demele. He alleged that the offending lyric got him uninvited from this year's carnival lineup.

U.N. officials and carnival organizers denied censoring any artists.

"Musicians have the right to write any song they like," said Yanick Louis, a member of the carnival's artistic committee.

And despite the harsh tone of some songs, other artists said they mean no offense.

"I ridicule the U.N. in the spirit of carnival, which is about having fun and letting go," Vwadezil's Fresh La said.

8. As Haiti stabilizes, progress still slow

A year after presidential elections, Haiti is enjoying political stability but struggling with democracy.

BY JACQUELINE CHARLES

Miami Herald

February 16, 2007

<http://www.miami.com/mld/miamiherald/news/16710230.htm>

PORT-AU-PRINCE - For the first time in years, Haiti is enjoying relative political stability.

There is not-so-good news as well. Progress has been slow, frustrations are growing, international donors are complaining and lawmakers are bickering. Crime remains high, and the slow pace of government may be steering the nation back toward paralysis.

"We are building a country, and it's not easy," said Prime Minister Jacques-

Edouard Alexis, defending the government. "I don't think there is a form of government as difficult as a democracy."

But confounding problems face President René Préval. Following his election a year ago this month, Préval formed a coalition government in hopes of avoiding a repeat of what happened during his first presidential term from 1996 to 2001, when a nonfunctioning parliament paralyzed his government.

"The problems in Haiti are so enormous that you could justify prioritizing almost every one at the top of the list," said former Florida Sen. Bob Graham.

"But you cannot put 50 items at the top of the list," Graham said, echoing criticisms that the government's priorities change from meeting to meeting and lack strategies for implementation.

"Initially Préval said education; six months later, roads, roads, roads. There needs to be a commitment to a clearly articulated short list of priorities and then demonstrate the ability to organize and get something done," Graham said.

Graham, who visited here in October, said he has been waiting months for a list of what kind of experts the government needs as part of a planned \$10 million effort to recruit Haitians in the United States and Canada to work in Haiti. The program is being funded by the Inter-American Development Bank.

"We are ready to go to be of assistance, but we still haven't gotten that list of requirements," Graham told The Miami Herald.

Alexis said the criticisms are unwarranted. Haiti, he said, is still waiting on donors to turn over "the kind of dollars they need to give for the country to develop."

"President Préval and I have defined where we want to go," he told The Miami Herald. "I don't believe they have a problem with our priorities. I believe it's their bureaucracy."

Donors publicly downplay concerns, preferring to tout their aid programs, including almost \$10 million to train parliament members. Privately, however, they say they are telling Préval and Alexis to get moving or risk losing badly needed dollars.

Victor Benoit, head of one of the six major political parties in Préval's fragile coalition government, agrees. "The population doesn't have the sense that the government is moving forward," he said.

Alexis acknowledged that little progress has trickled down to the people, but he listed several government advances:

- For the past two weeks, Préval has been meeting at 5 p.m. every day with Alexis and cabinet ministers, asking for updates on projects and pledged dollars.

"Before the elections you had political fragmentation. Today, we have a government capable of governing," said Albert Ramdin, assistant secretary general of the Organization of American States. "There is an active engagement of people in the process."

- Graduated 500 new Haitian National Police officers to help fight the wave of kidnappings and other crimes gripping the capital, and began tough vetting of police officers for signs of corruption. Both the government and the U.N. peacekeeping mission here have beefed up efforts to reclaim chunks of the city once controlled by armed gangs.

"Haiti today is horrible, the level of violence, kidnappings, corruption," said Edmond Mulet, head of the U.N. mission here. "But if you compare the picture of Haiti today with a year ago, it's a very positive evolution. It's very complicated, difficult. It will be better."

- Formed a task force to help Haiti take advantage of HOPE, a U.S. bill for duty-free textile exports approved by Congress last December and expected to create thousands of jobs in the poverty-stricken nation of eight million.

Préval has remained relatively silent amid the burgeoning complaints, choosing instead to run public service TV and radio announcements telling Haitians to respect one another.

Determined not to return the government to paralysis, he has instructed Alexis to prevent a clash with parliament. But with most of the lawmakers being first-time politicians and new to their duties and powers, some Haitians say clashes are inevitable.

Préval will have to do more than just take out ads, some analysts say. He'll have to shake things up, replacing ineffective ministers.

"We have political peace," said Jean-Marie Pierre, 20, who lives in the Bel Air neighborhood, near the presidential palace. "But the people are dying from hunger; dying from misery. This country is finished, completely broken."

Said Léon Saint-Louis, a professor of public law at the State University of Haiti: "The population is losing confidence. They don't see them working, they only see them fighting," he said.

Opposition Sen. Rudy Boulos said he doesn't share the anxiety about the 129-member parliament. It's growing pains, he said.

"They have slipped up a little bit, gotten into fights that took their time and were not vital neither for democracy nor governance," he said. "This is in the normal result of getting to know one another and acting within a group and facing other centers of powers."

For a while, parliament appeared to be playing its role. Members passed the budget in record time and threatened Alexis with a vote of no confidence over the deteriorating security environment.

Then came the traffic ticket.

A member of the lower chamber alleged that he was beaten by a police inspector after being pulled over for driving the wrong way. The issue erupted into a fight between parliament and the National Police, with the chamber of deputies passing a nonbinding resolution demanding the inspector be fired.

Soon after, the Senate was rocked by allegations that several senators had accepted \$200,000 in bribes to pass a resolution nullifying a decision by the executive on a bank merger. Parliament announced last week that a five-member commission would investigate the allegations.

"They don't see this as a unique window of opportunity Haiti has," Mulet said, referring to the parliament and its lack of focus on big issues. "They are acting as if this is a traditional country. Haiti has special problems and should have special and exceptional actions and measures to solve them."

9. Straight to the point• CALM IN HAITI

Miami Herald

Opinion

Monday, February 19, 2007

The United Nations Security Council wisely decided last week to extend the mandate of its military mission in Haiti for another eight months -- but that's not long enough. Haiti has enjoyed a rare period of relative calm for the last few months thanks to the 8,800-strong U.N. force. But real political stability is a long way off.

Give credit to Guatemala's Edmond Mulet, head of the U.N. mission, and Brazil's Major Gen. Carlos Alberto Dos Santos Cruz, the new commander of the security force. With more effective diplomacy and aggressive military tactics, they have helped Haiti's political establishment begin to function. They've also helped to curb Haiti's gang violence. It's a shame they weren't around earlier.

Haiti surely needs more than eight months to achieve self-sustaining peace and democracy. Yes, another extension can be granted later, but both the U.N. mission and the government need to lay plans that extend beyond an eight-month horizon. The Security Council should keep that in mind the next time it considers the future of its mission in Haiti.

10. U.K. medical journal The Lancet clears Haiti report of bias

The Associated Press

International Herald Tribune

February 12, 2007

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti: British medical journal The Lancet has found there was no evidence of systematic bias in a recent study it published that said 8,000 people were slain under Haiti's previous interim government.

In a clarification published in its Feb. 3-9 issue, The Lancet said it opened a probe into the Aug. 31 study after learning that its American co-author, Athena Kolbe, had written articles about Haiti under the name Lyn Duff without disclosing it.

The Lancet said it also learned that Kolbe had volunteered at an orphanage founded by former president Jean-Bertrand Aristide, whose ouster after a violent uprising led to the

appointment of the U.S.-backed interim government that led the country from 2004 to 2006.

The Lancet said it opened an inquiry to determine if Kolbe's past work and ties to Aristide constituted a conflict of interest.

As part of the investigation, The Lancet said 100 randomly selected questionnaires used in the study were reanalyzed and that the results matched the report's initial findings, which also said up to 35,000 women were sexually abused while the interim government ruled the Caribbean nation.

"There was no evidence of systematic bias," The Lancet said of the study, which was co-authored by Royce Hutson. "On the basis of this investigation, The Lancet has confidence in Kolbe and Hutson's findings as published."

Richard Horton, editor of The Lancet, declined further comment Monday in an e-mail.

Kolbe, a researcher at Wayne State University in Detroit, said she and Hutson were not surprised to be cleared.

"Now that the investigation is complete I hope attention really turns to the victims and holding the people responsible for human rights violations," Kolbe said in a telephone interview.

The London-based journal said it has amended Kolbe and Hutson's study to make readers aware that Kolbe had written past stories about Haiti under a different name.

The study used a random sample method to question 5,720 Haitians in Port-au-Prince about their experience after Aristide's ouster, which set off a bloody wave of clashes among Haiti's national police, pro- and anti-Aristide gangs, U.N. peacekeepers and rebels who participated in the uprising.

The Lancet report blamed half the killings and rapes on criminals, but said Haitian police and anti-Aristide gangs also were involved.

Former Prime Minister Gerard Latortue, who led the two-year interim government, has rejected the report's findings.

11. Trying to stay safe in Haiti

BBC News

February 10, 2007

http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/programmes/from_our_own_correspondent/6346549.stm

As the United Nations decides to keep its peacekeepers in Haiti for another 12 months, Nick Caistor travels to the country to find out how dangerous the situation is for himself.

The Republic of Haiti is the Caribbean's poorest nation

Whenever possible, I like to travel into Haiti by bus from the neighbouring Dominican Republic.

It is a long seven-hour ride, but it allows me to take the political temperature at the border and to see if there is any improvement in the crippling poverty immediately obvious in the Haitian countryside before I am submerged in the sprawling mess of the capital, Port-au-Prince.

I also get to meet interesting travel companions and this time was no exception.

The man I fell into conversation with was Charles, a retired engineer from New York State. Since his retirement, Charles told me, he has been spending his time on projects sponsored by the International Rotary Club.

At the moment, he is working hard in Haiti to bring proper drinking water to some 200,000 school children who at present - like most of the Haitian population - have no access to safe water.

This was interesting enough but it was Charles's other news that particularly caught my attention.

Random ransom

The last time he had been in Haiti, he said, he had been kidnapped.

While his car was held up in one of the inevitable Port-au-Prince traffic jams, four men had pulled up alongside in a jeep, fired shots underneath his vehicle and forced him out.

They held him for several days, while they tried to get somebody to pay a ransom.

They called all his Rotarian friends and anyone else whose business card he happened to have on him.

When the first group of kidnappers was unsuccessful, they passed him on to others who tried again. In the end, though, all they got was the money he had in his wallet, and his captors set him free.

As Charles proudly told me, the US embassy reckoned his was the only case of someone being released by kidnappers in Haiti without a ransom being paid. When I asked why he thought he was an exception, Charles modestly reckoned that it was because the gangs got fed up with him talking so much.

Returned criminals

But he also confirmed what many people in Haiti believe - that his captors, who spoke English, were people who had been deported back to Haiti from jails in the United States.

My own slender guarantee against being kidnapped is my Haitian driver, Jean-Pierre, who speaks Creole

The Bush administration has been sending back an average of 50 Haitians a month and, although this may ease their prison population problems, many of the returnees are wreaking havoc in the slums of Port-au-Prince.

The Haitian army was demobilised in 1995, after the United States intervened to help overthrow the last military dictatorship. This was a good move, except for the fact that the Haitian state now has no monopoly on force or weapons in the country.

The small police force is hopelessly outgunned and will hardly ever venture into the worst slums of the capital, where gangs and drug-runners are in control.

Troops on tour?

The threat from the criminal gangs is the main reason why the United Nations force of 7,000 soldiers from many different countries is staying on in Haiti for another year.

The UN troops' lack of local knowledge has earned them the nickname of 'tourists'

They are the only ones with the weapons and the logistical backup to be able to take on the criminals and win. So far, though, their success has been strictly limited.

Recently one patrol was caught out when their armoured vehicle broke down in Cite Soleil - or Sun City - the ironically named vast, dark slum down near the capital's seafont.

The UN contingent apparently ran off, leaving their armoured vehicle and its heavy machine-guns to the crooks. The United Nations was then forced into embarrassing negotiations just to get their own weapons back.

My own slender guarantee against being kidnapped is my Haitian driver, Jean-Pierre, who speaks Creole.

Jean-Pierre says that the biggest problem for the UN troops is their lack of local knowledge, which has earned them the nickname of "tourists".

Whenever they raid the slums, the Haitian gangs simply hide their weapons, secure in the knowledge that none of their neighbours will dare give them away.

Faith in a fast car

But Jean-Pierre also says there is a political point behind many of the apparently random kidnappings. Supporters of Jean-Bertrand Aristide, who was ousted from power in February three years ago, claim he was "kidnapped" by the United States and France, the old colonial power.

So the gangs are replying in kind and are trying to destabilise the government which, under President Rene Preval, has been making some timid progress.

Jean-Pierre's own tactics are to drive as quickly as he can, to avoid the slums whenever possible and to make sure we are back in a safe area before nightfall.

So far it has worked but, as the bus out of Haiti crosses the border back into the Dominican Republic, I still give thanks to Papa Legba - or any other voodoo deity I can think of - for protecting me, at least until now.